

WINE



PRESS

Highway 12 Wines

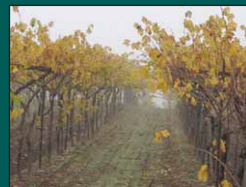
Gold Medal Wine Club Newsletter: Vol. 18 No. 12a



WITH AN EXCEPTIONAL
LEGACY AND AMBITIOUS
BEGINNING, HIGHWAY 12
WINES ARE DRIVEN
FOR SUCCESS.



Owners Michael Sebastiani, Doug Offenbacher, and Paul Giusto provide the expertise and most of the daily effort for Highway 12 wines.



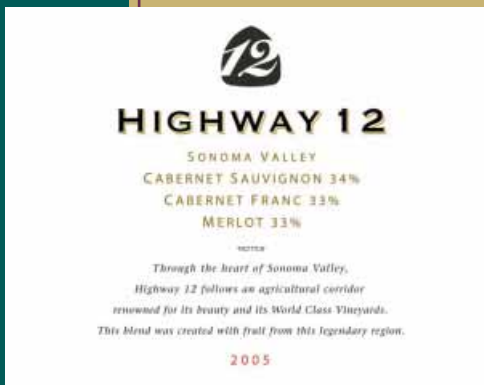
Highway 12 sources Sonoma Valley grapes that are known for the intensity of their fruit character and varietal expression.



Wine grapes were first planted along today's Highway 12 corridor in 1825 by the Franciscan Padres of the Sonoma Mission.



Highway 12's 2005 Sonoma Valley Bordeaux Blend embodies the naturally fresh berry-fruit characters of Sonoma grapes. Hand-selected from the Serres Ranch property, this wine is balanced, structured and soft, with equal parts Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Merlot. This is a classic blend to Sonoma Valley, which exhibits favorable microclimates to successfully producing the three core Bordeaux varietals. A true crowd pleaser with a great fruit profile and smooth texture, the 2005 Bordeaux Blend is a multi-award winning wine garnering a Gold Medal from the *San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition*, a Silver Medal from the *Sonoma County Harvest Fair*, and 87 Points from *Wine Enthusiast* magazine. Three core varietal components contribute to this deeply rich, full-bodied blend: a good structure from the Cabernet Sauvignon, a silky, soft texture from the Cabernet Franc, and velvety fruit flavors from the Merlot. Try pairing the Highway 12 2005 Bordeaux Blend with rich foods and heavy sauces, beef, lamb, and grilled salmon. 34% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Cabernet Franc, 33% Merlot. Enjoy now until 2015.



2005 VINTAGE:

GOLD MEDAL - SAN FRANCISCO

CHRONICLE WINE COMPETITION,

SILVER MEDAL - SONOMA COUNTY

HARVEST FAIR,

87 POINTS - WINE ENTHUSIAST MAGAZINE

LEGACY: JUST THE SECOND VINTAGE RELEASE OF HIGHWAY 12 BORDEAUX BLENDS, THE 2005'S GREAT FRUIT PROFILE AND RICH STRUCTURE IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF SONOMA'S TRADITIONAL RED BLENDS.

Just the facts:

pH.....	3.75
Alcohol.....	14.6%
Total Acid.....	0.60 g/100 mls
Cases Produced.....	2,200
Drink Now or Up to Year.....	2015

HIGHWAY 12 VINEYARDS & WINERY

It is a roadway that is every bit as legendary as Napa Valley's esteemed Highway 29. Beginning in the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas, Highway 12 winds and bends its way westward through the vineyards and marvelous landscapes of the Foothills Region, through Lodi and its venerable growths of old Zinfandel and then further west down through Napa and Sonoma's famed Carneros Region. After its transverse of the entirety of Sonoma Valley, Highway 12 winds up at the bluffs of the Pacific Ocean and the rapidly emerging appellation that covers the Sonoma Coast.

Actually, wine was first planted in the present Highway 12 corridor in 1825 by the Franciscan padres of the Sonoma Mission, the northernmost mission in the series of missions that transgressed California in the 18th and 19th Centuries. Commercial vineyards first began appearing in the mid-1800s almost simultaneously all along the current route as far east as the legendary '49er Gold Country.

