

WINE OF THE WEEK: Scare up fun with classy Ceago merlot



Ceago Vinegarden was founded in 2001 by Jim Fetzer when he bought an amazing lakefront property in Mendocino County, Calif., called Ceago del Lago.

He has his whole family working in the winery and vineyards, which are all biodynamically farmed and managed.

This merlot was one of the first wines made under the Fetzer family's complete control, and it did earn a gold medal at the prestigious San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition.

The Camp Masut Merlot is a luxurious cuvee that comes complete with an impressive bottle that gives it an expensive look. The winemaking process is equally impressive, and the wine spent 14 months in 80 percent new French oak barrels, which further adds clout to the integration in this wine.

In the glass, Ceago Camp Masut Merlot is a deep semi-opaque blood-red color with a nice firm core going out into a light crimson to pinkish-red rim definition with high viscosity. The wine displays a slight ghoulish sedimentation at this point, but it does not affect the taste.

On the nose, there are freshly crushed red and black berry fruits with blueberry sorbet, blackberry jam, soft toffee, mocha, vanilla, oak references, loganberries, licorice twizzlers and hints of minerals.

In the mouth, the wine is opulent with crushed berry fruit -- especially blueberries and raspberries -- blackberry liqueur, and good symmetry between the fruit and tannins, appearing soft and supple through the midpalate with just a little extra kick of black fruit and crushed star anise toward the lovely lingering finish.

Ceago Camp Masut Merlot has a real freshness to it, which is a nice quality for a wine of this stature and it is undoubtedly well-made by the Ceago team.

It is a perfect wine for a Halloween party. Try it with a grilled black bat served on a bed of squirmy worms. It should drink well through 2008 and does not necessarily need time out of the bottle prior to drinking.

Wine: Ceago Camp Masut Merlot

Grape: Merlot (80 percent), cabernet sauvignon (20 percent)

Region: Mendocino County, Calif.

Vintage: 2001

Price: \$ 25.00

