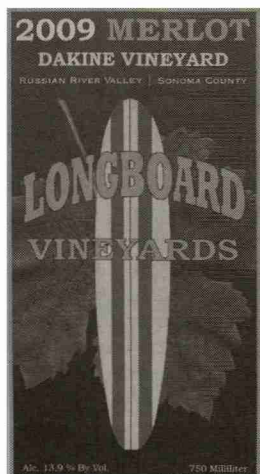


THE PRESS DEMOCRAT
Wine of the Week

Scouting for the tastiest merlot.

Wine writer Peg Melnik had a blind tasting this week of merlot and found an impressive lot. Our wine-of-the-week winner is the Longboard Vineyards, 2009 Dakine Vineyard, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County Merlot at \$28.



TOP PICK

Longboard Vineyards

2009 Dakine Vineyard, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County Merlot, 13.9 percent alcohol, (\$28). ★★★★★

A striking merlot with depth. Notes of bright cherry, mineral and spice. Great acid. Tangy. A standout.

Others worth noting:

St. Supery, 2008 Napa Valley Merlot, 14.5 percent, \$50. ★★★½

A merlot with crisp cherry, herbs and spice. Seamless texture. Very inviting.

Grgich Hills, 2008 Napa Valley Merlot, 14.5 percent, \$42. ★★★★★ A complex merlot with a range of flavors - cherry, rhubarb, cedar and pepper. Firm tannins. Nice length.

Buena Vista, 2009 Carneros Merlot, 13.5 percent,

\$21. ★★★½ A lively merlot with notes of bright cherry, pomegranate and chocolate. Ripe tannins. Seamless texture.

Purple Cowboy, 2009 Paso Robles Night Rider Merlot, 13 percent, \$12. ★★★½ An easy-going merlot with aromas and flavors of bright cherry, herbs and spice. Briary finish. A tasty quaff.

KEY

★★★★★ = Classic
★★★★ = Highly recommended
★★★ = Good

★★ = Limited appeal
★ = Not recommended

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