

February 2000

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Cecile's Wine Cellar is now part of Finewine.com.

We opened our second location December 11, 1999 in Gaithersburg, MD. Our new e-commerce site has been booming and we are delighted to report that you may now place orders online as well as in person. As always we have our wonderful staff to serve all of your needs online and off. As we grow so do our allocations for all those tough to find wines. We are sure you will be delighted with our ever-expanding selection of wonderful wines from around the world. You can now access your orders on line. Just log on to www.finewine.com and register for a full service account. Don't forget we deliver!

The Trends of 2000...

The red wine boom continued through 1999. It seemed that once "60 minutes" and other news magazine programs informed us that wine was good for our health, we started drinking more—especially red wine. As a result, the decade-long explosion of red varietals led by **Cabernet Sauvignon** and, more recently, **Merlot**, showed no signs of letting up. We have enjoyed the emergence of world-class bottlings from new or newly revived and lesser-known wine producing areas. This month we will highlight new wines from your favorite regions of 1999 and add a few of our newest discoveries that we are sure will be part of your 2000 list. On the domestic front, there were some awesome wines from California such as, **Zinfandels** and **Syrah**.

On the foreign side, the wines from the Rhone region of France were super exciting. In the Tuscan region of Italy, the 1997 wines from **Chianti** were lush and exquisite; and in the Piedmont region of northern Italy, there was an explosion of exciting new **Dolcettos** and **Barberas** from the extraordinary 1998 vintage. And most dazzling of all was Spain, (an in depth view will be featured in the upcoming March newsletter) the region of **Ribera del Duero** in central Spain, which created exceptional red wines in a contemporary style. Perhaps even more thrilling (is it possible) are the wines from **Priorat**, Spain. These luscious dreams are not to be believed.

Once ignored, the wines from New Zealand have begun to get the attention they deserve. The **Sauvignon Blancs** in particular has caused all of us to take notice. We have also seen continued interest in Australian wines. So much so that we are importing our very own label, **Beyond Broke**. A finewine.com exclusive! We thought that the Beyond Broke name was particularly fitting after our holiday bills. We encourage you to sample these lively new selections over the web or in person.

A finewine.com exclusive...

Australia

Australian wines have always been a huge success around the world, for their generous nature and certainly for the great value's. A new wine, which we have discovered from down under, is "Beyond Broke". This winery is located in the southeastern part of Australia where the days are hot and the evenings have the necessary cool air, which retains the balance of the grapes acidity and ripeness. One of the grape varieties, which have shown great strides in Australia, is the Semillon grape. This grape has the entire range of lovely aromatics and extraction that makes it so inviting, it is round yet it shows vibrant peach, lemon, and rich viscous texture in your mouth.

Beyond Broke, Semillon 1998 \$ 9.98

What a deal for the money! The perfect party wine, that shows bright aromatics and lively, young fruit. This one is sure to be a hit at any event and that is exactly what Beyond Broke wanted to achieve. A wine that is flavorful yet it is easy to drink with a smooth and lively finish. It has a well-balanced character between fresh fruit and acidity. Have fun with this wine and enjoy its youthful character.

Beyond Broke, Sparkling Semillon 1997 \$12.98

Made in the traditional "Method Champenoise" from Champagne, France. This is the method in which traditional champagne is made. They have created a sparkling wine that is wonderfully flavorful, showing aromas and flavors of citrus, lime character and bright peach on a clean and lively finish. This is a lovely aperitif wine that just dances on the tongue and focuses on the crisp and vibrant qualities of Semillon.



Beyond Broke, Chardonnay 1998 \$ 9.98

What is so charming about this wine is the round and fruity quality that it has to offer. It is made in the classic Hunter Valley style, which is a wine that is full of rich and lively melon, tropical fruit with a rich texture that finishes with a good dose of toasty oak.

