

WEEKEND EDITION

THE VANCOUVER SUN

EATDRINK

THE VANCOUVER SUN, SATURDAY, JULY 14, 2007 **F5**

A GUIDE TO THE GOOD LIFE

ANTHONY GISMONDI IN THE CELLAR

A boxed set to
please the
patio crowd



FRISKY ZEBRA SENSUOUS SAUVIGNON BLANC 2006, WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

Price: \$15.95

UPC: 6009812400460

Score: 85/100

Remarks: A solid summer sipper for the beach,
picnics and uncomplicated food.



FRISKY ZEBRA SEDUCTIVE SHIRAZ 2005, WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

Price: \$15.95

UPC: 6009812400484

Score: 84/100

Remarks: Simple red wine at an affordable
price.

THE VANCOUVER SUN

EATDRINK

THE VANCOUVER SUN, SATURDAY, JULY 14, 2007 **F5**

A GUIDE TO THE GOOD LIFE

Thirsty lizards and frisky zebras – the best of the boxed wine

BY ANTHONY GISMONDI

Now that most of us have accepted screwcap closures on our wine and the sky hasn't fallen, could there be hope for other alternative wine packaging? I'm thinking in particular of bag-in-the-box and Tetra or Prisma Paks.

I'm not betting on any swift changes, given the resistance to screwcap by the middle class of wine, but there's always hope.

As with screwcap, any meaningful success in box wine will have to come from quality wine producers. As I have often lamented, there is nothing wrong with the boxed-wine market that a little quality juice couldn't fix. I'm pretty sure readers that scan this column every week aren't looking for bad wine in a bottle, so why would they be tempted to buy bad wine in a box?

Following along that vein, every nasty-flavoured, cheap blend that

finds its way into a box of wine under the guise of being environmentally-friendly or better suited to people with active lifestyles simply hurts the boxed wine market. Similarly, one-litre boxes priced at a level that does not pass on the savings, be they transportation (more volume less weight), lower labour or what have you, is also holding back the category.

As it happens, the best boxed wine I have tasted this year was a streamlined, three-litre bag-in-the-box from Pentâge Winery, a Naramata-based producer. I just finished the wine after it had been open one month in my refrigerator and the last glass was as good as the first.

At just under \$70 a box, it was the real deal. If I owned a restaurant, I wouldn't think twice about buying high-quality bag-in-the-box wine, knowing the product, once opened, would stay fresh for weeks.

Tetras can be a bit dodgy once opened, but if you unfold the top of the box and squeeze out all the air before you put the screwcap back on, it will keep longer in the refrigerator.

Tetra screw-caps are plastic and, in my estimation, poorly engineered. They can leak without notice and they look and feel cheap. That said, why not give them a try and see what you think?

Remember, it's the juice inside that counts, so if you find a wine you like do not let the packaging deter you.

This week, we look at six boxed wines in the market; while none knocked me off my feet, you may find them useful on the patio for large crowds.

Thirsty Lizard Sémillon - Sauvignon Blanc 2006 has both flavour and style, offering floral, fruity flavours with hints of fresh almost sweet citrus. Just chill and serve it. Remember, if you do not finish

the box be sure to squeeze the excess air out. It should keep for days in the refrigerator.

From thirsty lizards to **Frisky Zebra Sensuous Sauvignon Blanc 2006**, there can be no underestimating the power and influence of the original critter brand, Yellow-tail. In fact, the Frisky Zebra Sauvignon is a bit friskier than the Thirsty Lizard. The fruit is drier with just a pinch of gooseberry and grapefruit. The intensity is moderate but it, too, delivers with

a floral, citrus flavour and a slightly bitter, lime-rind finish. A solid summer sipper for the beach, picnics and uncomplicated food.

From Sicily, the **Sono Vino Pinot Grigio Chardonnay N/V** offers earthy, honey, mineral notes with bits of spice. This has a bit of mid-palate weight with earthy, grassy honeyed fruit and soft finish. This is a simple, straight-up skinny grigio with a twist of richer chardonnay, suitable for summer salads and white meats.

Black Box Tetra Cabernet Sauvignon 2005 meets the crucial standard of being soft and sip-pable, or smooth and easy drinking, as they say. The nose reflects its Central Coast origins with more mint and olives than black fruit and chocolate but it's otherwise fruity and fine. It's perfectly acceptable with most grilled meat dishes. A hamburger red that doesn't quit, at an affordable price.

The bookend red to the white Frisky Zebra Sensuous is the

Frisky Zebra Seductive Shiraz 2005. This Frisky red sports that meaty, earthy, SA nose that permeates most red wine from the Cape. The entry mixes blueberries, leather and smoky, cigar-flavoured fruit that finishes soft and spicy. A basic simple, red wine at an affordable price.

Today's finale is the **Andrew Peace Mighty Murray Shiraz (Tetra Prisma) 2005**. This is the second time this Andrew Peace boxed wine has impressed me. It was tasted earlier this year at the Playhouse Wine Festival and it remains very drinkable. Look for plenty of that spicy, blueberry fruit with an undercurrent of compost and similar peppery, blueberry, tobacco flavours. A ready-to-go versatile barbecue red.

Sun wine columnist Anthony Gismondi is also co-host of *The Best of Food and Wine*, which airs at noon each Saturday on CFUN 1410 AM.

Eat/Drink online

THE GOOD LIFE ONLINE — Can't get enough of Eat/Drink? Well, you can continue to sip from the cup of quality and the plate of pleasure by going to www.vancouver.sun.com. Once you're there, scroll down to Current Features and you'll see the Eat/Drink link. Click and enjoy.