

# wine

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.

and vastly under-appreciated chenin blanc grape. Bethel Heights Vineyards (Salem area top-shelf winery) used to make one of the prettiest versions of this wine in the market; sadly, they decided to take out the vines and plant the more complex pinot blanc — which is beautiful, but I miss the little wine with the fresh face. Happily, other versions are still available. The French are still masters of this *vin*: Look for **Monmousseau 2001 Vouvray** (\$8) in your market, and you'll have tagged a tangy white with aromas of flowers and green fields, flavors of pears and green melons. For a few pennies more, South Africa produces **Kanu 2003 Chenin Blanc** (\$9) that's as charming as an adolescent who doesn't pretend to know it all.

Spring cannot come without pinot noir, and no lover of the season and these wines should miss the fact that many makers are just now releasing reserve versions from the fine 2002 vintage. And soon now we'll begin to see first releases from 2003; from what we've tasted in barrels, the best of

these will bring tears of joy. Right now, two bargains (for pinot noir) stand available: **A to Z Wineworks 2002 Pinot Noir** (\$17.50) is touted as "the best ... under \$20;" might be true, or close — medium body, bright flavors of cherries and raspberries, a touch of pepper — lovely, just lovely. Competitive at a little less is **Torii Mor 2001 Pinot Noir** (\$17), again medium body, distinctive black-cherry pinot flavors and aromas with a pleasant earthy note, quite satisfying juice.

For many, spring marks the last days for big reds and we really like **Cline 2002 Red Truck** (\$9). The label alone is fun on the table, but the wine is a big, juicy blend of dark grapes like mourvedre and syrah, plus others, yielding rich aromas and flavors of berries and cherries, tingles of chocolate.

Uh-oh, gotta go. Sun just broke out again. Must plant bulbs, shallots, onions, maybe send condolences to friends in Maine. Cya'll at Saturday Market! Hahahahahahaha! **ew**

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