

Holiday Hours

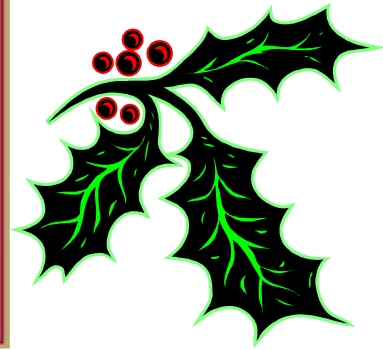
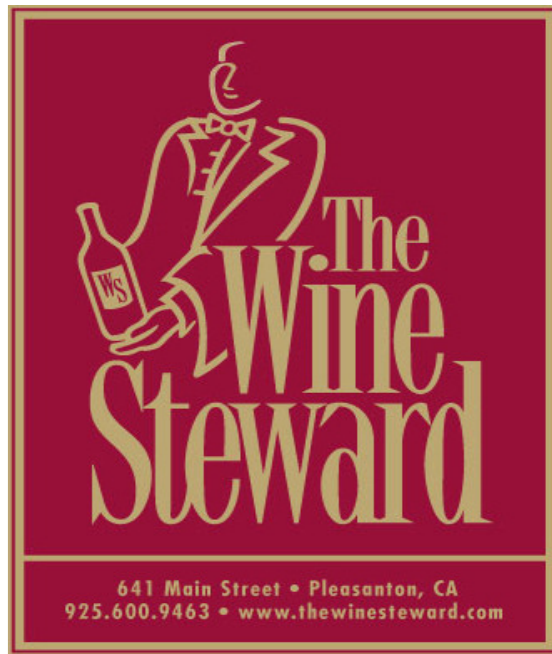
BEGINNING NOVEMBER 23 WE ARE OPEN ON MONDAYS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON!

Store

Sunday 12-5
Monday to Wednesday 11-6
Thursday & Friday 11-8:30
Saturday 10-8

WineBar

Tasting themes listed on Thewinesteward.com
Thursday & Friday 5-8:30
Saturday 1-8



GOBBLE-GOBBLE & HO HO HO! (A Wine Steward Holiday Newsletter)

Celebrating Friends, Family, & Weathering 2009!

First, a much-deserved **THANK YOU:**

YOU – who bought a bottle, joined a wine club, rented a locker, or visited the WineBar – made the make-or-break difference for your Wine Steward in 2009.

*As devoted as you have been to your local finder of distinctively delicious wine,
WE are devoted to carrying on and taking good care of you.*

*While we obviously hope to see you in the shop during this time, beyond “just business” we’d like to say
THANK YOU and wish You & Yours the most meaningful of holiday seasons!*

... From all of us at TWS

GREAT BUYS

for **HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT**

Chosen for value and crowd-friendly flavors

Case purchasers and wine club members get the “BEST” price!

SAN ELIAS CHARDONNAY

A fresh & flavorful new find!

\$7.49 / *Best Price: \$6.74*

JOEL GOTT CABERNET

Rich and People-Friendly – Great price!

\$13.99 / *Best Price: \$12.59*

SPELLBOUND CHARDONNAY

Love Wente’s Riva Ranch? Try this!

\$14.99 / *Best Price: \$13.49*

ROTARI ROSÉ BUBBLY

Dry & creamy. Best sparkling at this price!

\$10.49 / *Best Price: \$9.44*

STAGS LEAP CHARDONNAY

Elegance in your glass! Hot price:

\$19.99 / *Best Price: \$17.99*

JOEL GOTT ZINFANDEL

Welcome back to this friendly, rich Zinfandel!

\$13.49 / *Best Price: \$12.14*

TRES OJOS GARNACHA

Ancient vines, no oak, tons of spicy fruit.

\$9.99 / *Best Price: \$8.99*

VIU MANENT CARMENERE

Our Club Members loved this Cab-like value.

\$7.49 / *Best Price: \$6.74*

JOEL GOTT SAUVIGNON BLANC

Brisk and lively palate refresher . . .

\$9.99 / *Best Price: \$8.99*

FOREFRONT PINOT NOIR

All Archery Summit fruit from Oregon!

