

WineBuzz.Com

Web Process Document

IID, Spring 2004

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User Research

Overview of goals

The goal of our Directed Storytelling interviews was to contact working professionals who had been exposed to wine for several years and learn about how they discover and choose new wines. We assumed that this population has some measure of disposable income which allows them to experiment with wine. We interviewed a mixture of males and females who considered themselves Advanced Beginners in terms of their knowledge about wine.

Interview Notes

See Wine_Research_All.PDF

Competitive Analysis

The screenshot displays the Best Cellars website with a Valentine's Day theme. The header features the 'BEST CELLARS' logo in purple and pink, with the text 'Happy Valentine's Day!' and heart icons. Below the header, eight wine bottles are arranged in a row, each with a colored square icon underneath: 'fizzy' (blue), 'fresh' (green), 'soft' (yellow), 'luscious' (orange), 'juicy' (red), 'smooth' (purple), 'big' (dark purple), and 'sweet' (pink). To the left of the main content, there is a sidebar with a 'Hi!' greeting, a state selection dropdown (currently showing 'DC'), a 'CHOOSE' button, and a note '* = wine shipment available'. Below this are promotional banners for 'NEW!', 'BC GIFTS Oh...LOVAH', and 'BC Six-packs SIX GREAT WINES TO GO!'. At the bottom of the sidebar are links for 'BC Six-packs', 'Monthly Clubs', 'Wine Accessories', and 'Beyond the Best'. The main content area has two columns: 'Shop Great Wines for Every Day' with a description of eight distinct groupings priced at \$15 or less, and 'Shop Beyond the Best Wines' with a description of a collection of the best wine values from around the world. The footer contains a copyright notice '© 2004 Best Cellars', links for 'Shipping Info', 'Legal Info', and 'View Order', and a navigation bar with links: 'Shop BC', 'Play With Us', 'Me@BC', 'Product Search', 'GO', 'Advanced Search', 'Customer Service', 'About BC', and 'Sign In'.

Bestcellars.com

GOOD: This site is geared towards a young, urban professional market. We liked the simple presentation of this site and how the text is playful and the colors imply meaning throughout the site. The funky names and drawings are counter culture to wine industry, giving this site a more casual approach. This site makes it clear what to do and where to begin. The simple site does not overwhelm the user with too many choices.

BAD: This site cannot grow with education or palette of the user. The price ranges from \$6 – \$10 dollars which is too limiting, and they only sell what they stock.

Artisans on Web



[home](#)
[search](#)
[view cart](#)
[checkout](#)
[site map](#)
[contact](#)

Winery Information
Italy, France, Spain, California

Italy

- Illuminati Abruzzo
- Terre Valse Abruzzo
- Villa Frattina Friuli
- Nicola Balter Trentino
- La Monacesca Marche
- San Savino Marche
- Cairel Piedmont
- Cascina Bruni Piedmont

Wine Shop: Recommendations

Here we try to recommend wines for occasions

With a great selection like ours to choose from it's not easy to single out one wine for recommendation but here we'll suggest wines by categories we hope you'll find useful.

Sparkling Wine for a great moment

The Marquis de Sade Brut Reserve Champagne by Michel Gonet
The Marquis was a renowned gourmet and enjoyed the best in life. This Brut is suitable for sipping from silver slippers. Yeasty and redolent of zesty fruit, it drinks like a dream.

Great White Wine

The Albarino of Bodegas Castro Martin
If you've never had the pleasure or all ready know how wonderful a classic Albarino can be, you'll appreciate this one. Perfect to sip, with ceviche or with first courses right up to light meats.

Valpolicella can be wonderful to begin a meal.

The Valpolicella Classico of Viviani
Wonderfully scented from a small artisan winemaker and vineyards high above Verona. This is a medium weight wine with lovely complexity and spicy fruit aromas.

Wine Shop Main

- Wine Club
- Wine Recommendations
- Wine shipping info
- All Italian Wines
- All French Wines
- All Spanish Wines
- All California
- Italy by Region
 - Abruzzo
 - Trentino - Alto Adige

ArtisanWines.com

This site is overwhelming with the amount of information. Where do you go to find out about a new merlot? This site assumes a certain level of knowledge about regions and winery information that may be too intimidating for novices.

We also thought that this site resembles a wine region chamber of commerce site.



RobertParker.com

BAD: This “traditional wine” site, along with Winespectator.com and Wine.com tend to be overwhelming and cluttered, with no clear starting point. It is also not clear if it is a recommendation-only or an e-commerce site. These sites tend to use a traditional “grapey” color scheme of burgundy.

