

## Play Ball

I'm in the grip of a great thirst and only in recent days has it begun to abate. My Business is my business, and it might be an excuse but I won't lie; there are and have been nights where I've marinated myself for reasons I do not recall. I do know that I covered most all of the available acreage between cheap rationale and easy virtue, mastering all the classics; aching bohemian, escape from misery, pursuit of muse, escape from said muse, nights when a good old fashioned knee-crawling black-eyed bender seemed like a good idea (woke up under a bed once) or the most utterly pedestrian of all options "drink of choice is on sale" - take your pick. Like Everest, I took it because it was there. Frontal lobe development may have ensued but the thirst continued. The trouble begins when I forget why I have a drink in my hand in the first place. It's an almost vestigial instinct, feeling not far removed from my more primal banana-smashing tree-swinging days of yore.

There are times when I would like for it to stop, but Time is a violent Trick; a whore and a tease, draining the whiskey and stealing the odd dollars left on the desktop just before quietly slipping out the door. I am a creature of immoderate habits, I know this, yet my weaknesses remain on a most public display and I always seem to be running to answer the door with pants unceremoniously around the ankles. Life ain't the movies.

I say this at the beginning of a year, breathing deep of the sulfurous muck staining the valley - Salt Lake City makes its own gravy. I train with the saintly RT three times a week and I can't get a "full tank". My breath is short and I can't tell if it's the panic or the filthy air. I just want to breathe

An anniversary passed, a year ended, another had newly begun, when came Love. I was surrounded by it, smothered by little red hearts, chocolate foils and promises of connubial and copulative bliss. Concupiscentia reigned and all for the low low price of fewer dollars than one could possibly imagine. Bargains galore, everything's a dollar, step right up, step right up. I was bombarded by promises of affection and devotion, really, it won't cost much, the voices chimed, but all these try-and-fails did was leave me yearning for constancy. But even constancy has an expiration date - always on someone else's clock, one false choice after another, then February's chill bleeds into March.

The inflammations of youth still rage, the obsessive hard-ons too, the relationships that I-can't-possibly-live-without, and then the exploding cigar (always one too many) brings me to the usual inevitable conclusion that I always live. I meditate on this for months on end; what is it that keeps us there at the end of the day? What is it that keeps us there when the flesh sags and the libido wanes?

I piss on the signpost once again and move ahead. I mark another anniversary. I am, after all, a man of a certain age. My life accrues at a dangerous pace; the lyrics shine in the quiet late hours of the evening as they do "The things a crow puts in its nest, they're always things it finds that shine. And how he'll find a shiny dime, Silver twine, from a valentine. The crows all bring them shiny things" so the song goes. It seems I am still trying to make the varsity squad and I find myself writing in circles, the same words, different polish and different frames but with the same waltz time.

Things will be different this year -- I swear it to myself. No more do I wish to run ahead while sliding backwards, some skittering Bambi on ice, but nothing satisfies. It is a season of late nights, pacing about trying to remember just what it is that I can't recall. I do remember wanting to rule the universe once.

I am affixed to YouTube watching a Beethoven Triple, there are no answers there, but it's a mad comfort watching them strain and sweat, making beautiful music indeed. "Them" are Oistrakh, Richter and Rostropovich (a big deal in that universe - think Three tenors before the Three Tenors) and it's a magnificent pissing contest. They don't appear to be wondering whether or not the wife will be home when they get there, and even if they were, they rise above it, escaping the one moment, reaching higher for another and yet another. There is a point and counterpoint, a calling back and forth of sonorous voices and for a moment the heavens touch the earth and I see a glimpse of divinity, just as I do in the throbbing sing song sad tones of the Tom Waits tune that bleeds out next, of men and horses and dogs. We've been telling each other the same stories for centuries.

I move on to a Vivaldi Concerto for Four Violins, yes Four, and there is Isaac Stern, Isaac Stern who calmly played for an audience wearing gas masks during a SCUD missile attack, Isaac Stern sawing away as if nothing ever happened. The image sticks with me, the sweet spun-silk tone of the Strad sings to my resonant gut.

