

Affordable WINES

By Bobby Lee Lawrence
Photography by Marty Shortum Studio

The readers of *¡Sabroso!*, who follow the “Wine Connoisseur” column, know that I seek out what I feel are the best buys in wine. I always promote the fact that **price** is not indicative of **quality**. There are many wines produced that are exceptional but do not receive the kudos or reviews that they deserve. That’s where this column comes in. In each column I review and suggest wines for which consensus puts them into the category of affordable and above average quality. Part of the criteria will include local availability of the reviewed wines. Nothing bothers me more than reviewing a wine that can only be found in Timbuktu. Keeping in mind that everyone’s taste is different, I will try to be as mainstream as possible by considering the cuisine of the southwest and the dining habits we all live by.



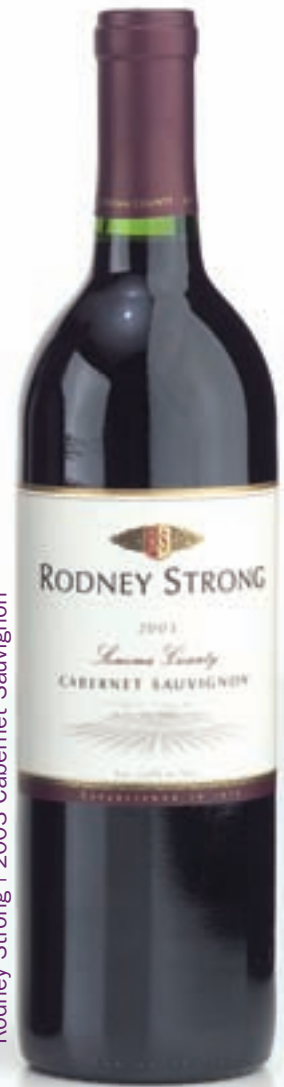
Ironstone Vineyards | Symphony Obsession



St. Clair Winery | 2004 Chardonnay



Red Diamond Winery | 2002 Red Diamond Shiraz



Rodney Strong | 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon

As you can imagine, picking these wines is a daunting task. Wine production in the world has grown by leaps and bounds over the past two decades. Many of the techniques have improved and winemakers have become more artistic. So, taking into account that we all have different tastes, here are my choices.

Ironstone Vineyards in California produces wines that are made for everyday enjoyment. The grapes come from the Lodi Valley and through the Sierra foothills. The one wine that I found to be a great value is a white wine called **Symphony Obsession**. What I liked most about it was how well it matched with spicy foods, a common cuisine in the Southwest. It's priced between \$8 to \$10 dollars a bottle and is available at Albertsons and Celebrate Liquor stores in Las Cruces and at Greenery Market in El Paso.

For the next white wine selection I chose a Chardonnay from **St. Clair Winery** in Deming. Their **2004 Chardonnay** was a Gold Medal winner at the 2004 NM State Fair. It has wonderful flavors of apple and peach with only a slight hint of oak. Serve this wine with fish or chicken. It's priced at \$9 a bottle and is available at Albertsons, Toucan Market and Celebrate Liquor store.

Rodney Strong 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon. This wine from one of the premier wineries in California is an opulent red wine that will pair well with any meat dish, and can be enjoyed equally with many cheeses. Winemaker Rick Sayre is a master blender. Beautifully balanced, with blackberry, cassis and cocoa aromas, this wine is one for the ages. With 250,000 cases produced, it is available most everywhere. Priced at \$20 per bottle it's a great buy.

Red Diamond Winery's 2002 Red Diamond Shiraz is a challenge to the highly-rated Australian Shirazes. Produced in Washington state, this wine will impress your Shiraz drinking friends. Not as full-bodied as the Aussie's, but certainly stands up well for the price. It carries a very fruity aroma and pairs well with game or spicy foods. It sells for under \$10 per bottle and is available at most local wine shops.

If you have any comments, please send them to Southwestwineguy@comcast.net. ❁




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CAN MAKE A MOMENT ROMANTIC,
IMAGINE WHAT
A WHOLE WINERY DOES.



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