

# Making Discoveries, Seeking Advice

| BY JAMES LAUBE |

**Wine Spectator**

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**Dry Creek Vineyard in California's Sonoma County is the source of a range of well-priced varietal wines.**

**M**uch of the time, I know what I want. So I do most of my wine shopping online these days, or buy direct from wineries.

But sometimes I want to explore. I'm looking for exciting wines that offer good value. I avoid the most popular wines, which are not always the best values, and mostly stay clear of wines from my California beat because I see so many in the tasting room. I'm more eager to discover a wine from elsewhere. In today's wine world I encounter so many choices when I'm in a wineshop or

restaurant that I always seek advice.

When browsing wineshops I pay attention to shelf-talkers and in particular endorsements from my colleagues. I figure that if someone has tasted the wine and offered a recommendation, that's a start, and with *Wine Spectator's* online database available on my iPhone, I can check on a wine in seconds. Then too, I'll ask the salespeople about the best values or something special in the store (such as an overlooked older vintage) and go from there. I'm not looking simply for the least expensive wine; quality is essential.

When dining out, I usually take the same, two-pronged approach. First I survey the list, looking for intriguing wines and good deals. Then I query the sommeliers about their preferences. They can tell me if there's a wine on the list that I shouldn't miss, or one that just arrived but hasn't been added to the list yet. In restaurants you have the advantage of tasting the wine and

letting the sommelier know whether you like it or not. If the sommelier's choice is something there's a chance you can try another option. Tasting is essential, describing

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## RECOMMENDED WINES

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
<b>ALONDRA</b> Chardonnay Mendocino County Middelridge Ranch Vineyard 2008	90	\$16
<b>BOGLE</b> Sauvignon Blanc California 2008	88	\$10
<b>CHATEAU ST. JEAN</b> Fumé Blanc Sonoma County 2008	88	\$13
<b>CONCANNON</b> Syrah Central Coast Selected Vineyards 2006	86	\$10

<b>DRY CREEK</b> Merlot Dry Creek Valley 2006	88	\$19
<b>FREI BROTHERS</b> Chardonnay Russian River Valley Reserve 2007	88	\$20
<b>KLINKER BRICK</b> Syrah Lodi Farrah 2007	91	\$18
<b>ROSENBLUM</b> Syrah California Vintner's Cuvée 2007	88	\$13

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