California

Chardonnay

So what sold the most? Red wine was certainly hot, but the big white-also known as Chardonnay just keeps rolling along. It continues to be the most popular wine in the world. Chardonnay was the best it has ever been-no matter where it was bottled. From its native Burgundy to California and Australia, they were a delight.

Byron Chardonnay 1997,

Santa Barbara \$21.99 \$16.98

When you taste this Chardonnay the first thing that comes to mind is its great balance between well extracted fruit that is blended with just enough spiced oak to add charm and character. This is a Chardonnay with class, showing elegance and balance. Its refreshingly crisp acidity on the finish is supported by the complex flavors of fruit that are mixed with good toasty oak flavors.

Cuvaison Chardonnay 1997 \$19.99 \$16.98

This is just a charming and smooth wine with an array of ripe and polished fruit that shows flavors of pear with hints of vanilla and nutmeg. It finishes clean with good acidity. There is an overall generous feel on the palate but with an elegant touch.

Bettenelli Chardonnay 1997 \$21.99 \$15.98

There is refined fruit here that blends nicely with the medium toasted oak flavors, which are in turn balanced out by the crisp mineral flavors on the finish. The light spice notes and vanilla flavors from the oak barrels marry nicely together with the focused fresh apple fruit flavors. This is a Chardonnay that has finesse rather than muscle.

Only available at our Virginia location.

Cabernet Sauvignon & Merlot

Joseph Phelps Cabernet Sauvignon 1997

\$41.99 \$36.98

This is got to be one of the most accessible and precocious Cabernet Sauvignon that Phelps has made in recent years. The beautiful black currant fruit is blended nicely with a light touch of both French and American oak, just enough to add dimension to the wine. The fruit is gorgeously ripe and has a concentrated personality. It is round and inviting on the palate with low acidity.

Ch St Jean, Merlot 1997 \$24.99 \$21.98

From the California winery who received wine of the year for their **Cinq Cepages** Cabernet/Merlot blend, we are delighted to present this mouth filling merlot. Made in the same careful and elegant style, this merlot is full of bright fruits with a velvety texture and taste. Grab it while supplies last. Perfect to serve with your next steak or chicken dinner.

Zinfandel

It is getting harder and harder to find a juicy Zinfandel that is affordable. When wines are so tasty and inviting we believe that you should be able to enjoy them on a regular basis. Most of the new Zinfandel's that hit the market are being sold at big prices, not to say that they don't deserve it but, it is always so refreshing to find a few that are tasty and cheap. The two Zinfandel's which we are featuring show all the ripe, luscious, and fruity qualities that make a Zin what it is. There is weight to these wines but they are not overbearing, they are simply great reds to drink with a range of foods, especially grilled meats, chill or stew.

Cline, Zinfandel 1997 \$11.99 \$ 9.98

Lots of round and fragrant strawberry, raspberry flavors emerge from this lovely glass of Zinfandel. It is so smooth and easy-to-drink, the fruit is accessible and shows a descent amount of structure and weight throughout. Drink now.

Kenwood, Zinfandel

"Old Vines" 1998 \$14.99 \$11.98

So inviting, lively and showing the perfect bright, fruity flavors which make Zinfandel so alluring and tasty. It has an explosion of fruit flavors that cover the spectrum of strawberry, raspberry, roses, a mixture of herbs and a medium touch of spice on finish. It has good weight and structure on the palate. It is a much rich style Zinfandel, with a round fruit character.

Sauvignon Blanc

Lately there has been a small convoy of New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs entering the market and yes, some have been good but there are others that are just excellent. The Sauvignon Blancs display the entire exotic flavor spectrum - the fruit is citrus driven mixed with the classic notes of kiwi, gooseberry, and some even show profound aromas and flavors of red currants. They show good weight, which still remains clean, and fresh. The ones that stood out for us this month are good introductions to the unique and yet classic Sauvignon Blanc flavors that New Zealand has to offer at incredible prices.