We found this site to be impersonal and it made the wine experience intimidating and unapproachable.

GOOD: Wide breadth, lots of info for someone who wants to learn about wine. All of these sites also have a wine club.

Brick and Mortar observations

State Stores

BAD: In Pennsylvania the staff has no knowledge of wine, and the stores are more of a fluorescent-lit liquor store than a wine shop

GOOD: The wines are inexpensive, the limited selection makes it easy to choose a wine (but hard to explore), and the shelf placement gives the users an indication of price with the “top shelf” more expensive than the lower shelves.

Supermarkets

Supermarkets in other states can be more gourmet, upscale shops have reviews posted for some of the wines along the aisles. Employees and even other patrons are knowledgeable, and can be used as credible sources of information. The supermarkets tend to have rotating stocks, and they sometimes offer wine tastings.

Wineries

Going to a winery is an experience unto itself. You get to see the production first-hand, taste the wines they make, and get a behind-the-scenes look.

Wine Shops

Wine shops can be intimidating and snooty and there is often a heavy mark-up on the retail price. At wine shops, there is a common use of wood and brick with a cozy, musty feel to give you a sense of being inside a winery. The wine shop displays are set up to look “official”, but this can backfire for novice users who are unfamiliar with varietals or regions.

Design Process

Card Sort Exercise



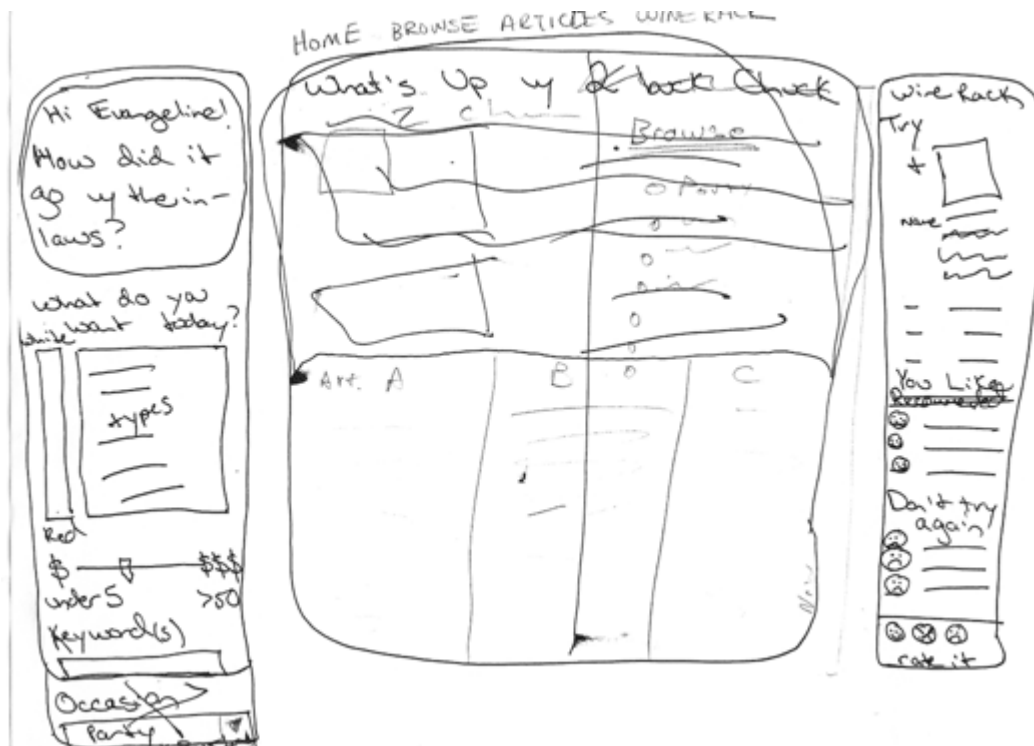
After our initial user research was complete, we had many free-floating feature and design ideas. To put these ideas into a more cohesive structure, we did a card sorting exercise. This exercise helped us begin to formulate which elements could logically be grouped together.

