



California Dreamin'

by Nate Rose

For those of you that don't know, I love California wines. With the cold finally settling in here in Houston it has me reminiscing about this past year and my trips to California wine country and the wines I was able to find on these trips. I decided this morning that I should put a batch of these "Nate Wines" together in a mix case format and list them in our newsletter. For those of you on "The List" you are very familiar with my "Dream Packs". What is "The List" you ask? Here at Spec's Smith Street I keep a database of our top wine-buying guests. This group, who resides all over the state get emails from me offering them the toughest to find, highly allocated wines about once a week. The wines on these offers are not for the faint of heart when it comes to \$\$\$, though occasionally I do find that dream 95 pointer for \$25 and send out an offer on that. I spend a great deal of time begging for wine. I often find myself begging for months and months before I finally get a single case. People in the Wine Business call me a "Professional Cherry Picker" because I only want the best wines for my offers!

There are a couple of rules when it comes to "The List", first and foremost these cult wines must be picked up at the Smith street location. I have never been comfortable transferring expensive wines around the city. What happens when one of the wines it took me 6 months to secure 48 bottles of breaks in transit to another location? I feel like I lost a child. Then really the only other important rule is first come, first served by response to my email. There are NEVER enough of these wines to go around. I put a limit on how many bottles you can purchase and you have 2 weeks to pick them up.

If you want to see what "The List" is receiving this month go here. http://www.specsonline.com/pdf/wineholiday_special2011_BIGLIST.pdf. It is my annual 24 days of Christmas offer impossible to find wine, everyday, for 24 days!

Ok, so you ask how can I get on "The List"? Usually to get on this list you have to have a certain amount of Spec's Key Points. If you have a huge amount of points and are not getting my emails chances are we do not have a valid email address for you. My Christmas present to you this year is to open up the list a little bit by giving you a way to sign up directly by go **HERE** !!! (<http://eepurl.com/fpdoA>)

Now to the wines, my other Christmas gift! If you grab this "Dream Pack" (all 12 wines) I will happily extend case price to you. You are also free to "cherry pick" me by grabbing individual wines! Please send me an email with your request and **REMEMBER** most of these wines can only be picked up at Smith Street! First price listed is cash price the second is case cash price!

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John Holdredge and I discussing killing the Caesar. (Yes, that is a toga party!)

Holdredge Winery

This year I was honored enough to be invited to Russian River Pinot Forum. This is an annual event held for 3 days for trade only. The days are filled with seminars and the nights are filled with winemaker dinners. One night was filled with doing Jell-O shots with Adam Lee the owner of Siduri at the local Applebee's (Don't ask). On this trip I met John Holdredge and his wife Cari. Their wines were awesome and they were a blast so I convinced them to sell us a tiny bit of juice. The wines are made in a small studio winery across the street from Davis Family in Russian River. Not only is John a great winemaker he is also Director of the Russian River Valley Wine Growers Association and a lawyer (We won't hold that against him). Due to his connection to the grower community in the RR he has some of the best fruit sources in California. These wines can only be found at Spec's! Here are 2 wines for this pack.

Holdredge Pinot Noir Russian River "Massale Selection" 2009 (48 bottles came to Texas!) \$44.99 / \$42.50

When a winemaker says "Massale Selection" he means that the vineyard was planted to numerous clones in a random fashion. This gives the vineyard many voices instead of one single voice. John keeps the location of this old vine vineyard a closely guarded secret. I get a totally unique bottle of Pinot here with a nice focus of bright red fruits and great acidity.

Holdredge Pinot Noir "Old School" 2009 \$34.99 / \$33.15

Sourced from another secret vineyard location and fermented whole cluster this wine is my favorite Holdredge wine. Again, completely unique in the world of "New School" huge California Pinots (which I also like) this wine's acidity is breath taking. Great red fruit, great mouth feel and awesome. I grabbed 15 cases for Texas!

Husic Vineyards

Owner Frank Husic has carved out a tiny slice of heaven in the Napa Valley. With help from one of the best Vineyard Managers, Jim Barbour (who is also one of the nicest guys on the planet) Frank planted a small Cabernet vineyard overlooking the Stag's Leap District. Frank recently had the insight to hire young winemaker Mike Hirby (Relic, D.R. Stephens Estate, Husic Family Vineyards, Sarocka Estate, and Winter) and Mike instantly brought the wines to the "next level". I had to have them. These 3 wines again are available exclusively at Spec's in Texas.

Husic Chardonnay 2009 \$39.89 / \$37.52

With only 350 cases of this chardonnay produced from estate vineyards this wine certainly qualifies for "The List". It was barrel fermented in 50% new French oak and shows classic Napa Chard characteristics without being over the top. Great!

Husic 2008 "Palm Terrace" Cabernet Sauvignon \$59.84 / \$56.12
Man, I love this wine. Not a second wine, more like a different wine. Still 100% estate, this wine shows better than bottles double the price. I get a huge nose of dried cherries and spice. In the mouth I get round tannins, cigar box, spice with a huge dose of black fruit. 600 cases produced.

Husic "Husic" 2005 \$109.89 / \$103.09

When I tasted through this batch of wines we went from 2005 to 2009 (still in the barrel) they were all awesome so I had a choice to make. I chose 2005 for it had some age on it and was showing like a champ. We will get to the other vintages right after I am done drinking this 05! This wine's profile exudes class and restraint in a vintage known for huge wines. In new French oak for 2 years and with minimal intervention this wine is a screamer. 100% Cabernet. 1255 cases made.



Spec's Team at Roy estate!!

