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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

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WINES

FORGET THE CASHMERE; GIVE SOFT TANNINS INSTEAD

Buying a gift bottle can be a bit like buying a sweater. You might delight the recipient, but there's always that lingering worry that they'll find it hideous. (Good luck getting as much pleasure from a sweater, though.)

So consider this an opportunity to buy a special bottle someone wouldn't buy for themselves - magnums to share, Cabs to lay down and age, Champagne for a special occasion, sweet wines to make the holidays a delight. Just keep telling yourself: It's better to give than to receive.

-Jon Bonne



4 NAPA CABS

Napa Valley's 2002 and 2003 results can be inconsistent, but the best wines from those years offer radiant Claret-like qualities. Give these now and let them be enjoyed several years down the road.

2002 Clos Du Val Oak Vineyard Stags Leap District Cabernet Sauvignon (\$62): This affordable pick, stoic with deep black fruit and a solid dose of wood, is consistently enjoyable. If you need to uncork now, opt for an '01 or older.

Also consider:

2003 Chappellet Pritchard Hill Estate Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (\$120)

2003 Stag's Leap Wine Cellars Fay Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (\$80)

2003 Dominus Estate Napa Valley Red Wine (\$110) 2002 Paradigm Oakville Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$53)