Mood Board

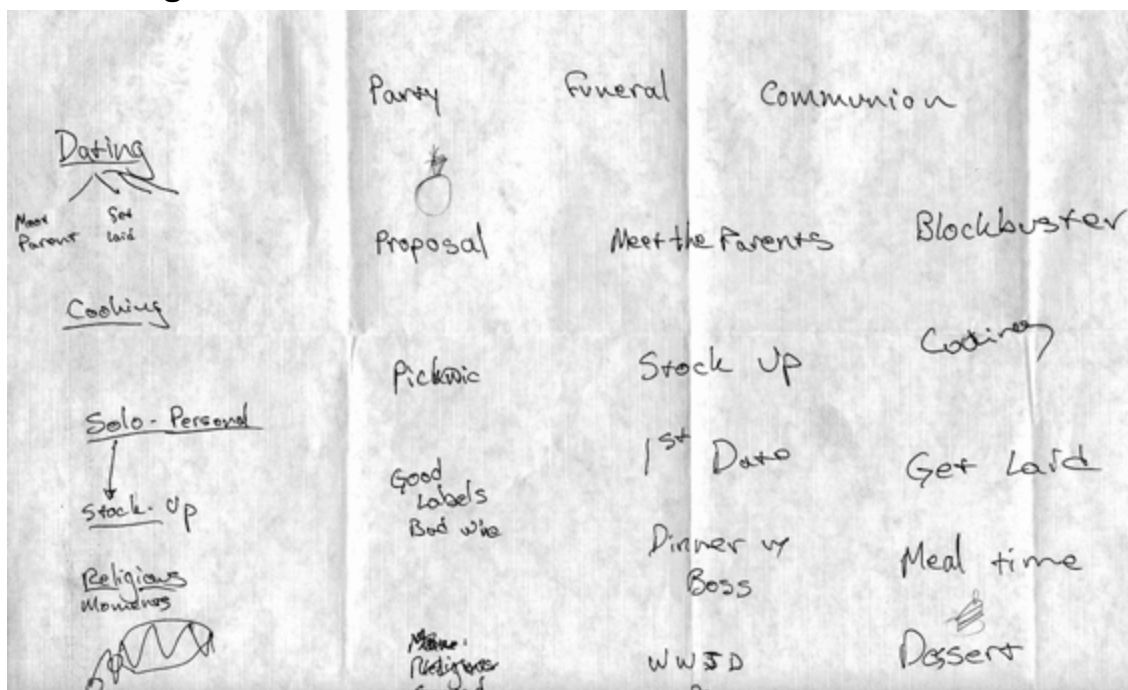


The next step was to calibrate our individual mental images into a more unified design concept. We gathered images from magazines and stock photo houses. We also jotted down some words that we wanted to be descriptive of the users' perceptions when they visited our site. Similar to the card-sorting activity, we selected our "platform" words and then simultaneously arranged our images around the words. Our mood board served as the jumping-off point for the design.

