

ABOUT WINE

Mature Wines Make Tasteful Gifts

Ready-to-Drink Vintages May Be Enjoyed Immediately

By NATHAN CHROMAN

Los Angeles Times

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WINE: Sparkling Holiday Gift-Giving

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Fine vintage German Mosels are available. A half bottle (at a lower-than-fifth price, of course) is a most acceptable gift such as Kasseler, Nieschen Beerenauslese, Reichsgraf, Von Kesselstatt 1976, at \$30 and Josefshofer, Trockenbeerenauslese, Reichsgraf von Kesselstatt 1976 at \$50.

Also offered from the marvelous 1976 vintage are Wehlener Sonnenuhr, Beerenauslese, Dr. W. Weins at \$50 and Maximin Grunhauser, Abtsberg, Beerenauslese, Von Schubert at \$100.

Less costly bottles from the '76 vintage which make good sense are Bernkastler-Kueser Weisenstein, Auslese, Dr. Hans Licht, \$13.50; Eitelsbascher, Karthaus, Hofberg, Kronenberg, Spatlese, von Tyrell, \$12.95; Wehlener, Sonnenuhr Auslese, Peter Prum, \$14.25.

Looking for the ultimate, try an aged Armagnac. Armagnac, from the land of D'Artagnan, is, indeed, rare if from an older vintage. Armagnac de Montal, a

long-respected name, offers the 1939 at \$135. In smaller quantity and much harder to find is 1904 at \$900 and 1893 at \$1,150. Be sure to add appropriate brandy snifters to your gift and a note explaining the difference between Cognac and Armagnac, which may be fuller bodied, stronger and less mellow.

Italian red wine lovers will surely enjoy Barolo with age, which is hard to come by, even harder than an older California red these days. Try Barolo 1975 Monfortino, Conterno at around \$20 per bottle or a younger wine by Renato Ratti at \$8.50 per bottle.

Another new sparkler is most fascinating: Try Cal del Bosco, a superb no-dosage Italian white sparkler made in the French style from Chardonnay. Indeed, it may be the best dry sparkling wine produced in Italy. It will shock, if tasted blind—around \$15.

Baron Philippe de Rothschild of Mouton-Rothschild has embarked on a joint venture with Zino Davidoff, noted Swiss international tobacconist, to produce a

so-called new luxury cigar on the theory that fine cigars are like great French wines, since both come from living plants and each represents a civilized art of cultivation. Zino Mouton-Cadets cigars are available between \$2 and \$3 depending upon size and shape.

Keep in mind that wine gifts do not have to be expensive, just simply well selected and at the point of nearly-ready-to-drink maturity. A personal note with your taste description as you experienced it should accompany the bottle, a confirmation of the effort and thoughtfulness of your gift of good taste.

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