It took Paul Giusto and Michael Sebastiani, co-founders of the relatively new Highway 12 Vineyards and Winery, to embrace this wonderful stretch of highway by naming their fledgling winery after its legendary stretch

2005 VINTAGE:

SILVER MEDAL – SAN FRANCISCO

CHRONICLE WINE COMPETITION,

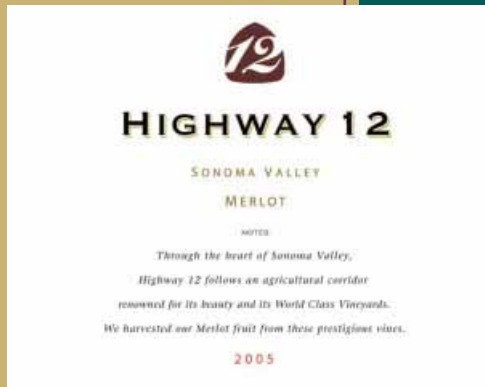
SILVER MEDAL – SONOMA COUNTY

HARVEST FAIR,

88 POINTS – WINE SPECTATOR MAGAZINE,

87 POINTS – WINE ENTHUSIAST

MAGAZINE



Highway 12 has achieved a bold, ripe style with their 2005 Merlot. Produced from the Serres Ranch property, an excellent source for Sonoma Valley Merlot, this wine has a full structure, solid tannins, and a velvety smooth quality that is characteristic to the varietal. Full of lush fruit flavors and prized Sonoma qualities, the 2005 Merlot was awarded a Silver Medal by the *San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition*, a Silver Medal by the *Sonoma County Harvest Fair*, 88 Points by *Wine Spectator* magazine, and 87 Points by *Wine Enthusiast* magazine. The Highway 12 Merlot was aged 26 months in French oak, complementing the wine’s fermented fruitiness and providing some softening for this extraordinary full bodied wine. Subtle notes of oak and vanilla round out the fruit flavors on the palate, making this Merlot delicately intense and able to age well with time in the cellar. A food friendly wine, try pairing the Highway 12 2005 Merlot with casseroles, meatballs, roasted turkey with gravy, and lamb chops. 100% Merlot. Enjoy now until 2015.

LEGACY: 2005 MARKS THE FIRST VINTAGE RELEASE OF HIGHWAY 12’S MERLOT PROGRAM, AND WITH SEVERAL AWARDS IT HAS SET THE BAR FOR FUTURE RELEASES.

Just the facts:

pH	3.80
Alcohol	14.3%
Total Acid	0.57 g/100 mls
Cases Produced	1,900
Drink Now or Up to Year	2015

of roadway. Giusto is a Sonoma State communications and marketing graduate who formerly worked with Sebastiani during his tenure at well-respected Viansa Winery.

“To us it sort of seemed quite simple,” noted Giusto, 36, and a San Francisco native. “Sometimes, the most opportune facets of a business are those you find right under your nose. All the great wineries that are located on or just off Highway 12 are what have helped make this area so wine famous. We just decided to dedicate our place to it and show just how wonderful wines made from

Highway 12 fruit can be.”

Giusto banded together with Michael Sebastiani of the noteworthy Sonoma family to start Highway 12 Vineyards and Winery back in 2003. With Sebastiani as the winemaker and Giusto as the sales and marketing figure, they first produced a smallish 650 cases of their first release to the general public. This year, production will top out at just over 3500 cases, a level that Giusto feels is quite comfortable for the three-man operation.

The third winery principle is former Ohioan and Marine Corps



Serres Ranch is among Highway 12’s distinctive, respected, and near legendary-status growers within Sonoma Valley.

veteran Doug Offenbacher, 62, who serves as a partner in the venture and also handles the design and development aspects of the new



Sonoma Valley's myriad of soils and microclimates generates a range of wine styles with varied individual expressions of varietal flavor.

winery. Together, the three principles provide the expertise and most of the daily effort for Highway 12. "We want to run a lean business for the first few years," confided Giusto. "We will eventually reach somewhere around 10,000 cases, but the exact date is yet to be

"So many different varietals give us a great deal of flexibility and allow us to do things other wineries that are more restricted regarding their fruit simply cannot do."

established. It is entirely up to our ongoing sales and the confidence the general public has in our wines."