\$19.99 / *Best Price: \$17.99*

J LOHR RIVERSTONE CHARDONNAY

Rich tropical fruit – winner at the price point.

9.99 / *Best Price: \$8.99*

POPPY PINOT NOIR

A LOT of Pinot at this level . . .

\$11.99 / *Best Price: \$10.79*

And now, LET’S TAKE IT UP A NOTCH . . .

DELICIOUS HOLIDAY TREATS

Many with special holiday pricing

BEST price for case and wine club purchasers!

ROBERT STEMMLER PINOT NOIR

Carneros intrigue, silky feel . . .

\$29.99 / *Best Price: \$26.99*

JUSTIN CABERNET

Paso Robles friendly fruit . . .

\$23.99 / *Best Price: \$21.59*

FORTIA CHATEAUNEUF du PAPE

Yes, 2007. The greatest of Rhone vintages.

\$38.99 / *Best Price: \$35.09*

SILVER OAK CABERNET

Very give-able at this special holiday price!

\$59.99 / *Best Price: \$53.99*

LADERA CABERNET

Great \$ for Mt Veeder & Howell Mtn darkness.

\$29.99 / *Best Price: \$26.99*

ORIN SWIFT “The Prisoner”

Napa Valley concoction that’s makin’ waves.

\$34.99 / *Best Price: \$31.49*

LAYER CAKE CABERNET

Lots of “Blackberry Yum”; Rich ‘n Easy.

\$23.99 / *Best Price: \$21.59*

DUCKHORN “DECOY”

Always a solid choice, at a **great** holiday rate!

\$25.99 / *Best Price: \$23.39*

ROBT. STEMMLER CHARDONNAY

Flavorful finesse. EVERYONE admires this.

\$23.99 / *Best Price: \$21.59*

MELVILLE PINOT NOIR

The gorgeous new 2008 has arrived ...

\$29.99 / *Best Price: \$26.99*

BROPHY CLARK G.S.M.

Delicious Santa Barbara Rhone Blend

\$19.99 / *Best Price: \$17.99*

GOSSET “Excellence” CHAMPAGNE

Beats the pants off Veuve Clicquot for less!

\$36.99 / *Best Price: \$33.29*

HALL MERLOT

Merlot that *knows* it’s Merlot! Plush, flavorful ...

\$27.99 / *Best Price: \$25.19*

2001 LAN RIOJA GRAN RESERVA

Exceptional statement of SUAVE.

\$23.99 / *Best Price: 21.59*

TENUTA di CASTIGLIONI

The essence of Tuscany from Frescobaldi.

\$24.99 / *Best Price: \$22.49*

RAMEY CABERNET

Intense Black Beauty at a huge discount

\$39.99 / *Best Price: \$35.99*

WHO is TWS?

(For those still getting to know us)

FRIENDLY WINE LOVERS WHO ACTUALLY HELP YOU: When you walk through our doors you'll be greeted and helped by a really nice person who loves wine. Think about it - that's a rare service!

WORLDWIDE SELECTION: While we have tons of great domestic Cabernet, Chardonnay, and Pinot Noir (etc.) for the domestic wine lover, and we are just as excited to lead you on a wine exploration of France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Chile, Portugal . . .

VALUE: We provide the VALUE of careful selection that qualifies a wine for our shelves. Since preferences differ, we also do our best to match you with the wine that's right for you. We actually taste up to 150 wines a week to choose the perfect few. There's a lot of good wine out there; we want to show you the ones that are *distinctively good!*

DISCOUNTS: We offer a discount 10% off a case of nearly any wine in the store (mixed cases as well) and 5% off on six bottles purchases. Members of each of our six wine clubs receive a 10% discount on virtually all TWS purchases. Do you have a bigger purchase in mind? Let's talk!

SIX DIFFERENT WINE CLUBS: For a variety of tastes and budgets! 2-bottle packs take you somewhere deliciously new each month! Our members also enjoy a 10% discount on TWS purchases, helpful notes on the wine club selections, and invitations to private tasting events and wine club parties.

WINEBAR LOUNGE: Join us on our WineBar mezzanine to taste a different wine theme every weekend. Cheese platters and other fare are also offered.

