

# Tasters pick favorite, red, white, sparkling wines

As the old adage said that "professionals and critics both may wax upon the attributes and composition of wines, but it is the consumer's perception which decides each wine's worthiness for enjoyment."

Because of the thousands of wine brands available in Michigan, many consumers use the rankings of wine writers, the advice of friends or the experience of a wine merchant to make purchasing decisions.

The majority of consumers do not make their own wine purchasing decisions because they have limited opportunities to personally taste a wide sampling of brands.

ONCE EACH year, Dennis Walsh, owner of Ye Olde Wine Shoppe (South Blvd. and Crooks Road) sponsors what he calls "The Great Wine Shootout." Recently, at Glen Oaks Golf Club, 225 wine consumers paid to taste approximately 60 newly released wines from California. Each

participant cast a secret ballot to select "the People's Choice" of red, white and sparkling wines.

Walsh, a longtime advocate of reasonably priced, quality wines, invites 12 metropolitan distributors to each pour five of their best new wines. In many cases, these wines have just arrived from the West Coast.

"This is the most popular consumer event that I run each year," said Walsh, who also sponsors "The Wine-tasters' Club." For information about The Wine-tasters and their dinner and tasting events, call Dennis Walsh at 852-5533.

WE PARTICIPATED in this year's "Great Wine Shootout" and sampled many quality wines. And more importantly, let's mention the wines that won the People's Choice Award according to the secret ballot taken at the close of the evening.

It should be pointed out that attendees tasted and voted for wines with-



focus on wine  
**Eleanor and Ray Heald**

out knowing retail prices. They based their choice on their perception of the wine's quality alone.

In the red category, the preferred wine was the 1989 Leonetti Merlot (\$21) from Washington State. Following close behind were the 1990 Markham Merlot (\$16) and the 1988 Sifri Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (\$30) and the 1987 Chateau St. Jean Cabernet Sauvignon (\$23).

WASHINGTON STATE has a record for producing excellent merlot. Napa Valley's Markham Winery

has made amazing quality improvements in recent vintages and is now one of the value leaders from the center of the California wine industry.

TASTERS NOTED by their vote that chardonnay is still queen of white wines, but they were looking to other grape varieties and styles to please their flavor interests. The top white wine was the 1988 William Hill Reserve Chardonnay (\$21), a wine that has been a top vote getter for the past several years.

The 1989 Bonny Doon Muscat Canelli "Ice Wine" (\$17/\$15ml) is a deliciously, sweet dessert style wine that swept people off their feet. Who says that people don't like well-styled sweet wines? Placing third and fourth were the 1989 Dehlinger Chardonnay (\$14) and the 1990 Caymus Conundrum (\$25).

We believe the popularity of Conundrum points up the fact that since tasters didn't know the prices, they judged the wines strictly on what they found attractive. For this wine, there is little price/quality relationship. Its forward, almost heady fruit is attention grabbing, but the one-dimensional flavor profile soon becomes boring with food.

In the sparkling wine division, the Roderer Estate Brut (\$21) from Anderson Valley was the clear winner. Given the ever-upward spiraling prices of French champagne, it is an excellent wine to buy for upcoming holiday entertaining.

## WINE SELECTION OF THE WEEK

1990 Flora Springs Sauvignon Blanc (\$11) is the wine we liked second best to the 1988 William Hill Reserve Chardonnay that captured the Great Wine Shootout award in the white wine category. The fact that this wine didn't show among the top three leaves us wondering whether people are still walking by sauvignon blanc because they're turned off by grassier styles. We encourage those of you who are bored with the sameness of many chardonnays to try the 1990 sauvignon blanc from Flora Springs. It has bright, melony aromas and fruit flavors. With generous mouthfilling fruit complexities and a solid, satisfying finish, it will harmonize with grilled fish, chicken or pasta with cream sauce.

## Busy families share weekday meal tips

See related story on Taste Front.

