

Six candidates for happy hour

By FRED TASKER

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If Alice (in Wonderland) can believe in six impossible things before breakfast, I can appreciate six improbable tipples by happy hour. Some of the following are rarer than others, but all are items you don't come across in your average supermarket (you gotta go to a wine shop).

- **Rosé port:** Seriously? Yup. And it's made by the venerable Portuguese port house of Croft. They suggest that regular red port is seen as too heavy by 21-something drinkers. And white port has an unfortunate "brown bag" image (at least in the United States; in Portugal trendy folks drink it as an aperitif). So they make port in the usual way but pull the thick, red grape skins off the juice more quickly than usual, leaving a pretty, light-cherry color. The port is crisp, fresh, lightly sweet and full of juicy red-fruit flavors. Nice over ice. Highly recommended, at \$20.

- **Organic vodka:** Oh, good. I wouldn't want to catch anything from my vodka. The Crop "Harvest Earth" Co. of New York is putting out vodkas distilled from "organic grain grown in fertile, healthy soil free of artificial fertilizers, pesticides and chemicals." The company calls them "the cleanest vodkas" and suggests that hangovers are less likely. The flavors are cucumber, tomato and "artisanal." No kidding. The vodkas are potent and smooth. And their Saketini recipe is quite tasty: 1 part cucumber vodka, 1 part sake and a

splash of Cointreau; shake with ice, garnish with 'cumber slice. Highly recommended, at \$24 a bottle.

- **Framboise:** It's a fruit infusion liqueur made by infusing, or soaking, raspberries (hence the name) in alcohol. This one, by Pacific Rim Winemakers of Portland, Ore., is made of fruit from Mike and Jean's Berry Farm on Mount Vernon. It's potent and sweet and intensely raspberry flavored. They suggest sipping it with chocolate after dinner or plopping it into a glass of bubbly for a kir royale. Oh, it may leave a hint of tannic residue in the bottom of the bottle. Pacific Rim suggests this is rich in antioxidants, so you should drink it. Recommended, at \$14 per half bottle.

• **Grüner Veltliner:** ``Groner," as fans call it, is a mainline wine in many circles. But when was the last time you bellied up to a bar and asked for one? Pronounced GROO-ner Velt-LEEN-en, it's the most widely planted grape in Austria, sipped routinely in that country's wine pubs. The 2008 version, by Monika Caha Selections, is bone dry, crisp, with Granny Smith apple flavors. It's no august tippie, but it'll impress your wine-snob friends. Its cult followers call it ``gru-vee." Recommended, at \$12.

• **2005 Rapitala Nuar:** Wines from Sicily are not new; the island off Italy is chock full of state-of-the-art wineries. What's new is the blend: 70 percent nero d'avola, the island's sturdy red grape, and 30 percent pinot noir, the complex, fickle grape of France's vaunted Burgundy region. It's concentrated, spicy and rich, with red-apple aromas and flavors. Recommended, at \$16.

• **2008 Moschofilero, by Boutari:** This popular white wine is by the grape of the same name, from Greece. It has a floral aroma and white grapefruit flavors. And, no, there's no retsina in it, so it doesn't smell like Pine-Sol. Recommended, at \$17.