

Napa Valley Register

PAUL FRANSON | What's Upvalley

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Marilyn Monroe lives again

Each year, Marilyn Wines releases a new vintage of Marilyn Merlot and each year's label is a different photograph of Hollywood legend Marilyn Monroe. Collectors snap up each year's release as the wines have appreciated more rapidly than first-growth Bordeaux and other "serious" wines. Twelve-bottle sets of the 1985 through 1996 vintages sell for as much as \$7,500.

The suggested national retail price is \$24.50 and you can buy it at the Cellar Door of Napa Wine Company. The winemaker John McKay, who blended 15 percent cabernet into the merlot, all from the heart of Napa Valley.

The family of Marilyn Wines also includes Marilyn Cabernet and Norma Jeane, a young merlot.

In September, the newest vintage of Marilyn Merlot arrives -- the 2003 Velvet Collection with the industry's first "peel and peek" label that peels away to reveal the most famous nude photograph in U.S. history. It's the shot of Marilyn reclining on red velvet taken by Tom Kelley in 1949 that caused a sensation when it appeared as the centerfold in the first issue of Playboy magazine.

She would have been 79 this year.