PERSONAL WINE COLLECTION STORAGE: Over eighty temperature-controlled vaults for the careful collector's stash!

FINE FOODS: Discover the Italian foods of A.G. Ferrari, the fresh-baked bread of Bibiane Bakery, Spanish chorizo and jamón, and a nice selection of unique cheeses.

CLASSES AND SPECIAL EVENTS: While many of our sit-down tastings are invitation-only and for our wine club membership, we also provide tasting classes through Pleasanton Adult Education and a few custom classes of our own. See our website for details: Thewinesteward.com

GIFT BASKETS: We're great at presentation; combining our wines with our artisanal food items in hand-wrapped baskets. Let us make a customized gift for you!

LOCAL: You have many choices for your wine buying. We appreciate your doing it right here at The Wine Steward. Our promise: As our volume increases so will our buying power – and your prices. Contribute to this mutually beneficial phenomenon!

CABS, MERLOTS, and such . . .

SAWBUCK CABERNET – Wine Club members are excellent test subjects. We taste-test dozens of wines before we show them one, but it's fun to see which "finalist" gets the most repeat sales. This Cab hit the sweet spot for so many, giving it a permanent place on our shelf while the vintage lasts. Bargain Cab that really satisfies doesn't happen all the time, but happens **BIG TIME** in this juicy drink. 9.99 / 8.99

VIU MANENT CARMENERE – Tucked into this column because Carmenere is in the Bordeaux family, but also because this one acts like a great little Rutherford Cabernet, of all things. Since it comes from Chile where the American Buck kicks butt it's a great value. Another recent wine club favorite, we just got a fresh shipment. Like 'em a little earthy and complex? It happens here for less: 7.49 / 6.74

KENNETH VOLK MERLOT – This Santa Maria-based producer makes a wide range of fruit-forward wines that happily lots of California wine drinkers. Here is a Merlot from Paso Robles fruit that over-achieves. Lots of rich berries and chocolate with an ample mouthfeel that's long and soft, just like Merlot should be! Nice packaging, friendly style, and affordability: A great gift/party wine! 16.99 / 15.29

JOEL GOTT CABERNET – The Wine Steward has shown you this brand long before it became so well known. We are still pleased to carry it and are taking a gamble by lowering the price, big time. Is it ready to drink? The average consumer ages his or her bargain Cab for the duration of the car ride home. This will accommodate that "I want it NOW" attitude with an easy feel and nice blackberry fruit flavors. Got Gott? Get it here at a nice price: 13.99 / 12.59

STORRS "St. Clare" – From a very good Santa Cruz Mountains producer comes this blend of Merlot, Malbec, and Petit Verdot that makes lovers of chunky Cab very happy. This fruit is sourced entirely from one vineyard way out in the boonies (hmmm, what other "crops" are grown nearby?). If Joel Gott is soft 'n easy, this is darker - more "macho," if you will. Big hairy men gulp it as a cocktail wine in bubble baths with candles for mood lighting. Others of us do it with steak. Great either way: 18.49 / 16.64

LAYER CAKE CABERNET – Surely you know this by now, but you might not recognize our new price. The name itself is seductive, but just wait until you see the intense color, smell the mocha/berry/floral perfume, and dive into this glass of liquid darkness. Cabs with this much fruit power often come with lots of tannic astringency. Not this easygoing wine! Who knows what kinds of tricks were used to soften it up? Who cares? This is simply delicious wine that casual Cab guzzlers yearn for. 23.99 / 21.59

BENNET LANE "MAXIMUS" - These guys freely admit what they do to make this so delicious: Add Syrah and Merlot to this Cab-based bottle of fun. Hey, you wanted something hedonistic, right? Given 90 points and proclaimed an "Outstanding Value" by the Wine Spectator, we agree wholeheartedly. Basically, this is the bottle we can hand to any customer who walks in, just in case we're not sure about their preference. A nice "notch up" from Layer Cake in the same friendly style. 29.99 / 26.99

2006 RAMEY CABERNET – We want to shock you with a great deal here. We sold the previous vintage of this wine for \$10 more; this one is probably "better" and so is the price (recession windfall). The epitome of 2006 Napa Valley, it is like a black laser beam with intense dark fruit, licorice, and espresso flavors. The feel is admittedly young, but airing it out will let you enjoy this now. That's not the whole story, though: This is one to lay down and enjoy again and again over the next decade. We are very pleased to bring this to you for 39.99 / 35.99

