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Wine Banter

by dick starr

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California's Political Wine Patron

I would like to extend a note of appreciation to State Senator Pat Wiggins who chairs the Senate Select Committee on California Wine Industry and has initiated and supported legislation to assist California wine growers and producers. Pat, an enthusiastic supporter of California's wine industry, is a product of an audaciously intrepid family; her father was the stuntman for the wing walking maneuvers in *The Great Waldo Pepper* and her mother, like Pat, was an accomplished parachutist. In rare but prized respites, Pat enjoys a dollop of her favorite varietal, Pinot Noir.



Celebrity Wine Wizards

In addition to Dan Aykroyd's varietals that I reviewed last month, wine world is expanding exponentially with celebrity bon vivants who want to broadcast an urbane lifestyle. Up 20% in grocery store sales since last year and accounting for 1% of total wine sales, it has become an increasing challenge to identify a celebrity gourmand that hasn't sanctioned a tailored grape. Many have actually cultivated an authentic master's tasting palate. Just to dash off a few of these famed wine pundits and wanna-be oenophiles—living and posthumously—who have had one or more grape-tinged body parts:

The Rolling Stones, Kiss, Celine Dion, Pink Floyd, Barbara Streisand, Madonna, Jerry Garcia, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Joe Montana, Santana, British Soccer Star David Beckham, Porn Star Savanna Samson, Vince Neil (Vince Vineyards), Fred Mac Murray (Mac Murray Ranch), former NFL coach Mike Ditka (Mendocino Wine Co.), director Francis Ford Coppola (wineries

in Napa County and Geyserville—pass on daughter Sofia's canned sparkling wine), pro-golfer Greg Norman (Greg Norman Estates), former inmate Martha Stewart (E. & J. Gallo), Paul Newman (Trinchero Family Estates), French actor Gerard Depardieu (Gerard Depardieu Winery), Elvis Presley (Blue Suede Shoes Chardonnay by Graceland Cellars),



Marilyn Monroe (Flagship is Marilyn Merlot by Nova Wines), auto racing icon Mario Andretti (Mario Andretti Winery), Olympic skating gold

medalist Peggy Fleming (Fleming Jenkins Vineyards & Winery), Sopranos' psychiatrist Lorraine Bracco (Bracco Wines), Raymond Burr (Raymond Burr Vineyards in Dry Creek), Kenwood resident Tommy Smothers (Remick Ridge Vineyards—take a pass if your looking for potable wine), Fleetwood Mac founding member Mick Fleetwood (Mick Fleetwood Private Cellar), Olivia Newton John (Koala Blue Wines), Sting (II Talagio's Vineyards in the Chianti region to be released about 2010), and Bob Dylan (Planet Waves by Fattoria Le Terrazze).



Ledson's anachronistic winery—an architecturally Gothic nightmare that defies any amicable appropriateness to Sonoma Valley—offered a Jeff Bridges heritage to sell for somewhere in the low three figures. The buyer was expected to purchase for the celeb name only since no tasting was offered. This is a good example of no pretense to quality or lack of it, just another luminary name.

- Cheers!