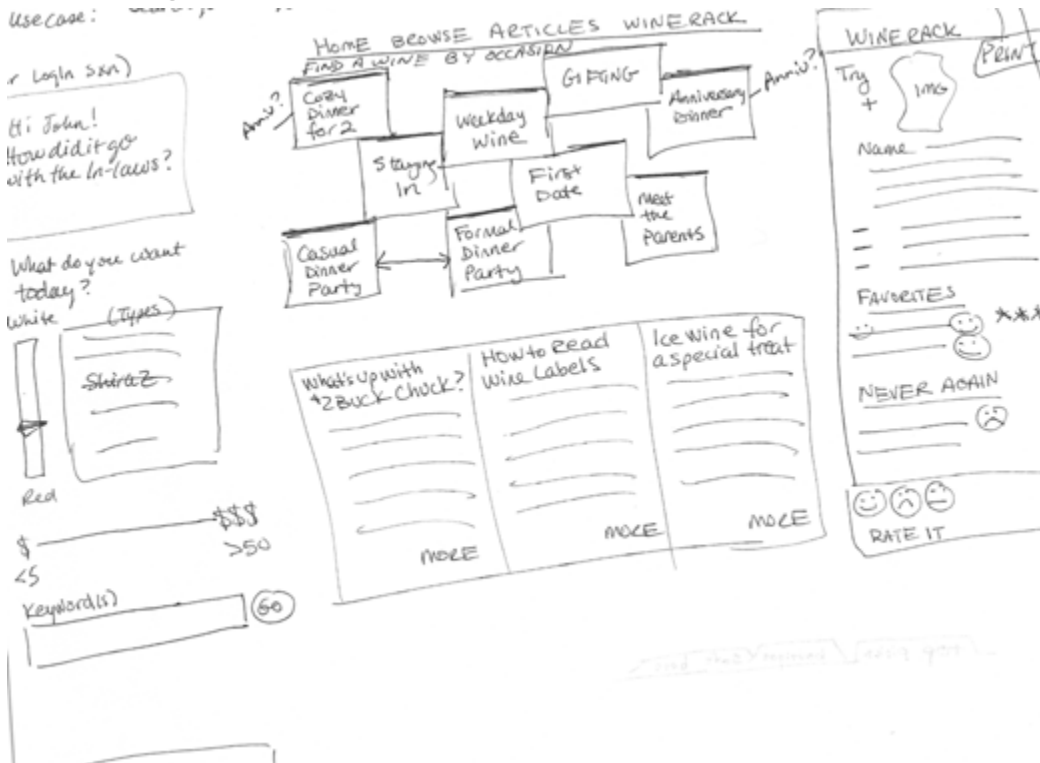
Sketching Round 1



Sketching Round 2



Sketching Round 3

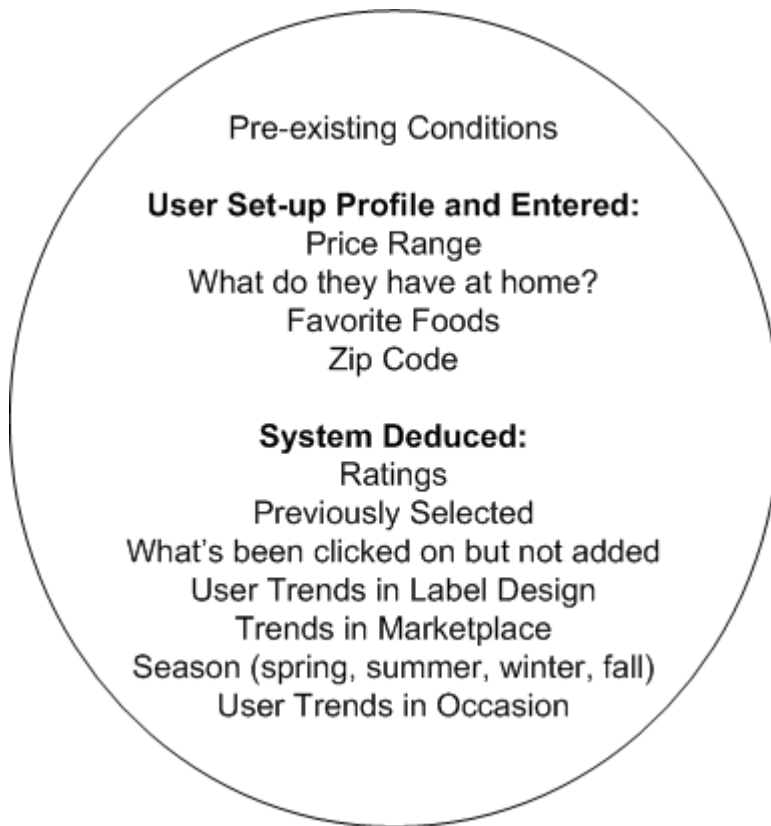


Loosening Up

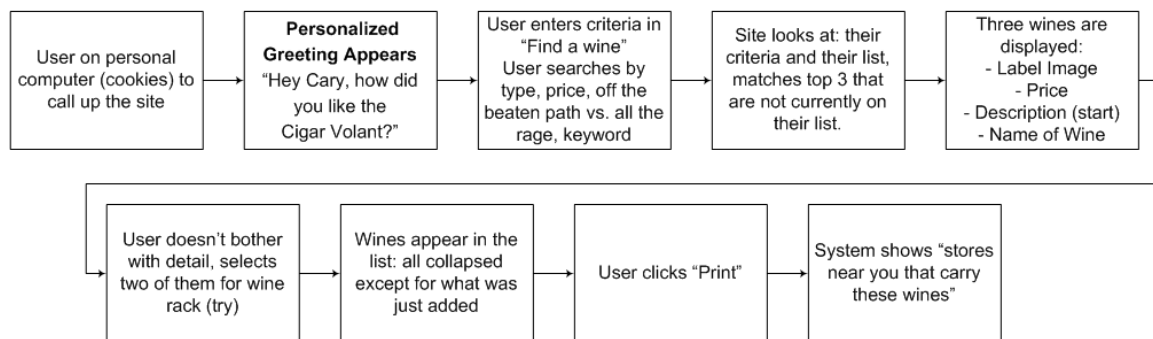
The process until this point was helping us make our concepts into something more concrete...perhaps a little too concrete. We took a lunch break. The change of venue helped us take a step back and transform our concept into something a bit more entertaining. Our souvenir from this part of the meeting is thoroughly documented on this placemat.

