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Sunset

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FRIENDS!**

\$10 wines, 10-minute dips

**Dreamy
backyard
paradise—
on a budget**

MAY 2009

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The West at its best

Mood-lifter in a cup: flower teas

We like these blooming teas for a daily pick-me-up or a pot shared with friends: Té Teas (\$1.95 per blossom; teteas.com) in San Carlos, California, or Numi Organic Tea (right; \$14 for 5 blossoms; numitea.com) in Oakland.



Little indulgences

What's on our food radar now

THE NEW DESSERT CRAZE: MACARONS

These delicate French cookies are taking bakeries across the West by storm. We sampled many, but only a few transported us to Paris.

Paulette bakery in Beverly Hills and San Francisco makes macarons (right) with flawless texture—they're creamy with a whisper of crackly surface. \$19 for 12; shipping available; paulettemacarons.com

Pix Patisserie in Portland has witty, rich flavors—our favorite is fleur de sel. \$20 for 12; 503/232-4407

Opera Patisserie in San Diego makes killer pistachio and cappuccino macarons. \$10 for 12; 858/458-9050

Essence Bakery Cafe in Tempe, Arizona, is rolling out organic flavors, but our favorite is still the classic French chocolate. \$36 for 24; shipping available; essence-macaron.com



Savvy sips

New wine trends are helping us see the glass (and our wallets) as half-full. At last, restaurants are stocking half-bottles as more than an afterthought; wine bars are serving pricier vintages by the glass; and California passed a law in July 2008 that lets wineries with licensed picnic areas sell by the glass, not just the bottle. Here's our guide to making the best of it.

Half-bottles look small, but they hold 12.7 ounces (almost three glasses) and are great for weeknight dinners. Compared to a bottle, they make a smart splurge too. We love **Schramsberg Blanc de Blancs 2005** (North Coast; \$17; kandlwines.com), an all-Chardonnay sparkling wine; **Qupé Bien Nacido Vineyard Syrah 2006** (Santa Maria Valley; \$17; grandwincellar.com), a big, juicy wine with dark fruit; and **Cristom Marjorie Vineyard Pinot Noir 2006** (Willamette Valley; \$27; cristomwines.com), an earthy but delicate Oregon Pinot.

Want instant gratification? Many restaurants are expanding their half-bottle and by-the-glass menus. We like Portland's **Tenoi**, where the terrific wine list has three pages of half-bottles, including cult Oregon



The Must wine bar in Los Angeles

Pinot Noirs (from \$20; ten-01.com), and Los Angeles' **Must** wine bar, which serves all its wines by the glass, carafe, and bottle (from \$5; themustbar.com). If you want to sample several wines on a budget, look for a place with flights, like Seattle's **Purple Café and Wine Bar**, which offers 14 (flights from \$15; thepurplecafe.com).

Finally, if you can get to wine country this spring, we recommend a glass from the outdoor bar at **Landmark Vineyards** (from \$7; Sat-Sun and holidays; landmarkwine.com) in Sonoma Valley.