

# ***Wine Review Magazine (Korea), June 2010***

*Translation from Korean provided by the Wine Institute of California*

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## **California Red Wine recommended by eleven Sommeliers Eleven Proposals**

As if it is the meeting of the key California red wines, each prominent wines were put on the table. 11 California red wines recommended by 11 sommeliers. Introducing eleven dreams proposed by them.

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### **Why California?**

To point out the wine producing area that has shown the most evident growth during the past several decades, no one would hesitate to pick 'California'. California's wine producing technology has been steadily developed that California is called "Old world of new world wine producing area", and study to find grape species fitting each various soil helped better understanding of the region's terroir. California's Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot have now become one of the sexiest wines that devotees of wine in the world expect most. Also, delicate Pinot Noir produced in the Russian River Valley and Santa Barbara which belongs to cool climate area in California is showing a substantial amount of growth lately.

California quality wines can stand comparison with any premium wines in the world. Sometimes, California wines are classified as much expensive wine than any other noted wines. Also, California Boutique wine or Cult wine produced by preceding technical skills and obsession to the quality of wine brought about wine fans' ardent support and put luxurious image on the California wine. California wine's rapid growth and attaining fame with its short history is because they produced their own distinctive wine while trusted by consumers with stabilized quality wines. California wine now arouses consumers' trust and curiosity just by its name. To experience every attractions of California wine, hosted a special California red wine tasting event.

### **11 California red wine tasting event with eleven sommeliers**

Last May 12<sup>th</sup>, eleven sommeliers gathered in Jardin Perdu. Each sommelier had been ordered to choose a California red wine that is handled by hotels or restaurants they belong to. Dierberg Pinot Noir, Rodney Strong Knotty Vines Zinfandel, Seghesio Old Vine Zinfandel, Ridge California Geyserville, Whitehall Lane Merlot, Wente Charles Wetmore Cabernet Sauvignon, Frei Brothers Cabernet Sauvignon, Chappellet Signature Cabernet Sauvignon, Vine Cliff Oakville Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, The Oracle are the selected eleven hot wines that marked a new era in the California wine industry.

General evaluation of California wines is the harmony of enrichment of fruit and oak and its structure. "California wine is like faultless young gentleman of rich family. It is perfect as if who are handsome and well-educated with outstanding abilities as well as good personality." The expression was one of the most accurate and impressed assessments of California wines. California is blessed land with plentiful of sunlight. Wine makers with adventurous spirit went through a lot of experiments, planted various species of grapes, and found suitable species for the land in the California that has variety of soil characters. Besides, there are many wine makers who devote to make best wines, so they concluded that it is reasonable for California wines to have great qualities in the perfect condition of nurture.

There were also talks on the table that various styles of California wine is one of its characteristics, because it is relatively free of traditions and rules in producing the wine. In other words, embracing

various kinds of wine culture and styles of other countries such as France, Italy, and Spain with open mind is one of the strengths of California wine. Also, it was on common ground that there is low-risk of choosing California wine because it tends to maintain its quality continuously, and it always shows the quality more than expected for customers and publically easy to be accepted. California wine is already taking possession of its own distinctive status internal and external. Sommeliers said that "to obstinately find fault with California wine is that it has relatively short history". However, if you look at it another way, there are two positive points here. Firstly, it directly confirms that California wine has achieved its growth in the short period of time. Secondly, there is confident expectation that California wine will continue to grow up as times go by.

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**"How is this wine?"**

**Recommended by Top Sommeliers**

It is still difficult task for experts who have tasted wines numerously to select wines wisely. Some advises to choose California wine if you want to minimize this gambling-like risk of choosing wine. So we asked to 11 sommeliers, "Which one is good among California red wine?"

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**The reason for selecting California wine**

**Recommendation letters from Sommeliers**

**Dierberg Pinot Noir 2006**

Winery Dierberg

Importer SJ Wine

Telephone 070-7893-1392

Retail Price 116,000 Won

Recommended by Joo-Wan Seo, 55° Wine & Dine

The wine produced in Dierberg vineyard located in Santa Maria Valley, California is probably the one in most spotlights lately after awarded KWC 2010 trophy. The wine shows the characteristic of California Pinot Noir with the maximum of enrichment and complexity that Pinot Noir can have.