Judging from Highway 12's initial successes, their wines are already held in extremely high regard by the trade press and in the opinion of wine

competition judges who have awarded a number of Gold Medals to the winery's first few years of entries.

"It sort of helps that we utilize just about every varietal that is grown in Sonoma," added Giusto. "So many different varietals give us a great deal of flexibility and allow us to do things other wineries that are more restricted regarding their fruit simply cannot do."

Highway 12 Vineyards and Winery has also come full bore with the opening of its incredible new tasting room on the southeast corner of Sonoma's famous plaza. Considered the last piece of the puzzle, the tasting room offers visitors to the historic area a glance inside the real character of the winery.

"Our new tasting room allows us to be competitive with the other more established wineries," Giusto concluded. "It took us a while to complete, but we think it is on a par with many of the other finer wineries. It is the showcase we have been waiting for."

Highway 12 Vineyards and

Winery is atypical of other area wineries in that it makes use of a number of different growing appellations to present its portfolio of wines. Its wines offer insight into these various growing areas while maintaining a unique style that sets it

apart from other wineries.

We congratulate this exciting new winery and its diverse programs of wine innovation on its impending success. Would that more wineries emulate this kind of unique wine originality. 🍇

The Wine Wizard

- 1) Where is the birthplace of northern California's wine industry?
- 2) Highway 12's Chardonnay goes through "malolactic fermentation." What is this?
- 3) What purpose do tannins serve in wine?

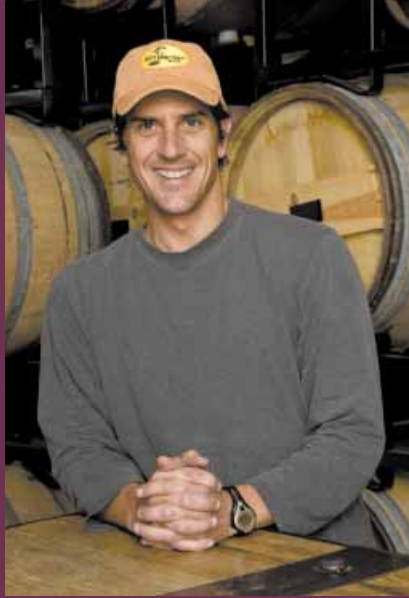
See Page 7 for Answers.

About The Winemaker

Like many of the other modern winemakers, Michael Sebastiani graduated from nearby UC Davis with a degree in winemaking. However, Sebastiani explained that while the degree most certainly covers the technical side of winemaking, he feels that the subtleties gleaned from years of family winemaking and the close associations he has had with other winemakers have helped mold the skills that make him a leader in his field.



Michael Sebastiani



At the ripe old age of 35, Michael Sebastiani has performed nearly all jobs related to the wine industry. As the fourth generation of his iconic family, he has worked in the vineyards since he was nine and has been a noted winemaker for more than a decade.

Michael is a product of the Sebastiani/Viansa winery progression that has chosen to go out on his own with the formation of Highway 12 Vineyards and Winery. Even though he left Viansa a few years ago, he waited until the right situation came along to try a new venture.

“Everything in the wine business works extremely slowly,” Michael recently pointed out. “I took a long time to look around and see what might ultimately work.”

Even though Michael and co-founder Paul Giusto had worked before at Viansa, it wasn’t until years after leaving the winery that Giusto and Sebastiani’s paths crossed again.

“One day we were sitting down together discussing some ideas and the same thought came to each of us at about an identical time. The prospect of building a winery around a series of vineyards along Highway 12 was both engrossing and challenging to us.”

Sebastiani and his partners used a small town family-style approach toward developing their winery style.

