

Chicago Tribune

Seasonal wine splurges

It's time for a little vino indulgence

Bill Daley

December 22, 2009

Consider these six premium **California** reds recommended by our tasting panel.

Whether the bottle is meant **for Christmas** present or Christmas future, these Napa Valley wines combine a fruit-forward friendliness with the tannic structure needed for aging. All are cabernet sauvignon or Bordeaux-style blends.

Go big and bold!

2007 Blackbird Vineyards Contrarian: A big hit with the tasting panel, this is a blend of 46 percent cabernet franc, 34 percent merlot and 20 percent cabernet sauvignon. Expect a full-bodied, elegant red with the fruit neatly wrapped around a core of wood and earth. Subtle nose: raspberry, earth and a squeeze of lime. Serve with prime rib with Yorkshire pudding, Chinese-style duck with plum sauce.

★★★ **\$90**

★★★ Very good

