

Gallo's new releases rock the wine market

Back in 1974, the California wine industry rocked mightily when the word got out — Ernest and Julio Gallo had placed an initial order for 5,000,000 corks.

By fall they were releasing eight varietal wines and a rose, all cork-finished, that have since sold an estimated 1.5 million cases.

Now the wine world is rocking again. Readers of slick magazines have seen, and television viewers will soon see, or have seen, a huge advertising campaign announcing a premium line of top varietals, some of them oak-aged, designed to sell in the \$2.50-\$5-a-bottle range.

No Gallo wine has previously seen any oak so this constitutes an even greater departure from its past than the 1974 marketing maneuver. And the addition of oak to wines means that Gallo is serious about offering premium wine.

The decision to stay non-vintaged seems the only potential flaw in the concept though that will tend to reduce cost somewhat.

THE FIRST SIX HAVE only recently been released, both in the traditional fifths and in attractive 1.5 liter bottles. Other wines will follow, those that require greater aging or oak exposure before they are ready. Within the next year we can expect to see Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon (in the \$5-\$6-a-bottle range), a Barbera and a Zinfandel, at least.

The prospect of any of the first two priced in that range is intriguing. The cost of both of these by most winners these days is closely approaching the unbelievable. If Gallo can come in with quality releases in this price range it may do something to slow down our seemingly mad race with economic disaster in the wine world.

And Gallo is big — big enough to singlehandedly affect the whole industry. They set the basic price each year in California for the cost of grapes. Grape cost is the chief variable in what a bottle of wine is going to cost you and me.

I have been very impressed with the initial releases, labelled in buff paper and boasting the wine is from "the Cellars of Ernest and Julio Gallo." Beginning with the use of heavy duty foil on

the neck, this smacks of a class issue.

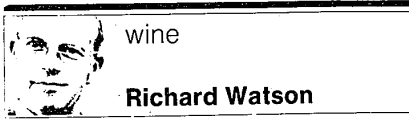
THE GEWURZTRAMINER is soft and elegant, the Chenin Blanc has a slight touch of fruit, the French Colombard is light and off-dry, the Sauvignon Blanc a bit thin but decently tasty, the Johannisberg Riesling has an excellent nose and some varietal character, and the Rose has some crisp fruitiness.

Clearly, by Gallo's standards, their 1974 entries didn't dent the pricing market appreciably. But don't expect Gallo to miss twice. The advertising for those new releases will be awe-

some, according to reports, dwarfing the campaigns we have seen for Masson and the Coca Cola entries.

For those of you who have not drunk Gallo wines lately, try these. For consistency and value, no one in the world touches them. If they can keep it up with Chardonnay and Zinfandel we may see a new trend.

Trivia note: the decision by Gallo to call its release Chardonnay with no precedent Pinot suggests that little battle had finally been won. Now if we could just get them to say White Riesling...



The scene that greets visitors to Plymouth Historical Museum this month is a replica of a Civil War camp, with cannon that has been cleaned, hard tack and coffee for dinner and pup tent ready for the night.

The Civil War Exhibit recalls memories of Aug. 5, 1862 when within two hours on the Village Green (now Kellogg Park in Plymouth) 77 men were recruited into Co. C of the 24th Michigan Iron Brigade.

The drum used by a young Plymouth boy during the war is on display, as well as guns and bayonets of the kind

Civil War relies on exhibit

used during the Civil War. Visitors will see an 1864 Springfield musket, an 1846 Maynard, an 1863 Springfield, a Remington New Army revolver and a Zouave bayonet.

Items on exhibit pertain to the 24th Michigan as well as items used throughout the war years.

The museum, at 155 S. Main St., is open Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, from 1-4 p.m. There is an admission fee, asked at the door.

Special educational tours may be arranged in advance by calling the museum, 455-8940.

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The three-hour workshop will take place from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday at the CCS, 245 E. Kirby in Detroit's University-Cultural Center. The fee of \$8 is tax deductible. For further information, call the registrar's office at 872-3118.

Leonard F. Charla, J.D., who is currently affiliated with General Motors Corp., will conduct the workshop. Charla received a master of laws from George Washington University graduate school of public and international law and a doctor of law from Catholic University Law School.

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