2005 SILVER OAK CABERNET – The ultimate gift wine, because it is recognized and because it is consistently delicious. Just in time for Christmas, Silver Oak has rewarded us with a better cost for buying in quantity. Certainly, this wine sells well at this time of year at the higher rate, but we'd rather make more friends by temporarily re-setting the price based on what we paid. Between now and the end of the year you can grab this for less: 59.99 / 53.99

2005 HALL MERLOT – Hall doesn't make a mediocre wine. Under the consulting winemaking view of Dave Ramey (Petrus, Dominus, Rudd...) Hall is making major waves. Did you see the 96 point score for their higher-end Cab? Greatness rolls downhill to this silky, graceful, flavorful Merlot. This grape is shaking its iron fist in a velvet glove at the silly idea that a movie quote determines quality. Merlot is back, better than ever. Some that we're buying are powerful rivals to Cabernet, while others like this one are happy to be "just Merlot," delivering an elegant message of spicy fruit, smoke, dried herbs, and a long, syrupy feel. This is a great excuse to come back to Merlot – as is the price: 27.99 / 25.19

2006 LADERA CABERNET – Here is the "Napa Valley" version from Ladera, a wine we carry nearly every vintage. What's different this year is that we have been able to drop the price by nearly ten dollars! The quality has NOT changed: It's great wine, in the dark and dense style, based on 100% mountain fruit. In this case "Napa Valley" actually means a combination of Mount Veeder and Howell Mountain grapes. This makes for very good steak Cabernet right now, and would also perform well in your cellar. I could imagine drinking a bottle of this once per year for the next ten. 29.99 / 26.99

2006 STAR LANE MERLOT - A wine defying preconceived notions: "Merlot can't satisfy my big Cab palate." "The only good stuff comes from Napa." "It takes at least \$50 to get power, darkness, intrigue, and age-ability." This impressive wine is winning over our customers who taste with their mouths, not their biases. Another operation that began under the "influence" of Dave Ramey and Paul Hobbs, Star Lane is in the unlikely location of Happy Canyon, in the easternmost part of Santa Ynez. They have some of the only mountain grapes in that appellation, tucked away in their own private canyon. Keep an eye on future greatness from these guys and taste currently-released greatness right here: 39.99 / 35.99

2006 HONIG CABERNET – *90 points, Wine Spectator*. Here's another consistently great Cab that's rarely absent from our shelves. The use of American oak instills a more apparently "yummy" macaroon aspect to the black cherry fruit. We think this Cabernet makes many of the more expensive brands look like rip-offs (none that we carry, of course) to be perfectly blunt! \$36.99 / \$33.29

2007 MELKA "CJ" CABERNET SAUVIGNON – Phillippe Melka is one of Napa's most sought-for "rock star" winemakers. His work fills the bottles of some of the most famous multi-\$100 trophy names in the biz. However, he also makes something more approachably priced under his own name (and those of his kids, Chloe and Jeremy). "CJ" always over-achieves, oozing with opulent fruit and dark vanilla love. Normally it's a wine you don't fret about drinking early on. Now comes perhaps Napa's best vintage ever. 2007 CJ is magnificent; packed with black fruits AND the "importance" of structure. Fans of young, burly Cabernet will delight in this now. Others will want to air it out or tuck it away. Regardless, it is the greatest CJ we have ever shown you and the price remains reasonable for the type: 51.99 / 46.79

We are also proud to feature the Merlots and Cabernets of Mi Sueño, Duckhorn, Paloma, Twomey, Far Niente, Cain, Opus One, Spottswoode, Pahlmeyer . . . the list goes on!

WHY JOIN ONE OF OUR 6 WINE CLUBS?

And why they make a great gift for your wine lover . . .

Monthly wine clubs are about having THOUGHTFUL TASTERS choose the wine for you. Considering the 100+ wines we carefully taste each week, why not let us do the choosing?

