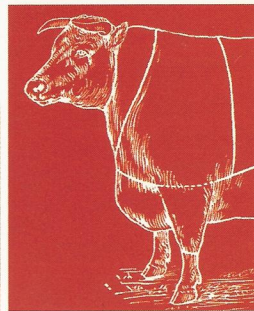
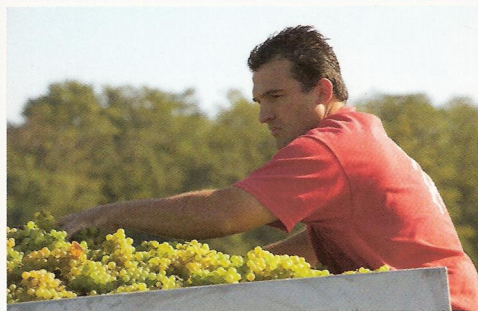


Wine & Spirits

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BEST IN THE WORLD OF WINE

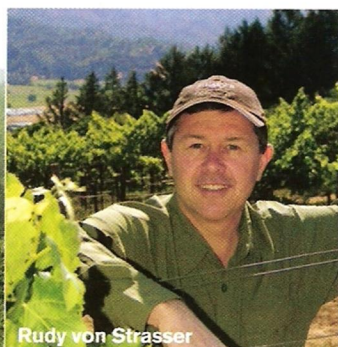
CHAMPIONS OF VALUE

champions of value

In the simplest terms, value is the relationship between quality and price. There's some deep emotional place in most people's minds, however, that makes it nearly impossible to separate those two criteria. As tasters, we hear it all the time: "I would recommend this wine if it were cheap," panelists tell us. Our response, long ago, was to take price out of the equation; the only information we give our panels and our critics is vintage, variety and region. So the recommendation and numerical rating a wine receives is based on its quality: Is it a fine expression of what it purports to be?

With this issue, for the first time, we've made a statistical analysis of our ratings in relation to price, and found that indeed, there is a predictable relationship between the two: In general, the higher the score, the more expensive a wine is likely to be.

However, this is not always the case—and it's in those instances where the greatest values lie. In the pages that follow, we've highlighted the wines that performed better than their price would predict, with the most impressive values earning five stars.



Rudy von Strasser

★★★★★ **von Strasser** 2006 Diamond Mountain District Napa Valley Post Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (96 points, \$75, 6/09, von Strasser Wine Co., Calistoga, CA)

Rudy von Strasser will go down in history as one of the great farmers of Napa Valley. He works exclusively in the tight hillside community of Diamond Mountain, having helped to define the district AVA, farming his own vines as well as neighbors' blocks under long-term leases. Post is one small vineyard he planted for a neighbor in 1992, just under three acres of vines in rocky, well-drained ground he describes as similar to river-bottom soils. In 2006, it's all cabernet sauvignon, with the kind of bright center and mineral-infused edges that lead right to Diamond Mountain. Other Napa Valley wines of this quality are twice the price or more. —J. GREENE