

FOOD & WINE

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best value wines
napa, bordeaux & more

10 classic dishes
for entertaining
wine country's
top recipes



cooking with cheese
a master's simplest recipes



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great values from
NAPA VALLEY

2005 Aquinas Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$13) Don Sebastiani & Sons, one of California's top *négociant* companies, owns this brand. Aquinas concentrates on simple reds from Napa Valley—like this bacony, black-curranty Cabernet.

2005 Avalon Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$15) Sweet blackberry flavor and a light oak toastiness are the defining characteristics of this juicy Cabernet from the oddly named Purple Wine Company, which produces bargain bottlings from regions throughout California.

2006 Castle Rock Napa Valley Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (\$18) Warm, black fruit and lots of it is a

good way to describe this user-friendly, juicy Cabernet from value-specialist Castle Rock (which mostly focuses on Pinot Noir). A cedary note adds a necessary touch of complexity.

2005 Edge Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$20) Edge makes only one wine—this purple-black, boysenberry-inflected Cab—from vineyards along Napa Valley's Silverado Trail. A small portion of Merlot helps smooth out some of the Cabernet's aggressive tannins.

2005 Educated Guess Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$20) This formidable Cabernet, from a new *négociant* label, uses fruit from Yountville, Oakville and Rutherford; winemaker Barry Gnekow then ages it for nine

months in French oak and three in American to give its black currant fruit a distinct savory-spicy edge.

2006 Steltzner Claret (\$20) A perennial value from one of Napa Valley's most well-regarded Cabernet Sauvignon producers, Steltzner's cherry-inflected, streamlined claret is an intensely flavorful blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot.

2006 Twenty Bench Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley (\$20) Purple-red in color and dense with ripe blackberry and blueberry fruit, this Cabernet is remarkable for the price. That may well be thanks to the fact that Jim Regusci is in charge of sourcing the grapes for it. Regusci, the owner of Regusci Vineyard Management, farms more than a thousand acres of grapes in and around Napa Valley.

star selection



2006 BonAnno Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley (\$20) Winemaker Tim Dolven of Steltzner Vineyards helps BonAnno proprietor Matthew Bonnanno craft this expressive, blackberry-rich red from top-quality Napa Valley fruit.