

FOCUS ON WINE



RAY & ELEANOR HEALD

Fisher Vineyards in renaissance

It's fun to reacquaint with pioneers in the California wine industry. Fred and Juella Fisher probably don't think of themselves that way. Fred founded Fisher Vineyards in 1973 and after marrying Juella in 1976, this couple joined in pioneer grape growing in the Mayacamas Mountains of Sonoma County. A tasting and discussion with them recently, however, revealed a winery in renaissance.

If you've been a wine lover living in Michigan for a number of years, you most certainly know the wines of Fisher Vineyards. Fred was born and grew up in Michigan. The winery's flagship Couch Insignia Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon honor his family's heritage of craftsmanship, expressed through Fisher Body Co. for the autos of General Motors. His wines have often been touted as having a "body by Fisher."

With new wineries bursting on the scene monthly and grabbing wine media attention, the pioneers of the 1970s often take a back seat. That's sort of how it has been for the Fishers. Yet, they've made steady, top quality wines with aging potential and were early leaders in the latest trend of vineyard-designating wines.

Great vineyard challenges

Wedding Vineyard, where Fred and Juella were married, is a rugged site that produces concentrated fruit at only one ton per acre. The cabernet showcases black fruit aromas and flavors and frequently chocolate and coffee nuances in the finish. The 1999 Wedding Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon \$130 has exceptional integration of fruit and oak.

In 1979, Juella's parents Robert and Marcia Lamb purchased this vineyard, adjacent to the well-known Eisele Vineyard, now owned by Araujo. The first single-vineyard designated bottling was the 1991. Look for the highly-anticipated release of the 1999 Lamb Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon \$130 in August 2002.

Planted in 1988, RCF Vineyard, named after Fred and Juella's son Robert Charles Fisher, has produced magnificent merlot in a rich, cabernet-like style that is one of the blockbuster merlots of California. The 1999 \$82 is a dynamic wine not to be missed.

First-born, daughter Whitney, has her vineyard too. It's on the south-facing slope of the Fisher's mountain estate where low yields of no more than two tons per acre, produce the Whitney's Vineyard Chardonnay. The 2000 Chablis-like wine with loads of California fruit power is \$48.

Renaissance in motion

The Fishers desire to perch their wines at the pinnacle of California winemaking took a giant leap forward in 2000 when they hired Mike Klein as consulting winemaker. Klein's reputation in the rigorous pursuit of excellence is well-exemplified in Dalla Valle.

Please see HEALDS, B2

Wine Picks

Sauvignon blanc, sometimes called fume blanc, although it's the same grape variety, is the perfect spring wine. Crisp and dry, it's sometimes marked by a degree of oak sophistication as it is with our **PICK OF THE PACK:** 2000 Chateau St. Jean Fume Blanc \$20.

EXCELLENT: 2000 St. Supery White Meritage \$22 is sauvignon blanc blended with semillon, which brightens the fruit and broadens the palate impression.

NEW FROM NEW ZEALAND: 2001 Kim Crawford Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc \$18 is very good but with higher acidity.

BEST BUYS AT \$10 AND UNDER: 2001 Geyser Peak Sauvignon Blanc \$10; 2000 Errazuriz Fume Blanc, Chile \$10; 2001 Montes Reserve Fume Blanc, Chile \$10 (grapefruit style); and 2001 Colterra Sauvignon Blanc, Chile \$8.

A simpler time

Hard times bring people back to familiar foods

BY LANA MINI
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When times are tough people often turn to food for comfort. Peter Loren knows this; it's his job. It's also his job to know what type of meals people crave during periods of emotional or economic difficulty. The kind of food sought for comfort depends on the area of town. Currently, America is in a period where comfort food is wanted, and perhaps, even needed.

What's In:

- Peanut butter sandwiches
- Roast chicken
- Real potatoes with real butter,
- Heirloom tomatoes
- Stews and roasts
- Meatloaf
- Real gravy

Loren's prime responsibilities is to make certain the restaurants offer meals its clientele craves.

Today's desires are simple foods. Comfort foods.

For upscale areas like Birmingham or West Bloomfield the comfort foods sought at Forté may be lobster and butter—minus the fancy sauces and herbs. For middle and upper-middle-class clientele like those who frequent Tribute in Farmington or Too Chez in Novi they are seeking sandwiches with good breads and red meat.

"Everyone is making more conservative buys in the market and at the supermarket," Loren said. "Just on a different scale. And we want food that isn't so fussy. We want basic hearty meals that make us feel good."

