

FOCUS ON WINE



RAY & ELEANOR HEALD

Cal-Itals are steeped in tradition

Italian-origin wine grapes grown in California are dubbed Cal-Itals. California's wine heritage stems from Italian families who brought their wine traditions to the United States. Today, these families have 100 years or longer in the California wine business. They've gone back to their roots and are raising awareness of three red varietals in particular: Barbera, sangiovese and Nebbiolo.

Barbera: From its birthplace in Italy's Piedmont, Barbera is challenged only by Tuscany's sangiovese in versatility. The Piedmontese refer to Barbera as a "people's wine," meaning a wine to be drunk in youth or while waiting for the region's great wines, Barbaresco and Barolo, to age.

Barbera excites California winemakers. Some producers are old hands at it, but newcomers have added it to their growing portfolio of Cal-Itals.

Piedmontese Barbera is bottled in a wide array of styles from young and fruity to dark, intense, extracted versions with heady aromas. Some of this is due to variances among soil type and microclimates, but winemaking practices contribute significantly. Not all Piedmont Barbera is oak aged.

California, too, is developing a wide range of styles. While most producers age their wine in oak, some are stylizing for early release and drinkability with minimum cellaring in older cooperage.

Sangiovese: From Italy's Tuscany region, Chianti is the best-known red wine. It draws its charm from the sangiovese grape, but there seems to be no limit to variations. Tuscan producers have created when working with this varietal. Grown in California, sangiovese is beginning to show a similar potential.

Under "traditional" Chianti winemaking, the law required a blend of 20 percent lesser grape varieties. This law stifled creative potential of both producer and grapegrower. A new law enacted in 1984, allows up to 10 percent of non-traditional varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon to be blended with a maximum of 90 percent sangiovese.

Nebbiolo: Native to the Piedmont region, it is the great red grape responsible for some of the longest-lived wines in Italy — Barbaresco and Barolo. The grape name derives from "nebbia," fog in Italian, a frequent phenomenon in the Piedmont during the October grape harvest.

Please see WINE, D2

Wine Picks

■ Pick of the pack: Arzuaga Diquena from Ribera del Duero in Spain (\$27) is everything a great Spanish red wine should be — beautiful fruit, concentrated flavor with integrated oak. Spanish cuisine is trendy. It deserves the complement of a great wine. This is it!

■ Last month we wrote about Meritage wines and unfortunately, the 1997 Geyser Peak Reserve Alexander Meritage (\$45) was not yet available for our comparative tasting. Guaranteed, it would have been highly ranked as a magnificent blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Cabernet Franc and Malbec — all five of the great Bordeaux varietals. Cellar it for a few years and reap more taste rewards.

■ Outstanding chardonnays: 1996 Costa Lacharrie Cuvee Alexandre (Chile), \$16; 1998 Hogue Barefoot Select, \$14 (an absolute steal at this price); and 1998 William Hill Reserve, \$22 (creamy and delicious); and 1998 Kumu River Maie's Vineyard (New Zealand), \$42, a bit pricey as it seems all New Zealand wines are, but very good.

■ Fitting good cabernet sauvignon with a Napa Valley designation under \$20 gets more difficult. Eureka! Try 1997 Bessieu Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (\$16) — a great value.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- What's for Breakfast
- Main Dish Miracle

Lots-a lovin' goes into

chicken soup

Soup's on: Sylvia Bernstein of West Bloomfield, a finalist in the Ultimate Chicken Soup Contest, stirs up her entry. Curtis Bellinger and Joe Wnuk of Westland, also known as Chef Curtis and Chili Joe who host a local cable cooking show, stir their batch of Dr. Benjamin Overstreet's Chicken Soup.



BY KELLY WYGNIE
STAFF WRITER
kwygnie@homecomm.net

Making chicken soup is something people put their hearts into.

"Mine comes from the heart. I make it to make my kids feel better," said Sylvia Bernstein of West Bloomfield, one of the finalists in the second annual Ultimate Chicken Soup Contest held Friday, Feb. 25, at Temple Kol Ami in West Bloomfield.

Sitting at a table waiting for the judges to begin tasting the chicken soups simmering in crock pots, Bernstein and Sandra Biagini of Clarkston, last year's winner and one of this year's finalists, struck up a conversation.

Both wore heart necklaces, and agreed making chicken soup is about the nicest thing you can do for someone who's not feeling well.

"It's just a way you show people you really care about them and that you're trying to do something to help them. It shows you're interested in their well-being," said Carolyn Silverstein of Franklin, who won this year's contest.

Her Mediterranean Chicken Soup is not an old recipe. It's something she just put together. "I always make up stuff as I go along," she said. "I was experimenting with combining leftover rice, cooked spinach, and artichokes to create a

'It's just a way you show people you really care about them and that you're trying to do something to help them.'

Heart Smart Silverstein yet tasty soup with some ingredients my husband I both enjoyed. Cooking the rice with the soup makes it creamier."

Reducing fat and cholesterol has been a concern since Silverstein's husband, Barry, suffered a heart attack. When she makes soup, she lets it cool overnight, and removes the hardened fat the next day.

Attesting to its medicinal qualities, Chef Keith Farnie, one of the judges who was fighting a heart attack, said Silverstein's soup was "refreshing. There's a balance of acids, the artichokes with lemon," he said. "It does help colds," said Silverstein. "I was coming down with one and this soup helped stave it off."

Joe Wnuk and Curtis Bellinger of Westland, best known as Chili Joe and Chef Curtis, hosts of a local cable cooking show, placed second in the contest.

They spent three weeks researching to develop their prize-winning recipe.

"I collect musical instruments and found the recipe tucked into an old violin case," said Wnuk.

Please see SOUP, D3

Check your family's eating habits in March

March is National Nutrition Month. Do you know what you and your family should be eating? Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Top-rated foods for 2000

■ SOY

Throughout the '90s, health professionals recommended soy products for cholesterol lowering, cancer prevention and alleviation of menopause symptoms.

Soy contains phytoestrogens. Phytoestrogens belong to a family called phytochemicals. Phytochemicals are substances naturally present in plants that help protect the plant from severe weather, insects and stress. In your body, they can aid in preventing the origination and growth of cancerous tumors and slow cancer cell growth. Phytoestrogen containing foods can also help

reduce hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis. Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis. Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.

Reduces hot flashes as well as help prevent osteoporosis.

Phytoestrogens contain the isoflavones genistein and daidzein, which can prevent osteoporosis.

Soyfoods include tofu, tempeh, soy cheese, soy milk and "meat-free" products such as veggie burgers.

Let's take a look at the top-rated foods for the new millennium.