Our wine club members receive thoughtfully-selected, smaller production wines that they don't see just anywhere. They also receive 10% off all Wine Steward purchases, useful notes on their monthly wines, invitations to private sit-down tasting events, and access to two annual wine club parties.

YOU CAN ALSO GIVE A WINE CLUB MEMBERSHIP AS A HOLIDAY GIFT:

3 MONTH, 6 MONTH, 1 YEAR, AND "ONGOING" MEMBERSHIPS AVAILABLE!

\$20 Monthly:

ANDREW JACKSON CLUB

Two bottles of very good reds; some from here, some from abroad!

\$30 Monthly:

WHITE WINE CLUB

One domestic white and one adventurous foreign white each month.

\$40 Monthly:

CALIFORNIA WINE LOVER'S CLUB

Two bottles of small-production (nearly always) red from California, Oregon, or Washington!

\$40 Monthly:

WINE ADVENTURER CLUB

Two (usually red) bottles from anywhere but here! Expand those horizons!

\$90 Monthly:

RED COLLECTOR'S CLUB

Higher-end "Napa-centric" trophy reds. The really good stuff!

\$90 Monthly:

WORLD CLASS CLUB

The great "benchmark" wines of the world. Brunello, Bordeaux, Chateaufeuf . . .

PINOT NOIR INSANITY

Many of you show the symptoms. Look out, it's catching!

POPPY PINOT NOIR – Monterey County Pinots are always so darn happy, sometimes you just want to slug them. - And you can afford to slug this down just about anytime! Charming cherry fruit with a nice, easy feel. It put a smile on your face without putting a dent in your pocketbook . . . 11.99 / 10.79

FOLK MACHINE PINOT NOIR – Same area, much tinier production, and worth the little bump up in price. This is made by Kenny, a really hardworking young guy who drives all over the place looking for good quality fruit. You may have tried his excellent Banyan Gewurztraminer or very worthy Hobo Zinfandels. Now try his latest release of a Pinot that shows the true grace of the grape. There is a brightness and levity that will honor food, not knock it off the table. 17.99 / 16.19

MACMURRAY CENTRAL COAST PINOT NOIR – This is a better-known label that happens at a nice price. It will appeal to you lovers of full-fruited Pinot who are looking for a friendly value. The mouthfeel is generously soft and rich, with cherry/berry flavors that are understandable to the whole crowd at your party. It's the kind we call (in a good way) "No-Brainer"! 16.99 / 15.29

CAZAR PINOT NOIR – We are pleased to welcome the return of a wine we thought we'd never see again. This is made by Chasseur's Bill Hunter, who could no longer afford to make a lower-priced Pinot when Sideways inspired a rush for grapes and higher per-ton prices. Nothing like a recession to knock people back to their senses and prices back to "normal" – and enable a new Cazar bottling. Here is Sonoma County fruit thoughtfully rendered. While Paraiso gives you something more "obvious" this Cazar provides the intrigue of the grape. There is more than "just fruit" happening here, to the joy and relief of all wine ponderers. 22.49 / 20.24

FOREFRONT PINOT NOIR – Archery Summit is one of the recognized "greats" of the Willamette Valley, Oregon Pinot Noir scene. What to do with the fruit that doesn't quite make the cut for their pricier bottles? Put it in here. 2008 is a very nice vintage for Oregon. After an unnaturally warm 2006 and a rainy 2007, producers there are now sending us the most "Oregonesque" vintage in years. Smoky fruit teases the nose, with wild dark cherry fruit richness in the mouth. Surprisingly flavorful for place and price point, this will do nicely with grilled salmon as well as pork roast and turkey. 19.99 / 17.99

MOLNAR PINOT NOIR – Some producers play games with their wines to make them more than what they actually are – colorwise, sizewise - losing authenticity along the way. That can't have happened here. This wine so accurately declares the region of Carneros, the first discovery of modern California Pinot lovers, and a place with flavors all its own. Cranberry and ripe strawberry brightness, vanilla, and a lively juicy (nearly briney) quality happen here. Now, while some of those descriptors might not sound appealing, they'll make perfect sense to your palate, which will recognize a wine that was not "made" but allowed to honor its source. 24.99 / 22.49