The frightful thought tells me I am not getting any younger, the hopeful thought flares at the internal waking to a sweet noise, I know there are things that are bigger than me and I recognize the magnificent singing tones that tell me so. Thanks to my father I cut my teeth with the help of these worn old men who found depths of lightning in their ropey hands and freckled fingertips, with music sustaining them through war and famine. (Cont'd p.2)

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Your feedback is welcome and wanted - any thoughts on how I might improve this newsletter are welcome. I want to hear it all — the good, the bad and the ugly. Questions, concerns, thoughts, experiences, both fair and foul, [francis.fecteau@gmail.com](mailto:francis.fecteau@gmail.com)

# e-libation

## Play Ball

(continued from p.1)

It was as if he'd tapped me on the shoulder with his characteristic chirp-whistle and cock of the head, "hey kid, getta loada this" and therein was all the thunder of the universe and the siren song to the secret of existence—or at least a knowing nudge and cuff to the back of the head (psst, this is how its supposed to work); there is a magnificent resonance to this life, and someone I knew let me in on the secret.

Then a strike of thunder, Louis Latour Corton Charlemagne 2007 (\$95) makes me stroke the skin on my arm. It's an electric thing, silky, textured and long. It's a first deep kiss, a mad love and a sad parting all at once. I remember as I always do in the presence of great art, that I am small. Oh how I wait for the voice to come. It calls to me in all the best ways, making me remember indiscretions past and those yet to be, it's a familiar love too, a constant thrill right down to the spice that warms my throat and again I am stranded between the devil and the deep blue sea.

I still want to be raucous and bad, excessive, I know this, but somewhere life took an ordinary turn – there are no wars for me to report, no natural disasters, no sweeping changes of men and spirit and country; only the constant nickel-and-dime haggle of everyday life running on my own hard time. My one ringing triumph was learning the value of "Enough". It took patience hard-earned over twenty plus years of questionable living to see that this is not the end of the world but a constant search for new beginnings, marked by the buttery yawns putting me down at night and pulling me up the next day. I still hate going to sleep at night, fearing what I might miss; I am a sucker after all, and I always, always, want to see what happens next.

As always I will greet baseball season with a sigh of relief, I am, I confess, always relieved to see this constancy that I know, a constancy as sure as taxes and death, and soon I will journey to Farm camp to warm my hands with waking earth, knowing that the suspension-of-disbelief that is bloom will distract me. I gather my touchstones around me; they guide and warm as I amble forward. Even the ancient Romans wrote in present tense (read your Ovid) knowing even then the value of living in the moment. It is an essential element to all great narrative. It takes place *now*.

### The best of the best wine stores;

Park City /1550 Snowcreek Drive / 435-615-8538  
 Metro Salt Lake /255 South 300 East / 801-533-6444  
 Cottonwood /1863 East 7000 South / 801-942-2580  
 The Big Shiny New One /280 West Harris Avenue  
 (about 1600 South, 300 West) / 801-412-9972

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## Shebang?!? Really?



Yes, really. **Sherman & Hooker's Shebang!** \$13.99 is a non-vintage blend of Zinfandel, Sangiovese, Cabernet, Syrah and Petite Syrah from a variety of Sonoma and Napa Valley sources. These are ordinarily vineyard designates for most mere mortals (Rockpile, Dry Creek, Monte Rosso) but winemaker Morgan Peterson (of the Ravenswood Vineyard Petersons) put them in a **1 liter jug** (complete with thumb grip-ring) finished with a screw cap. Its plush, fat, smoky, loaded with black fruit and incredibly delicious and weighs in at a rather zaftig 14.2%. Do as I do, pour off a glass, put the cap back on, give the bottle a vigorous shake. This is serious stuff that needs a little extra air time. Serious wine, Egalitarian Vibe. Get in touch with your inner socialist.

## Volunteer Wanted

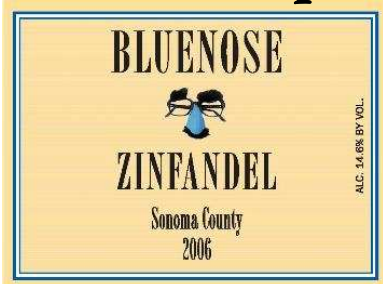


Winemaker Tony Leonardini isn't just a winemaker, he's a St Helena volunteer firefighter, hence the name "Volunteer". Usually "cult" is reserved for 200 case productions that demand more princely sums, but the stuffing here merits serious attention, **Volunteer Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2007 (\$24.99)**. St Helena stuns me for a variety of reasons; first and foremost I never cease to be amazed at the number of people in this most picaresque (and I do mean that in the most roguish sense) of towns that are perfectly straight-faced and willing to demand 100 of my dollars for a bottle of mediocrity. It this phenomena that makes the Volunteer that much more of a shock. This is stunningly rich stuff, but beautifully sculpted as well. It is a base of 83 % Cab with the remainder split between its Bordelaise brethren, it is supple and full bodied, a juicy and zaftig thing, showing loads of red and black fruit with hints of licorice and five spice powder. The aromatics are dizzying & the finish is long rich & balanced with deft oak tannins. As if that weren't enough? All this weighs in at about 14.7%. A dazzling well proportioned beauty.

