



## A Really Good Buy

*Rutherford Ranch's Rhiannon red is all that and more.*

QRW TASTING STAFF

This column is usually about “must buys.” However, we have largely exhausted our choices of what to us constitute must buys—value wines \$10 and under. So, this quarter we have altered the title and are offering readers the “good buy,” and what a good buy it is. Meet the **2005 Rutherford Ranch's Rhiannon**, a California Red Blend from Napa Valley that is as fine a wine at its price point (\$20) as we can find.

If you're not familiar with Rutherford Ranch, you should be. They are some of the most consistently reliable, well priced wines available. Readers of QRW, who were introduced to Rutherford Ranch in previous columns, are writing to us noting that restaurants across the country are realizing just how good they are, and placing them on their list for \$40 a bottle for the Cabernet (even less in Boston and parts of the east coast, and still less for the Merlot, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc). Most wines are already grossly overpriced at restaurants, and \$50 is approximately a threshold that frequent diners are comfortable with. At retail Rutherford wines sell from \$13 to \$20 (they have reserve and estate wines that are \$30). Steve Rued, a native Californian/U.C. Davis graduate, who was formerly with Kenwood Vineyards, has been Rutherford's winemaker for the last few years.

Rutherford Ranch has quietly emerged as a serious player, steadily increasing its volume and

its U.S. market availability. It's a winery to watch. The Rutherford Ranch owners—the Zaninoviches—are quiet and unassuming, who, while owning property in Napa, proudly claim Bakersfield as their rightful home. Their table grape business in Bakersfield, moreover, is one of the most thriving in the state.

The 2005 Rutherford Ranch “Rhiannon” (from the Welsh meaning “golden”) is a blend of 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot, 5% Syrah, and 2% Petite Sirah. Winemaker Rued told us recently that at “Rutherford Ranch we're all about blending our best grapes, which we select throughout Napa Valley. We take trying to make Napa's best value wines seriously, using French oak barrels, some of which age from 18 to 24 months. Consumers want good prices and I believe we give it to them.”

As for the Rutherford Ranch Rhiannon (Napa Valley), it has aromas of vanilla, anise, spice, oak, and blackberry. There's plenty of mouthfeel and texture upfront. The wine is very approachable, offering more vanilla, generous coffee and mocha flavors, black raspberry, and more oak in the palate, with a stylish finish of caramel and chocolate that has length, with soft tannins. There's an impressive amount of complexity in this \$20 bottle. There were 2,000 cases produced. Available nationally.

For more information: [www.rutherfordranch.com](http://www.rutherfordranch.com) ☞

