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wine BY LANCE SPARKS

Chill Down

Toasty times call for luscious lighties.

I'm hunkered at my desk in my shabby office on the 17th floor of Eugene's shoddiest highrise, looking out at the early morning of a lovely Oregon July: gray, sodden sky, moist westerly breeze, temp in the mid-50s, perfect early summer's day. Appropriately, we're here to explore hot-weather wines, accompaniment for alfresco dining, picnics, barbecues, poolside parties, other such.

See, when temperatures soar — say high 70s, whew — and evenings swelter to the point we're down to one sweater, we want to avoid those dark, heavy wines; they tend, under such sweaty conditions, to quease the tum and spin the head. No, for the hot-box month of Oregon summer we want light, bright, lively wines, matches for lighter fare and scantily clad funning.

'Scuse me while I put a coupla hammer raps on the radiator, little message for the derelict building super to warm this icebox so I can take off my gloves. I detect echoing raps from other tenants. Radiator groans, thermometer rises about an eyelash's worth. The super'll be up here some time today, baggy shorts, Hawaiian shirt, sandals, mopping his mug, grinning, yakking about the heat wave we're having. With luck, Mole will restrain me from committing felonious assault. That guy (the super, not Mole) is a member of that detestable sub-species called cheerleaders.

Cheerleader chic is gripping this nation and it comes from the top, His Georgeliness, the Cheerleader in Chief, and his squad of sideline chicken hawks who rah-rah the troops and sis-boom-bah the citizens, sending young men and women to kill and die while the rally team might blister their pinkies from shaking their pom poms or counting the piles of dough they've looted from the national treasury. On June 28, the Cheerleader in Chief urged support for the home team with lots of flag waving and bumper-sticker hoopla, then added, "We live in freedom because every generation has produced patriots willing to serve a greater cause than themselves." That's perfectly true, of course, but those words coming from this guy and his crew have got to cause gagging. Is he referring to such warrior patriots as Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Karl Rove, Rush Limbaugh, Bill O'Reilly and himself? Cheerleaders, all of them; fans of war might love them, but damn few real warriors are fans of war, and real supporters of our troops might feel a little irritation, knowing that George and Company have left VA hospitals in shambles and have cut benefits for wounded and disabled vets. And let's not forget those fine, patriotic "private contractors" George and

Dick love so much, folks who owe three billion dollars in back taxes as I write. Now, *that's* support for our troops.

I am not now and never have been a cheerleader, for war or for wine. Like Phaedrus in Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, I quest for value in wine, some fusion of quality and price that will yield pleasure to consumers. I am not here to pimp anyone's wine or even any region's, though I confess a certain bias toward local products, mostly because local wine and food marry so well.

All that said, my monthly rant well aired, let's explore *vins d'été* (French for summer wines):

Every year, I recommend this wine, not because I'm fond of the winemaker (tho' I am) and they've made no contributions to my campaign fund; straight scoop, **Amity Vineyards 2002 Dry Gewurztraminer** (\$15) is one of the best values in Oregon wine that I know of, always delivering fresh, zesty fruit on a balanced frame, and the 2002 vintage is exceptionally good. This varietal is best made in the dry style by winemakers in France's Alsace region; they've been working at it for a few hundred years, seem to have some grip on this grape, but Amity's Myron Redford has been learning with every bottling and clearly scored great fruit in '02: The wine is juicy and forward with classic flavors of fresh grapefruit, hints of lychee, dash of lemon pepper. Serve with Asian dishes, grilled fish or chicken, but do not serve it too cold. If you store your wine in the fridge, take this one out an hour before opening, let it warm a little and it'll reward you with dry, full-flavored white that is refreshing and exciting.

Rosie time: Rosé wines used to be insipid and dull, but recent years have seen a new respect for these wines and the results — for us, the imbibers — have been swell. **Bergerie de l'Hortus 2004 Rosé de Saignée** (\$13) derives from the Languedoc region of France's Rhone Valley and is a very nice wine. Served cool, it puts pretty flavors of cherries and strawberries in the glass and braces them with spice and acidity enough to accent outdoor foods. It deserves better, but it'll even go with a burger.

O'Reilly's 2004 Pinot Noir Oregon (\$12.50) leads off the great '04 vintage; the big boys and girls will arrive later, but this is a happy kid, fresh and bright with flavors of black cherries, currants and zingy black pepper, wowser value.

Wait! Strange blue crack between clouds, and ... and ... yes! C'mon, all you guys: Yay Sun! Yay Sun! Burn 'em up, burn 'em up, smash on through! H'ray! **ew**



WHAT'S HAPPENING
Corvallis

NEXT ISSUE
COMING AUGUST 11, 2005

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