Flows

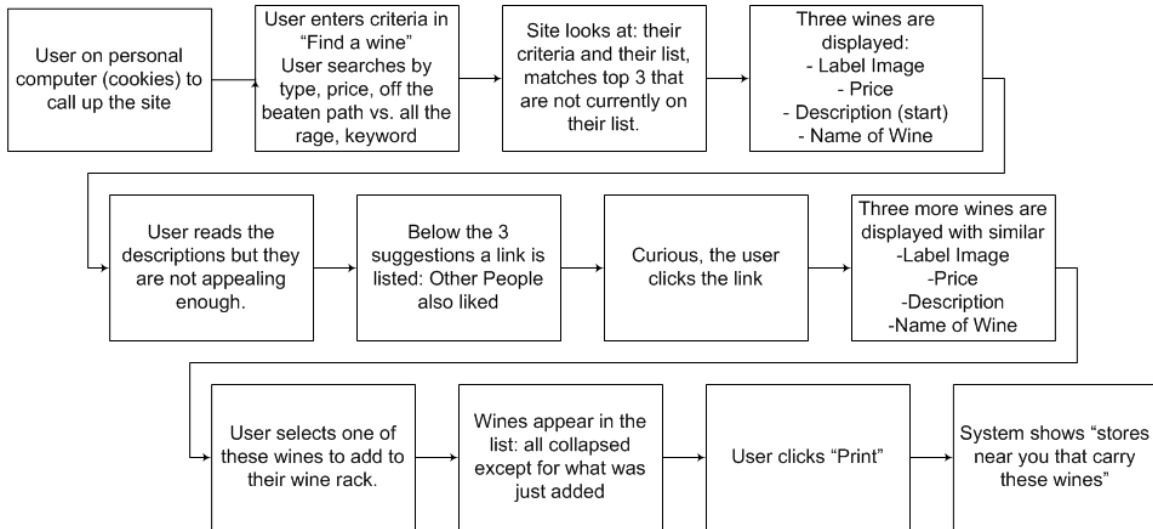
We boiled our user interviews into some likely scenarios that our site would need to support. We documented how the users with these different goals in mind would move through the site. Since we were designing for the repeat visit, we also documented what "profile" information we would know before the visits.