Even before the 9-11 tragedy, the trend at Too Chez was becoming more mainstream. The designer foods were being partially replaced by barbecued



Ladle it on: Beef gravy is poured over garlic mashed potatoes and southern meatloaf.

food, Loren said.

At Forté, since 9-11, the Apple Martini is in demand.

All income levels are cutting costs, just in different ways. In some areas, meatloaf is replacing steak while in others \$45 bottles of wine are replacing those costing \$80, he said.

The economy is affecting what we're

eating, Loren said.

"Maybe people are ordering the apple martini because subliminally they're thinking of their love for New York. It's an emotional time," Loren said.

Right now, he said, people want simple food that's simple to prepare. Peanut butter sandwiches are comforting. So are whole roasted chickens

with real potatoes and real butter, he said.

Heirloom tomatoes, actual "siblings" of original tomatoes grown in America hundreds of years ago, are in big demand. Stews and roasts are requested too.

Please see FAMILIAR, B2

COMFORT CUISINE

Comfort recipes by Chef Peter Loren of the Epoch Events Restaurant and Catering Group

SOUTHERN MEATLOAF

SERVES 4 TO 6

- 1 1/2 pounds ground beef, lean
- 2 cups Italian style bread crumbs
- 1 cup tomato ketchup
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/4 cup chopped green pepper
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 beef bouillon cube
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

1. Crush bouillon cube and beat with eggs.
2. In a large mixing bowl, mix all ingredients together with a pastry cutter or spatula. Be careful not to over mix, which will make the meatloaf tougher.
3. Grease or spray a medium sized loaf pan with non-stick vegetable oil coating. Turn mixture into pan and mold into a loaf shape. Alternately, you may use butter stick wrappers and line the pan with them instead. The resulting meat loaf will have a slightly sweeter butter flavor.
4. Place in a pre-heated 350 degree oven and bake approximately 1 hour or until an internal meat thermometer registers 165 to 160 degrees.
5. Cook 15 minutes; turn meat loaf out of mold and slice.

GARLIC MASHED POTATO WITH CHIVES

SERVES 4 TO 6

- 6 medium large potatoes, peeled and cut
- Cold water to cover
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1-2 tablespoons fresh minced garlic
- 1/2 - 3/4 cup milk or half & half, hot
- 1 stick butter
- Salt to taste
- Black pepper, ground to taste
- 1 tablespoon chives, minced

1. Place potatoes in a large saucepot and cover with water. Add 1 tablespoon of salt and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook until tender.
 2. While potatoes are cooking, place butter in a small saucepan or fry pan and heat on medium heat until melted. Add minced garlic and return to medium heat, stirring until the garlic is light brown.
 3. Drain water from cooked potatoes. Mash dry potatoes until well broken and somewhat smooth. Add butter and garlic and one half of milk and beat until smooth. Add more milk as necessary to create a light and fluffy potato mixture.
 4. Season with salt and black pepper as necessary.
 5. Stir in chives or sprinkle over finished potatoes as served.
- (More recipes on Page B3)

'Buyer beware' with nutrition supplements

BY PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS, R.D.
SPECIAL WRITER

You or someone you know is probably taking them. They may be used to calm you down or chase away the blues.

They are nutrition supplements. They include vitamins, minerals, herbs and other botanicals, amino acids, and other extracts or tinctures.

The supplement business is a multi-billion dollar a year industry. The Food and Drug Administration regulates dietary supplements under the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994. Under this act, the manufacturer is responsible for ensur-

ing that a nutrition supplement is safe before it is marketed. The FDA is responsible for taking action against any unsafe nutrition supplement after it reaches the market. Generally, manufacturers do not need to register with the FDA or get FDA approval before producing or selling any nutrition supplements. Manufacturers do not even have to prove that the product works,

only that the product label information is truthful and not misleading.

Regulation of Product Quality

The United States Pharmacopeia sets standards for drug products, vitamins and mineral supplements, botanicals and herbal preparations, and nutrition supplements. The USP designation can help consumers identify high quality supplements.

Consumers may first want to contact the manufacturer about the product they intend to purchase. Another source of information is the FDA web site for the article entitled *Tips For The Savvy Supplement User: Making Informed Decisions And Evaluating Information* at <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/ds-savvy.html>.

Check assumptions

Check your assumptions before taking supplements.

Assumption 1 - Even if a product may not help me, it at least won't hurt

Please see SUPPLEMENTS, B3