“To me, winemaking is much like cooking. A good cook prepares food he knows his guests will enjoy. It is much the same for me as a winemaker. I want our customers to really enjoy our wines as much as possible. I also consider wine a living entity, one that somehow always seems to figure itself out. My partners agreed with me that we should let our wines express themselves in their own manner,” he further related.

Michael Sebastiani has also welcomed the chance to work again with many of the growers he first knew through his family’s wineries. He has worked with these farmers since his youth and appreciated the work that went into producing world-class fruit suitable for making great wines.

He considers these vineyards the true foundation of Highway 12 Vineyards and Winery and is dedicated to establishing his mark with his new entity.

THE WINE REGION



True to the name on the bottle, all fruit that goes into Highway 12 wines must come from what the owner’s term, “a stone’s throw from the actual Highway 12,” that curves its way through Carneros and Sonoma Valley. While it might seem to some potentially confining, Highway 12 Vineyards and Winery has lined up some of the finest vineyards in the Sonoma Valley and connecting appellations from which to draw its fruit, a move that basically guarantees quality and name recognition. Such an arrangement also offers a degree of micro-climatization that allows a unique



With its favorable climate, inviting landscapes, and historic authenticity, Sonoma Valley has been producing a wide range of varietals for more than 100 years.

insight into fruit that can change its character with the curve of the road.

“It is part of our tribute to the great growing prowess of the area that we choose specific vineyards that possess certain characteristics,” offered co-founder Paul Giusto. “In our role as vintners, it is our job to bring together this myriad of fruit in a style that is specifically Hwy12’s, and no one else’s.”





*Sonoma's Special
Barbecued Tri-Tip with
Yellow Tomato &
Mushroom Salsa*

*Pifferi Duck with
Mustard Cream Sauce*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Pair with Highway 12 2005 Bordeaux Blend – Serves 6

Barbecued Tri-Tip

Ingredients:

1 beef tri-tip (about 2-1/2 pounds)
1 large yellow onion, sliced into
1/4-inch thick rings
8 oz. of your favorite BBQ marinade
1/4 cup Rubbing Herbs

Preparation:

Place tri-tip roast and onion in a shallow container and cover completely with marinade. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 4 hours, or preferably overnight, turning occasionally. To cook, preheat grill to medium-high. Transfer the tri-tip and onion slices to a platter and rub with Rubbing Herbs, coating completely. Grill the tri-tip for 15 minutes on each side, turning as needed, or until cooked to desired temperature. Remove from grill and place on a clean carving board, cover with aluminum foil and allow to rest for 15 minutes before slicing. Reduce heat under the grill to medium and cook the onion slices for about 5 to 7 minutes on each side, until they are tender. Slice the tri-tip into 1/4-inch thick slices and top with grilled onions. Serve with Yellow Tomato and Mushroom Salsa.

Yellow Tomato and Mushroom Salsa

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon Extra Virgin Olive Oil
6 ounces cremini mushrooms,
cleaned and quartered
Salt and pepper
2 large yellow tomatoes
3/4 cup Gorgonzola cheese, crumbled
1/2 small red onion, sliced into thin strips
1 small red bell pepper, diced into
1/2-inch pieces
2 tablespoons Red Wine Vinegar
1 tablespoon Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1 teaspoon chopped fresh marjoram

Preparation:

Heat olive oil in a medium sauté pan. Add mushrooms and sauté over medium-high heat for 3 to 5 minutes, until cooked and lightly browned. Remove from heat, season with salt and pepper and cool. Cut out the stem end from the tomatoes and slice in them in half. Squeeze out the seeds and dice the tomatoes into 1/2-inch pieces. Combine the diced tomatoes with the cooled mushrooms, gorgonzola, red onion, bell pepper, vinegar, olive oil and marjoram. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve with chips or alongside Sonoma Tri-Tip.

