

TASTINGS

A weekly review of wine, beer and spirits

2008 Big House Red, California, four-bottle box (3 liters), \$24

It is time to think of box wine in a new light; it is no longer just cheap and bland stuff. This wine is packaged in an Octavin, an eight-sided box that holds four bottles. The wine is just as good, if not better, than the glass bottle sample. But while four bottles would cost \$40 or so, the box wine is about half price because of the savings on packaging. The flavors — a blend of syrah, grenache, tannat, mourvedre, sangiovese and barbera grapes — are big and powerful but also harmonious and well structured. A nose of dark ripe berries with a hint of spice leads into a full body that emphasizes dark fruit with hints of oak. The finish is

like red velvet, lush and soft.

The Macallan Fine Oak Highland Single Malt Scotch Whisky (15 year old), Scotland, \$70

This classic single malt starts with rich aromas of dried vanilla beans and raisins, which lead into a medium-bodied Scotch with layers of delicate flavors. Toasted coconut and dried citrus zest were framed with a slight honey sweetness and a cinnamon-raisin finish. The overall taste was smooth and creamy, perfect for any single-malt lover. The casks used to age this Scotch are a combination of American sherry and bourbon in addition to European sherry casks, which impart the complex flavors found in each sip.

Samuel Adams Summer Ale, Boston, \$8, six pack

Samuel Adams summer brew is a different recipe every year, but it always maintains a light and easy drinking character. I noticed a little more spice this year and lots more flavor. It has big notes of lemon and orange zest and a slight sweet white pepper flavor that comes from Grains of Paradise, which is grown on the west coast of Africa. Subtle notes of clove and anise with layers of hops and a medium bitterness bring the flavors into perfect balance. This is a terrific beer for almost any chicken or fish meal cooked on the grill.

NOTE: For a list of upcoming wines to be reviewed, e-mail advance@winetalk.org.

Check out reviewer Lain Bradford's Web site, winetalk.org. Or follow him on Twitter (username: [winereview](https://twitter.com/winereview)). If you have trouble finding a reviewed item, e-mail lain@winetalk.org

