

# Time Out

## New

### Booze clues

### Drink inside the box

By James Oliver Cury

**B**ox wine evokes many things, none of them good. Some people are reminded of clueless college-days consumption; others recall spring picnics in which the focus was on everything but the wine—food, frolic, sun. Why the bad rap? Because the stuff was almost always as cheap as its packaging. But times are changing. Wine makers are experimenting with bottle shapes and sizes—even cans—as well as with synthetic corks and screw-caps. And now, just in time for spring, several companies have introduced what once sounded like an oxymoron: Good box wine.

Just last month, Boisset America unveiled **French Rabbit**, a series of French wines that come in multicolored octagonal cardboard cartons. The advantages of this particular container are numerous: It holds more wine than a bottle (two more glasses), it's light and recyclable, it's easy to open and reseal, it chills quickly and it won't break if you drop it.

All of this makes no difference whatsoever if the wine fails to impress, so I hosted an informal taste test and threw in two other new box wines: **Hardys Stamp of Australia** from Down Under and **dtour**—a collaboration between chef Daniel Boulud, sommelier Daniel Johnnes, and winemaker Dominique Lafon—from France.

First things first: Design matters. Two members

of the panel couldn't find the spout on the Hardy's box (you have to tear out a perforated flap); dtour prints instructions on the back—which helps—and French Rabbit has an easy-to-use twist-off cap. Hardys and dtour, which both come in three-liter packages (the equivalent of about four bottles), will keep longer than French Rabbit because they have inner plastic bags that collapse—thus preventing oxidation.

None of the panelists knew what wine they were drinking at any point in the process and I specifically added some bottled wines to the blind tasting so the stigma of boxes wouldn't bias the feedback (to avoid those "I knew it would suck" kinds of criticisms).

Of the three box-wine chardonnays, the \$37 dtour was the winner. It showed more complexity and flavor than the others, which tended to have either too much acid or too much vanilla. French Rabbit scored a resounding second best. Hardys has an unmistakably creamy-buttery scent—which repelled some tasters—but at \$17, it's still a steal.

French Rabbit also offers cabernet sauvignon, merlot and pinot noir. We sampled the pinot against a few bottles in another blind test and wished we hadn't. Tasters said it smelled bad, was harsh and acidic and had a short finish. We'll give that varietal another try sometime, like maybe at a picnic.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY SINDIA HEALE CARTELO

### FEATURING THE VICE

Adam Rapp  
Maria Dahvana Headley  
Jessica Coen  
Eugene Mirman  
Carmen Wong Ulrich  
Wylie Dufresne  
and Philip Bloch

### ON SIN IN THE CITY



### French Rabbit (French)

From: Boisset  
America  
Size: 1 liter  
Price: \$10

PLUS:  
**Christopher Buckley**  
**Jason Reitman**  
and  
**Colson Whitehead**  
on the Hot Seat

March 16-22, 2006  
Circulation: 112, 413