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## Duck Soup



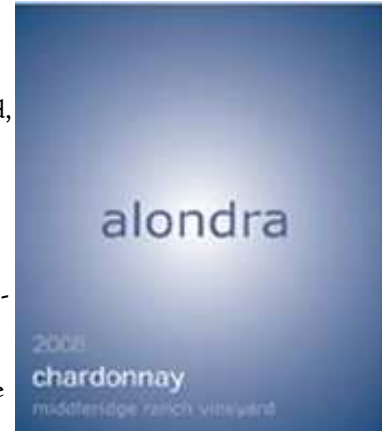
Zinfandel over recent years lost its balance, buoyancy, humor and lightness. Zinfandel became ponderous, humorless and dull in the hammy hands of artless souls wanting to make a quick buck off sycophantic critics and consumers. I miss Zinfandel. I love Groucho Marx (and the Marx brothers) What was I to do when I saw this label? I took it as a sign. Famed Rockpile Road Vineyard provided the vine cuttings for the two 80 year old Dry Creek vineyards that form the base of this impeccably balanced Zinfandel. Dry Creek's spicy brushy undertones frame lovely black fruit with terrific acidity that sings over the top—this is not silly jammy flabby hot zin, this shows a precision all too often missed in this crowd pleaser varietal. Wonderful aromatics and a long rich finish make this a welcome new entry in Utah. **Bluenose Sonoma County Zinfandel 2006 (\$19.99)**



The **Honig Vineyards Sauvignon Blanc '08 (\$13)** is a benchmark, stainless steel ferment followed by extended lees time results in a wine with exceptional textural notes, bright fresh acidity and length down the center of the palate, fresh melon and sweet herb characters play all day long. Press loves it - Robert Parker says "consistently one of the finest Sauvignons made in California".

## Blue Collar Brilliance

**Alondra "Middleridge Ranch Vineyard" Chardonnay 2008 (\$11.99)** Spring sings to me of buds breaking and longer light; in essence wines like this. Wonderfully fresh & lively, its stainless steel fermented, no malolactic Chardonnay at its best. The nose says Prem Cru White Burgundy with aromas of citrus, talcum and fresh cut apples and pears. The finish is long, intense and lingering; and the wine stays lively for days in the fridge. Nationally this wine retails for \$16/\$18 (thank you Small Winery Exemption). Alondra is Skylark Wines, a two man show run by the wine directors at Boulevard in San Francisco. There's only 1500 cases of this little gem and its \$11.99 in Utah. This drinks like serious White Burgundy - for a pittance. Drink up.



## There's Always Room for Cake

### LAYER CAKE



**MALBEC**  
VINTAGE 2007  
Mendoza ~ Argentina

ALC. 13.9% BY VOL.



Let's get this out of the way. There aren't many grapes I despise. Two at last count. I loathe Pinotage. I can't understand the charms of a varietal with all the palate charm of a tire fire. I may one day be proved wrong and have to drink my own bile and I will welcome that day when I can add another grape to my joyous viticultural firmament. Malbec is next in line. I could never be mistaken for a fashionable fellow. It's a goddamn blending grape for a reason. I have tasted them at most every price point from \$10 to \$100. It is capable of magnificent expression, yet it always contains the same flaw. Once it passes to the last quarter of my palate before descending into my gut from my cavernous maw, it disappears. Blank. Zip-O. Zilch. Nada. No finish, no nothing. I've never been one to hurry intimacy along, but Malbec is a nervous, furtive teenage handjob of a wine; all quick immediate easy appeal with no lingering sweetness. If I am to get only half a finish, I would prefer that such a wine be half the price. That said, I now have to enjoy a pile of Crow.

### LAYER CAKE



*One Hundred Percent Pure*  
**SHIRAZ**  
VINTAGE 2008  
South Australia

ALC. 14.9% BY VOL.



