



# RED DIAMOND®

## Wine & Spirits



### merlot

Sommeliers we interviewed confirmed what our poll numbers suggest: that merlot has slid off the radar for most American diners. Its share of the most popular wines has slipped to 5.5 percent, which is actually lower than 1991, when it first debuted on an upward trend in our poll. And so our list of popular brands is shorter than in recent years. "There's been such apathy for so long," says Chaylee Priete of *Greens* in San Francisco. Merlot sales are sluggish for Leona Taylor at *Bistro Jeanty* in the Napa Valley, who says,

**"Bigger names like Duckhorn move, but otherwise merlot is really slow."**

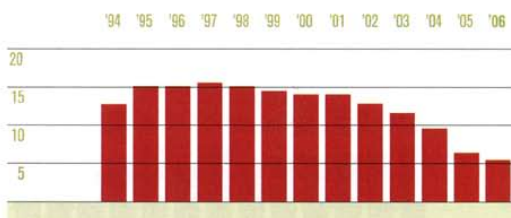
Duckhorn dominates the pack this year; it is by far the most popular, and its average price is significantly higher than others—nearly every other wine listed is value-priced. This value orientation may have come at the expense of Washington State, a top domestic source for merlot and perennial presence on our list; this year, it's all but absent.

Not everyone is ready to write off the variety. "We haven't seen any drop in merlot sales," says James Yacyshyn at *Carmine's* in New York City, who moves at least three cases a week, citing Kendall-Jackson as well as an Italian merlot: an exotic, ripasso-style wine from Tenuta Santa Maria in the Veneto, called Decima Aurea. That was one of his biggest successes last year, which suggests that when merlot no longer seems ordinary, it can once again capture people's imagination.

#### MOST POPULAR MERLOTS

Rank	Pts.	Winery	Bottling	Price \$
1	73	Duckhorn Vineyards St. Helena, Napa Valley, CA	Napa Valley Estate Howell Mountain	\$108 \$150
2	35	Sterling Vineyards Calistoga, Napa Valley, CA	Napa Valley Central Coast Vintner's Collection	\$46 \$36
3	30	Rutherford Hill Winery Rutherford, Napa Valley, CA	Napa Valley	\$55
4	26	Blackstone Gonzales, CA	California Napa Valley	\$30 \$35
5	23	Coppola Geyserville, Sonoma Cty., CA	California Diamond Series	\$36
6	23	Franciscan Oakville Estate Rutherford, Napa Valley, CA	Napa Valley Oakville Estate	\$40
7	23	Kendall-Jackson Vineyards Santa Rosa, Sonoma Cty., CA	California Vintner's Reserve California Grand Reserve	\$48 \$50
8	23	Markham Winery St. Helena, Napa Valley, CA	Napa Valley	\$45
<b>9</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>RED DIAMOND</b> Paterson, WA	<b>Washington</b>	<b>\$29</b>
10	18	Stags Leap Winery Napa, Napa Valley, CA	Napa Valley	\$70
11	17	Casa Lapostolle Santa Cruz, Colchagua Valley, Chile	Rapel Rapel Cuvée Alexandre	\$34 \$38
12	16	Château Simard St-Emillion, Bordeaux, France	St-Emillion	\$66
13	10	Frog's Leap Winery Rutherford, Napa Valley, CA	Napa Valley	\$76

#### merlot as a % of top-selling wines



#### share of merlot points & average price

by Country	% Share of Points			Avg. Price		
	'04	'05	'06	'04	'05	'06
America	78.9%	74.9%	70.5%	\$48.98	\$48.24	\$55.88
France	12.5	18.7	21.2	63.23	61.56	81.09
Chile	2.8	0.8	2.5	30.57	36.00	34.75

by Appellation	'04	'05	'06	'04	'05	'06
Napa Valley	38.8%	27.6%	36.3%	\$59.07	\$62.30	\$69.94
Sonoma	10.7	11.7	9.0	42.89	43.70	39.06
Washington	13.3	13.4	9.4	43.54	40.78	51.27
Bordeaux	12.1	17.4	17.4	64.86	65.42	90.62
St-Emillion	9.3	10.9	12.6	65.95	63.95	97.09

Overall Average Price	'04	'05	'06
	\$53.37	\$57.62	\$60.08

(Data reflects the fourth quarter of the year indicated.)