



Basic Juice Article
Yummy Yellow Tail

by: *Beau Jarvis*

I worked in a wine store during the holiday season. I was curious to see what people bought for parties, gifts and themselves. I met serious bargain hunters: “Which is better – the four dollar Chardonnay or the three dollar White Zinfandel?” I also met very generous gift givers: “Help me find the best bottle of wine, regardless of cost.” Yet the holiday refrain I heard most often (seemingly every five minutes) went like this: “Where is the Yellow Tail Shiraz?” Somewhat less often I heard I heard the same question with the word ‘Chardonnay,’ ‘Merlot’ or ‘Cabernet’ substituted for ‘Shiraz.’ In fact I heard these words so often, I began to think my name was, “Sir Where-is-the-yellowtail.” If you haven’t heard, Yellow Tail is an Australian line of wines that are selling like *Wham-O* boomerangs from the 1970’s. I was carrying out entire cases for customers. I was restocking the shelf every 30 minutes! I was really tired. I wondered what all the fuss was about. On the surface, Yellow Tail seems to be like many other budget wines from Oz. It has a catchy name (though not as catchy as my favorite Aussie name, *Woop Woop*). It has a fun label – which, come to think of it *is* bolder in color than most other Aussie wines. It costs between six and eight dollars – just like dozens of other Aussie wines. So, what gives? For three weeks, I watched a river of Yellow Tail flow out the wine shop’s doors. I was getting curious. I began to experience an urge to try Yellow Tail. I tried to resist, but resistance was futile. One night as I was leaving the store, I noticed a single, lonely bottle of ‘Tail Shiraz sitting on the shelf. I walked by the bottle, and, as inconspicuously as I could, grabbed it, paid for it and made a b-line for home.

Once home, I opened the bottle and right away smelled the ‘Yellow Tail aroma’ – Gigantic bunches of red fruit. I sensed I was about to drink some cherry-flavored *HI-C*. Not only did I smell fruitiness, I sniffed sweet caramel and vanilla (this would be *Über-Oakiness* for all you wine geeks). In the glass, the Yellow Tail was a vivid ruby color. I was beginning to feel that everything about the ‘Tail would be big and bold. My first sip confirmed that feeling: Red pie-cherries and red raspberries danced on my tongue. However, something surprised me; the wine was sweet! Not *Hostess Cherry Pie*-sweet,

but the tip of my tongue did indeed sense some sweetness. After that, I began to spin my mental (training-) wheels. I concluded that Yellow Tail wines are so popular for two reasons: 1) they are reasonably priced and 2) the wines *are* quite easy on the palette. Let me explain. Many wine drinkers' first experience with wine was not too positive. The wine many of us tried for the first time was harsh, not terribly appealing to the nose and pretty icky/painful to drink. So imagine you drink wine for the first time and it happens to be Yellow Tail Shiraz. Rather than swearing off wine because it tastes like vinegar and going back to beer, you think, "Wow, wine is yummy."

Now, I'm not saying Yellow Tail is "wine for beginners." I'm saying that it is a wine that won't offend too many taste buds. And, as a result, Yellow Tail is one of the most popular wines around. I didn't dislike the 'Tail Shiraz, but as someone who enjoys drinking wine while cooking and who drinks a little more wine with dinner, I did find it a bit overpowering. If you like Yellow Tail...great! However, if every wine bottle in your house has a bouncing kangaroo on the label, it might be time to diversify. Some suggestions: If you like easy-drinking reds and want to serve wine with dinner try *René Barbier Mediterranean Red* (from Spain). It's only six bucks. This red is a good, easy-drinking wine that works with a wide range of food. If you prefer bold, fruity, red wine, try *Fairview, Goats do Roam* (from South Africa). By the way, if you like the Yellow Tail label, you'll love the *Goats* label. It's a seven-dollar wine that is juicy and fruity, yet balanced with some spiciness so it works well with pizza, pasta and burgers. Cheers!

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