Roy Estate

For a long time Roy Estate was one of my "secret wines" by this I mean I did not want to many people to know about it so there would be more for me!

Owner Shirley Roy is absolutely one of my favorite people on the planet. She exudes kindness and her wines exude awesome! Helen Turley planted her tiny 17-acre vineyard off Soda Canyon Road

in Napa in 2001 and current winemaker Philippe Melka (Gemstone, Hundred Acre, Seavey, Melka) has a knack of making this microclimate sing. With a tiny production and a focus on making the best wine in California, Roy Estate is a winner. I am not going to give you my notes, though I have now had quite a few bottles of these 2 wines, (including at Shirley's house at 10 o'clock on a Saturday morning, that is another story) instead I will give you Robert Parker's notes. He gets it right on.

Roy Estate Proprietary Red 2007 \$114.49 / \$107.36
94 Points

The dense ruby/purple 2007 Proprietary Red, a 1,400-case blend of 67% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, and 8% Petit Verdot, exhibits an impressive chocolaty nose with lots of berry fruit, coffee bean, mocha, and earthy/forest floor notes. Complex and dense with silky tannins, and superb elegance combined with richness, it can be approached now, but it will be even better in 4-5 years. It should last for 20+ years. – Robert Parker

Roy Estate Cabernet 2007 \$133.94 / \$125.66
94+ Points

There are usually 300-350 cases of the Cabernet Sauvignon cuvee. The 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon along with the 2007 Proprietary Red are the finest wines I have yet tasted from Roy Estate. A beautiful nose of charcoal, crème de cassis, black currants, licorice and underbrush is followed by a deep, full-bodied, powerful wine with lots of texture, silky tannins and impressive density, as well as length. This wine has enough tannin to suggest 3-4 years of cellaring is required. It should age well for 25+ years. – Robert Parker

Blankiet Estate

This property actually is in the hills ABOVE Dominus! Owner Claude Blankiet has built himself an actual castle and planted one of the most breathtaking vineyards I have ever walked. He then built a cave into the side of the hill and outfitted this cave with some of the most advanced technology I have ever seen. Blowers actually flush the whole

system with fresh air, at the proper temperature, once every 24 hours. He has also built and outfitted a tiny winemaking facility, also with a focus on doing everything by hand. Winemaker Martha McClellan (Sloan, Levy and McClellan, and Checkerboard) has crafted the best 2007 I have ever tasted. This wine is certainly pricey, but I must say, every dollar spent is in the glass!

Blankiet Proprietary Red 2007 \$199.99 / \$187.88
96 – 98 Points

The 2007 Proprietary Red Wine has that "great" vintage look to it. Sweet tannins, an extraordinary fragrance (the same array of aromas as in the 2006, but even more concentrated blackberry and cassis fruit as well as touch of graphite), a full-bodied, opulent style with, analytically, high tannins, this is a 30-year effort. However, it should be approachable when released because of the nobility/sweetness of the tannins as well as the low acidity. This is a brilliant, full-throttle, complex effort that is worth a special effort to find and purchase. – Robert Parker

Blankiet "Prince of Hearts" 2005 \$59.84 / \$56.12

I again had some choices to make when I tasted through multiple vintages of the "Baby Blankiet"; I chose 2005 that was made by Helen Turley, because it was drinking perfectly right now. The nose is explosive with red fruit, spice box and vanilla. It pours ruby red (not black) in the glass and instantly fills the room with smell of an awesome wine. In the mouth this brighter style reveals structure and elegance with a black cherry and minerality that reveals itself in a finish that lasts and lasts. – Nate

Worlds End Wines Napa

About a year and a half ago I attended a blind tasting in Napa of 80 2008 Cabernets with a bunch of other trade from all over the country. The top ten wines were all pretty obvious (Schrader, Harlan, BOND, Etc etc) with one exception, 2008 Worlds End "Crossfire" Cabernet. I started the chase instantly after that tasting. I found that another Bordeaux transplant, Jonathan Maltus, who was one of the first "gargista" guys (Le Dome) and started making wine in Napa from fruit sourced from the famed Beckstoffer vineyards. The phone number listed on the website was wrong (dialed a house in Wisconsin?) so I put my feelers out and called my "people" to try to find out how Spec's could get a hold of this awesome juice. Eventually 6 degrees of separation led to Jonathan Maltus picking up one of these "people" at the airport during a VinExpo trip and the rest is history. These single vineyard wines sold out instantly in California. You should grab one and tell me if they were worth the chase. Also, you may notice that all the wines are named after classic songs from the 70s, awesome!

Worlds End "Crossfire" Cabernet 2008 \$93.99 / \$87.88

(Named after "Caught in the Crossfire" - Stevie Ray Vaughan)
Sourced from the Beckstoffer Missouri Hopper Vineyard this wine screams California. With a rich, dusty nose, layered with blue fruits and spice. To a huge mouth of tannins, great acid, baking spices, oak, more dust and incredible layers of black and blue fruit. This wine absolutely needs decanting and a great piece of meat. Cheers. – Nate

Worlds End "Wave Length" Blend 2008 \$75.99 / \$70.97

Named after "Wavelength" - Van Morrison
Sourced from another Beckstoffer vineyard, Sugarloaf Mountain this Cabernet Franc / Syrah blend gets my 3 B's rating, Big, Bad and Bold. Larger than the sum of its parts this unique blend works on so many levels. The nose of meat, coffee, and cola intermingled with blueberry give way to one of the biggest wines I have tasted this year. Huge, teeth staining tannins balance with fruit intensity that lets you know "This is real wine"! It has finally gotten cold outside and this wine is my cure! - Nate