

# Wine Spectator

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## THE TOP

# 100

PLUS:

## WINE OF THE YEAR

Our Editors Select the Most  
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DEC. 31, 2006 - JAN. 15, 2007  
\$5.95 US \$6.95 CAN



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## Pump It Up

There is disagreement around the *Wine Spectator* offices on the issue of vacuum-pumping wine to slow its decline. Some say vacuum-pumping doesn't work; others say it can actually harm the wine

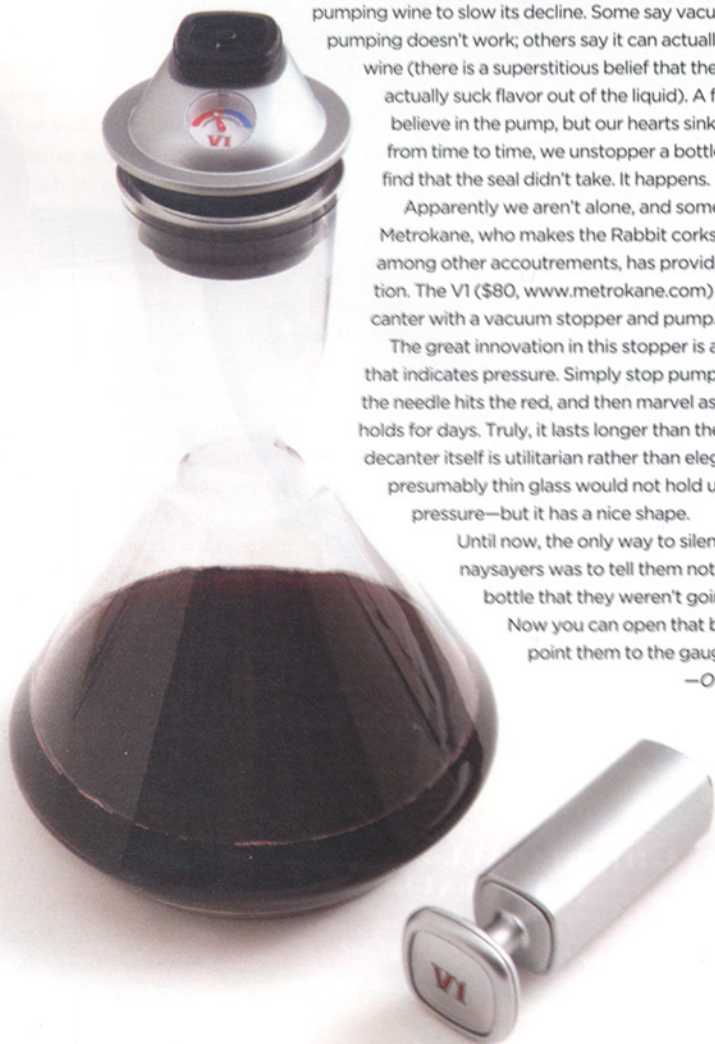
(there is a superstitious belief that the pump can actually suck flavor out of the liquid). A few of us believe in the pump, but our hearts sink when, from time to time, we unstopper a bottle only to find that the seal didn't take. It happens.

Apparently we aren't alone, and someone at Metrokane, who makes the Rabbit corkscrew among other accoutrements, has provided a solution. The V1 (\$80, [www.metrokane.com](http://www.metrokane.com)) is a decanter with a vacuum stopper and pump.

The great innovation in this stopper is a gauge that indicates pressure. Simply stop pumping when the needle hits the red, and then marvel as the seal holds for days. Truly, it lasts longer than the wine. The decanter itself is utilitarian rather than elegant—presumably thin glass would not hold up to the pressure—but it has a nice shape.

Until now, the only way to silence the naysayers was to tell them not to open a bottle that they weren't going to finish. Now you can open that bottle, and point them to the gauge.

—Owen Dugan



## Heirloom Beans

Steve Sando is changing the way we think about beans. His Rancho Gordo New World Specialty Food in Napa, Calif., is a designer label of beans, with dozens of heirloom varieties to choose from. Think of heirloom beans the way you would heirloom tomatoes—beautiful to look at, with unique flavors and textures. Rancho Gordo's customer list includes the French Laundry and Per Se—if you've had beans that have caught your attention in a restaurant lately, chances are they were Rancho Gordo.

To introduce the home chef to the world of heirloom beans, we recommend the European Sampler (\$20, [www.rancho-gordo.com](http://www.rancho-gordo.com)). This set includes Cellini Runner, French Horticulture, Flageolet and Red Nightfall, demonstrating the range in shapes, colors, textures and flavors of heirloom beans.

To cook, try the Rancho Gordo simple method: Soak ahead if you have time; sauté a simple mirepoix of diced onion, celery, carrot and garlic. Add the beans and their soaking water, bring to a boil and then simmer on low until your kitchen smells wonderful. You'll swear they were cooked in butter and stock—the flavors are that rich.

—MaryAnn Bovio



## A Real Cut-Up

Prettiness is not normally what draws one to buy a knife, any more than cute colors make one want a computer. A knife should simply do its job.

However, when a knife does its job as well as these examples from New West Knife Works, a little prettiness is OK. A number of shapes and sizes are available from their two lines.

The colored handle on the Fusionwood model (far left, 8.25-inch "mini chopper," \$79, [www.newwestknifeworks.com](http://www.newwestknifeworks.com)) is gorgeous—and feels good in the hand, too. It holds a heavy steel blade made to specifications in Seki, Japan, a former samurai-sword-manufacturing center. All New West knives are assembled and hand-finished in Wyoming.

The handle on the Phoenix line (near left, 7.75-inch paring knife, \$85) is synthetic material—not so pretty but easier to take care of and virtually indestructible. But the blade's the thing: Angle it up to the light and see the wavy pattern where the layers of steel are forged together. These knives are sharp as blazes. Who cares if they happen to be pretty, too?

—O.D.

