

# Fetzer wines stand out for quality and value

Founded in 1968, by Barney Fetzer, Fetzer Vineyards is celebrating 22 years of commitment to fine winemaking. Owned and operated by 11 family members, the winery has experienced double-digit growth rates through the 1970s and 1980s.

The bottlings from this Mendocino County, Calif., winery represent quality and value, and American wine drinkers are, more than ever, saying "yes" to Fetzer wines.

"These wines are available everywhere from the most prestigious restaurants to the smallest grocery store in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and several foreign countries. The Fetzers see no end in sight to their phenomenal growth."

"We have been growing grapes since 1958. That's an advantage we have over other wineries," contends the winery's CEO, John Fetzer. "We also know the best growers, and each family member knows all the vineyard techniques and spends a lot of time in vineyards."

"Our buildings are not fancy, but



focus on wine  
**Eleanor and Ray Heald**

they are very functional. We spend our money on equipment, technology and people. Only after 15 years did we fix up the grounds. Other wineries built elaborate buildings first. There isn't that kind of money in this business. We need to be very frugal."

"Our business grew from nothing. We learned to work hard as children. It's easy to get carried away in this business with a big life-style, but we remember hard times and struggles."

"OUR STAFF is probably 1/3 to 1/2 the size of any other winery in our production range," maintains Paul

Dolan, the head of Fetzer's winemaking team since 1977. "We operate on a small winery philosophy. Our equipment is designed around reacting to the wine as expediently as possible during the harvest period when it could make or break us."

Fetzer currently produces cabernet sauvignon, chardonnay, chenin blanc, fume blanc, gamay beaujolais, gewurztraminer, johannisberg riesling, petite syrah, pinot noir and zinfandel, with a variety of labels. Bel Arbers began as a private label in 1980 and was developed into a second label by Fetzer for its low-

## WINE SELECTION OF THE WEEK

1988 Fetzer Vineyards Barrel Select Chardonnay (\$12) showcases fresh apple and pear aromas and flavors with a hint of vanilla oakiness. Its rich, toasty oak characters last in the finish and make an excellent accompaniment for grilled chicken breast or sear with a lemon-tarragon wine sauce.

er-priced wines. The Merlot under this label is a definite best buy.

In a mid-price range, Fetzer's "ranch" (vineyard) wines are top values. Its first "ranch" success was Sundial Chardonnay (\$8.50), first produced from the family ranch in 1980. Valley Oaks Fume (\$7.50) is modeled similarly. Both wines are light, fruity, easy to drink, and make perfect accompaniments for lighter summertime fare.

"The key to our other wines is

blending," Dolan says. "We blend grapes from different counties and different vineyards. Each of the areas produces a different style of wine. We use different percentages from various tanks to make what we think is the best wine."

"It's really the blending process more than the winemaking process. With whites, we have developed a system that makes the wines softer in character and fruit without the bitter components."

FETZER'S LARGEST-SELLING red wine is cabernet sauvignon (\$8.50), followed closely by red zinfandel (\$7.50), both with a California appellation. They have intense fruit aromas and palate flavors. They are soft and drinkable because they are processed with a short fermentation on the skins and aged in older barrels.

Concentrating on the two most popular varieties, chardonnay and cabernet sauvignon, Fetzer bottles Barrel Select wines priced at \$12 per bottle. The Barrel Select chardonnay comes from vineyards with potential for more intense fruit and complexity of character which are barrel fermented.

As cabernet sauvignon goes through the barrel aging regime, certain wines develop to fit the profile of a Barrel Select release. The 1988 is highlighted by cherry and, cassia-like fruit with gentle clove spiciness and hints of tobacco and oak. The finish is rich, round and complex and perfect for a rosemary-accented filet of beef.

"Barrel aging for 12 months tends to soften our Barrel Select and Reserve wines," Dolan says. "After six months' bottle age, the reds are just about ready to drink, but many will age five years or longer."

The crown jewel of the Fetzer line is the limited production of Reserve wines, handsomely packaged with new, simple, elegant label. We particularly liked the 1986 Mendocino Zinfandel, Rietveld Vineyard Zinfandel and Petite Syrah. Bottled aged for an average of 18 months before release, they are value-priced at \$14.

The 1985 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon at \$25 is rich with blackberry, cassis and oak nuances, reminiscent of a young red Bordeaux from a ripe vintage. It's a big, dynamic wine with opulent fruit, good structure and controlled tannins that will age gracefully.

