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**Congratulations to the
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Haley Farr
 Jonathan Gunson
 Kendy Kinports
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Good luck in Orlando!

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WINE TASTINGS

EXPLORE THE WINES OF SOUTH AFRICA

Join us for this special wine tasting featuring superb new wines acquired during a January tour of South African vineyards by Steve Baker of Sundance Wine Cellars and Matthew Parrott of Paragon Imports. Thursday evening, April 22, 7:30 pm. \$30. Call for reservations. Seating is limited.

UPCOMING FREE SATURDAY TASTINGS:
 APRIL 3, CHEHALEM • APRIL 10, ABACELA
 APRIL 17, SECRET HOUSE

MAY TASTING SEMINARS: RHONE, MAY 5 / SPAIN
 MAY 12 / BURGUNDY, MAY 19 / BORDEAUX, MAY 26.
 CALL STEVE FOR DETAILS & RESERVATIONS.

Also, each Saturday we offer "Super Pours" - A chance to sample (for a small fee) a selected high-end or older vintage wine from our shelves.

OPEN DAILY UNTIL 7PM
SUNDANCE WINE CELLARS

2470 ALDER ST.
 687-WINE
 ORWINES.COM

Fools' Wines

Sun's warmth brings lighter hearts, heads, reds.

The cruelest month is tough on wine snoops. People turn loopy, wear goofy grins, can't be trusted to give straight answers to simple questions.

It's ga-ga time in the Willamette Valley. While chunks of America's Midwest and East are still shoveling sidewalks and huddling at homefires, denizens of Western Oregon valleys have been sucked out of their houses by the strangely bright yellow orb in the normally leaden sky. Our pasty, pale-gray faces cannot resist the orb's curious warmth, even while our soft and doughy hands reach toward still-sodden earth, grasping for weeds, groping through blinding bursts of color — hyacinths, tulips, rhodies and azaleas, anemones and forget-me-nots, pansies and the last daffodils.

Even the cultural wasteland of mass media, the reeking cesspool of Bush-league politics, the savagery of worldwide war, pollution and pestilence cannot fully suppress or deny the sappy whisperings of Oregon spring splendor. Lucky for us, good wine abounds, nearly as plentiful as dammit dandelions. Give a gander:

Our Washington cousins make some decent wines, almost as good (in rare cases) as our own. And folks at Hogue Cellars, on the (go figure) north side of the Columbia, keep sending me samples, apparently opining I'll be impressed enough to boost them

here. Well, farkles, I guess they have a point or two: for forward-fruit flavors and price-point value, these are really drinkable.

Hogue 2003 Gewurztraminer (\$9) is widely available and kinda tasty, with a sweet grapefruit palate suitable for spicy Asian dishes or stand-alone sipping. The wine is fermented in stainless steel, not soaked in oak, so all the flavors are clean and fresh, backed by some small percentage of residual sugar that imparts a roundness in the mouth.

Hogue 2003 Columbia Valley Pinot Grigio (\$10) may not be as serious or complex as some of Oregon's best pinot gris, but it's not intended to be; in calling this pinot gris by its Italian moniker, the Hogue marketers clearly intend consumers to grasp a stylistic denotation: stainless-steel fermentation, crisply dry finish, focus on fruit flavors of fresh pears, green apples, hints of spice. This is quaffable vino, complementary to crab, smoked salmon, white cheeses, a wine to take on an early picnic and cool in a still-frigid stream, then toss back with pleasure and not a lot of conversation (about the wine). Point made.

The first rush of spring warmth calls out lush salads, greens still trembling from fields, maybe color-contrasted with slices of first strawberries, marking the return of lingering light and long sunsets. Pretty wines make happy matches. Try the little-known



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