Sommeliers' Tasting Note

It has nice acidity and well-balanced body, and a little spicy taste left in the mouth is good. Aroma of reddish berries and fruits makes a familiar first impression. Soft tannin, silk like texture and delicate character of oak make a nice finish. It is not slender Pinot Noir, but rather has strong impressions. It emphasizes the features of terroir.

**Rodney Strong Knotty Vines Zinfandel 2007**

Winery Rodney Strong

Importer Kooksoondang L&B

Telephone 02-2167-9410

Retail Price 58,000 Won

Recommended by Sung-Hee Han, Aligote & Aligote Kitchen

Zinfandel is the grape species that can represent California. The wine produced in Sonoma County region is made with grapes harvested by hand, and is a wine of distinct characteristic that consumers can approach to easily. It is well-known to public for relatively inexpensive price. It is also proper to recommend for the beginners of wine.

Sommeliers' Tasting Note

Concentration of fruits, woody aroma from oak, vanilla and spicy taste are in harmony and make a strong impression. The Flavor is comparatively specific and simple so that is good to enjoy casually and the soft tannin would not give repulsion to anyone. The wine reflecting traditional character of California Zinfandel becomes better as time goes by. It will be perfect for barbeque party in summer.

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**Seghesio Old Vine Zinfandel 2007**

Winery Seghesio

Importer Bacchus

Telephone 02-581-4588

Retail Price about 80,000

Recommended by Won-Sun Seo, Millennium Seoul Hilton

Old Vine Zinfandel with 100 years of average life span has small output, but it produces more concentrated fruit and cohesive wines. It might seem hard species, but allows you to feel attraction of Zinfandel with this high quality wine.

Sommeliers' Tasting Note

It is full bodied wine with aroma of blackish red fruit and strong scent of flower thickly condensed. A little toasty, delicate aroma of coffee and walnut are in harmony. Pleasant acidity that supports thick taste and aroma shows well made Zinfandel.

**Ridge California Geyserville 2006**

Winery Ridge

Grape Species Zinfandel 74%, Carignan 18%, Petite Sirah 8%

Importer Cave de Vin

Telephone 02-786-3136

Retail Price 110,000 Won

Recommended by Tae-Joon Hwang, Naosnova

Ridge Vineyard is located in deep mountains of Santa Cruz at an altitude of 800 meters. It's heydays began with Paul Drapper, who learned winemaking in Chateau Latour in 1969, started to work as wine maker in Ridge, and it has been considered one of the best California wine producing Boutique winery for 25 years. I recommend the wine, if you want to taste the wine that expresses California Zinfandel accurately.

Sommeliers' Tasting Note

Has strong aroma of condensed raspberry and dark fruit, supported by spicy and high acidity. Tannin full in the mouth is impressive, and it has well balance and concentration. It looks like well matching with strong sauce of barbeque.

**Whitehall Lane Merlot 2004**

Winery Whitehall Lane

Importer Sooseok Trading

Telephone 02-547-2771

Retail Price 63,000 Won

Recommended by Joo Hoon Jang, Banyantree Club and Spa Seoul

Small scale family-run winery located in Rutherford of Napa Valley, Whitehall Lane took a leap to be one of the leading winery within a short period of history. Whitehall Lane Merlot is a delicate style California Merlot that has aroma of fresh strawberry and condensed rose with nice tannin, boasting high qualities for its price.

**Sommeliers' Tasting Note**

Prominent oak flavors of chocolate, cocoa, vanilla and aroma of fresh strawberry and rose. Soft, but not light structure and delicate finish is attractive. Smooth tannin seems to take the most advantage of Merlot, and seems to reach peak of mature.

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**Duckhorn Merlot 2006**

Winery Duckhorn

Importer Nara Food

Telephone 02-405-4362

Retail Price 160,000 Won

Recommended by Hyun-Jung Lee Podo Plaza Vin Ga

'Duckhorn' is one of the names that cannot be excluded in mentioning California wine. Founder Dan Duckhorn especially devoted to this Merlot with a big concern. Therefore, Duckhorn attained fame for best Merlot maker in Napa Valley. Duckhorn Merlot which has delicate texture and concentration nurtures Merlot species' strength.

**Sommeliers' Tasting Note**

It shows characteristic of Merlot well and mineral quality stands out. Chocolate and toasty oak with thick Cassis and character of strawberry are the features of it, and able to feel strong acidity and spicy herb aroma.

