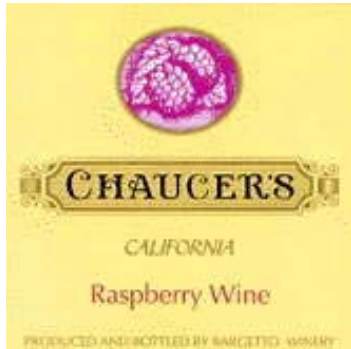


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TUESDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2009 17:25 JOSIE COWDEN, DINING - WINE REVIEWS



Searching for a bottle of local wine in Deer Park Wine & Spirits in Aptos, I came across a raspberry wine made by Chaucer's Cellars (\$13 for 500 ml.). Chaucer's dessert-style fruit wines are absolutely delicious because they're all made from 100 percent pure fruit without any artificial flavorings. As the holidays are coming up, this is just the kind of wine to crack open after dinner to enjoy with dessert—or even if friends come over and you just want to offer something different. It's a sweet wine, of course, so it can actually be served instead of dessert. Chaucer's suggests serving it with soda, champagne or over the rocks, with ice cream or cheesecake or in a cobbler. Personally, I like to pour a little glass of it and enjoy it as you would a liqueur.

As well as the raspberry wine, Chaucer's also makes a rich-tasting olallieberry and a lovely pomegranate. One of these wines served chilled with nuts, cheese or dried fruit adds a bit of pizzazz to a special occasion.

Chaucer's Cellars wines are made by Bargetto Winery in Soquel—as an offshoot of their booming wine business. The name Chaucer is an apt name to give the wines made in Medieval England style—reminding us, of course, of the 14th Century British writer, Geoffrey Chaucer. It even says on the label that these wines can be enjoyed “in the spirit of Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.”

As my husband and I finish off our English-style dinner of roast lamb and mint sauce, Brussels sprouts, mashed potatoes and gravy, we're looking forward to the Chaucer's raspberry wine afterward instead of dessert, and the nice piece of Huntsman cheese to go with it—imported all the way from dear old England. The luscious, dense flavors of the raspberry wine explode in the mouth—and combined with the rich, dual flavors of this particular cheese—a layered combination of Blue Stilton and Double Gloucester—this is an excellent pairing to finish off a meal. It doesn't necessarily mean that because the wine is sweet, the food eaten with it must also be sweet.

Chaucer's Cellars also makes mead and flavored mead. Mead is an alcoholic beverage made from honey and water—and fermented with yeast. It's a sort of “medieval” brew that's been around in countries throughout the world for centuries.

Chaucer's Cellars' wines can be found all over, but your best bet is to head to Bargetto Winery in Soquel—where you can do a tasting and decide which one you like best. The winery has gift baskets available too—with a nice assortment of these really delicious dessert wines all ready for you to carry away. And what a nice stocking stuffer it would make.

Chaucer's Cellars/Bargetto Winery, 3535 N. Main St., Soquel. 475-2258. chaucerswine.com. Tasting room open daily from noon to 5 p.m. Tasting fee is \$5 for five different wines.