

The Best of Texas Wines

by Dr. Russell D. Kane

THE TEXAS WINE INDUSTRY IS FINALLY GETTING SOME TRACTION, AND TODAY THERE ARE MORE THAN 180 WINERIES IN THE STATE. We have a value-oriented, mega-winery (Ste. Genevieve) and a number of large premium wineries such as Llano Estacado, Becker Vineyards, Fall Creek and Pheasant Ridge. The most exciting and rapidly growing sector includes smaller boutique wineries, some of which are true artisanal Texas wineries with names like Brennan Vineyards, McPherson Cellars, San Martino Winery, Alamosa Wine Cellars, Lone Oak Winery and Haak Vineyards. Tasting my way around Texas has inspired me to create this list of the best of the evolving Texas wine experience.

BEST TEXAS WINE UNDER \$8 Ste. Genevieve Moscato (1.5 liter bottle). It's a crisp, clean white wine with a refreshing bit of floral and sweetness, and it's better than some wines at five times the price. Serve it in a carafe paired with fresh fruit, and challenge your guests to guess where it came from.

BEST RESTAURANT FOR SAMPLING TEXAS WINES

Cabernet Grill at the Cotton Gin Village in Fredericksburg offers some 75 Texas wines and wine flights with dinner. The offerings change monthly. See www.cottonginlodging.com.



MOST UNUSUAL TEXAS WINE DRINK Llano Estacado Sweet Red Wine with Squirt grapefruit soda. A Tejas version of what the Spanish call *tinto de verano*, or red summer drink.

BEST TEXAS VINEYARD TERROIR The widespread red sandy loam over porous limestone in the **Texas High Plains Appellation**. This "Tierra Roja" has similar qualities to the more famous but much more limited Terra Rossa of the Australian Coonawarra wine region.

MOST UNUSUAL WINERY NAME Barking Rocks in Granbury, Texas. A quality micro-winery making

Sangiovese and Cabernet blends and, hopefully, soon a Tempranillo. All stout with years of oak aging.

BEST TEXAS WINE UNDER \$12 McPherson Cellars Rosé of Grenache and Mourvedre. Pink, dry and full of tart red raspberry and cranberry flavor. Have it around, chilled, anytime the weather gets above 89 degrees.

BEST NEW TEXAS WINES White wine: Llano Estacado 2007 Viviana, a premium aromatic white wine blend to go with their long-standing favorite Mediterranean red blend, Viviano. Red wine: Becker Vineyards Raven, an inky blend of Texas Malbec and Petit Verdot, available at the winery.

BEST TEXAS WHITE GRAPE VARIETIES Viognier, Roussanne, Muscat Canelli. Best examples: Texas Hills Vineyard 2007 Roussanne and Grape Creek Vineyards 2008 Viognier (Lost Draw Vineyard).

BEST TEXAS WINE STATISTICS According to a recent study, the economic impact of the Texas wine industry is now more than \$1.3 billion annually. Nearly one million people a year participate in wine tourism in Texas.

BEST TEXAS WINE INVESTMENTS FOR CELLARING Becker Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Fall Creek Meritus, Llano Estacado Viviano, San Martino Ramos Cabernet Sauvignon Private Reserve and Messina Hof Paulo Bordeaux Blend.

BEST TEXAS WINE UNDER \$20 Brennan Vineyards 2008 Viognier.

The grape originates from the South of France and has found a new home in Texas. This dry, unoaked wine embodies ripe peaches and apricots, with a touch of orange peel and a silky mouth feel.

