

FOCUS ON WINE



RAY & ELEANOR HEALD

WineFest showcases Sonoma County

In 1959, long before Sonoma County was recognized by wine lovers around the globe, Rodney Strong was pioneering it as a premium grapegrowing region. Today, the winery bearing his name makes superb wines from selected vineyards Strong "discovered" in appellations such as Chalk Hill, Alexander Valley and Russian River Valley.

Today, connoisseurs recognize names on Rodney Strong's bottlings such as Charlotte's Home Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc, River East Vineyard Pinot Noir and Chalk Hill

Chardonnay as high quality. But, no pun intended, Rodney Strong Vineyards Alexander's Crown is the crowning glory!

Rising a couple of hundred feet above the Alexander Valley, Alexander's Crown is likely Sonoma County's best-known Cabernet Sauvignon vineyard.

It was one of California's first vineyard-designated wines following its spectacular debut with vintage 1974.

Wine Picks

■ **Picks of the Pack** one white, one red: 1996 Murphy Goode Fume II The Deuce \$20 is the best Fume Blanc we've tasted in a long time. Let the Deuce loose! 1995 Fine Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon, Sings Leap District \$40 is big and concentrated. Forget Bordeaux. Buy and cellar this beauty!

■ **Smooth, creamy chardonnays** with a fruit punch. Try with creamy risotto for a taste treat: 1996 St. Supery Chardonnay \$14; 1996 Chateau St. Jean Chardonnay, Belle Terre Vineyard, Alexander Valley \$21.50; 1996 Pezzi King Chardonnay \$22; and 1996 Iron Horse Chardonnay \$24.

■ **High on our list of flavorful merlots:** 1995 St. Clemente Merlot, Napa Valley \$27; and 1995 Lambert Bridge Merlot \$22.

■ **Winner from France's southern Rhône:** 1995 Pinot Gigondas \$22.50.

■ **Best buys at \$10 and under:** 1996 Martin & Prall Pinot Blanc \$10; 1996 Fox Mountain Sauvignon Blanc \$10; 1997 Geyser Peak Sauvignon Blanc \$8.50; 1995 Fetzer Zinfandel \$9; and 1994 Tensada Cabernet Sauvignon, Chile \$10.

Cork Board

The **RIGHTS OF SPRING**—Our upcoming wine seminar 7:30-9:30 p.m., Mondays, April 27, May 4, 11 and 18, at Birmingham's Townsend Hotel, is \$120 per person for the series.

■ **Learn how Syrah, Zinfandel, new-age Rosé and Burgundies fit into spring and summer drinking when paired with the right foods.** Call (248) 644-3443 for information and reservations.

■ **Several silent auctions** run throughout the evening and a spirited live auction caps the

excitement. Before leaving, attendees are hosted to music, dancing and more strolling through delectable dessert tables.

Tickets are \$125 or \$100 per person (depending on desired table size) for this regularly sold-out, black-tie optional event and can be purchased by phoning (734) 994-8004, Ext. 106.

If you've not been to a charity wine auction before, make this your first and meet one of the great men in Cal.

Please see WINE, B2

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- 2 Unique
- Main Dish Miracle



Easter traditions: Mary Legnini bakes a sweet braided bread every Easter.

Cherished Dishes

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The blessed
hard-cooked
eggs are
peeled and
sliced into
quarters.
Family mem-
bers sprin-
kle them
with blessed
salt and
wish every-
one a Happy
Easter, good
health and
happiness.
.....

Today is Palm Sunday — and the start of Holy Week for Christians preparing to celebrate Easter on April 12.

Mary Legnini and her husband Mario of Livonia live far away from their families in Johnson City and Binghamton, N.Y., but Easter is still a very special time.

Mary is of Czech-Slovak descent. Mario is Italian. "We both observe the traditions our parents brought with them from Czechoslovakia and Italy," she said. "It is good to hold on to our traditions — to keep the spirit alive."

After Mass, Mary will braid some of the blessed palms she brought from church, which celebrates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem where he was greeted by enthusiastic crowds who threw palm branches in his path.

Later that week, she'll make sweet braided Easter egg bread, following her mother's recipe. The braided bread symbolizes the crown of thorns placed on Jesus' head before he was crucified, an event commemorated during Good Friday service on April 10.

And, of course, it wouldn't be Easter without ham and kielbasa," said Legnini.

On Holy Saturday she'll put a fine

linen cloth (or one with special meaning) in a basket, and fill it with kielbasa, sliced ham, decorated hard-cooked eggs, butter lamb, braided Easter bread, milk, and sometimes wine, and take it to her church, St. Theodore's in Westland, to be blessed.

The rest of the day will be spent cleaning and getting ready for Easter Sunday.