By Joan Borom  
special writer

Some time ago, the Bloomfield Township subdivision where the Tanner family lives decided to put together a cookbook. The only person in the family with a recipe was Sean, who had invented a milkshake that tastes like Reese's Peanut Butter Cups.

There's a lesson here; namely, recipes do not figure prominently in the kitchens of those of us who are trying to hold down a full-time job and feed a family 365 days a year. Sure, "Roasted and Grilled Vegeta-

bles with Garlic-and-Herb Oil" sounds good (and probably is), but in real life, it's Shake 'n Bake every time.

As both Emma Allolunna and Mike Tanner indicated, however, there are extra touches that can make a family feel cherished as well as nourished. Here are some of them.

• Boboli (Mike): "Individual, partially baked, Italian bread shells. Add your own toppings. A good way to get the kids to eat vegetables — let them make their own pizzas, with veggies and cheese! (Also a good way to get rid of leftovers.)"

• Shish Kabobs (Mike): "Just make them up the night before, and marinate in beef bouillon for extra

flavor. They're simple to cook, but look special."

• Frozen Bread (Emma): "It's wonderful stuff. When I want Arroz to have a homey reception when he comes through the door, I bake a loaf of bread from frozen dough. Or, if I'm not making a particularly nice meal, I slice the thawed dough, put the slices in a greased 9-inch pan, and let them rise. When they're baked, they're like homemade pull-apart rolls. Or, thaw the bread, slice, twist the slices and roll them in sugar and cinnamon. A good snack with milk or coffee."

• Cool Whip (Emma): "Very handy for a festive look. Put banana slices on the bottom of an individual serving dish and top with pudding. When ready to serve, add Cool Whip and a cherry."

• "Slice apples into a baking dish, add a couple of tablespoons of water, and dabs of butter, cinnamon and brown sugar. Bake a few minutes, until the apples are tender. The whole house smells like apple pie."

Remove from oven, add a dash of Cool Whip; they'll never miss the crust!" (Emma)

• Neither family uses their microwave, much. Mike uses it for baking potatoes, but not for thawing chicken, because he maintains that the outer part of the chicken cooks a little during the thawing process.

Emma uses her microwave to do a little something extra for a meal at the last minute.

For example, cut an acorn squash in half, add a dab of butter, a little brown sugar and cinnamon, and zap in the microwave for a few minutes, until done.

• Sean's recipe for peanut butter cup milk shake: 2 scoops of ice cream; ½ cup milk; 1 tablespoon Nestle's Quik, 2 tablespoons creamy peanut butter. Mix in blender.

"Sideracked Home Executives" and "The Sideracked Sisters Catch-up in the Kitchen" are published in paperback editions by Warner Books.

## Spoonfuls of soup soothe sore throats

See Larry James' Taste Buds column on Taste front.

### MOMMAS GET WELL SOON VEGETABLE STOCK

- ¼ cup finely chopped onion
- 2 tablespoons oil
- dash white pepper & cayenne pepper
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 6 peppercorns
- 6 cloves
- pinch thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 whole allspice
- 2 tablespoons parsley
- ¼ cup carrots
- ¼ cup turnips
- ¼ cup parsnips
- 2 cups celery
- 1 cup shredded lettuce
- 1 cup chopped mushrooms

Place chicken parts in cold water. Slowly bring to a simmer (not to a boil) and remove "scum" that begins to float to the top. After skimming has removed all scum, in a cheesecloth bag, tie up peppercorns, bay leaf, thyme, cloves and parsley. Place in stock pot with vegetables and continue simmering for at least 3 hours, uncovered. Remove cheesecloth bag and vegetable chunks. Cool, refrigerate and remove fat, if desired.

Saute onion in oil until transparent. Add peppers and salt. Mix well. Make a bouquet garni using a cheesecloth bag filled with peppercorns, cloves, bay leaf, thyme, parsley. Tie and add to 8 cups cold water. Add vegetables and sautéed onions. Bring to a simmer and simmer uncovered for 1½ hours or vegetables are very tender. Strain and chill. Vegetables can be pureed if desired.

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