MELVILLE ESTATE PINOT NOIR – I want to tell you all about **WALTER HANSEL, ANCIEN, CAPIAUX, KEN WRIGHT, DUTTON-GOLDFIELD, TALLEY**, and so many more. There's no time right now - come in and we'll have a Pinot chat. In the meantime, let's tell you that the brand new release of Melville has come in and we love it. There's no missing the ample, vivacious fruit and baking spice. That's Melville for ya! Get in here, grab this, and revel in Sideways Country Pinot Noir! 29.99 / 26.99

THE 12.5 **BEST** WINES IN OUR STORE

Actually, we're kind of iffy about wine beauty contests, especially those revered "Top 100" lists. The featured wines are often already sold out, with the casual consumer having little interest in the available newer vintage. Moreover, these lists are confining: For every mentioned wine we think of several more that are "better" or at least equally deserving. And entire categories can be ignored: How do you list 10 great Italian wines and only 1 from Spain? Finally, what defines "Best"? The Price-value ratio? The reader's preference? The writer's? You can go mad trying to create the perfect list that makes everyone happy!

So it was with a touch of sarcasm that 6 months ago we posted a sign under an unheard-of French wine selling for 17.99: "This is the BEST wine in the store!" People saw it, inquired, and even some conservatively domestic wine buyers took it home. Many returned for more. One of our best California wine customers gave it a whirl. A day later she phoned in for two cases.

Great retail minds at work: "Hmmm, maybe we should declare a few more "Bests" and thereby sell more vino . . . - Ah ha!! THAT'S how these lists got started in the first place!

Okay, before you accuse us of selling out, let's make our list different: We'll justify our selections. Each of the following is a BEST for a specific reason and we'll note it.

(by the way, these really are AMONG the best wines in the store!!)

2007 WALTER HANSEL "Cahill Lane" PINOT NOIR – This beauty is "BEST" for its intrigue and complexity. If you taste Ancien's Carneros Pinot alongside this you might prefer the latter for delicious fruit power. The Walter Hansel is, for this palate, eternally more thought-provoking. Incidentally, winemaker Steve Hansel drinks very little of his own wine (more for us!). He's a big Red Burgundy fan. 36.99 / 33.29

2004 LAURA ZAHTILLA BECKSTOFFER VYD GEORGES III CABERNET SAUVIGNON – This is for those missing the way Napa Cabs used to taste. Nothing against fruit-forward wines, but this Rutherford beauty provides that classic cab sense of black olive, dust, dried herbs, and –yes – plenty of fruit. It all happens with balance, and it's cool to show you an '04 with a nice amount of development. For the elegance and range of flavors it delivers, the price is fair. 55.99 / 50.39

2007 MELKA "CJ" CABERNET SAUVIGNON – This is to confirm that we're not *all* about "classic" and "old world" and all that tweedy-fuddy-duddy stuff that goes along. Mentioned earlier in the Cabernet/Merlot column, this is powerfully-fruited and importantly structured. Quite possibly the Napa Valley's finest vintage yet, and CJ give you "Cult Cabernet" quality for less. 51.99 / 46.79

2008 STOLPMAN ESTATE SAUVIGNON BLANC – As globally ubiquitous as this grape has become, the Santa Ynez Valley is providing a set of Sauvignon Blanc flavors which are uniquely great. This wine's got 'em. "Puffy" lemon cake aspects and a minerally feel. We're not talking about grapefruit, grass, cat pee, or bell peppers. Wonderfully different, carefully farmed: 21.99 / 19.79

DOMAINE VIGNEAU-CHEVREAU VOUVRAY BRUT – Because we should drink good bubbly more often. This is sparkling wine from France’s Loire Valley made from 100% Chenin Blanc. Technically, the wine is dry, but the lemon curd, marshmallow, and chalky flavors provoke a “happier” attitude than Champagne might. The price is also much better. Do this with goat cheese and nuts, perhaps with a drop or two of honey. 20.99 / 18.89

2007 CLOS DES BRUSQUIERES CHATEAUNEUF DU PAPE – Robert Parker (who happens to love CdP) says 2007 CdP may be the best vintage of all time, of any region. We are loving the 2007 Rhones as well and have happily overbought. We could just as easily mention other great CdP’s or a great Gigondas, Cotes du Rhone, Rasteau . . . – but we name this for its perfection at the price. Dark, structured-but-so-darn-fun-to-drink-now, replete with Rhonish attitude, and for one of the great wines of the world nicely priced: 44.99 / 40.49

