



# Rick's Grape Skinny



[ricksgrapeskinny@gmail.com](mailto:ricksgrapeskinny@gmail.com)

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*"All you need is love and wine...and maybe some chocolate and a nap...but mostly wine!"*

(Anonymous)

## Bordeaux Futures:

How to Invest and Score a Sweetheart Deal!



Every now and again...I am asked for advice related to investing in wine...specifically Bordeaux wines...a subject about which I know *"less than nothing!"* But, hey...when has knowing absolutely zippo about a subject ever stopped this intrepid wannabe investigative reporter!? The answer is *"never!"* So off we go!

Related to this topic, here's something I do know. About six months after moving to the Raleigh, NC area, there was a story in the paper about hundreds of people in, and outside of, our area who had invested and lost boatloads of money in Bordeaux futures with a local firm. Supposedly, the wines whose futures were being bought and sold were actually in the possession of the local firm -- and being stored in ideal conditions. But of course...that proved to be a virtual Jeroboam of plonk! 9 years later, court battles are still being fought over this eno-fiasco!

So -- here's my advice related to investing in wines...particularly Bordeaux wines. *DON'T!*

But hold on! No sooner would I offer my most sage and compelling *how to avoid losing money through investing in wines advice*, and what should arrive in my Gmail inbox but a note from a friend who was heralding a small fortune that his family had recently made from a long-held investment in...drum roll please...Bordeaux wines! Now what!? I just advised you to not invest in wines -- particularly Bordeaux wines -- and I get this email from a friend who's telling me about six Magnums of 1982 *Château Le Pin* that his family sold for...better sit down for this...\$85,000!! For those who aren't math majors, that works out to \$14,166.67 a bottle!

Whoa Nellie! Them's a lot of shekels for six bottles of wine...especially for wines from an unheard-of *Château*. Well...maybe you and I never heard of *Château Le Pin*...but somebody sure has...and they must really love it -- a lot!

As it turns out -- this past summer while enroute to a Family Reunion in Pittsburgh, we visited Joe and Catherine George in Morgantown, WV -- whom we had not seen for 43 years! They were our landlords back when I was in school at WVU...and we grew to love them dearly. We get teary-eyed when we think about how wonderful and special it was to visit with them after such a long time. But I digress. Anyway, Joe had been in the wine and spirits business professionally -- and aside from that, he and Catherine also had five sons...four of whom turned out to be lawyers...while son # 5 just owned 1600 acres of productive oil and gas wells. Can you imagine!?

As the years unfolded...it seems that the combination of Papa Joe's experience, the trusting encouragement of Mama Cat, the unified smarts of his home-grown legal team, and those oil and gas wells all served to make them successful Bordeaux wine investors! But unlike investors who only bought a promise and hope, the Georges actually bought and took possession of their Bordeaux wine! And get this -- all 519 bottles were stored in the cellar of the home we rented from them while I was in school!

Long story made woefully short, 59 Lots totaling 519 bottles (which they had spot-tested every now and again) sold at auction in October 2015 for \$231,050! So, I hereby revise my wine investing advice. Instead of DON'T -- if you're planning on investing in wines: 1st<sup>t</sup> - marry a supportive partner; 2d - go buy a Wine and Spirits Distributorship; and 3d -- have 5 kids, four of whom should be lawyers while the fifth should own some oil and gas wells. Eazy Peazy!



# Toast of the Month



*“Here’s to the unspeakable good fortune to win a true heart  
And the merit to keep it!”*

*(Author Unknown)*

## A Bunch of Sweetheart Wines!

### White Blend

**Conundrum 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 2014**

**Off-dry, Fruit-forward & Mouthwatering!**

**(Napa Valley CA)/\$19-\$25** - Conundrum White was first produced in 1989 and boy oh boy was it ever the media darling...with a constant hum and buzz about just what grapes were in the mix. But there was no answer forthcoming from winemaker Chuck Wagner...who quipped, “If I told you what’s in it, it wouldn’t be a conundrum, now would it?” Well, after 25 years...the proverbial cat’s out of the bag on this masterfully mixed mélange of aromatic and tasty grapes! At long last, we now know it’s a union of *Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon, Muscat Canelli, and Viognier*...but the varietal apportionment -- which changes each year -- will remain a puzzle to be pondered and debated! Despite the perplexing nature of Conundrum’s puzzling components, what isn’t a mystery is that this is one of the most exceptionally delicious and versatile white wine blends you might ever enjoy!

[www.wagnerfamilyofwine.com](http://www.wagnerfamilyofwine.com)

### Red Blend

**Conundrum 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 2013**

**Rich & Supple....Simply & Sinfully Delicious!**

**(Napa Valley CA)/\$19-\$25** - This is a relative newcomer in the line-up of delicious wines from the Wagner Family Caymus Vineyards. First hitting the streets in 2011...and true to the nature of its older sibling, the varietal mix of this über-yummy red blend was initially undeclared. It remains a puzzle today...for the most part -- as grandson winemaker, Charlie Wagner has only recently revealed the fairly obvious inclusion of “at least” *Zinfandel* and *Petite Sirah!* The exact nature of the blend might remain a perpetual curiosity, but here’s what is agreed to by all who’ve chosen to pick up a bottle of Conundrum Red -- it’s a gorgeously rich and voluptuous wine that just might tempt you to drink an entire bottle at a single sitting! All to say...forewarned is forearmed!! Careful now!!

[www.wagnerfamilyofwine.com](http://www.wagnerfamilyofwine.com)

**Taken Wines *Complicated Red Wine* 2013**

**Deep, Dark, and Decadently Delicious!**

**(Napa Valley – St. Helena, CA)/\$18-\$22**

Always a sucker for a great story, I love it even more when wine is involved! Here’s one about two childhood buds, Josh Phelps and Carlos Trincherro, who grew up together in Napa Valley winemaking families...and went on to found Taken Wines. In 2010, they proudly launched their first Taken wine...a lovingly made and very delicious Cabernet Sauvignon. As the Taken team has evolved, so too have the complexity and sophistication of their wines. And there’s no better testament to just how good these guys and their wines are than their masterfully crafted *Complicated* -- a blend of 52% *Grenache*, 43% *Syrah* and 5% *Carignane* from Central Coast vineyards -- that’s very reminiscent of the great Spanish reds from Priorat and Montsant.

[http://takenwine.com/](http://takenwine.com)

### Rosé

**Starmont *Rosé of Pinot Noir* 2014**

**Like Drinking Flowers...Lipsmackingly Good!**

**(Los Carneros AVA – Napa, CA)/\$16-\$20 –**

With a familial lineage that is a part of the venerable and renowned Merryvale Family of Wines, Starmont was collocated with the Merryvale winery in St. Helena for most of its existence. In 2005, that all changed when 50 acres of the 150 year old Stanly Vineyards -- originally planted by legendary vintner Louis Martini -- became available in Carneros. Pinkies and Blushes come in all kinds and colors these days -- but none is any better than this peachy, pink, potion of perfection -- Starmont’s *Rosé of Pinot Noir!* The masterminds behind this stunning sweetheart of a *Rosé* are Head of Viticulture, Michael Costley, Director of Winemaking, Sean Foster, and Superstar Winemaker, Jeff Crawford. I guess it might be fair to call them a bunch of winemaking geniuses!

[www.starmontwinery.com/](http://www.starmontwinery.com/)

