

# Food & Wine

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2002

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT  
SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

## Tasting room

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE



### TOP RATED WINES FROM 2002

These wines, a selection from the highest ranking in our tasting grids during 2002, are still available. If you have oenophile friends, you're all set for your shopping spree.

<b>Gundlach Bundschu</b> 2001 Gewurztraminer, Rhinefarm	★★★★ \$16	Stunning. Perfectly balanced. Bright and crisp, with a hint of apricot. Spicy. (5 stars with food.)
<b>Preston of Dry Creek</b> 2001 Sauvignon Blanc, Hartssock	★★★★ \$18	Classic herbal, grapefruit and passion fruit flavors. Better alone, but also pairs well with turkey, cranberries and yams.
<b>Mason</b> 2001 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley	★★★★ \$16	Grassy, with a burst of mineral and white grapefruit. Mouth-filling, with big fruit flavors. Balanced. A focused finish.
<b>Smith-Madrone</b> 2001 Riesling, Napa Valley	★★★½ \$17	Bright, with juicy apple fruity flavors. Began sweet and finished dry. (Rated 4 stars with food.)
<b>Huntington</b> 2000 Merlot, Alexander Valley	★★★★ \$18	A lovely, fruit-forward merlot. Notes of violet, orange zest, cassis and currant. Good varietal character.
<b>Clos La Chance</b> 2000 Pinot Noir, Santa Cruz Mountains	★★★★ \$28	Sweet blackberry fruit, with a kick of spice. Tastes like there's zin or syrah in the mix. Concentrated.
<b>Castle</b> 1999 Pinot Noir, Los Carneros	★★★★½ \$24	Soft, fleshy red cherry fruit. Notes of mint, bay leaf, rose petal and gardenia. A long, supple finish.
<b>Frei Brothers</b> 2000 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley	★★★½ \$20	Wine was a bit controversial. Some argued it was syrah-like, but all agreed it was a good wine.
<b>Delicato</b> 2001 Shiraz, California	★★★★½ \$8	A tasty syrah with great value. Floral aromas, with notes of berries and cream. Fruit flavors of blueberry and blackberry.
<b>Rosemount</b> 2000 Shiraz, Hill of Gold, Mudgee, Austr.	★★★★½ \$19	Zinfandel-like, with blackberry and a hint of cherry. Good backbone, with a supple texture. Rich, ripe and complex.
<b>Chateau Souverain</b> 2000 Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley	★★★★½ \$17	A hedonistic zin. Lovely fruit flavors of blackberry, raspberry and creamy blueberry. Well balanced. Long finish.
<b>Murphy-Goode</b> 2000 Zinfandel, Liar's Dice, Sonoma Cty.	★★★½ \$19	A very drinkable wine. Juicy blackberry fruit flavors. Notes of pencil shavings, almonds and toasty oak. Subtle aromas.
<b>Sterling</b> 1999 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley	★★★★ \$24	A generous cab with beautiful structure. Flavors and aromas of cassis, black cherry, vanilla and herbs.
<b>Field Stone</b> 1999 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Vly.	★★★½ \$24	A nice consumer wine. Good balance. Good structure. Claret-like. Soft blackberry fruit. Mint undertones.

#### KEY

★★★★ = Classic, ★★★★★ = Highly recommended, ★★★ = Good, ★★ = Limited appeal, ★ = Not recommended.  
More wine reviews: [www.northbay.com/foodwine](http://www.northbay.com/foodwine)

**CRITERIA:** The panel samples eight to 17 wines a week in a blind tasting. Price is suggested retail; actual price is often lower.