2007 MELVILLE ESTATE SYRAH – “VERNA’S” – A great example of how much Syrah you get for your money compared with other varietal categories. This shows the power of California fruit AND the intrigue of the grape. Full and friendly in body, rambunctious in the nose, and telling you all kinds of things like blueberries, blackberries, dark smoke, meat, black pepper . . . So much wine for the money. 21.99 / 19.79

2008 SPELLBOUND CHARDONNAY – Yours Truly might take this to his sister-in-law’s for Thanksgiving, but you may never see it in my house. The Chardonnays I drink are most often the White Burgundy type – and we have some great ones to show you. That said, we place this on the “BEST” list because so many of you DO want this, the same way you buy all that Wentz Riva Ranch Chardonnay. It is delicious with fresh tropical fruit, vanilla, and rich cream. A good wine buyer never passes up something that will sell like hotcakes - even if it’s not his personal style. And besides, I’d never say no to a glass of this fun drink! 14.99 / 13.49

2008 QUO GRENACHE – This is from Campo de Borja, Spain (so they should have labeled it “Garnacha”) and of all the inexpensive reds we’ve sold from there this may be the best yet. Spain is blessed with splendid raw material (ancient dry-farmed vines) and since someone’s ancestor paid for them the resulting wines can be very well priced. Brambly, ripe cherry fruit and white pepper happens generously here. Some of the “Best” wines are these inexpensive surprises, yes? 10.99 / 9.89

2006 CHATEAU DE CUGAT “FRANCIS MEYER” BORDEAUX SUPERIEUR – We are not rejecting the great “names” of Bordeaux. We are pointing out that you can actually afford to drink the ones that aren’t so well known. This gem is – believe it or not – the producer’s “reserve” wine – at less than \$20!! Dark, dense, and powerful with sweet earth, mocha, and blackcurrant flavors, there is also a nice touch of oak happening here. Considering the cold months ahead and the braised meat dishes we’ll be cooking, this is a timely “Best”! 19.99 / 17.99

2004 CASTELGIOCONDO BRUNELLO di MONTALCINO – Some of you are longing for a nice score to go along with your wine? Here ya go: 95 Points, Wine Spectator. Brunello is the biggest, bad-ass Sangiovese in Tuscany. 2004 is an utterly too-too Tuscanvintage. Frescobaldi has been practicing winemaking for centuries and has it pretty figured out. So there ya go: Another “Best”! 69.99 / 62.99

2004 FAIVELEY MERCUREY – This is a more customer-specific “Best,” but anyone who enjoys wine inquiry will get a kick out of it. 100% Pinot Noir from Mercurey, Burgundy, France is not supposed to give you California’s Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot sensations, especially in the cooler year of 2004. This wine is more quietly profound and absolutely must be smelled and savored with food (The Foundation for Rotisserie Chicken paid for this placement). What we are offering you here is a classic Pinot place with the development of time. Forest floor, dried cherries and porcinis, and a LOT of suave silk then minerality are there to be discovered. IF you forget to incorporate protein into this experience the finish will be quite “gripping.” If you do remember the chicken you’ll witness one of the great dances of food and wine where each makes the other look really good on the culinary ballroom floor. 19.99 / 17.99

And a half . . .

2008 KIONA CHENIN BLANC ICE WINE – This stuff is expensive to make. First you have to buy a good jacket and scarf. Then a hat with those earmuffy things. Then you need a flashlight to pick frozen grapes on a bone-chillingly cold night. Then you crush said grapes before they thaw and discard all the ice (i.e. money). All you’re left with is an intense syrup that you ferment nice and cold. All that work makes this: The best Washington State dessert wine I tasted on my recent trip north. You can make ice wine with just about any grape variety, given freezing conditions and long underwear, but Chenin Blanc has got to be one of the best choices for the genre. This is stellar. Sweet, yes, but remarkably lifted, graceful, refreshing. Find a lemon tart recipe, maybe one that incorporates marscapone cheese, and hang on for dear life . . . HALF BOTTLE: 27.99 / 25.19

CONSIDERING A **WINE CABINET PURCHASE?**

May we recommend the good people at “Vino” on 1st Street in Livermore?

