

## WINE BASICS 101

Learn about various grape varietals, pairing wine with food and ordering off a restaurant wine list, plus taste nine wines. 7:30 to 9:15 p.m., 3018 Arizona Ave. NW. Tickets cost \$55; call 202-244-3700 or visit [www.tastedc.com/cgi-bin/events.cgi?location=X\\_DC](http://www.tastedc.com/cgi-bin/events.cgi?location=X_DC).

## CINDY AND SCOTT GREENBERG *Vine Gal and Vine Guy*

# Twice the fun, half the size

Last weekend we decided to take advantage of the wonderful spring weather by packing a picnic lunch and setting off for a scenic location. Just as we headed out the door, we realized there was a critical element missing from our bountiful basket: wine.

A quick trip down to the cellar turned into a 30-minute scavenger hunt for an appropriate bottle. We rummaged around and stumbled upon a box tucked away in the far corner. It was full of assorted half bottles. We looked at each other and exclaimed in unison, "perfect!"

Perfect because a half bottle is exactly what you need when you don't want too much wine — such as in the middle of the day or when dining alone — but when you need just enough.

Sadly, half bottles are not as easy to find as you might think. Many wine shops carry limited quantities of quality wines in the 375 ml size either because demand is low or supply from wineries isn't readily available. The good news is that diligent wine shoppers can pick up some great half bottles if they keep an eye out for them. Alternatively, you can ask your favorite retailer to order a specific wine for you by the half bottle — but be prepared to order at least 12 half bottles to make it worth the shop's effort.

One other tip — half bottles are not exactly half-price. There is a slight markup for the reduced size, so expect to pay about 60 percent of the full bottle equivalent.

Here is a list of our favorites wines currently available in half bottle format. Retail prices are approximate.

### SHE SAID

**2004 Caymus Conundrum White Wine Blend, California (\$12 — available at Pearson's in D.C.)**

This intriguing blend is composed of chardonnay, semillon, muscat canelli, viognier and sauvignon blanc grapes sourced from various vineyards throughout California. A great value, this wine features aromas of honey-suckle, peaches and apricot and mouth-filling flavors of melon, pear and creamy vanilla. Citrus notes sneak in on the crisp, dry finish. Great with shrimp salad.

**2004 Etude Pinot Noir, Carneros, California (\$20 - available at Schneider's of Capitol Hill in D.C.)**

This medium-bodied pinot features fresh strawberries and ripe raspberries. Hints of cinnamon weave in and out on

the back of the palate while the lasting finish features just a touch of orange peel. It would be fun to try this with roasted chicken.

**2005 Rosenblum Cellars Zinfandel, Richard Sauret Vineyard, Paso Robles, California (\$22 — Available at Total Wine and More in McLean, Va.)**

Whoever said great things come in small packages must have had this zinfandel in mind. A big, opulent red wine that possesses gorgeous flavors of black cherry, blueberry and vanilla notes on a well-balanced stage. Characteristic black pepper plays out on the powerful finish. Try it with barbecued ribs.

**2003 Vieux Telegraph Chateaufeu du Pape, Rhone, France (\$25 — Available at MacArthur Beverages in D.C.)**

This full-bodied red wine blend is one of my favorites from the southern Rhone Valley of France. Rich flavors of black cherry, raspberry and savory all mingle seamlessly on the tongue. Prominent notes of cedar and black pepper on the lengthy finish provide a worthy foil for a steak sandwich.

### HE SAID

**Pommery non-vintage Rosé Champagne, Reims, France (\$10 for 187ml — available at The Wine Specialist in D.C.)**

The playful pink color and effervescent bubbles shout "picnic." Soft and easy flavors of slightly sweet strawberries and pomegranates stay light and crisp on the finish. A wonderful companion with fresh strawberries.