## Peter Sugar shares a few favorite recipes

### SALMON SIMPLE

4 tablespoons butter or olive oil  
4 fresh salmon steaks  
Salt and pepper  
1/2 pound sliced fresh mushrooms  
1/4 cup sour cream  
3 teaspoons chopped chives  
2 tablespoons dry Madeira wine

Rub four pieces of foil (10 by 12 inches each) on 1 side with butter or oil. Wash and dry salmon steaks, salt and pepper both sides, and set 1 steak on each piece of foil.

Heat the remaining butter or oil and saute mushrooms until they render their moisture. Raise heat and add salt, pepper and Madeira.

Stir mushrooms over high heat until liquid is reabsorbed (about 1 minute). Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly. Distribute mushrooms evenly over salmon steaks and seal foil tightly.

Place on covered grill (or in oven) preheated to 400 degrees and cook for 15-18 minutes. If using a grill, turn salmon steaks over after 8 minutes.

Pierce salmon with a small skewer after 15 minutes and withdraw slowly. When the skewer can be removed easily and does not "grab," salmon is done.

In a small saucepan, heat, but do not boil, sour cream, a pinch of salt and pepper, and the chives. Plate the salmon steaks and spoon the sour cream over each salmon steak and mushroom mixture.

Serve with buttered noodles (or rice or orzo) and grilled asparagus spears.

### GRILLED ASPARAGUS SPEARS

1 bunch of asparagus spears  
1 clove garlic, finely chopped  
1/4 cup olive oil

Juice of 1/2 lemon  
Ground fresh pepper  
4 strips lean bacon

Wrap 4 individual bunches (4-5 spears each) of asparagus with a strip of bacon. Sprinkle with fresh pepper. Mix olive oil, garlic and lemon juice and spread over asparagus bunches.

Grill asparagus bunches, turning frequently, until done. When the asparagus is easy to pierce with a skewer or fork but the texture is still firm, it is done.

### STRAWBERRY MOUSSE WITH RASPBERRY SAUCE (4 servings)

1 1/2 quarts fresh strawberries  
1 pint fresh raspberries  
1/4 cup sugar  
2-3 tablespoons of Kirsch or Framboise

1 1/4 cups heavy (whipping) cream  
1/4 cup lemon juice

Mousse: Puree 1 quart of the strawberries. Add sugar and lemon juice and cook mixture until reduced to approximately 1 cup of liquid. Strain through a small strainer to remove berry seeds. Chill and mix in liquor (can be omitted for children's portions).

Whip heavy cream and fold 1/2 into cooled berry mixture, being careful not to overfold so that volume is retained. Spoon mixture into 4 large, stemmed glasses or small serving bowls.

Sauce: Puree remaining strawberries and raspberries together in the blender, strain and chill. Dollop remaining whipped cream on individual mousse servings, spoon on sauce and serve.

## Batter-dipped one way to serve artichoke hearts

AP - Even though artichokes are available nearly year-round, they are most abundant right now.

Artichokes are eaten with the fingers. Each leaf is pulled off individually then pulled through the teeth, scraping off the soft flesh.

Only the "heart" or base remains after the leaves are removed. This is the choice part. But before it can be eaten, it must be separated with a fork from the choke or spiny needle growth attached to the base.

These delicious hearts can be eaten as is. They are equally delicious when dipped in a batter or used as an appetizer.

Use the quartered cooked hearts from 4 large artichokes. Make a batter by combining 1 large egg beaten with 1-3 cups beer or milk, 1/2 teaspoon salt and a dash of pepper. Stir in 1/4 cup biscuit mix; stir until smooth. Dip artichoke heart pieces in batter. Fry until browned, turning once. Drain on paper towels; serve hot. Can be made ahead and reheated. Makes 16.

The following recipe is for lighter eating.

### ARTICHOKE WITH LEMON BUTTER

6 large artichokes  
Water  
1/4 cup butter or margarine, melted  
1 1/2 tablespoons lemon juice  
Freshly milled black pepper

Cut off stems and about 1/4-inch of the tips of each artichoke. Remove tough outer leaves and wash each artichoke. Tap hard on flat surface to spread leaves slightly apart. Place upright in a pot to fit snugly; add enough water to cover up to about 1/2

to top of artichokes. Cover tightly and cook for about 45 minutes or until a leaf pulls out easily. Add more water if necessary during cooking. Mix butter with lemon juice and pepper. Serve with warm or cold artichokes. Serves 6.

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