Pair with Highway 12 2005 Merlot – Serves 6

Ingredients:

4 pounds Muscovy duck (or other large duck) legs and thighs
1/2 cup minced celery
1/2 cup minced onion
1/2 cup minced carrot
1 bay leaf
4 cups red wine
3 tablespoons Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Sauce:

1/2 cup ricotta cheese
1/4 cup half and half
2 tablespoons Hot Sweet Mustard

Preparation:

Trim excess fat from the duck and cut between the leg and thigh joint to separate them. If the thighs are quite large, cut into 2 pieces. Each piece should be about 5 or 6 ounces, or cut to serve 2 to 3 pieces per person. Place the minced celery, onions and carrots, the bay leaf, red wine and duck pieces into a large refrigerator container. Cover and refrigerate overnight, turning occasionally. When ready to cook, remove the duck pieces (saving the marinade to use later in the recipe). Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Heat Olive Oil in a large sauté pan or Dutch oven and brown the duck on both sides over medium-high heat (about 10 minutes per side). Remove excess fat from the pan. Strain the vegetables out of the marinade and discard them. Pour the marinade into the pan with the browned duck and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 3 hours, turning occasionally. About 15 minutes before the duck is done, blend together ricotta cheese, milk and mustard until smooth and creamy. Set aside. When the duck is cooked, transfer to a hot serving platter and pour the pan juices over the duck. Keep warm. Add the ricotta and milk mixture to the pan and bring to a boil, gently boil, scraping loose any pan bits, until mixture is hot. Pour mustard sauce over the hot duck and serve.

*Find these recipes and all of your favorites online at www.GoldMedalWine.com.
From the Gold Series page, click on Winery Recipes and find delicious entrées to pair with your favorite wines.*

Results

2003 Niner Cabernet Sauvignon

GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
95%	3%	2%

2006 Niner Sauvignon Blanc

GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
94%	4%	2%

2002 Ballentine Zinfandel

GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
94%	4%	2%

2003 Ballentine Merlot

GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
93	5%	2%

The above wines were recently featured.

To see our current inventory, reorder online, and Judge the Wines, visit us at www.GoldMedalWine.com/member.

Michael Sebastiani

Spotlight, continued from page 5

“I am aware of the fact that the general consumer wants a certain type of wine,” Sebastiani confessed. “These same consumers are forcing wineries to make their wines a certain way if they want to be successful. I am of the hope and belief that we can return to some of the original approaches to winemaking that were in use when I first started in the business when I was a youth.”

To make his point, he points out the different types of Chardonnay being made. “Basically, there are two styles of Chardonnay I really prefer. One is the cleaner style made back in the 1980s and second is the newer style that combines butter and oak to produce a specific mouth feel. I believe we can make both of these wines side-by-side and make both into incredible wines.”

While Highway 12 Vineyards and Winery is still in its infancy, Michael Sebastiani feels the large number of wines still unreleased by the winery will bode well for the near future.

He singles out grapes originating from Serres Vineyards and Sangiacomo Family Vineyards as the ultra quality fruit he has to work with. Both have sold their grapes to the highest-level wineries in the past with incredible awards and respect from around the wine world.

“I have been lucky to work with these growers in the past,” he added. “They are among the best possible suppliers and I want to make them proud and add to their list of awards. I really want to put Highway 12 on the map (no pun intended).”

Michael Sebastiani seems to have found a comfortable niche for his remarkable winemaking talent, a talent he knows can lead his new company in practically any direction.

“Our future is wide open,” he finalized. “We are on a course that could take us anywhere.”

Make that Highway 12 and Michael Sebastiani could be quite correct. 

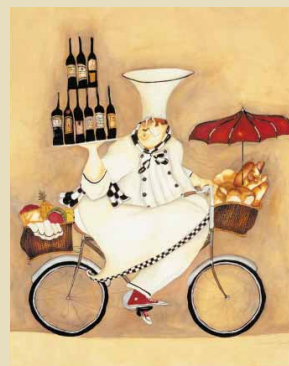


1.) Sonoma Valley is considered the birthplace of northern California's wine industry, with grapes planted as early as the 1820s. The first major vineyard in Sonoma was planted in 1857, and today there are approximately 70 wineries thriving in the Sonoma Valley region.

2.) Malolactic fermentation is a secondary fermentation process in which malic acid is converted to lactic acid. This process is usually encouraged in producing red wines, as it tends to create a rounder, fuller mouthfeel. For white wines, it's a matter of flavor preference, as those that do not undergo this process are crisper and more “fruit forward” in style, while those with malolactic are richer and butterier in style.

