

Jan 2003  
To wife

# Tasting notes

**Stop the taint** There was a corked bottle in this month's tasting. That doesn't mean the wine was floating corky bits; rather, it was tainted by a pungent chemical that produces an unpleasant musty smell reminiscent of damp basement or wet cardboard. Even the tiniest amount of 2,4,6-trichloroanisole (TCA) can ruin a whole bottle. Cork, traditionally harvested from the bark of a species of oak tree, can contain moulds and other substances that may react with chlorine (sometimes used in the bark's cleaning process) to create the offending chemical. In part due to the bark's perceived flaw, the use of synthetic corks has been growing at a rate of 10 to 30 per cent a year and now accounts for about seven per cent of the 17 billion stoppers produced annually. Other winemakers have turned to screw-tops. The New Zealand Screwcap Wine Seal Initiative ([www.screwcap.co.nz](http://www.screwcap.co.nz)) promotes these closures and also lists 140 wines available in 20 countries. But natural cork isn't the only culprit: TCA has been known to contaminate many things, from plastic crates to a winery's rafters. This time, the cork on the musty wine was plastic.

## Pick of the month

**La Gioiosa La Villa  
Prosecco ★★★★★**  
Prevedello and Mathews  
International, 416-  
979-9153. 627471, \$11.95.  
Veneto, Italy

Just in time for New Year's, a charmat-method bubbly that's value priced. Off dry with a vaguely floral pear character, pleasantly vinous, and neutral enough for cocktails. Add peach purée to make a bellini, or half an ounce of crème de cassis for a pretty kir royale.



character that's earthy and herbal, combined with black licorice, cedar and ripe fruits. Big for the price, with lengthy, persistent tannins, built to age five years or more.

## Red wine

**Bolla Amarone della Valpolicella Classico 1997 ★★★**  
Charton-Hobbs Inc., 905-238-3222. 352757, \$32.95.  
Veneto, Italy

Grapes are dried for up to 90 days on trays, then crushed, fermented and aged several years in oak. A firm, intense, spiced style with pine needle, game, raisin and menthol notes. Plenty of structure and alcohol (14.5 per cent) yet lean in the middle palate. Have with sharp, dry cheeses or rich stews, such as osso buco.

**Calama Merlot 2001 ★★★ ½**  
Bogdan Cojocar, 905-825-2079. 612440, \$9.35.  
Central Valley, Chile  
Pleasant, easy-drinking style with a medium body and supple tannins. Smooth ripe-berry tastes. Quaff with baked ham, burgers or pasta dishes.

**Robert Skalli Merlot 2000 ★★★★★**  
Pernod Ricard Canada, 905-405-0410. 571042, \$12.95.  
Vins de Pays d'Oc, France  
Deep purple edges with toasted oak, spiced clove and plenty of berry flavours. Medium bodied; nice, elegant structure and good concentration. Match with beef, steak or game.

**Duboeuf Moulin à Vent 2000 ★★★**  
Philippe Dandurand Wines Ltd., 416-368-3344. 154864, \$17.50.  
Beaujolais, France

A light, non-tannic red with fresh acidity. Medium body, bright berry liveliness and nice grip. Have with white pizza, veal, pork.

**Thomson Woolpunda Red Block Shiraz 2000 ★★★ ½**  
Lacey's International, 416-690-2557. 627216, \$9.95.  
South Australia  
Simple, oak-spiced (from inner staves, a common value-priced Oz alternative to barrels), with a velvety delivery of ripe, plummy fruit. Have with meat sauces or flank steak.

**Fleur du Cap Shiraz 2000 ★★★ ½**  
Peter Mielzynski Agencies Ltd., 905-820-4117. 340422, \$14.25.  
Coastal Region, South Africa  
Matured in small oak casks, medium-full bodied with a spiced, tarry, smoky plum taste typical of S.A. shiraz. Big in flavour, with velvety tannins and a long finish. Have with Hunan chili beef, smoked meats or hearty stews.

**White wine**  
**Château Grand Renom 2000 ★★★ ½**  
Authentic Wine & Spirits Merchants, 905-238-0716. 619858, \$11.25. Bordeaux, France  
Sauvignon blanc from vineyards not far from the Dordogne. Fresh nose of citrus

and honeysuckle. Dry, crisp taste with a silky mouth feel. Good food wine, well balanced, clean.

## Consignment pick Jardin Cobbler's Hill 2000 ★★★★★

Abcon International Wine Merchants Inc., 416-766-8235. \$35. Stellenbosch, South Africa  
From South Africa's Jordan, marketed as Jardin in North America in deference to California's Jordan Winery. Husband-and-wife winemakers Gary and Kathy Jordan produce consistently top-notch wines with exuberant varietal expression. This, their premium label, spent 22 months in French oak. Blend of cab sauv and merlot with four per cent cab franc. Well balanced, full, plush and tasty, with soft, rounded spicy chocolate and berry.

Abcon International imports California's Butterfield Station, Belvedere, Michel-Schlumberger Benchland, Mountain View Vintners and Bogle. Also: Italy's Cantine Salvalai, New Zealand's Forrest Estate, Chile's Viña Porta and Oregon's Flynn Vineyards. From Oz, they bring in De Bortoli and Stanley Brothers.



These notes list producer-shipper, agent (and telephone), CSPC number (V indicates a Vintages bottle), price per 750 mL and region. Consignment bottles are generally bought by the case from the agent. Rating is on a five-star system that stresses quality for price: ★ (basic), ★★ (acceptable), ★★★ (good), ★★★★ (very good), ★★★★★ (exceptional).

## Cellar keeper

**Chateau d'Aiguilhe 1999 ★★★★★**  
Lorac Wine, 416-783-2516.  
V983361, \$36.95. Côtes de  
Castillon, France

Blend of 80 per cent merlot, the rest cabernet franc and cabernet sauvignon, from the famed producer Comtes de Neipperg (owner of Canon-La-Graffelière, La Mondotte and other notable Saint Émilion estates). The château dates to the 13th century. Its 42 hectares benefit from Stephan von Neipperg's low-yield harvesting and a modern, flexible approach to wine-making. Rich, deep, with a classic French