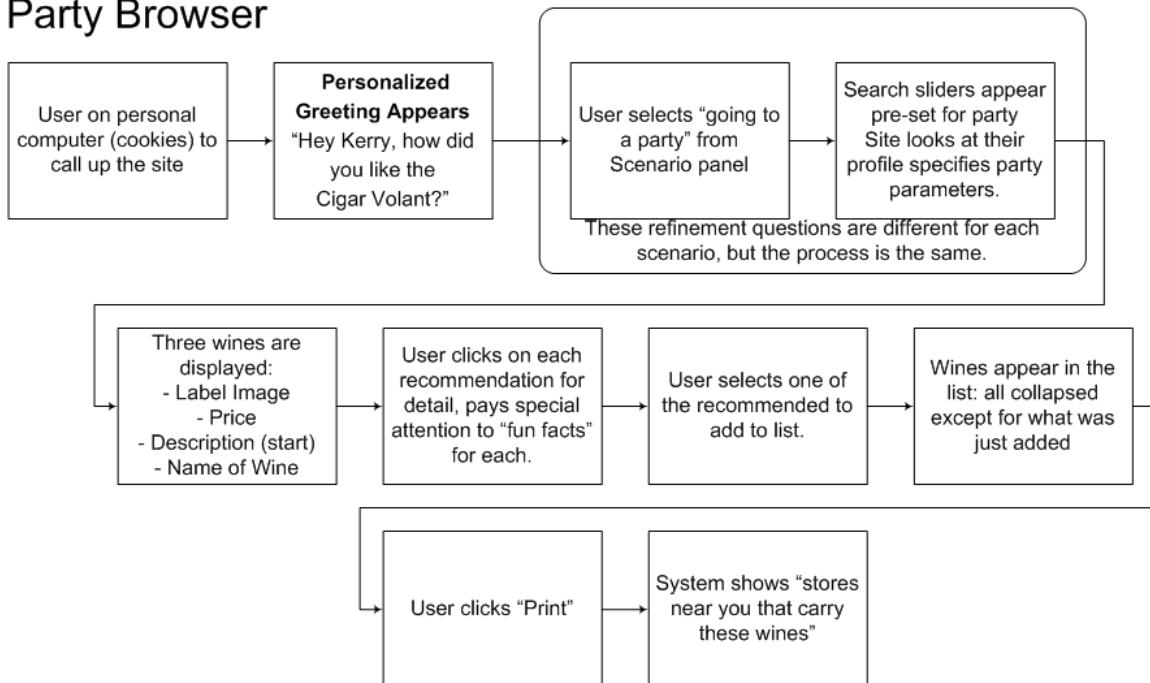
Quickie - No Frills, Just the Facts



Home Alone



Party Browser



Refinement and Production

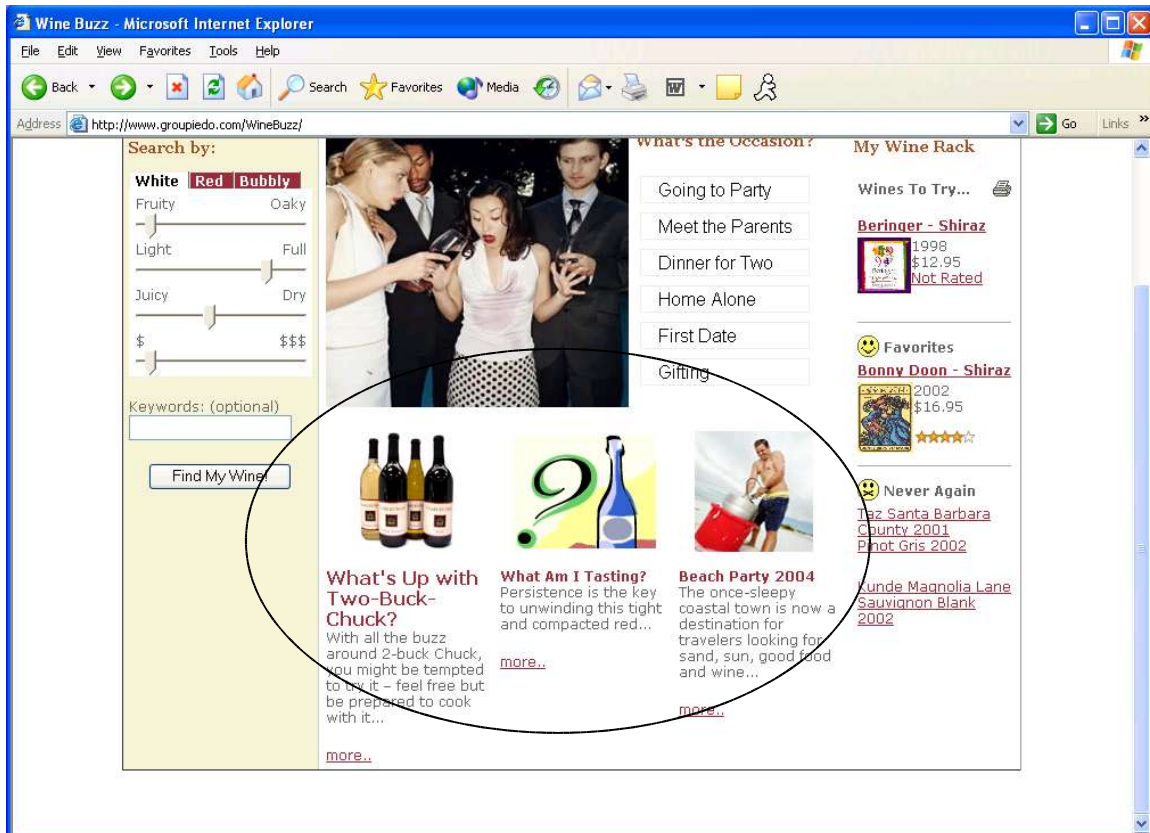
After designing the flows and sketching out what the pages, we divided the different areas of production including imaging, copywriting, site design and HTML production.

