


MerlotMerlotMerlot

STAG'S LEAP WINE CELLARS 1992 Napa Valley
Soft, fat and ripe in an accessible style that seems a little developed for its age, this easy-drinking effort is colored by competing elements of cherries, smoke, rooty spice and obvious herbaceousness. The faintest bit of sharpness in the nose and a noticeably dry edge to the finish further convince that its time for drinking is now.

   \$24.00




STAGS' LEAP WINERY 1992 Napa Valley
Moderately fruity, somewhat brushy and lacking breadth in spite of ripeness and sweet oak, the aromas additionally betray an unwelcome mushroomy, brushy note. The mouth, although supple at entry, quickly turns to tannic toughness that diminishes the impact of fruit.

   \$20.00

 **STERLING VINEYARDS** 1991 Napa Valley
Three Palms Vineyard. There is so much of interest in the nose that the wine's somewhat stiff, truncated flavors come as a bit of a disappointment. The initial aromatic impressions, stressing ripe black cherries buttressed by a rich and sweet, root-beer-like spiciness, would seem to promise more wine than is delivered in the moderately rich, decently fruited but somewhat reticent flavors, and the coarse astringency at the finish chops off the fruit prematurely. The positive aspects of this wine make it enjoyable and allow it time to improve in the bottle.


   \$19.50

STONESTREET VINEYARD 1992 Alexander Valley
(14% Cabernet Sauvignon). Oak and dark chocolate tones veer toward overripeness. Ripe and round with a soft impression at entry, the immediate palatal feel is opulent but astringency produces a bothersome finish, and the wine tastes rough and hot with food.

   \$22.00

STRAUS VINEYARDS 1991 Napa Valley
Attractive top notes of ripe cherries and charr oak in the nose give way to ripe, but loosely defined fruit in the clean, middle-density flavors of this supple, slightly soft-edged wine. That fruit is more evident early on than later, however, and the fading finish is at once hollow, slightly hot and tougher than needs to be.

   \$19.50

 **PAUL THOMAS Cabernet-Merlot** 1993 Columbia Valley
53% Merlot, 47% Cabernet Sauvignon. (Washington). If this is the same Merlot as in the following wine, then it has greatly benefited from its affiliation with Cabernet—for this is a much richer, fuller and more complete wine than its sibling. It shows an extra measure of concentrated fruit, has more of a tannic backbone and sets a noticeably tangy

note of trailing acidity in its aftertaste as a counter to its outspoken ripeness.


   \$10.00

PAUL THOMAS WINERY 1993 Columbia Valley
(Washington). Mild scents of cherries and strawberries are limited in fruitiness and limited in concentration, and this undersized fruit is joined by hints of herbs and stems in the quiet, clean flavors. This wine simply wants greater center and substance.

   \$10.00

PAUL THOMAS WINERY 1992 Columbia Valley
(Washington). Scents of cherries and herbs are offered in the unassertive nose along with hints of sweet oak and a dry brush, woody element. Firm but somewhat coarse on the palate, the wine tastes of cherries with a persistent herbal, vegetal undercurrent that undercuts its appeal.


   \$10.00

 **TRUCHARD VINEYARDS** 1992 Carneros
Napa Valley. Rich and inviting in a creamy, open sense, the nose shows plenty of direct cherry and raspberry fruitiness to match its vanillin oakiness. Supple on the palate at entry, then showing increasing astringency, the wine mixes impressively deep fruit with oak and hints of dark chocolate in its long-finishing flavors. This one wants a few years of bottle age to round and broaden to its fullest potential.

   \$18.00

WELLINGTON VINEYARDS 1992 Sonoma County
(17% Cabernet Franc). Ripe cherries and loads of sweet oak are evident along with assertive spicy, clovey, toasty scents. A firm and fairly dense feel at entry leads to tight, tough, rather astringent qualities by mid-palate. Black cherry and creamy oak can be found in the flavors, but questions must be raised about how much of the aroma and flavor appeal will be present by the time the harsher elements soften and the wine becomes agreeable to drink.

   \$15.00

 **WHITEHALL LANE WINERY** 1992 Knights Valley
(7% Cabernet Sauvignon). Youthful aromas of ripe cherries, berries, toast and brush introduce this brisk, medium-bodied Merlot that succeeds on the basis of vitality and balance more than it does on richness and muscle. Clean and nicely focused throughout, it ends on a note of tannic coarseness that should be tempered by two or three years of cellaring.

   \$16.00

WILDHURST VINEYARDS 1993 Clear Lake
Light-medium intensity aromas of ripe and candied cherries are augmented by a dollop of vanillin oakiness, and this same set of pleasant but somewhat underplayed characteristics takes an encore in the fairly simple flavors. A serviceable wine at present, it may open a bit with a few years of age.

   \$12.00