



RUTHERFORD *Ranch*



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Bob Hosmon's Wine Tasting notes: Rutherford Ranch wines beat out far pricier labels

Before I sat down with Tyson Wolfe, a young winemaker at Napa-based Rutherford Ranch winery, I knew nothing about his wines. I had never noticed them, never tasted them and was not even sure I had ever heard of them. I was in for a very pleasant surprise.

The first hint of quality is in the *2007 Rutherford Ranch Napa Valley Chardonnay*. With its delicious fruit-forward, well-balanced flavor, ending in a crisp, lingering finish, this white is made the way chardonnay is meant to be. Imagine my delight that this winning wine is modestly priced (I've tasted chardonnays at twice the price that are no better).

I am equally taken by the *2006 Rutherford Ranch Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon*. A user-friendly red, ready to drink now, this cab tastes of the grape with rich flavors of black currants and just the right dose of tannins to give it body without creating a harsh finish.

The *2005 Rutherford Ranch Napa Valley Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon* also has subtle tannins but is more complex. The reserve is intense, delivering multiple layers of black berries, mint and cinnamon. Offered as the winery's most expensive red, it can hold its own with other higher priced cabs.

Serve with: Enjoy the chardonnay as a sipping wine or pair it with chicken, fish, pasta (fettuccine Alfredo) or grilled pork loin. I like the cabernet (which is a blend with other red grapes) with hangar steak, cheeseburgers and other grilled red meats. The reserve 100 percent cabernet deserves to be served with special dishes, including rack of lamb, prime rib, duck or veal.

Availability/suggested retail: Sold in wine shops, the chardonnay is \$15, the cabernet \$25 and the reserve cabernet \$50 a bottle.

The people who make Rutherford Ranch are also responsible for the very affordable Round Hill wines, including the easy-to-like *2007 Round Hill Pinot Grigio* and *2007 Round Hill Oak Free Chardonnay*, both priced at \$10 and sold in food and wine stores.

Have a question about wine? Write to Wine, Sun Sentinel, 200 E. Las Olas Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301-2293. Or send an e-mail with your first and last names, address and telephone number to dhartz@SunSentinel.com with "Wine Column" in the subject line. Sorry, no personal replies.

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