Coopers Creek, New Zealand \$14.99 \$12.98

This is an expressive Sauvignon Blanc with the unique signature of exotic aromas that focus more on the citrus side, with a round palate that is full, with a rich feel throughout. Its charming citrus notes show lively grapefruit, lemon, and kiwi flavor. This wine represents an excellent value that is hard to pass up. Unfortunately, it is very limited.

Nobilo, New Zealand \$12.99 \$ 9.98

Here is another winner from New Zealand, it not only represents a great value but it is wonderfully tasty too. This Sauvignon Blanc leans more towards being crisp and clean, showing light mineral flavors than having overly intense aromas and flavors, which is sometimes found in Sauvignon Blancs from New Zealand. This is a Sauvignon Blanc that everyone will enjoy.

France: The Cote du Rhone

The 1998 vintage in the Rhone Valley is not to be missed. The fruit and structure of these wines is superb, they are solid all the way through and the fruit is just bursting with complexity and charm. There have been very few 1998 Rhone's which have not been satisfying, rather the majority of them are very good to excellent. We have chosen just a few of the newly arrived 1998's, that we found to be particularly inviting and exemplified the vintage as a whole. We will have a huge array of various producers and styles from this spectacular vintage at all of our various locations in just a few months.

Domaine les Grand Bois, Cote du Rhone

1998 Unfiltered \$13.99 \$11.98

The Cote du Rhone's from 1998 have so much to offer, especially this one, the blend of cassis, wild raspberry, herbs de Provence, and faint aromas of terroir (earth) add so much charm and interest to the wine. The weight on the palate is just right, lively yet structured. The fruit is bright and vibrant. *Only available at our Virginia location.*

Dom des Lambertins, Cote du Rhone 1998

\$10.99 \$ 8.98

This is simply a delicious bottle of Cote du Rhone. It is a great bargain too. The fruit and structure is so invitingly rich, with the right dose of wild herbs and a mixture of beautiful red berries to match the overall structure of the wine. Highly recommend this Rhone for now drinking and it will certainly age gracefully over the next five years.

Sign up for our
finewine.com
tasting events...

**California '97 Cabernet
Shiraz vs Syrah
Chardonnay
see page 5**

Italy

Bacchus cast his winemaking strengths to the Piedmont region in the 1998 vintage. These wines are gloriously charming and inviting with so much pretty, vibrant fruit that it will be hard to hold on to them. They are drinking beautifully right now; it's as if one could taste the warm summer day with the fresh breeze of the cool nights in your glass. We just love how fragrant and charming they are. These are reds that will easily go with a range of meats, such as, veal and pork and even grilled seafood, just put a slight chill before serving.

Elio Altare, Dolcetto d'Alba 1998 \$16.99

This is such a dramatic and flavorful Dolcetto with the wonderfully deep dark berry flavors that show richness and length. The beauty of a wine like this is the weight and accessibility it offers. Simply put this is a delicious wine! Superb quality and taste!



Rivetti, La Spinetta, Barbera d'Asti "Ca'di Pian" 1998 \$17.99

Shows a jazzy quality, with intriguing rustic flavors that display a wonderful savory edge with notes of violets, dry fruit, rose petals, herbal character, slight straw, and toasted bread quality on the nose that is well focused and high toned. Great feel on the palate with a round and rich character. This is a wine that is showing well right now but will certainly continue to evolve over the next several years.



Winter Warming

Port

It is just amazing that a Late Bottle Vintage Port was made from this superb vintage, 1994. From that vintage the two top producers were Taylor Fladgate and Fonseca, both received 100 points for their vintage port. That's why it is so surprising to have found a LBV made from these two producers. The beauty of these wines is that they are at a fraction of the price compared to the real thing (Vintage Port). What do we mean by the "real thing", well, a bottle of "vintage" port is considered to be the best of the best and only made in great vintages. The Late Bottled Vintage (LBV) is a port made in the vintage style but aged for 4 to 5 years in the barrel and then put into the bottle to age, so therefore it is much more approachable upon release than a true vintage port would be. One should drink the LBV's while the vintage port ages, most vintage port needs around 15-20 years to reach its full potential.

