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### WHAT THEY'RE DRINKING AT DAVOS

At the economic forum's hottest party, guests come to schmooze—and for the choice booze

BY FRANCES DINKELSPIEL

FOR THE PAST 17 YEARS, the venture capital firm Accel Partners has thrown a hot-ticket party at the World Economic Forum. Held in the modern Kirchner Museum in Davos, Switzerland, the party draws heads of state, leading executives from technology and media companies, and the occasional celebrity.

The 350 guests come not only to mingle with Google's Larry Page and Sergey Brin, hear what Shimon Peres has to say about Middle East peace efforts or to find out when Facebook will go public (Accel owns about a 10% stake in the company). They also come for the wine.

Joe Schoendorf, the Accel partner who started the party as a way to introduce Silicon Valley leaders to European businessmen and politicians, is a serious wine buff, as are Bruce Golden, Jim Breyer and Kevin Comolli, the other Accel hosts. Each year the men, working with the Napa Valley wine company Soutirage, spend months as-

sembling a list that showcases a particular region or varietal. Previous parties have focused on superb Cabernet Sauvignons or Pinot Noirs, with selections from leading wineries in France, Italy, Spain, California and Australia.

For the Friday party, the Accel partners decided to show off California wines made before 2000.

'We wanted to highlight California wines. We like the parallels between the two great valleys—Silicon and Napa/Sonoma.'

Most of California's cult and rare wines are produced in such small quantities and are in such high demand that they are almost impossible to find in Europe. On a continent dominated by Burgundies, Bordeaux and Barolos, Mr. Schoendorf and his colleagues were eager

to demonstrate that California wines, particularly those from the 1960s through the '90s, are among the world's best.

"This year we wanted to highlight how extraordinary some California wines become with age," said Mr. Golden, who is based in London but travels frequently to the Bay Area. "We also like the parallels between the two great valleys—Silicon Valley and Napa/Sonoma Valleys—and how California produces both world class tech companies as well as world class wines."

The 15 wines served at the party reflect California's wine history, with a few surprises thrown in, said Soutirage co-founder Matt Wilson. The 1969 BV Georges de Latour Cabernet Sauvignon and the 1962 Inglenook Cabernet Sauvignon are both elegant, rich wines made in the Bordeaux-style, which was the direction of many Napa Valley winemakers at that time, he said. The later wines, including the 1992 Harlan Estate and 1999 Colgin Criad, are more fruit-forward and lush. And guests may

be surprised by the 1996 Williams Selyem Rochioli River Block Pinot Noir. Most consumers drink Pinot Noir within five years, but this wine shows how well that varietal can age, Mr. Wilson said.

All of the wines are donated. "We say to the winemakers, 'This is an opportunity to be in front of some of the most powerful influencers,'" Mr. Wilson said.

Bill Harlan, whose Harlan Estate and Bond bottles have been featured at the Accel Davos party numerous times, said the event serves as an important vehicle to get the word out about California wines. They are not as well known as they should be, particularly in China, which has emerged in recent years as the hottest market for French wine.

"We feel it's important for the world to know that we can produce fine wines in California, and if we can get our wines in the hands of those who have credibility and are people of discernment, we feel that's very good," said Mr. Harlan.



F. Martin Rubin for The Wall Street Journal