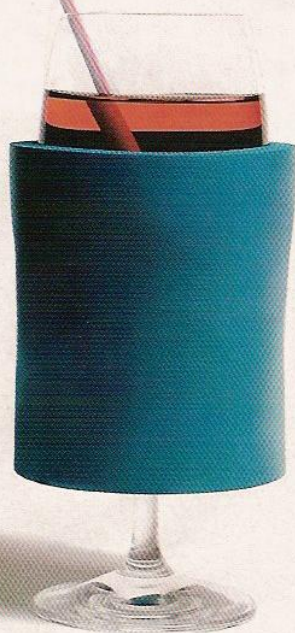


» **TREND OF TWO: SMELL LIKE BOOZE** The spa at the Palms Casino in Las Vegas is now offering a Margarita Madness body scrub, a gender-neutral exfoliating treatment that, thank God, wastes no actual tequila. (\$60 to \$65 per treatment; 702-942-6938.) For those who wish to exude the bottle all day, Demeter Fragrance Library offers Martini and Gin & Tonic scents. (\$17.50 for 1 oz spray; 800-482-0422.) —JEFFERY LINDENMUTH

(man at his best)

food & drink

## The Frugal Man: \$2 Wine



### WHEN WE HEAR

“two-dollar wine,” we naturally think of those berry-flavored, screw-top syrups we used to chug back in high school. But if you believe the hype coming out of California (and who doesn't?), wine maker Charles Shaw has produced a vino that costs just a bit more than gasoline and, theoretically, tastes better. (It's sold exclusively at Trader Joe's markets.) We invited a few wine snobs over for a sampling of all four varieties of “Two Buck Chuck,” as the stuff is affectionately known. And just to make sure they wouldn't judge a booze by its bottle, we swapped labels with more expensive brands. Was anyone fooled?

—SUZANNE ELY

**[1] Merlot:** One taster called it “watery with no balance—like Beaujolais.” Okay, it could be worse. “It's sweet,” remarked another, “like cranberry juice spiked with rubbing alcohol.” Well, maybe not much worse.

**[2] Cabernet sauvignon:** Thinking it was actually a pricey bottle, one drinker wanted to know if the wine had gone bad. “There's no way this wine could stand up to food.” Even two-dollar food, like chalupas? “Sorry.”

**[3] Chardonnay:** “It starts with a big boom, although the taste dies very quickly.” It might lack endurance, but this white fared the best of the label's four offerings by far. “It has multiple flavors, although I can't distinguish them,” said one guy, obviously drunk.

**[4] Sauvignon blanc:** “It's heavier than the one we just had—sweet, sticky. Basically, I just don't like it.” Can't argue with that.

## Future Foods

This spring, the ominous-sounding Syngenta corporation introduced the world's first miniwatermelon, an adorable seedless sucker about the size of a cantaloupe. Below are six equally overengineered foods making their way onto store shelves in the next decade. —JAMES CURY

### » Bananas

**Problem:** There's about a five-second window between the time they're ripe enough to eat and the moment they turn to brown mush.

**Solution:** Syngenta is developing a banana with a shelf life three to five days longer than that of normal bananas—and it's the length of the shelf life that matters. **Due out:** 2006.

### » Beer

**Problem:** Clouds and tastes awful if allowed to sit around too long, or so we hear. **Solution:** Diter von Wettstein, a professor at Washington State University, is developing a type of barley with reduced levels of tannins, which cause beer to get skunked. It could be used to make beer that lasts for years. **Due out:** Ten years before we see everlasting brew. And can you really blame researchers for drawing out this project as long as possible?

### » Onions

**Problem:** They make us cry. Also, onions may help prevent heart attacks—thanks to antiplatelet compounds—but they need raw, eye-burning pungency to be effective. **Solution:** Shinsuke Imai at House Foods Corporation in Chiba, Japan, has developed an onion that tastes normal and thins the blood without burning eyes and hearts. **Due out:** It'll be several years before scientists can effectively reproduce the tear-free onion.

### » Potatoes, rice

**Problem:** They're all carbs, fatso. **Solution:** Researchers in Europe have created a modified strain of rice that contains beta-carotene, which the body converts into vitamin A. Joyce Van Eck of the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research is working with the USDA on energizing potatoes in a similar fashion. That's good news for french-fry lovers, and even better news for people in developing nations, who often suffer blindness and even death because of vitamin-A deficiency. **Due out:** “Golden rice” has existed for years, but patent issues and politics have kept it from reaching consumers. Van Eck believes beta-carotene potatoes are six to eight years away.

### » Lemons

**Problem:** Very boring shape for such an essential cocktail garnish. **Solution:** “Star lemons,” which have grooves down their sides. Slice through the midsection and you get a star-shaped garnish. **Due out:** On store shelves at Urban Fare every fall for a limited time.