These folks will give you the straight scoop on the quality and type of wine storage that is right for you.

Vino is also working with us to help you put good things in your new cellar.

Receive a Wine Steward Gift Card for every wine cabinet or cellar purchase!

2241 First Street Livermore, CA 94550

info@vino-cellar.com

Tel: (925) 447-8000

SNAPSHOTS

We have put much energy into tasting, haggling, choosing, and displaying really good wines for your holiday enjoyment and gift giving. We have bought Under \$10 wines with the same care as those that cost a bit more. As much as I love to write about wine, not enough time remains to say more. We have to get this “in the mail”! Perhaps the following soundbytes will coax you into the store where we can give you the personal treatment. That, after all, is what we do best!

THE REAL KIND OF WINE BARGAINS:

Over a hundred red, white, pink, and sparkling wines for around \$10 and less. As many as you'll find on our sales floor, each one represents so many more that we tasted to find you the best and most distinctive values.

SOUTHERN RHONE WOW: Especially the 2007's! From humble Cotes du Rhones up to the king of the region, Chateauneuf du Pape, we have found you Southern Rhone greatness. Fill a case with these classic “GSM's” and you won't be sorry. This is the European wine place that even the most hesitant domestic wine drinker can quickly learn to love!

CALIFORNIA CAB WINNING STREAK: We have been blessed with some terrific vintages and – finally – some nice price breaks. 2005's are getting syrupy in a framboisey kinda way. 2006's are a study in wound-up darkness. 2007's are going to be so good it's scary. The Cabernets we find you are all distinctively delicious and we're happy to match you with your favorite “type.”

\$PRICES\$: We're very aware of all the wine dumping going on out there and promise you that we will “participate” in those clearance deals only when we truly love the offered wines. Our quest has always been the same: Finding you REAL value for the price level and wine type, and we do that not by picking from “closeout lists” but with careful tasting and comparing. We hope that's important to you wine lovers . . .

2007 CALIFORNIA PINOT NOIR: Throw a dart blindfolded – this is such a great vintage that you'll hit a good one nearly every time. 2007 shows vibrant fruit and “lift” that will soon round out to stunning richness, if it's not happening already. We've got a bunch of great ones!

WASHINGTON STATE: A recent road trip has encouraged us to better represent this state. Yes, they make New World wines up there, too, and there's a nice difference to be discovered. Bright whites, red blends, and great Cabernets await your perusal, from the value end to the “reasonable” luxury level.

SPARKLING WINE AND CHAMPAGNE: A little Italian bubbly called “Prosecco” has been the inspiration for more Tri-Valley-ites to enjoy bubbly more often. Come in and see how many great sparklers we have found you for well under \$20, Proseccos (Prosecci?) and beyond! We have “tasted hard” to find you very good Champagne at reasonable prices, too. We truly feel you will improve on those huge-production grocery brands by checking out our small production gems. You can pay way too much for a famous name!

WINE ACCESSORIES: Lothlórien has done a bang-up job of juggling schoolwork, wedding plans, and finding you unique and attractive gifts for the wine lover in your life. Come see what she's found!

SYRAH: Explore this grape. It's so many different good things and you need to do a little investigating to find your sweet spot, but that's part of the fun, right? Thoughtful winemakers, wine critics, and wine buyers agree: Great Syrah costs less than Great Anything Else. It's only a matter of time before wine DRINKERS discover this!

OTHER HOT TOPICS: **ITALY SO MANY WAYS . . . ARGENTINE MALBECS . . . CHARDONNAY OF ALL KINDS . . . WHITE BURGUNDY . . . BORDEAUX YOU CAN AFFORD TO DRINK . . . PORT AND OTHER SWEETS . . . BIBIANE BREAD . . . JAMON SERRANO . . . SPANISH WINE . . .**
And **all** that good stuff

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

THE WINE STEWARD

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Regarding typos, made-up words, and wrong prices:

We reserve the right to be wrong.