

Put a Wolf in the Cellar



Throughout the year most bottle shops have certain wines that go on sale and then tend to vanish. If you've tried them and like what you taste, they can be really good buys. But there are others that get selected for the "standard restocking cycle" and those are always available at the store to pick up.

Many of these are very consistent performers that can be counted on to deliver every time. One of the most noticeable brands, usually right there at eye level, is Kenwood's [Jack London](#) series with its wild wolf label. These are part of Kenwood's flagship wine lineup and Kenwood attends to every detail to make sure that these puppies are always front-and-center in the taste department with wonderful flavors each vintage year.

An example of Kenwood's continued excellence in wine, found at outlets like [Total Wine](#) or [Sportsman's](#), is their [Jack London Zinfandel](#). It's available for around \$20. This excellent wine is always a prudent addition to the cellar and is welcomed at the table. You can normally buy it as you need it, but cellaring makes sense because a Jack London Zin ages quite gracefully with its alcohol content integrating very well over several years.

And Kenwood makes sure it lives up to its bold label. With a powerful bouquet of wild berries and a garden full of peppers, it's no wimp. The smooth jammy finish combines almost perfectly with burgers and chili sauce with a big side of grilling beans. As noted on several occasions, this is also one of the best available take-along wines for tailgates or just plain packing for a picnic.

A good strategy is to watch for each new Jack London vintage to appear on the shelves (usually in late summer/fall) and keep your own running stock of cellar stuff on hand, just to put a little more age on it. After it's about 4-6 years old, bring some out and enjoy the benefits that old man time can add to a well crafted wine like this.

Kenwood's other Jack London wines include varietals like Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot. The Cab and Merlot are almost always available, but the Syrah is bottled in smaller lots and has a spotty distribution to bottle shops.

If you happen to be in Sonoma on a wine tour, be sure to stop in at Kenwood, taste the Jack London series, and take home some Syrah if you like it. Their tasting room is always a “hoot”, especially their stories of the Jack London vineyard.

Serve the “wolf” moderately chilled after 40 minutes in the fridge (50-55 degrees). It will open up interestingly as it warms, better than most Zinfandels, so it is a perfect throw-in for the ice chest. There is no paper label to soak off either, so you can always spot the wolf bobbing in there with the beer.