



# WHAT THE GROWNUPS ARE DRINKING

by Diane Murphy & Laura Lindsey

**W**hile Fiesta revelers crowded the plazas and mercados downtown, our core group of wine tasters gathered for a *fiesta* of our own (not to be confused with the *siesta* that follows over-imbibing of the grape). On the menu for this party was a daunting task: finding delicious and affordable wines from our local vineyards.

Do these recession-buster wines really exist in pricey Santa Barbara County? We set out to unearth what bottles could be had for \$20 or less, and in true recession-buster style we paired the wines with that most humble meal—pizza. Note that the prices listed are the wineries' suggested retail prices, and you may be able to find them for even less at various locales around town. Join us on our voyage of discovery, and you can enjoy everyday drinking wines at prices that will have you dancing in the streets, certainly in keeping with Old Spanish Days tradition.

## 2005 Ovene Sauvignon Blanc

Santa Ynez Valley Royal Oak Vineyard (\$15)

A light, bright wine with a hint of sweetness countered by a slight tartness. A ripe peach flavor emerged after eating the caramelized onion pizza. Perfect as a refreshing pick-me-up, it also paired well with mild cheeses. Gazing at the puzzle design on the label, we understood Ovene's motto: "The puzzle is now complete. The only piece missing is you." Available at Coastal Winery and The Harbor Restaurant.

## 2008 Alma Rosa Chardonnay

Santa Barbara County (\$19)

With flavors of green Granny Smith apples and just a hint of oak, the acidic finish was a welcome treat. The organic grapes impart a clean taste, not at all like a traditional, buttery Chardonnay. The wine totally opened up when paired with a rich, fatty cheese. Available at C'est Cheese, Cantwell's Market, Lazy Acres and Los Olivos Grocery.

## 2006 William James Cellars Legacy

Sangiovese/Cabernet Sauvignon Camp 4 Vineyard (\$20)

A blend of 70 percent Sangiovese and 30 percent Cabernet Sauvignon, this wine exudes a delicious smoky flavor. A smooth, easy-drinking Italian-style wine, it is like soft velvet in your mouth. This small-production winery, named for winemaker Robin Bogue's father William and son James, delivered one of the great finds of the night. It worked well with the veggie pizza and would be a fantastic steak wine. Available at Wine Country in Los Olivos and Round Up Market in Santa Ynez.

## 2007 Beckmen Vineyards Cuvee Le Bec

Santa Ynez Valley (\$20)

This wine adds a little something extra to the traditional blend of Grenache (44 percent), Syrah (28 percent) and Mourvedre (20 percent) with 8 percent of the little-known Counoise. Aromas of tobacco, red cherries and leather give way to a back-palate finish that is bold without being overpowering. A multidimensional wine with complex, rounded flavors, this wine was a hit, especially with the meat pizza. Available at Lazy Acres, the Winehound, Los Olivos Grocery and East Beach Wine.

## 2006 Camino Real Syrah

Los Alamos Vineyard (\$12)

The least expensive wine we tried was a "really respectable," jammy crowd pleaser that tasted like it cost triple the price we paid. It was a mild and smooth Syrah, very approachable and not overpowering. It was lovely with figs and cheese and evoked images of sitting on the patio with a glass of wine and good conversation. Available at Happy Harry's Produce, Coastal Winery and Red's Urban Wine Bar and Nielsen's Market.

One key takeaway from this tasting is that food really works well with less-expensive wines, so there's no reason not to crack open a bottle of local wine with dinner any night of the week. While we hope the end of the recession is in sight, for now we can take comfort in knowing that we can enjoy great local wines without putting too much strain on the pocketbook. Until next time, cheers! 🍷

Diane Murphy and Laura Lindsey are the co-owners of Classic Vines, specializing in distribution and online sales of small-production wines. Visit [classiccivines.com](http://classiccivines.com)