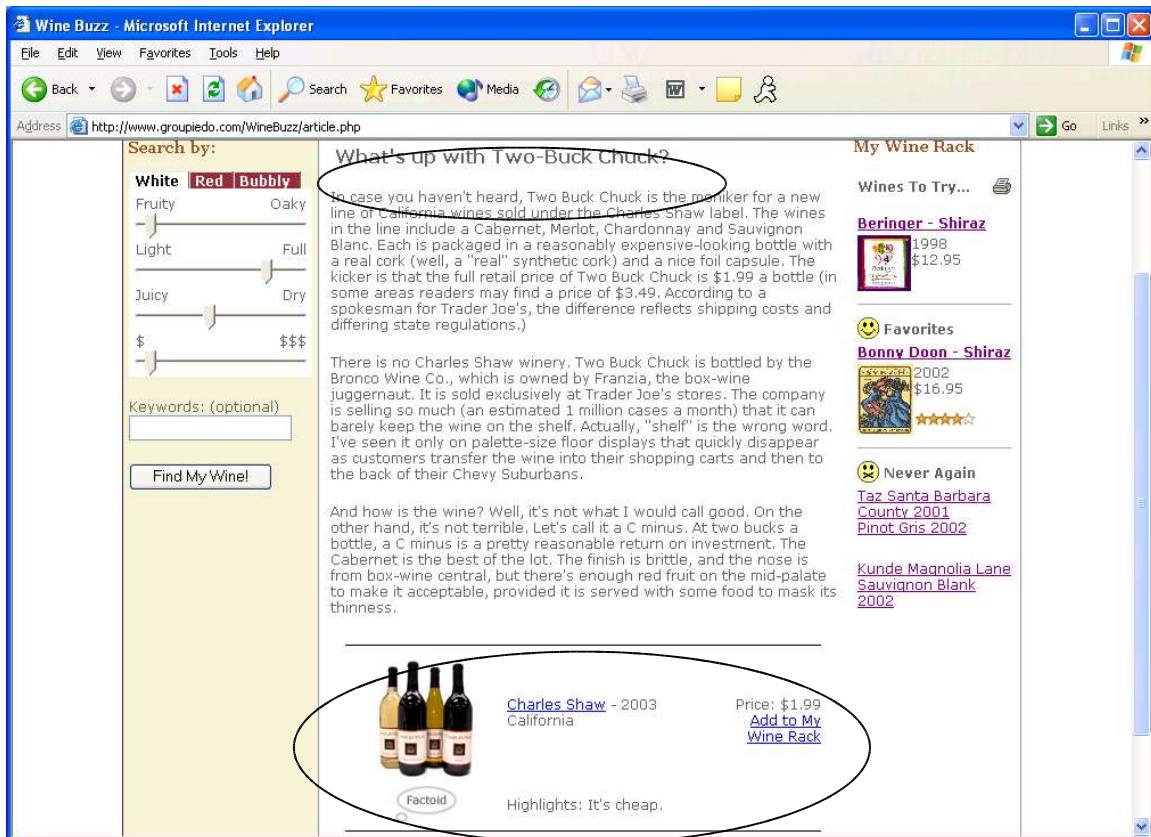
Site assets were gathered and a version of the home page was created in Photoshop. The home page image was then translated into a web page using Dreamweaver. The home page served as a template for subsequent pages, ensuring the site would have a consistent look and feel.

The HTML mock-ups revealed that some of the features we had designed were not going to be effective. For example, our original search interface that occupied the left hand side needed to be redesigned due to the space limitations on the actual screen. Prior to the redesign, the core functionality in the search was 'below the fold' and this would have made searching cumbersome.

With one of the team members out of town for the weekend, we posted development progress on a public site so that she could gain access and provide feedback. Phone conversations, instant message and emails were used to integrate feedback and orchestrate design changes.