**Wente Charles Wetmore Cabernet Sauvignon 2006**

Winery Wente

Importer Sharp Trading

Telephone 02-3446-4160

Retail Price 54,000 Won

Recommended by Dae-Hwan Eun, Ritz Carlton Hotel Seoul

Visiting Wente's winery gives you feeling that it is the place as if where all the American lifestyles are collected into one place. Also, wine of Wente is the most Americanized wine that they drink very easily and deliciously in daily life, and is accessible that everyone would enjoy.

**Sommeliers' Tasting Note**

The aroma of mineral and fruit are expressed finely, and is generally well balanced with proper tannin. Most of all, it is not too much, but has accessible characteristic fits with food. It is not traditional Cabernet Sauvignon character, but rather good to drink somewhat lightly.

**Frei Brothers Cabernet Sauvignon 2003**

Winery Frei Brothers

Importer Keumyang International

Telephone 02-2109-9228

Retail Price 100,000 Won

Recommended by Chang-Min Shin, Lotte Hotel Seoul

It is one of the most consumed wines in America, produced by global wine corporation E&J Gallo. It is loved by consumers constantly, and shows fine balance from beginning to end.

#### Sommeliers' Tasting Note

It is a well matured wine expressing aroma of oak and overripe fruit. Harsh masculinity and romantic character from elegant aromas coexist. It is just perfect to have right now, but also good to have after the lapse of time because tannin is lively and concentrated.

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#### **Chappellet Signature Cabernet Sauvignon 2007**

Winery Chappellet

Importer The Hite

Telephone 02-3485-5753

Retail Price about 260,000 Won

Recommended by Yong-Hee Kim, Garden Place

The distinctive California wine character, the feeling of fruity as well as thickly condensation is well expressed in the wine and it is one of the most popular wines in the Garden Place. It is the wine that breaks the prejudices of full bodied style California wine.

#### Sommeliers' Tasting Note

Well-ripe cherry, herb, lavender and aroma of coffee are filling the wine splendidly. It has remarkable harmony of soft tannin and acidity, and is easy to drink because alcohol is not pungent. After drinking, the wine spreads out for a long time.

#### **Vine Cliff Oakville Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2006**

Winery Vine Cliff

Importer Yeonil Beverage

Telephone 02-3210-7760

Retail Price about 250,000 Won

Recommended by Hyun-Joo Kim, Hyatt Seoul

I'm confident that it is the best quality wine among the wines that has fine structure which is the characteristic of California wine, meanwhile has Bordeaux style terroir of the old world. You'll be able to feel sincereness of brewer.

#### Sommeliers' Tasting Note

Smokiness and aroma of wood and others are complex, and tannin fills up the mouth. It is luxurious and elegant wine and has excellent perfectness with proper acidity. It is expected to be matured in at least 5 years or more, but sufficient to feel the deep texture of wine even now.

#### **The Oracle 2005**

Winery Miner Family Vineyard

Grape Species Cabernet Sauvignon 52%, Merlot 31%, Cabernet Franc 17%

Importer Dongwon Wine Plus

Telephone 02-589-3649

Retail Price about 300,000 Won

Recommended by Joshua Jang W Hotel Seoul

It is Bordeaux style blending wine produced in Stagecoach which is well-known place for high-quality

wine producing region in Napa Valley. It won the KWC 2009 trophy. You'll be able to feel the essence of refined structure of California wine.

#### Sommeliers' Tasting Note

Endless aromas such as cherry, spice, Japan cedar, cassis and chocolate come up. It shows full-bodied and solid structure with matured tannin, and the finish spreading in the mouth is long and overwhelming. It offers somewhat different aspects of California wine reflecting Bordeaux style very well.