I do not know what sort of alchemy was at work here, but proprietor Jayson Woodbridge (maker of **100 Acre Cabernet**, a very spendy thing that few of us will see or drink) flies his winemaking staff 'round the world to make wine on site from top tier fruit (tough gig I know). These are shameful values. The **Layer Cake Malbec 2008 (Argentina)** and the **Layer Cake Shiraz 2008 (Australia)** both at **\$14.99** are huge, opulent, round and rich, loaded with as much rich lingering black fruit as one could ask for. These are what we like to call "ringers", \$50 buck wine stuffed in a \$15 bottles.

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## Vitamin Dago

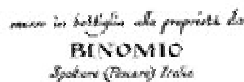
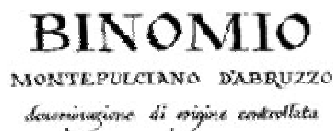


Vietti was among the first to isolate single vineyard sites in Barolo. Thanks to them, single vineyard Barolo are now some of the most highly sought after distinctive wines made. Reduced yields, French oak and later harvests produce some of the most balanced and concentrated wines of the appellation, making Vietti is an elite reference-point producer. Wine dorkness aside, these are usually two categories that drive me batshit crazy. The market is gagged with bad, bitter, nasty astringent bottles of bile bearing the names “Barbera” and “Nebbiolo”. These two provide major balm to my inner Dago.

The **Vietti Barbera D’Asti Tre Vigne 2007 (\$18.99)** is perhaps the finest value Barbera I have ever tasted. It is brilliantly rich, loaded with truffley black fruits, smoke, lead pencil and licorice notes framed by a bright sweet tannic finish. This is exceptional stuff (and a hefty well-balanced 14.5%). It develops magnificently in the glass too.

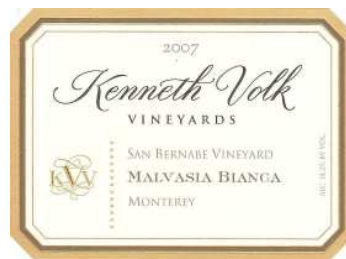
The **Vietti Nebbiolo Perbacco 2006 (\$24.99)** is a STUNNING value most producers would kill for as an estate bottling. This bottling sources Nebbiolo from Cru classified hillsides such as Bussia and presents a seriousness to its deep ripe sweet floral-scented red raspberry fruit that will thrill for years to come. It is a Barolo in swaddling clothes.

## Unadulterated Kink



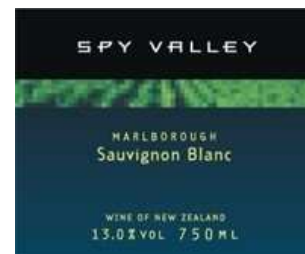
There are a few bottles of this precious ichor (I mean it in the divine sense) kicking around. It will prompt deep reflection on the meaning of \$50. This is one of the greatest bottles of Italian wine made. It provides one of those rare moments when a wine prompts thoughts other than what your senses perceive. It is deep, rich, luxurious. **Binomio Montepulciano D’Abruzzo 2005 (\$50)**

## Spring Perfume



It happens entirely too often for someone with my drinking habits. There are flavors that I forget in my daily rush to taste EVERYTHING and invariably, I return to old friends such as Riesling and realize that I don’t guzzle nearly enough of them. I am always pleasantly surprised at how deeply complex and fascinating these are, with a length and intensity that belies its meager price. The **Josef Leitz Rudesheimer Magdalenenkreuz Spatlese 2008 (\$20)** shows thrilling acidity (a surprise in Spatlese) it has minimal sweetness but a range of juicy pineapple, pear and cherry notes, all in a low alcohol effort. Should you want to pump up the octane, the **Kenneth Volk Malvasia Bianca 2007 (\$15)** is a juicy aromatic treat, spicy and floral like fresh jasmine, ginger, baking spice and honey-suckle, the palate is bone dry, yet rich and textured on the palate. Gorgeous fresh, stainless steel only, no Malolactic fermentation. Malvasia is usually a goopy sweet aromatic dessert wine, but here it meets a higher purpose without losing any of its primal charms.

