



Three To Watch by Linda Murphy

“Who are these winemakers? That’s the reaction of many wine drinkers when they scan the retail shelves and restaurant wine lists, and see dozens of unfamiliar labels. Some of them are small brands, numbering in the hundreds, not thousands, of cases. The wines are sold by word of mouth, and the good ones are quickly snapped up by keen listeners. Here are three winemakers who are getting good buzz.

Jack Bittner, also the General Manager at Cliff Lede Vineyards in Napa, is a sucker for old vines. He makes the brambly, spicy Franz Hill Napa Valley Zinfandel from his vineyard overlooking Calistoga. Bittner got his winemaking start as a teenager in Massachusetts, helping his father making apple wine. “It was awful,” he says, “but it made me popular at parties.”