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### **Four truths to know about California wine**

#### **1. It's how California wine was born**

The history of American winery began by European immigrants in the early 17 centuries. Spanish explorers and Francisco priests started to plant Spanish grape species called 'Mission' in California during 1769 and 1823, but the results were worthless. In 1830, Jean-Kouis Vignes brought high quality species from *Vitis Vinifera* such as Cabernet Sauvignon, and people started to take notice of vineyard as gold mine in Sierra, California is exhausted in 1849. In the time, Hungarian Agoston Haraszthy came back to America after trip to Europe with 300 species of grapes, and planted in Sonoma. However, there were several crises in California wine market. The attack of phylloxera in 1890s laid wine producing areas to waste, the prohibition act from 1920 to 1933, and outbreak of World War 1, and World War 2 constricted California wine industry. However, by the 1960s, California wine made a new leap forward. In 1964, Joe Heitz established winery after his name, and Robert Mondavi made his own independent wine in 1966 which was the prelude to the new history of California wine industry. Since then, California is making rapid progress with wine makers who are making a constant effort and learning wine producing skills with blessed land of California, technical skills and open mind. The wine output of California is about 20 million hectoliter, and California is the fourth region to producing wines in the world, after Italy, France and Spain. Also, it is recording fourth place in market share of Korea wine market in terms of price and supply.

#### **2. Superior environment controls California wine**

It is 1,100km from north to south of California. It is able to find vineyards in most regions along the area. As you can see the difference from north to south, climate and soils of the wine producing region of California varies according to geographical position. However, the most common characteristic is that it is inevitable to have irrigation during the period when fruits become ripen because there is little rain from June to September. The most influencing factor to climate of California is the Pacific coast and the regions show characteristics of maritime climate generally. Also there is a great temperature difference between day and night because of frequent morning fog on the coast, and the difference plays a key role in maintaining fresh acidity of grapes and maturing plentiful fruit taste at the same time. On the other hand, the inland regions where cool breeze and fog of coast doesn't reach shows very hot summer climate.

Researchers of David Campus who investigated and researched of the climates of California wine producing regions classified the regions by weather and temperatures of wine producing regions. There are five categories from Zone 1, which is the coldest area, to Zone 5, the warmest area. Zone 1~3 are considered as proper place for producing high-quality wines.

#### **3. Grapes that California selected**

There are 60% of red varieties planted and 40% of white in California. Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, Merlot are the representative red varieties of California wine and amount of producing Pinot Noir and Syrah is increasing lately. Napa Valley is especially the famous place for Cabernet Sauvignon within California. The nature of Napa Valley helps Cabernet Sauvignon to be ripe well and slowly in the

grapevine, and as a result, it produces rich taste, aroma and texture and high alcohol degree. Developed technologies as temperature controlling system and unstinted investments in producing best quality wine contributed to gain fame of Cabernet Sauvignon in California.

Meanwhile, Zinfandel which has the story of American pioneer is the wine that has special meaning for Americans. In the beginning of gold rush, it is well-known story that miners who finished their work in coal mine took a rest from the fatigue by drinking Zinfandel. Zinfandel is first planted in 1850 and generally known as inherent species of the region, but the research proved that it is genetically the same species with Primitivo from Puglia, Italy. However, it doesn't mean that it is 100% exactly same as Italian Primitivo. Clone of grapes, soil and difference of brewing process makes the unique California Zinfandel.

On the other hand, Chardonnay is well-known species for white wine in California and also planted widely. Chardonnay grows well in most wine producing regions neighboring coast, and matured California Chardonnay in oak casks shows great harmony of aroma of soft butter, oak, apple, peach, melon and pear. Lately, some ages the wine more lightly in oak to make much fruity styles or does none of aging to produce fresh ones. Also, Sauvignon Blanc and French Colombard which is mostly used for blending with inexpensive wines are produced a lot. Amount of producing Pinot Gris and Pinot Grigio which became sensationally popular lately is growing rapidly.

#### **4. The land that illuminates California wine**

California's wine producing area is officially divided into 5 categories, which are the coast of north California, central California, South California, and Sierra Nevada, and Central Valley. The coast of North California is located north of the San Francisco Bay, and is the most famous wine producing region in California. It includes Mendocino, Lake County, Sonoma, Napa and Carneros.

Napa Valley that has meaning of 'the land of plenty' in the language of Wappo Indian has small surface area but well-known wine producing area in America and the world. Sonoma County adjacent to the Napa Valley is in the center of California wine producing area. Russian River Valley which is famous for high quality Pinot Noir and Dry Creek Valley famous for Zinfandel are well-known wine producing place in Sonoma County.

Mendocino County located on the north of San Francisco started to appeal internationally between 1970s and 80s. The region includes Anderson Valley that shows cold climate, and is well-known for white wines of fine aroma such as Riesling and Gewurztraminer.