## Kiwilicious



Who’d a thunk this one? Deep dark brooding fruit from New Zealand, the **Spy Valley Marlborough Pinot Noir 2008 (\$23)** - it’s a dead ringer for good Cote D’Or with its warmth and richness. Those down undah are quietly developing into a destination for World Class Pinot Noir (all caps intended). This has the acidity to last a decade or more, but with its immediate floral aromatic juicy charms it will be difficult to keep my hands to myself (not that I’ve ever struggled much for that much self control) **Spy Valley Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2008 (\$14)** is one of the most perfectly balanced pitch perfect expressions of Sauvignon Blanc I’ve encountered. It is loaded with sweet herbs, fresh melon and gooseberry and is as crisp and crunchy as one could want as the seasons lighten and brighten. This is a pricey neighborhood for NZ Sauvignon Blanc, yet for some reason, Spy Valley is still half the price of its more famous neighbor Cloudy Bay. Again, the egalitarian vibe....



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## Spring Eats & Treats



308 West 300 South  
(801) 531 - TONY

I am sad to report the demise of Tipica, a Caputo joint. Its focus and discipline in executing an impeccably high level of cuisine was a marvel. I am happy to report that Caputo's is continuing in night-time dining. It's a return to palooka roots for **Caputo's by Night** with a menu that is unabashedly unapologetically straight ahead Italian, rife with meatballs, meat sauces, that impeccable lasagna and parmigiana with chickens the size of pterodactyls. It is a more sentimental idea of food, that comfort food of my eighth grade appetites from the predominantly Italian north side of Syracuse New York, all without ever having to return to that frozen industrial rustbelt wasteland hellhole that is upstate NY. Caputo's has saved the sentimental parts of it for me in a most painless fashion. The wine list has expanded and the prices have dropped significantly to some of the most reasonable in the valley. And here I thought the \$5 glass was a thing of the past.

And, as good fortune would have it, Caputo's is opening a satellite in the 15th and 15th Neighborhood. Caputo's at 15th will act as a "Mini Me" to its downtown parent (and there is talk of a wine license). Great addition, great neighborhood.

## Cheap Dates

APRIL 27th

### Quick & Healthy Mediterranean Meals

The Spanish region of Andalusia, the island of Crete in Greece and the island of Sardinia in Italy, have perfected healthy and simple culinary traditions. We will explore each area through fresh, flavorful and easy to prepare recipes

**Class: \$45 Wine: \$15**

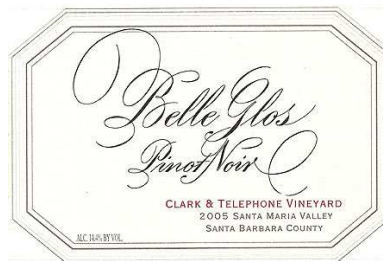
MAY 10th

### Mother's Day Champagne & Cheese Pairing

In the interest of keeping the wine cost at \$15, we have never included much Champagne. Here you will get your money's worth. This class will focus on wine with bubbles paired with the finest soft cheeses; particular attention will be devoted to artisanal grower champagnes and cheeses from the actual region as well. What could be better than learning, eating and sipping the best there is to offer with mom?

**Class: \$25 Wine: \$25**

## Spring Sappiness 08



Keep an eye on Joey Wagner. Kid's got skills. The upcoming **Belle Glos Meiomi Pinot Noir 2008 (\$20)** switches to a 3 appellation blend that takes the remaining single vineyard fruit from their famed waxtop single-vineyard bottlings, **Los Alturas (Central Coast)**, **Clark & Telephone (Santa Barbara)** and **Taylor Lane (Sonoma Coast)** - (**ALL \$34.99**) and blends them into a magnificent, richly textured, expressive mouthful of plump, juicy Pinot Noir fruit in Wagner's hands-off style. Each of the Single-Vineyards contributes a fascinating layer of complexity to this entry level Pinot Noir. It will quickly become Utah's most popular Pinot Noir, at a pricing well below national retail. As always Caymus' sacrifice to support the restaurateur is your delicious gain.

I love these wines, I really and truly love these wines. They are a pinnacle of Pinot Noir for me, each representing a difference face of this silken grace. **Taylor Lane / Sonoma Coast** speaks of the structure and cheek that come from higher altitude cool climate plantings. It's a deep dark Burgundian brute with elements of jasmine tea, earth, cola, black cherry and truffle. **Los Alturas / Central Coast** is the next stop in the Belle Glos Pinot Tour of California, the more southerly structure is evident in the deep, rich and plush texture with more floral aromatics and riper fruit with ripe raspberry characters. The **Clark & Telephone / Santa Barbara** is the most obviously big chested of the bunch with massive ripe rich almost jammy characters with rosier more floral notes. All of the wines show impeccable balance with a sappy astringent finish that indicates a long life ahead. These are a brilliant range of 2008s with the best wine dork back labels ever.