**2005 Domaine Merlin-Cherrier Sancerre, Loire Valley, France (\$12 — available at MacArthur Beverages)**

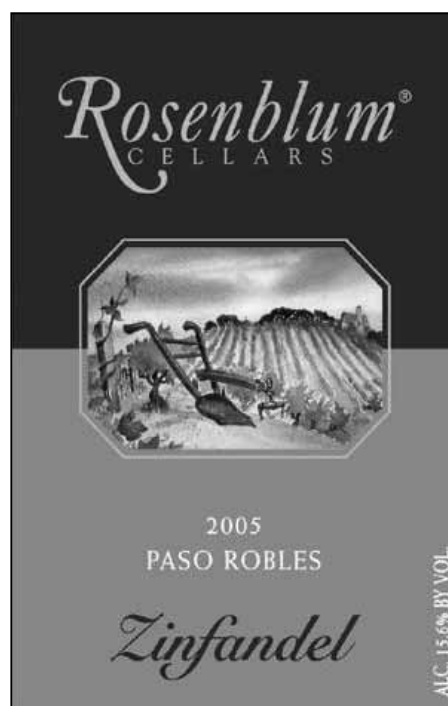
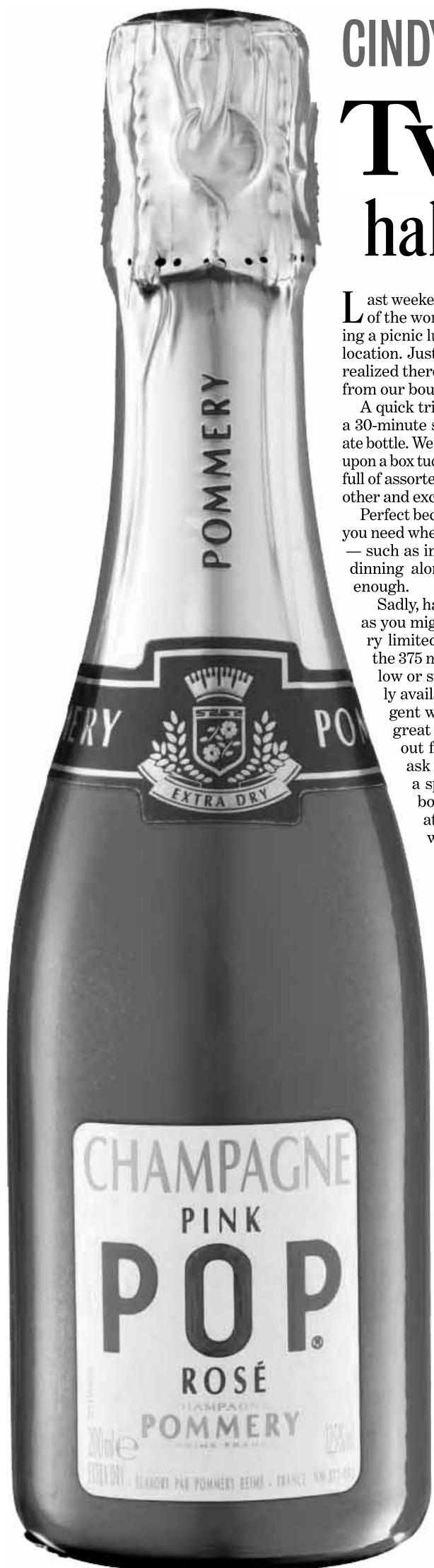
The Sancerre region of France, located in the Loire Valley, makes wonderful, easy-drinking summer wines. This sauvignon blanc has lovely notes of citrus on the nose and in the mouth. Additional flavors of grapefruit join with nuanced mineral underpinnings on a crisp frame to provide a great match for fresh oysters.

**2004 Domaine Serene Pinot Noir Evenstad Vineyard, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$29 — available at Schneider's of Capitol Hill)**

An opulent pinot noir that highlights ripe black cherries, plums and black tea flavors, all packed onto a well-structured frame. A hint of cherry cola plays out on the long, luxurious finish. Roast duck, here I come.

**2003 Chateau Montelena Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa, California (\$48 — available at MacArthur Beverages)**

A rich, decadent cabernet with loads of blackberries, dark plum fruit and cassis up-front. Dried herbs and a hint of cocoa are featured on the long, impressive finish. Soft cheeses and crusty bread are all you need for a memorable pairing.



Do you have a favorite royalty of wine? E-mail us at [scott@vineguy.com](mailto:scott@vineguy.com).