"On Easter morning the family puts on their new outfits and attends Easter celebration mass," said Legnini.

After Mass, Mary's family would enjoy a "short brunch" of blessed foods. It is a tradition she still celebrates.

The blessed hard-cooked eggs are peeled and sliced into quarters. Family members sprinkle them with blessed salt and wish everyone a Happy Easter, good health and happiness. Then they enjoy some of the other blessed foods — a slice of ham, piece of kielbasa with horseradish, and braided bread spread with butter. Mary grows horseradish in her garden. She cuts the root up fine and adds vinegar and other seasonings to make horseradish.

At 2 p.m. family and friends gather for the Easter celebration dinner. The table is spread with a fine linen table-

cloth, a candle lit and red wine poured. The head of the household holds up their glass and announces the blessing — Happy Easter!

A typical Easter dinner includes baked ham decorated with fresh grapes and orange slices, kielbasa, vegetables, potatoes, and braided egg bread. Angel wings (a light pastry dusted with confectioners sugar) are served for dessert.

Mary might also include some of her husband's favorite Italian dishes such as sausage, roasted potatoes or ravioli.

Because their families live in New York, Mary and Mario, who will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary on Oct. 13, often invite friends and neighbors over for Easter dinner.

When Mario's cholesterol soared to 249, Mary changed the way she cooks, and they eat more fruits, vegetables and grains.

"We brought his cholesterol down to 198 in three months," she said. "When you maintain a healthy lifestyle, you feel better about yourself, and you're more alert."

Instead of ground beef, Mary now uses ground turkey in recipes. They

Please see EASTER, B2

Passover diet restrictions challenge vegetarians

LIVING BETTER SENSIBLY



BEVERLY PRICE

Passover comes in March or April every year. At this time, Jews hold a special ceremony in their home called a seder. The seder celebrates how and why the Jews won their freedom from Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

Everyone gathers around the dinner table to recite the story of Passover. On the table sits a "seder plate," which holds the various symbols of Passover.

These symbolic foods include a shankbone, which commemorates the paschal lamb sacrifice of biblical times, parsley to celebrate spring, bitter herbs to remember the bitter times during Jewish slavery, and Charoset (a mixture of apples, nuts, wine and cinnamon) symbolizing the mortar made to hold together bricks Jews produced while enslaved in Egypt.

During the week of Passover, unleavened bread, "matzah," is eaten. No other leavened products may be eaten during Passover, including anything made with flour, corn, peas or beans. This is to signify the Jews fleeing from Egypt after winning their freedom. In their hurry, they did not have time to wait for bread to rise.

What is the significance behind corn, peas and beans? These may be used to make bread flour, which in turn uses a leavening process, so they are not allowed to be used during Passover. Actually, the only starch which may be used is potato and potato flour. They are the basis for many of the foods made during Passover.

An increasing number of Jews are turning to vegetarianism and finding ways to celebrate Passover while remaining consistent with Jewish law.

For example, a beet may be used in place of the shankbone on the seder plate. Many vegetarians who are Jewish see connections between the oppression suffered by their ancestors, and the cur-

rent status of many individuals who lack sufficient food and resources.

Vegetarian diets require much less land, water, and gasoline (as well as pesticides) and other resources, which can help reduce global hunger. Since the main theme of Passover is freedom, many vegetarians who are Jewish consider "slavery" of animals on modern farms.

A certain sector of Jews "Sephardim" (of Mediterranean descent) allow the use of rice and beans during Passover. This is because their cuisine is dependent on these foods.

So what is left to eat if you do not eat meat, chicken, fish, eggs or dairy? For Jews (including myself) whose steady diet consists of whole grains, beans (soy and the like), Passover becomes a very difficult holiday. Of course, you can subsist on potatoes, matzo, vegetables and fruits, but I guarantee that by the third day of Passover, you will be ready to throw in the towel.

Alan Goodman, executive director of Jewish Family Services, along with

many family members, is a vegetarian.

"I am having fun developing new traditions," he said. Each member of his family is responsible for bringing a dish to the dinner table at the seder. Some of these enticing dishes include carrot-ginger soup, matzo ball soup made with a "secret formula," colorful salads and sweet potatoes. Goodman now keeps Passover the Sephardic way — eating rice and beans (including soy products) to keep variety during Passover.

Be creative, explore the possibilities. Happy Passover and Easter to all!

Beverly Price is a registered dietitian and exercise physiologist. She operates Living Better Sensibly, a private nutrition practice in Farmington Hills that offers programs for individuals and corporations. She is the author of "Nutrition Secrets for Optimal Health." Toll Free Publishing Company. Visit her web site at www.nutritionsecrets.com, and look for her column on the first Sunday of each month in Taste.