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IT IS AN AFFECTATION of some gentlemen vintners to refer to themselves as simple farmers. In the case of Jeff Gargiulo, proprietor of Gargiulo Vineyards in Napa Valley's Oakville appellation, the descriptor is accurate: Before becoming in 2001 the president and CEO of Sunkist Growers, Gargiulo built his own company, Gargiulo Inc., into the largest producer of fresh tomatoes, before selling it to Monsanto in 1997. Yet he is as much a connoisseur of a well-balanced Sangiovese as he is of, say, a prize Roma. In 1992, he and his wife, Valerie, purchased the 40-acre Money Road Ranch vineyard, a property situated between the Rudd Estate and Screaming Eagle. From their estate's Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Sangiovese grapes, the Gargiulos create a California take on Tuscan wines: a "Super-Oakville" blend, *Aprile*, which is named for their

daughter, April. In the Italian tradition, the *Gargiulo Vineyards Aprile 2004* is a stellar food wine, offering deep cherry fruit on the nose and palate, accompanied by essences of leather and eucalyptus. The bright, cleaning acids refresh the palate with each sip. (\$40) [www.gargiulovineyards.com](http://www.gargiulovineyards.com)

JUST AS each of the European powers has enjoyed its golden age of political supremacy—England under the Tudors, Spain under Ferdinand and Isabella, France under Louis XIV—so each major European wine region has had its vogue. While no one will question that Bordeaux and Burgundy have dominated Europe's viticulture, Italy's top appellations—Piedmont,

Tuscany, Veneto—have, in the past quarter century, challenged French supremacy, as have their Spanish counterparts. Despite an equally rich history producing fortified wines, the Portuguese only recently have thrown their proverbial hats into the bullring of fine table wine. One such pioneer is Malhadinha Nova, a historic farm purchased in 1998 by the

Soares family, who intended to resurrect the Alentejo region's wine-making traditions. The *Malhadinha Nova Malhadinha Tinto 2004* is a mesmerizing blend of Aragones, Alicante Bouschet, and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes. The wine exudes dark warmth, redolent of cinnamon and clove as well as perfumed, exotic woods. The flavors are at once luscious and elusive, full-bodied, saturated with brandied plums, yet supported by stylishly sturdy tannins. (\$90) [www.quintessentialwines.com](http://www.quintessentialwines.com)