Taylor Fladgate, Late Bottle Vintage 1994

\$26.99

It is incredible that this LBV has so much to offer with such dramatic flavors and such beautiful inky, almost black color. There are such deep and profound dark fruit flavors that resound throughout the wine. Making this a great deal for now drinking and will certainly keep aging for the next decade. The first thing that comes to mind when tasting this is Wow! what a great glass of port. It is rich, tasty and with a long and lingering finish. The texture on the palate is round and deep.

Fonseca, Late Bottle Vintage 1994 \$26.99

This is a power driven Port with the same kind of dark and extracted fruit quality that the Taylor Fladgate LBV has to offer. That is to say, it is wonderfully layered and rich wine, with the profound aromatics of dark chocolate, dark cherry and notes of licorice. On the finish it shows a much more solid quality, it has a fuller style that shows a bigger tannic structure and a firmer oak presence.

Spain

Spain is an amazing destination and there is so much diversity in both the landscapes as there is with the wines. One of the regions, which currently are showing the most mind-blowing and intense wines, is the appellation of Priorato, located in the northeastern part of Spain within the region of Tarragona. The wines from here show incredible power and profound depth of fruit extraction. These are all world class wines with the quality to prove it. The world has only recently become aware of these already "cult" wines and are becoming even harder and harder to get. Get them while they last.

Clos Mogador, Priorato 1996 **\$59.99**

This is a powerhouse of a wine with an array of dark, almost inky fruit extraction, with hints of lead pencil, almonds, rich marzipan and showing big tannins. This wine has so much to offer there are layers upon layers of flavors that are intensely complex and bold. The balance between power and refinement is superb, the finish just lingers on the palate. We just love this wine this is serious stuff! Shear power in a bottle.

Clos Martinet, Priorato 1996 **\$69.99**

Simply put this is a bold and powerful wine with massive richness and packed with loads of stuffing. It is so delicious and complex that it is almost impossible to describe this superbly elegant and wonderfully layered wine. There is such an array of dark fruit, lavender, rosemary, and notes of dark chocolate that one doesn't know where to start. So, just enjoy it, it's awesome!

Martinet, Bru 1996 **\$24.99**

Made from a blend of Grenache and Carignan, this is an intensely complex wine that displays a range of raspberry, dark berry flavors, and licorice with a solid body but not over the top. It has a lot of structure and power without the length and drama of the Clos Martinet. This represents a solid wine from Priorato. A great example of what is coming out of Priorato these days.

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2000 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Finewine Maryland

Finewine Virginia

Saturday, February 12th French Rhone wines on Tasting in MD & VA

Saturday, February 19th Italian '98 Dolcetto on Tasting in MD & VA

Saturday, February 26th Spring Whites on Tasting in MD & VA

Saturday, March 4th Spanish Sherry on Tasting in MD & VA

Thursday, March 14th 7-9pm in Maryland
\$40 per person pre-payment confirms reservation

Let us know what tasting events you would like to have!

1997 CALIFORNIA CABERNET TASTING

We'll taste: **Wm Hill Cabernet**
Sterling Cabernet
Geyser Peak Cabernet
J Lohr Cabernet
Frogs Leap Cabernet
Joseph Phelps Cabernet

Cheese and breads will be served

Sparkling reception 7:00-7:30pm

Comparitive Cabernet Tasting 7:30-9:00pm

FEBRUARY 2000 CALENDAR OF EVENTS
FREE TASTINGS FRIDAY NIGHTS & SATURDAYS

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CLINE ZINFANDEL 1998
\$ 9.98

*A round and tasty wine. Lovely strawberry notes.
Serve with stews, birds and grilled meats.*