

## Arizona wineries turn out some solid winners

by **Mark Tarbell** - Oct. 24, 2007 12:00 AM  
*Special for the Republic*

Ah, Arizona wines. I took the long road to doing a serious tasting of our home-state favorites. My inner voice was spinning the same reel that others have: How could it be possible to make world-class wines in what is, by and large, a desert? Admittedly I was resistant, fearful I would not like what I found. The good news is that the Arizona wine business is here to stay. I searched the shelves of five Valley wine shops to put this tasting together and found there are very solid wines being made here. The big three winners in this tasting were Callaghan, Dos Cabezas and Echo Canyon. Buy local.

**2005 Callaghan Vineyards "Lisa's Selection" Viognier/Riesling, Sonoita** (\$25.89, Enotria Land of Wine) - This winery emerged as the front-runner when Robert Parker wrote kind words about it several years ago. The color is a rich golden yellow. The aroma is a rich and melony with a hint of cream. The taste is crisp, full and round, kind of like an Americanized Chablis with a Rhone sensibility. 89 points

**2004 Dos Cabezas Wineworks "RED," Cochise County** (\$14.99, AZ Wine Co.) - The color is a little opaque and lacks clarity. The aroma, ripe and mature with dark-red raspberry jam tones, is solid but falls in the finish. The taste is dry, with earth and wood as a structure and spirituous warmth in the finish. Since this wine has a great name, I suspect there may have been a shipping or storage problem and I'll retaste it for a future review.

**2003 "Famous Ranches of Arizona" by**

**Echo Canyon Vineyard & Winery Sedonatage, Sedona** (\$25.99, AZ Wine Co.) - The color is a bright ruby red with clean graduation to the rim. The aroma has a seductive deep-red fruit with wood tones around it. The taste is bright and hits with a pow of fruit concentration, fading to woodiness in the finish. 86 points

**2004 Rancho Rossa Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoita** (\$20.99, AZ Wine Co.) - When it says estate bottled and produced, I suspect that the grapes are from yonder down the road, maybe California. The color is ink black, opaque and clouded. The aroma is rich dark currant, blackberry and oak. It's a very classic Cab nose. The taste is dry with smooth tannins. The fruit is on the ripe and stewed end of the spectrum; drink now. 86 points

**2005 Callaghan Vineyards "Buena Suerte Cuvee" Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot, Sonoita** (\$29.49, Enotria Land of Wine)- The color is sharp and bright with great ruby core and a purple hue. The aroma has tight, dark-red fruit and a hint of green pepper and earth. The taste is big, bright and unctuous, the structure is fine and the fruit

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has good character. The pepper definitely comes on in the end. 93 points

**2004 Colibri Vineyard & Winery "Magnificent" Syrah, Cochise County** (\$18.99, AZ Wine Co.) - This wine looked like it might have had some good potential but might have been negatively affected by shipment or storage. I'll retaste this for a future review.

**2003 Echo Canyon Vineyard & Winery "Estate" Syrah, Yavapai County** (\$36.99, Sportman's) The color is leathery red with a tinge of purple, and it's opaque. The aroma is all pepper and earth. The taste is earthy, dry and tight on the finish. 87 points

**2004 Dos Cabezas "La Montaña" Petite Syrah/Merlot, Cochise County** (\$23.99, AZ Wine Co.) - You expect a good color from Syrah, and this wine's deep, dark and yummy-looking color delivers. The aroma is velvety smooth and complex, with deep fruit. The taste is round, lush, structured but fine. It's a very big and forward red with good character. 92 points

**2004 Callaghan Vineyards Zinfandel, Sonoita** (\$24.50, Village Wine Cellar) - The color is muted and cloudy. The aroma is jammy ripe with a spiciness from alcohol. The taste is big, hot and spicy. The alcohol is a bit out of balance, leaving it a little hollow in the palate. 84 points

### Others to try

- Not available in the stores I visited is a truly fine winery called Granite Creek Vineyards. It's 100 percent USDA-certified organic - check it out! Granite Creek Vineyards, 2515 N. Road 1 East, Chino Valley, Ariz., [granitecreekvineyards.com](http://granitecreekvineyards.com).

- Previously reviewed, and another excellent choice, is a winery called Page Springs Cellars, 1500 N. Page Springs Road, Cornville, Ariz., [pagespringscellars.com](http://pagespringscellars.com).

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