In fine spirits with cognac

The French district of Charentes, an hour's drive northwest of Bordeaux, on the Atlantic, is known for butter, cream, shellfish, casseroles and cognac.

and cognac.

"Cognac produced from grapes
grown on chalky soil, double pot-distilled, and aged in oak, has the elegant, delicate aroma and smooth, silky taste of the finest distilled spirits," says Benedicte Hardy,
international export manager for A.
Hardy cognac.

international export manager for Allardy cogna.
Hardy the great-great grandupter of the founder Antoine Hardy, whose cognac house has borne his name since 1863, Is on a mission to sell America on the pleasures of sipping cognac. Hardy received great attention in the United States last year because her family operated firm offers the world's most expensive split! — Cognac Perfection, retailing for 33,500 per bottle.

bottle
Consistent house style, the reputation of a cognae producer, falls largely on the nose of the master blender. The job of blending cognaes requires years of training and experience as well as concentration, a sensitive nose and good taste memorate process.

ory.

For full enjoyment of a fine coenac, practice the following techgnae, practice the to niques when you taste.

THE GLASS: The glass to be used is not a snifter but one that is tall and slim on a short stem. The bowl is 3% inches high by 1% Inches in diameter with a total volume of 4% onces. This tasting glass allows the cognac to present its perfumes in waves — the very volatile first, followed by less volatile components. A lounce pour of cognac is ample for a thorough evaluation. In the case of cognac, tasting requires less drinking and more attention to aromas, flavors and sensations.

flavors and sensations.

View the cognac against a bright,

WINE SELECTIONS OF THE WEEK

Although Hardy's Cognae Per-fection is just that, not all A. Har-dy cognaes are pricey. In fact, they are values when compared to many of the more heavily ad-vertised brands. Delicate and smooth, A. Hardy cognaes are ex-cellent examples of the region's finest spirit.

A. Hardy VSOP (\$30.97) repre-

A. Hardy Napoleon (\$37.40) fits into the "house" style between VSOP and XO. Lingering oak nuances are evident with the consistent thread of aromas and flavors established with the VSOP.

A. Hardy XO (\$57.32) illustrates how extended oak aging enhances a delicate cognae style. Hints of vanilla in the aroma nataste are indicative of artful distillation techniques.

A. Hardy Noces D'Or (\$95.56) a superior cognac in every respect. Fruit essence and field violet aro-mas end with the velvety smooth-ness of chocolate cream.

white background to observe its col-or and brilliance. It should have a golden hoe without being too dark. Cognoc's aroma can be evaluated in two steps. First, hold the glass at waist level and swirl it vigorously. Then, very slowly, raise the glass toward your nose. Breathe in deeply to determine at what maximum dis-tance you can perceive the first per-

focus on wine Eleanor and

fumes of the cognac. This will help you determine the vitality of the co-gnac, which is controlled by the more volatile elements of the spirit.

Repeat the process of swirling and inhaling while holding the glass a few inches from your nose. This "second nose" allows you to discover a new level of perfumes that are part of the less volatile components. This step belps assess the length of the cognac.

Raise the temperature of cognac by hand. Do not waste money on a warmer. Cognac is 40 percent alco-hol and many desirable components are volatile. Healing the spirit only serves to evaporate volatile ele-ments before you get to enjoy them.

TASTE IS best appreciated in two steps also. Take a little drop of co-gnae on your tongue and let it diffuse through your mouth. Swallow it very

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Ray Heald Take a little drop of cognac on your tongue and let it diffuse

slowly, detecting whether there is any bitterness or acidity. Note too the smoothness, roundness and bal-ance.

through your mouth.

Next, take a higger sip. Rotate the cognac in your mouth so that your tongue is coated and simultaneously circulate an through the liquid. Your entire mouth and nasal pass overflow with the aroma.

"Length is the most important characteristic of fine cognac," main-tains Hardy. "Oak aging and the spirit give a perfect marriage that is evident even after the glass is emp-tied."

TAXES TOO HIGH?

@ Your hometown is:

Herbs and spices spark roast beef

AP - With Just a few herbs and spices, you can turn basic roast beef into a boldly Havored, company-special entree. To release the heady aronn and Havor of whole herbs and spices, crush them just be foregregative, the respective measuring, but you will need a spice grinder or mortar and pesale to crush seeds and peppers. In the recipe below, crushed fennel seed, mustard seed and peppers combine to make a flavorful rub-on coating for roast beef. Serve this slices of the roast with creamy mushroom-mustard, sauce, boiled new polatoes and steamed green beans.

SPICED ROAST
WITH MON SAHOE

beans.

SPICED ROAST
WITH DIJON SAUCE

12 teaspoon fennel seed
14 teaspoon mustard seed
12 teaspoon whole black pepper
One 21- pound boncless beef round
rump-roast.

1 cap sliced fresh mushrooms 1 tablespoon margarine or butter 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour 14 tenspoon salt 1 cup milk 2 tablespoons coarse grain brown mustard 1 teaspoon snipped fresh chives

Using a mortar and petter, crush the fennel seed, mustard seed and pepper, set aside. Trim excess Iat from meat. Place roast, Iat side up, on a rack in a shallow roasting pan. Rub hall of the seed mixture over the top and sides of the roast. Insert a meat thermometer in the center of the roast. Roast, uncovered, in a 225-degree oven for 1½ to 1½ hours or until meat thermometer registers. 150 to 170 degrees. Let stand about 15 minutes before carving.

Meanwhile, for sauce, in a medium saucepan cook the mushrooms in margarine or butter until tender Star in the remaining seed mixture flour and salt. Add milk all at once Cook and stir until thickened and bubbly. Cook and stir for 1-minute more. Stir in mustard and chives, heat through. Carve roast and serve with sauce. Makes 8 servings.

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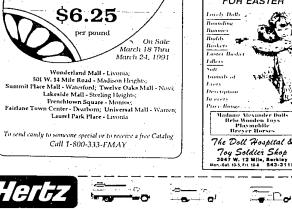
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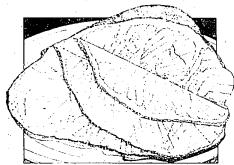
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