

# Notes on a Wine List

By Elaine Smith

I plunk myself down in the cushy restaurant booth and reach eagerly for the wine list. All too often, I'm disappointed by generic wines and high prices. But my cup runneth over when I find wines that have been chosen as carefully as the menu. So imagine my joy when I discovered the wine program at Hawks in Granite Bay, owned by Molly Hawk and Michael Fagnoni.

"How did you get it right when so many fail?" I asked the restaurant's wine director, Kevin Tyson. Tyson offered to go through the seven-page list with me and share the thinking behind some of his selections.

**SPARKLING**

Lucien <u>Albrecht</u> Cremant d'Alsace NV	bottle	\$38
Robert Hunter Brut de Noirs, Sonoma Valley 1999		\$63

**WHITES**

CrossBarn Russian River Valley 2007 Chardonnay		\$72
Frank Family Napa Valley 2006 Chardonnay		\$68
MacRostie Carneros 2006 Chardonnay		\$48
Pine Ridge Dijon Clones Napa Valley 2006 Chardonnay		\$65
<u>Huge Bear</u> Sonoma County 2006 Chardonnay		\$86
Luli Santa Lucia Highlands 2007 Chardonnay		\$46
Daniel Chotard Sancerre 2006		\$47
Rail Bridge Dry Creek Valley Sauvignon Blanc 2006		\$26

**REDS**

<u>Barnett Cyrus Ryan</u> Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2005		\$185
Jordan Alexander Valley 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon		\$107
O'Shaughnessy <u>Howell Mountain</u> 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon		\$155
Snowden Lost Vineyard Napa Valley 1999 Cabernet Sauvignon		\$100
Stag's Leap Napa Valley 1998 Cabernet Sauvignon		\$165
Northstar Columbia Valley 2004 Merlot		\$61
Provenance Napa Valley 2005 <u>Merlot</u>		\$44
<u>Harlan Estate</u> Napa Valley 2004 Meritage		\$945
Justin Isosceles Paso Robles 1997 Meritage		\$270
Viader Napa Valley 1998		\$244
Château Charmail Haut-Medoc 2001 Bordeaux		\$45
Château Puy Arnaud Côtes de Castillon Bordeaux 2004		\$45
Château Lafite-Rothschild Pauillac 2000 Bordeaux		\$1,810
Adrian Fog Numbers Sonoma Coast 2005 <u>Pinot Noir</u>		\$140
<u>Beaux Frères</u> Willamette Valley 2006 Pinot Noir (magnum)		\$190
Kosta Browne Sonoma Coast 2006 Pinot Noir		\$145
Sea Smoke Southing Sta. Rita Hills 2006 Bordeaux		\$118
Melville <u>Sta. Rita Hills</u> 2006 Pinot Noir		\$67
Shea Wine Cellars Shea Vineyard Willamette Valley 2006 Pinot Noir		\$93
Siduri Cargasacchi Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills 2006 Pinot Noir		\$122
Labouré-Roi Volnay Clos des Chênes 2003 Burgundy		\$63
Relic Alder Springs Vineyard Mendocino 2005 Syrah		\$106

**Notes:**

- "Robert Hunter is California's smallest sparkling-wine maker. Only about 1,000 cases. When you taste it blind, you'd guess Champagne. Yeasty, brioche aromas, with screaming acidity. For vintage Champagne, this is priced well under others on the list."
- "Fruit-driven and creamy. Rosé champagne is usually more expensive, but Albrecht comes at an introductory price point. I enjoy it as an aperitif, to get ready for the evening."
- "I don't have Rombauer. It's everywhere. But I do have Frank Family, a winery that was partially founded by Koerner Rombauer."
- "There's the no-brainers, brands that people are comfortable with, like MacRostie and Pine Ridge."
- "One of our distributors' sons makes this at a custom crush pad in Napa. Only 72 cases. I thought it was a Margaret River Chard from Australia, because it had tropical fruit and a richness that's hard to achieve in California without getting too viscous. We're the only ones with it in this area. A few places in Napa and San Francisco took the rest of the lot."
- "An unoaked style without the buttery malolactic fermentation. The first Chard from the Pisoni family, known for cult Pinot Noir."
- "From Spring Mountain. I tasted it from barrel last spring. Only 250 cases, supposed to go only to their club members. I called and asked, 'Please, please, please.' They haven't given any to any other restaurant."
- "When you have some of these special things on the list, next to things people have heard of, it's hard. You want to educate them, excite them, but you don't want to be pushy. Please ask us!"
- "Winemaker John Alfonso makes this in downtown Sacramento from Sonoma grapes."
- "I find a lot of value from mountain fruit, compared to valley-floor wines, like Caymus, with higher production and recognition. It's music to my ears when people recognize Howell Mountain."
- "I don't expect everyone to know all the wines on the list. Instead of feeling like they have to order the known thing, I wish a customer would simply say, 'I always order Jordan Cabernet and I'd like something else. What do you suggest?'"
- "I was very appreciative they could send me six bottles."
- "New restaurants don't usually have the opportunity to bring in older vintages."
- "Traditional Merlot drinkers love the softer-tannins, fruit-forward style here."
- "Older vintages of Justin and Viader get people jumping!"
- "Early on, I signed up the restaurant for the waiting list. A week later, they called me. It was a real tribute to what [owners Michael Fagnoni and Molly Hawk] have done with the restaurant."
- "We've sold one since opening."
- "One affordable right bank and one affordable left bank."
- "A husband-and-wife team. Only 1,000 cases split between four Pinot bottlings per year."
- "Beaux Frères is partially owned by critic Robert Parker Jr."
- "People go for these right away."
- "The list ranges in style from the wild cherry/red raspberry of the Santa Rita Hills to the earthiness, black tea and mushroom of the Willamette Valley."
- "In the Pinot category, I'm able to offer more single vineyards."
- "Absolutely beautiful, especially when we get sockeye salmon in."
- "One hundred cases, single vineyard. Only four cases distributed in Northern California. We got six cases. A gem."