



June's Pets

Of all the summer months, June is my favorite. Not too hot, but still hot enough, June ushers us into the heat mercifully. Also, it's my little sister's birthday month and she's the *bestest* friend I will ever have. And speaking of June, animal shelters are normally at their fullest during summer months, so if you were thinking of adopting, *do it now*. But first check out these awesome wines.



PHOTO: DOUG YOUNG

by Jessie Birschbach

Our Wine Editor, Jessie Birschbach, Certified Sommelier—or JABS, as we call her in the office—uses her experience as a sommelier and her background in marketing to rate retail wines on both the inside and the outside of the bottle. After all, in off-premise environments it's usually the packaging that hooks us then it's up to the wine to keep us on the hook. For this reason, we are nixing the traditional rating system and simply employing the "JABS" rating system to assess packaging and brand identity. As for the inside of the bottle, you can be sure that these wines have met the reasonably high yet unpretentious standard of simply being delicious and drinkable.

- 1 JAB Clear, legible label, solid branding. Pow, right in the kisser.
- 2 JABS Eye catching label and memorable branding. This one's got a one two punch.
- 3 JABS Creatively inspiring in both packaging and branding. I'm seeing stars and parakeets.
- 4 JABS A near work of art and meaningful branding. Might not last another round.
- 5 JABS A masterpiece in packaging and new benchmark in branding. An instant knock-out!



Palo Alto 2014 Pinot Noir, Santa Barbara-Santa Clara-Monterey (\$20)

Thankfully, you don't have to work in the tech industry to be able to afford this medium-plus-bodied Pinot Noir sourced from Santa Clara, Monterey and Santa Barbara. Black cherry and sandalwood leads into a clove-like finish. Although the Silicon Valley doesn't necessarily evoke "wine-growing region," the concept of sourcing its innovation to make the wine is interesting. The label, a circuit chip framing an evergreen tree, will surely catch the eye of an introverted computer programmer and/or anyone else who's into the cutting edge.

FETZER VINEYARDS



Haute Couture Blanc French Bubbles.

France (\$29) A bottle textured in what looks like gold fishnet stockings and Art Deco flare will appeal to those living in the 1920s and/or those of us today with a keen eye for fashion. In either case, after a sip of this stone-fruity sparkler from France, dancing the Charleston will very likely ensue. The finish does offer a bit of residual sugar, so this will work for a larger audience at any party and/or speakeasy.

BOISSET COLLECTION



Game of Thrones 2016 Chardonnay, Central Coast (\$19.99)

A wine branded by an HBO series, even if it's one of the best damn shows on television, is still a wine branded by an HBO television series. Surprisingly, though, this isn't the clumsy oak bomb I was worried it was going to be—more of a fresher, aromatic style of Chardonnay. Made by Bob Cabral, Sonoma based winemaker for Three Sticks and formerly of Williams Selyem, it only goes through partial malolactic fermentation and includes ten percent Riesling; the stone fruits here are furnished with a citrus and honey spin. The branding/label features gold rings embellished with dragons and other animals found on the GoT emblem, and I highly suggest reading the back of the bottle. This is truly as the site claims, "a golden, refined quaff," so don't do as I did and underestimate this wine. The same mistake has been made about Tyrion Lannister. Also, I've yet to try the red, but no matter how delicious, I would not suggest serving it at weddings.

VINTAGE WINE ESTATES



Fatty Pope 2014 Red Wine, Paso Robles (\$19.99)

Akin to Lowbrow (pop surrealism) art, the label/branding of Fatty Pope is immediately fetching. (This is coming from someone who likes to visit the Luz de Jesus Gallery at Soap Plant Wacko in Los Angeles every month.) Still, I think anyone can find the humor and self-awareness here even if they're not into the populist Angeleno-based art movement. There's even a "prayer" offered on the back. Raspberry liqueur; black cherry and Twizzlers in this big, fruit-forward blend from Paso Robles. Proprietor Chef Fabio Viviani himself suggests this with a burger and I'd be inclined to agree. The full-bodied sweetness will counter the rich, salty ground beef. ■■

FABIO VIVIANI ESTATES



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