

Celebrity Style

It's okay to enjoy a wine from your favorite singer or actor.

Over the past few years, it's become increasingly common for an actor, singer or other high-profile individual to slap their name on a bottle of wine. Sometimes there's zero involvement. The most dedicated, like director Francis Ford Coppola, are right there in the wineries on a regular basis. The choices below represent the most common celebrity expressions: fruit forward, easy to drink, young wines meant to open with a casual meal or during a backyard BBQ.



Giffit 2012 Estate Grown Red Blend (Monterey, CA)

Wolfgang Puck 2011 Master Lot Reserve Red Blend (CA)

Drops of Jupiter 2011 California Red Wine (CA)

Giffit 2012 Estate Grown Chardonnay (Monterey, CA)

Fans of the *Today Show* know it is no secret co-host Kathie Lee Gifford likes her wine. So it makes sense she'd partner up with someone to produce a label. That someone is Monterey-based Scheid Family Wines, and the result is an easy-to-drink, picnic or dinner party blend (42% Merlot, 25% Petite Sirah, 12% Syrah, 10% Petite Verdot). It also arrives nicely packaged, making it ideal for "giffit"-giving. The wine is black-and-red-fruit driven, but not jammy.

It's charming, with mild tannins, medium acids and a straightforward finish. Perfect with grilled pork chops or kebabs and soft cheeses with almonds. \$20

The steak-friendly celebrity chef has released a namesake wine for the public, and it's perfect for barbecues, tailgate parties and general entertaining. The blend (Puck's also got a CabSav) is 49% Merlot, 37% Cabernet Sauvignon and 14% Zinfandel; it produces an enjoyable, straightforward table red, ready for drinking. On the palate, you'll find dark berry fruits, lush but distinctive tannins, and a lovely spice/pepper finish. As a bonus, proceeds go to benefit the Keep Memory Alive Foundation (KMA). If you can spare a cup, it also works nicely paired with wine-braised duck legs and pappardelle pasta. \$15

The band Train helped define pop rock in the early 2000s. While the guys still tour, they've also expanded their interests. Guitarist Jimmy Stafford was particularly interested in getting involved with wine. The band formed Save Me, San Francisco Wine Company in 2011 (in partnership with Acme Wine Movers and winemaker James Foster) to create approachable, enjoyable wines named after the band's most famous songs. DoJ is a Petite Sirah-based red with notable boysenberry and other berry fruit aromas. Soft tannins and subtle herbaceous notes mean this wine pairs nicely with lasagna or creamy pasta. \$15

This is the second in Kathie Lee Gifford's new label with Scheid Family Wines. Gifford said she wanted it to reflect "an elegant Chardonnay like those I tasted in California in the 1970s."

The wine more or less succeeds at this goal. While there's not a lot of (if any) oak on the nose, on the palate it does remind one of those rich, buttery Chardonnays of the past. Hints of banana outline the mineral and malo notes, and mild tannins buzz the inside of the lips. Pair with soft goat cheese, almonds and honey, while reclining on a sun-drenched redwood deck. \$20

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