

Fine Californias are on the way

The last few weeks have brought to local shelves, or very soon will, some truly remarkable issues from California. It is gratifying to write about them, especially when such a large group can be reviewed. Here's a great mixed case to consider, selected for quality as well as value per dollar.

Cabernet Sauvignon: From Monterey County, long the home of poorly matured cabernets resulting in a cooked taste, is the 1980 Smith and Hook Vineyards issue. No faults here, just massive, intensive fruit with great acidity and tannin to balance.

The producers make only cabernet and are new to the state. Hard to find but worth the effort. Cost about \$12.50, very reasonable for the quality in the bottle.

To the west of Monterey, in the Coastal Range of the Santa Cruz Mountains, is Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard. Known chiefly for marvelous pinot noirs, winemaker Ken Burnap occasionally makes a cabernet when he can get the right grapes. In 1980 he did.

THIS IS A beautifully structured wine, complex and full of good rich flavors. A bit costly. You should not pay more than \$20 for it. Age this one for several years, however.

One of the most memorable wines I experienced on a 1981 journey to California was drinking the Estrella River 1978 Reserve. I have not drunk it since but the memory lingers of a great ca-

bernet. Should cost about \$18. From the Paso Robles area, this is due soon.

Recently released, in the more reasonable cost range (\$12), is the Napa Rutherford Hill 1978 cabernet. A splendid wine, ready to drink now or will take age well.

Zinfandel: Sometime in the next six months, Gallo will issue its first ever from this grape. When it comes in, it should be well-priced and you'll find it light and full of good berry flavors. This is an everyday wine, not great but good for the money.

On the excellent side of the ledger, and one of the best zinfandels I have had in a long time, is the 1980 from Preston Vineyards. It is estate-bottled, which means the grapes are from the excellent benchland along Dry Creek in Sonoma, and came in at 14.4 alcohol.

THE FILL, warm flavors completely mask the alcohol; the mouth is simply filled with deep fruit, ripe and lush. Priced at \$8, this is a Best Value wine, either for drinking or aging. This wine marks a dramatic change for Lou Preston, away from his fresh, berry-like earlier releases. Let us hope this marks a sustained change for him.

Chardonnay: Amazingly, three of them in the under-\$6-a-bottle range, all of excellent quality for everyday drinking. (After all, who needs more \$15 chardonnays? They can be found too readily.) The Geysler Peak Winery 1981



wine
Richard Watson

issue is a delightful wine, crisp yet full of good chardonnay fruit, unmasked with oak aging. The recently issued Zaca Mesa Winery's 1982 toyon chardonnay is well-crafted, complex and reminiscent of citrus flavors.

The least expensive of all, at less than \$4, is the 1982 Glen Ellen Winery's Proprietor's White Reserve, a blend that contains 75 percent chardonnay; a bit fat and opulent. This issue is in marked contrast to its 1981 issue, which was a crisp French colombard. Some stores sell this at two for \$7.

Sauvignon (Fume) Blanc: Three issues here, two of them affordable. Most subtle and elegant, easily overpowered by strong foods, is the Girard Winery's 1982 edition. This has been discussed in an earlier column. At about \$6 is the

Fetzer Vineyard, fuller and riper than the Girard, full of good sauvignon flavors and a complexity that suggests more semillon is blended in (but isn't). Finally, a bit costly at nearly \$10 is Robert Peccata's 1982 issue. Always good, this does constitute a price reduction over the 1981, which was a smash. This one has lots of finesse.

Advanced notice suggests this kind of column will be possible again soon. In spite of the glut of cheap French and Italian wines flooding our shelves, due to our presently very strong dollar, California values can be found with some judicious searching. Rejecting the poor and overpriced is our only weapon. Hopefully, the wines suggested here will be a guide toward doing this.



'Liar' costars

Angela Yannon is Rosaura and Tom Whalen is Lelio in "The Liar," a comedy by Carlo Goldoni, with previews scheduled at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday and Jan. 8-7 at the Hilberry Theatre on the Wayne State University campus in Detroit. The production opens Jan. 12 and continues through Feb. 3. For further information, contact the Wayne State University Theatre box office at Cass and Hancock, Detroit, phone 577-2972.

Auditions slated on campus

Auditions for "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" continue at 7:30-9:30 tonight at the Royal Oak Campus of Oakland Community College.

The play has roles for 17 men and five women. Dick McGowan will direct

the production, with performances March 23-31 in the Royal Oak Campus Auditorium.

For further information, call McGowan at 853-4200.

College hosts Wassail feast

A traditional "Olde English Wassail Feast" will be held from 6:30-10:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 17, at Marygrove College, 8425 W. McNichols in northwest Detroit.

The event will be presented by the college's

Division of Visual and Performing Arts.

Price for the event is \$35 per person, with proceeds used to defray the expense of a tour of Ireland and Wales planned by the Marygrove College Chorale and Chamber

Santa arriving at Detroit Zoo

Santa Claus and Christmas Carol will make personal appearances Friday-Sunday at the Detroit Zoo in Royal Oak. Admission is free for children 12 years and under who bring any canned

food item for distribution to the Feed the Hungry Program. Santa's hours are 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday-Saturday and 1-4 p.m. Sunday.

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