

IT'S WINE GIFT SEASON

Shop local, and maybe a little online too

Tis the season, sure, but if you've got a wine geek on your love list, rejoice! For you have oodles of options, limited only by time (all gone, sorry) and money. Got gobs? No worries. Got little? Still lotsa options, some online.

Only a few years ago we could discuss a few hands-full of online websites for wine. Now, of course, online shopping for wines and wine-related gifts is huge (excuse the Trumpie term).

Okay, we preach "buy local," for all the usual reasons, mainly that the dough stays home, here where it's most needed — and deserved.

But there's no denying digital leverage: If you shop wine stuff online, you'll find gadgets and gewgaws galore, more than local stores could afford — or want — to carry in inventory, but also cellar shelving, refrigerators, glassware, decanters, openers (including electric, \$60), coasters. A vast array.

True, many of the gadgets are just junky novelties (an antler-prong-topped cork?). But even fine wines wing through the digitized retail world, putting considerable pressure on local shops. For instance — we hate to admit this — Amazon offers a large inventory of wines from various places and in various forms, complete with descriptions and ratings, plus free shipping. Same with other online retailers: Sur La Table, Harry & David, wine.com and many more hustle wine-stuff mos' mightily, abetted by UPS, Fed-Ex and USPS.

There is some upside: Save the wine!

Example: Only on Sur La Table's site, for one, could you find the **Coravin Model 2 Wine System**; for a mere \$300, the device uses a needle inserted by the wine lover, right through the uncapped cork and, boosted by inert argon gas, pour a glass of wine, without removing the cork, meaning the wine is protected and can remain so for days, weeks, maybe longer. Might be a good tool.

Cheaper would be a good corkscrew (waiter-style, \$20): pull the cork, drink the wine, zap any left with squirts of argon from can of **Private Reserve Wine Preserver Spray** (\$8, stocking stuffer).

For the home shopper, online is quick, easy — and pretty cheap: prices are fair, the process reliable. And you don't have to fight frantic holiday traffic and parking, snarky salesfolk, snarly shoppers and so on.

See the people!

On the dark side, you lose the chance to interact with some of the most wine-savvy people you could even imagine, folks who could steward you to wine treasures and special treats that could boggle the mind of a wine-giftee.

Some of the local wine pros are also among the most charming, amusing folk you might meet; they got the spirit of wine — and often of Christmas itself. This is especially true for local South Willamette Valley wines, mostly ignored or overlooked by online sources, such as, say, **Capitello Brut** (\$35), super sparkler, delicious, too. Or **LaVelle 2016 Riesling** (\$22), newly released, yummy, off-dry, whisper of sweet fruit, complex flavors, delish with fish or fowl.

Local shopping also brings us closer to local wines. And there's no compromise on quality with our valley's vinos; in fact, some of the world's best wines originate right here (see current issue of *Wine Spectator's* Top 100 Wines of the world — Oregon fares well, though not our end of the state).

For your wine-goof giftee, consider a three-pack of local beauties, like: **J. Scott Cotes du Rogue Blanc** (\$15), a Rogue-Valley-sourced blend of Marsanne, Roussane, Viognier and Grenache Blanc, delicious with cheeses, white meats, poultry, fish; **Territorial 2014 Pinot Gris**, Equinox Vineyard (\$26) is simply superb, stylish white, a natural with salmon; **Iris 2013 Pinot Noir** (\$19), from Cottage Grove, shockingly good pinot, good value, too.

These are just three. Many others from our neighbors come to mind — King Estate, Sarver, Abbelone, Sweet Cheeks, Silvan Ridge, Noble Estate, too many to list here.

Oh, woe, the agonies of tasting and shopping wines! Oh, well, imbibe — and give freely — the spirit.

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