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The State of the Grape

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Merlot's gone soft, Chardonnay's in a rut, but Pinot's Triumphant—a snapshot of California's leading varieties.

Another year has come and gone. As is my custom, it's time once again to look at the State of the Grapes in California.

Zinfandel, Petite Sirah: There's no longer any reason to separate these two because, texturally, they're so close. Both are dark, full-bodied wines, with a tendency toward superripeness, high alcohol and residual sugar (paging Kent Rosenblum). Besides, many Zins have Pet in them, and vice versa. There's an historic place for these wines as well as a culinary one, but the specialists should figure out what to do with all that sugar at harvest.

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