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2011 Spring Wine Guide: What the pros are sipping this season

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By **Katherine Cole, Special to The Oregonian**



Ross William Hamilton/The Oregonian

We swirled, sniffed and sipped (and sometimes spit) to bring you some great wines.

Sometimes there's a disconnect between the wines reporters are writing about and those they're actually drinking at home.

Because we spend a lot of time immersed in the industry, we've got lines on the little-known, "sleeper" producers who aren't on the public's radar. We also know which wines are outrageously cheap and which ones we wouldn't mind spending a bit more for.

So we asked The Oregonian's resident wine experts — wine-business reporter Dana Tims, critic-at-large Grant Butler and yours truly, wine columnist Katherine Cole — plus Tracy Howard, associate editor at Portland-based Imbibe magazine, to share which local wines we plan to sip over the next few months.

I'll spend a little more for ...

In case you haven't heard the news, the perennially modest journalism profession is a direct career path to the poorhouse nowadays. Still, we wine-loving scribes save our pennies for special bottles like these.

2008 Andrew Rich Vintner "Cuvée B" Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$30)

2009 The Grand Dalles "Leroy's Finest" Columbia Valley Riesling (\$30): This new label's reds are as dramatic and impressive as its windblown, sun-soaked vineyard in the golden hills above The Dalles ... but at \$60 a bottle, I can't quite afford them. The riesling, however, is just within reach (and as we went to press, we heard that some stores are discounting these wines to \$24 for the riesling and \$48 for the reds). It's a bone-dry, Alsatian-style bottling with a rich mouthfeel counterbalanced by a clean citrus finish. Over Memorial Day weekend, husband-wife owners Scott Elder and Stephanie LaMonica will pour their wines in an old service station on Country Club Road in Hood River, amping up the cool factor of the gorge wine scene. —Katherine Cole

NV R. Stuart & Co. "Rosé d'Or" Oregon Brut Rosé (\$35)