3.) Tannins enhance the flavor and naturally preserve the wine. Tannins mostly come from the grape skins and seeds, and tend to be more noticeable in red wines, which are fermented while in contact with the skins and seeds to further extract flavor and color. Tannins also have antioxidants that enable long-term aging and promote the development of complexities over time.

THE ART OF FINE WINE



The Wine Peddler was painted by award winning artist Jennifer Garant whose work expresses the joy of living life to the fullest. Her work has been collected by celebrities as

well as public and corporate buyers, and is represented in galleries worldwide.

THE GRAPEVINE

“Bullseye! Great taste, especially with the pork loin we grilled for supper. We definitely ordered more of this! [Niner 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon]”
– Kenneth Smith

“Both of the Ballentine wines were GREAT selections this month! We tried them with the newsletter recipes and loved the pairings.” [Ballentine 2002 Zinfandel & 2003 Merlot]
– Diana Westwood

“A superb wine. Very smooth and flavorful. Thanks!!” [Niner 2003 Sangiovese]
– John Ferreira

Happy Holidays

and Happy New Year from Gold Medal Wine Club! Each December and January we welcome in a significant number of new members who quickly discover the fun and unique benefits our Club has to offer. Each month, you will receive two hard-to-find, medal-winning wines from California's best small family-owned and operated wineries. The *Gold Series* is a great way to discover these limited production, unique wines and learn about the background of the wineries and talented winemakers. You also have the opportunity to order additional quantities of your favorite wines at discounts up to 35% off winery direct prices. There's another exciting year ahead of us with 2009, filled with memorable selections and multi-award winners that you won't want to miss. We hope you enjoy these wine selections with family and friends and have a happy holiday season!

This Month's Special

Our NEW *Pinot Noir Series* is a huge hit! This delicious Series exclusively features captivating world-class Pinot Noirs from California and around the world. Every other month, you or your gift recipient will receive two bottles of highly regarded, limited production Pinots from top winemakers. Discover why this grape has become one of the world's most celebrated varietals. If you have a passion for Pinots, you won't want to miss another delivery! Visit us online at www.goldmedalwine.com or Call 1-800-266-8888 for details.

The *Gold Series* features wines from only the best small wineries of California. The selected wines have earned medals in the top wine-industry competitions or have been highly rated by respected national wine publications. On occasion we feature a wine of high medal-quality with very limited availability that may not be submitted to these venues for review.



THE GOLD MEDAL WINE STORE *Reorders*

The Highway 12 2005 Bordeaux Blend and 2005 Merlot provide a true Sonoma Valley experience, sourced from vineyards along perhaps the most diverse region of the wine road's entire 139-mile span. Varietally focused, critically acclaimed, and limited in availability, these selections from Highway 12 are a salute to Sonoma's exceptional legacy and a celebration of all the great wines yet to come.

**Save up to 35%
off Winery Direct**

HIGHWAY 12 WINES	Retail Price Winery-Direct	Club Price 2-Bottle Members	Club Price 4-Bottle Members And Multiple Series Members
2005 Bordeaux Red Blend*	Half Case-6 \$144	\$108 (\$18.00) Save 25%	\$101 (\$16.83) Save 30%
	Full Case-12 \$288	\$202 (\$16.83) Save 30%	\$187 (\$15.58) Save 35%
2005 Merlot*	Half Case-6 \$132	\$99 (\$16.50) Save 25%	\$92 (\$15.33) Save 30%
	Full Case-12 \$264	\$184 (\$15.33) Save 30%	\$171 (\$14.25) Save 35%

Reorder Online: www.goldmedalwine.com/member

Toll Free: 1-800-266-8888 Fax: 1-800-266-8889

Gold Medal Wine Club – 5330 Debbie Road, Suite 200 • Santa Barbara, California 93111

*Availability is extremely limited Note: Shipping and tax (if applicable) not included in the above prices. Call for details.

New If you are also a 2-bottle member of another Series, you are now eligible to receive the 4-bottle member prices above!