



# Tasting Panel Report

**T**HINKING—AND DRINKING—LIGHT ARE IN ORDER AS WE HEAD into summer. This month you can choose a snappy sparkling wine, a new premium tequila or an appropriate selection from "The Top 10" list, which includes a superb bottling from the well-known Stellenbosch wine region in South Africa.

## The Top 10

Here are your best bets for the month, selected by the Bon Appétit Tasting Panel, which meets weekly under the direction of wine and spirits editor Anthony Dias Blue and his associate, Jack R. Weiner.

**1992 Arbor Crest Wine Cellars, Johannesburg Riesling, Columbia Valley, Washington (\$5.25).** Juicy and ripe, round and lively with sweet, fresh apricot flavor.

**1990 Zonnbloem Wines, Pinotage, Vintner's Selection, Stellenbosch, South Africa (\$8).** A lush red made from a grape hybrid indigenous to this part of the world. Tangy and bright, crisp and fresh with lively acidity and spice.

**1988 Sebastiani Vineyards, Barbera, Sonoma Valley (\$9).** Plummy and loaded with sweet raspberry and layers of lively acidity.

**1991 Clos du Bois, Zinfandel, Sonoma (\$12).** Round and refreshing with bright berry fruit and fresh new oak. The Alexander Valley supplies 58 percent of the grapes for this Zinfandel; the rest come from the Dry Creek Valley.

**1990 F. E. Trimbach, Gewürztraminer, Alsace, France (\$14).** "Rose petal, ripe peach and honey; refined with a dry finish," says panel member Christina Clifton of the Four Seasons Clift Hotel.

**1991 Gundlach-Bundschu Winery, Chardonnay, Sangiacomo Ranch, Sonoma Valley (\$15).** Lush and smoky with lovely butterscotch and honey; crisp and long.

**1990 Cape Mentelle, Chardonnay, Margaret River, Australia (\$20).** Deep, lush and smoky with gorgeous length and balance.

**1991 David Bruce Winery, Pinot Noir, Estate, Santa Barbara, California (\$25).** Spicy and ripe with cherry-berry fruit, fresh, long flavors.

**1989 Sterling Vineyards, Reserve, Napa Valley (\$30).** This wine is 62 percent Cabernet Sauvignon, 28 percent Merlot and 10 percent Cabernet Franc. Panel member Sue Pey of Prego Ristorante found it "smooth and rich with plum fruit and great structure; complex and balanced." Cellar for a year or two.

**1991 Warre's Vintage Port, Portugal (\$35).** Rich and velvety with big, round plum and berry fruit, plus complex, balanced tones of wood and spice. Should be at its peak in 20 years.

Listed prices are approximate and may vary from one state to another.



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## Through the Grapevine

We usually advise our readers to consult their local wine merchant for last-minute tips on buying wine. But if you want to purchase your potables through the mail, Geerlings & Wade is one of the most reliable and value-conscious mail-order wine importers in the country. For a copy of their free biweekly newsletter, telephone 800-782-9463. . . . Two pamphlets from the Wine Institute, *Enjoying California Wine* and *Wine Exists for Food*, are packed with useful information on regional and varietal wines as well as ideas for matching wine with food. Call 415-512-0151 for details.

## Wine of the Month

We have tasted lots of bubbly from California over the years, but never a Golden State sparkler as good as the 1989 Roederer Estate L'Ermitage (\$35). It has the sophistication and depth of a superior Champagne; a beautifully packaged, world-class wine.

## Spirit of the Month

Tequila used to have about as much finesse as the proverbial five hundred-pound gorilla, but like a lot of other spirits, this Mexican favorite has grown up and gone premium. One of the most impressive is Porfidio, made entirely from the finest blue agave cactus. There are four versions: crisp, lively silver (\$24); regular oak-aged golden añejo (\$34); a six-year-old oak-aged añejo, called añejo extra, sold in a hand-painted ceramic crock (\$64); and an amazing, aromatic single-barrel tequila (\$78) packaged in a hand-blown bottle containing a glass cactus (left). Margaritas will never be the same; in fact, these are more suited to sipping than to mixing. 🍷

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