



HAPPY CAMPER

“getting to where life is good”

As Seen in ‘Wheel life’ on the SpokesmanReview.com

THIS SCREW TOP’S FOR YOU: HAPPY CAMPER WINE TARGETS RV CROWD

By Julianne Crane - The Spokesman-Review

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Wandering through the wine section of Rosauers the other day – amid the hundreds of bottles – I was struck by the plethora of bright, snappy labels with catchy names like White Truck, Mad Housewife and Yellow Tail.

Many of these contemporary wines feature color-coded labels with endearing little animals or nostalgic designs.

Over the past few years, vineyards have diversified their branding and started appealing to the young, up-and-coming wine-drinking segment who aren’t extremely knowledgeable but enjoy showing up at a party with a fun label.

One of the latest vineyards to spin off a brand geared toward a “fun” niche market is Happy Camper wine out of San Martin, Calif.

“Who doesn’t like a happy camper?” asked proprietor Jeffrey Dye when reached on his cell phone somewhere in central California.

“We wanted to produce a wine that celebrates the freedom of the great outdoors,” he said.

Happy Camper Wines, whose slogan is “getting to where life is good,” came out with three varietals – chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon and merlot – in 2006.

All of the wines are produced predominantly from fruit grown along the central California coast. Suggested retail price is less than \$9 a bottle.

“It speaks to a young and young-at-heart market,” he said.

Dye approached illustrator Buster O’Connor of eye4 inc to develop the brand’s label designs and copy.

“Happy Camper is definitely targeted at the RV and summer outdoor crowd,” said O’Connor from his office in Gainesville, Fla.

“The label tries to encompass the spirit of adventure and

camaraderie that RV people have,” he said.

“It’s not a brand for wine snobs, but for Mom and Pop Airstream who are looking to invite some people over at the lake,” he said.

Dave DeWitt, treasurer with the Get Along Sams RV club, picked up a couple of bottles of Happy Camper wine as door prizes for a recent club meeting.

“My wife and I were shopping at the URM Cash and Carry when the label jumped right out at me,” said DeWitt. “They have Airstream-type trailers on them, and I thought that they were really neat.”

Sarah Mann, owner of Enoteca Fine Wine and Beer store in Post Falls, said the wine appeals to a variety of buyers, especially in the summer.

“It is a cute little wine with pictures of retro ‘I Love Lucy’ aluminum trailers,” she said.

The cabernet sauvignon label has the camper parked at the end of the day in the middle of giant Redwood trees. The chardonnay features the same retro teardrop in the wide-open desert after a rainstorm. The merlot trailer sits on a quiet beach under a star-lit sky.

Mann said the brand’s screw-cap bottle is a bonus, especially for backpackers and rafters.

“The screw caps are easy to open when you are stuck out in the middle of the wilderness without a corkscrew,” she said.

“Screw caps are becoming more and more popular with wineries because they don’t damage the wine at all,” she said.

“It might not be as romantic to have a screw-off top,” said Mann, “but corks can be faulty and break apart. That’s not romantic, either.”