*macphail*

I love Spring if for no other reason than new releases. James Macphail makes terrific Pinot Noir that combines a ripe expressiveness with a seamless integration of sweet French oak. His **Macphail Anderson Valley 2006 (\$27.99)** is a model of elegance and restraint with fresh raspberry graced by tones of licorice and sweet herbs. The **Macphail Sonoma Coast 2007 (\$36.99—\$10 OFF NATIONAL RETAIL)** is all Pratt Vineyard, the fruit here is deeper and richer, marked with darker fruit, baking spice nuances.

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## Volver, Volver



Spain is indeed, still, a sanctuary. There is no better place for stretching sparse wine dollars than the Iberian peninsula and I find myself returning again and again. Volver is more than a great tango song (google Carlos Gardel) or a movie with the tragically hot Penelope Cruz. It means to return to a place, and where to more than Spain? The wines are old vine sources with minimal hands off wine-making and most always capture the place in a bottle.

The **Finca Luzon Jumilla (\$8.99)** is a shamefully ridiculous value. A blend of old vine Mourvedre aka Mataro and Syrah aged briefly in neutral giant oak casks, this is a massive, rich and rewarding use of \$9 that weights in just north of 14.5% alcohol. It develops and changes with time in the glass and turns into a brooding, hulking little beast considering its niggardly price. Costs \$9, tastes \$25

The **Vega Sindoia Viura Chardonnay 2008 (\$8.50)** is a blend of viura and chardonnay fermented in stainless steel and allowed to rest on the lees in neutral oak. This doesn't see any time in new oak nor does it see any malolactic fermentation. This is racy bright and fresh, tasting like good Macon at half the price with a range of fresh apple, lemon curd and bright ripe citrus characters.

## Silky, Silky Selby

Susie is a wonderful wine maker with a talent for fruit selection. Now with Eric Clark (assistant wine-maker) managing fermentations, an added firepower shows in the wines. This is Susie's greatest Chardonnay to date—and its still a very friendly price **Selby Russian River Chardonnay 2008 (\$19.99)**. It is 100 percent Barrel Fermented in varying ages of French Oak (the really good stuff too—new Latour Oak \$pendy). It is plush and luscious (pluscious?) with a seamlessness between its oak and fruit that is stunning. There is a long range of ripe apple, tropical notes, baking spices, hints of ripe citrus and honey with a length of finish that shows its brilliance.



## Generous Juice



SALDO

Napa Valley's preeminent Italianate blend **Orin Swift "The Prisoner" 2008 (\$35.99)** shows a touch more concentration in its plush middle palate flavors. It's a bathtub blend of (in proportion) Zinfandel, Cabernet, Syrah, Petite Syrah, Charbono and Grenache and it's a whopper, a mouthful of rich, juicy fruit. I actually prefer the 2008 over the prior two years. The concentration and acidity create a richer more complete experience in the mouth than usual. It's a hefty 15.3% but I'll be dipped if it shows any heat. A little extra Cabernet gives this the extra needed cheekbone.

**Orin Swift "Papillon" 2006 (\$54.99)** is a Bordeaux blend (Cabernet, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec and Petit Verdot in its mélange) that shows a surprise a minute; soft rich summer jam at one turn, an 8 cylinder roar the next; massive, balanced, rich and sweet. One of California's unknown great plush red values (yes, at \$55) a crowd-pleaser and a deal.

The new Zin based **SALDO 2008 (\$28.99)** is another generous burly entry in the Prisoner stable, combining Zin with Petite Sirah and Syrah. This is one big, burly, juicy pig of a wine and it is fun to drink. Loads of black fruit, tinged with raspberry, smoke and vanilla.



**Waterbrook** makes some of the finest values in Washington state. Bordeaux specialists, they churn out the some of the most consistently rich, concentrated value reds. Two wines stand out for me this month; the **Waterbrook Reserve Merlot 2007** and their **Reserve Cabernet 2007 (both a reasonable \$19.99)** these are models of Bordeaux purity yet sacrificing nothing for ripeness and a deft touch of French Oak. How these are only \$20 I do not know, but such layered, textured, intensity is inspiring, especially for the \$\$.