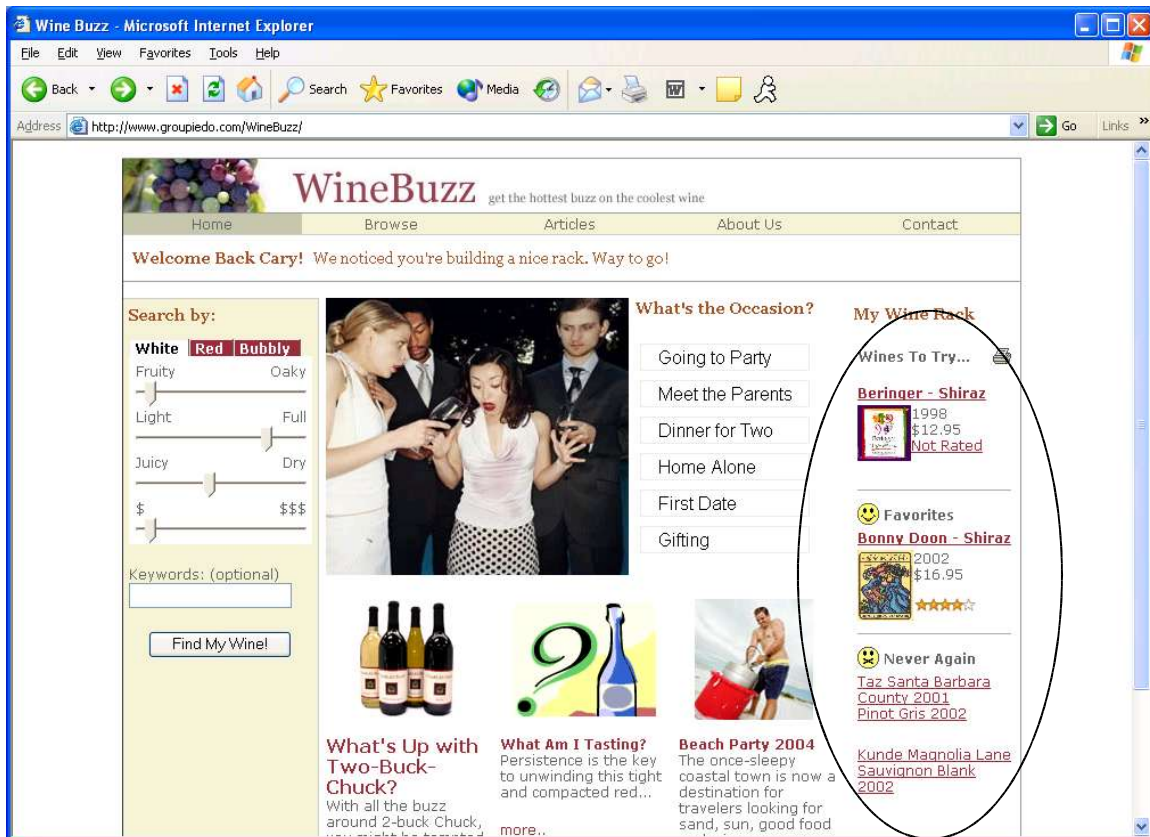
Element by Element Rationale





Articles

We chose to include articles on the site for several reasons. First, we wanted this site to support wine novices, but also have the ability to support the users as their palettes grew more sophisticated. The articles are a way to help novice users learn more. They are also our vehicle for fulfilling our brand promise "the hottest buzz on the coolest wines." Finally, we made certain that the articles supported the most likely next step for the users, adding what they just read about to their wine racks.



Wine Rack

Our goal as the architects of the site was to drive all user visits to interact with the “wine rack.” This is the value-added portion of the site. In all of our user interviews, we heard the repeated theme “I can’t remember.” Whether it was “I can’t remember what wine I read about in *Wine Spectator*.” Or “I can’t remember the wine that I hated and I accidentally bought it again.” Users needed a tool that would help them track their explorations with wine. The ability to rate the wines in the rack supported the users’ need to remember what they liked best and was also our mechanism for learning the users’ likes and dislikes. This valuable information would help us tailor future recommendations to be more aligned with the users’ preferences.

To support the ability to find a wine on WineBuzz and then purchase the wine at the store, we wanted to include only the information that was most relevant to the users: a) an image of the label (so they could visually identify it in the store b) the name of the wine c) the price.

Because the wine rack is important and we wanted the users to choose to interact with it at every stage of their site visit, we chose that it be persistent throughout the site: always located on the rightmost panel.

The wine rack is the part of the site that the user literally takes with them offline. The print function needed to be prominent and useful. Because we know the user’s zip code, the print function is able to provide a map to the user’s local wine shop. Additionally the user who prints out his list also gets a copy of the factoids for the wines, so he can be prepared to wow the other guests at the party with witty wine banter.

Final Design Rationale

Title Information

The name WineBuzz.com and the tagline, “Get the hottest buzz on the coolest wines” were created to give the site a fun and approachable feel. We wanted one of the first things that the user sees to be a light and irreverent greeting like “Welcome Back Cary! We noticed you're building a nice rack. Way to go!” which adds a sense of playfulness to the site and also informs the user that the site acknowledges the efforts they have made in developing their wine rack.

Search

The search criteria located on the left side of the screen is divided out by type of wine. The White, Red, and Bubbly tabs contain sliders to adjust for the user's taste qualities and preferred price range. This design was derived from information gathered in all of our Directed Storytelling interviews since price and type of wine were deemed the two primary factors for novice wine drinkers. In addition, the sliders act as an educational tool, providing users with a sampling of wine vocabulary used to describe wine. A keyword field was added to ensure an easy way to find a specific wine for the user who knows what they want and is looking for a quick transaction. This feature supports the users that we interviewed who often seek to purchase a specific wine.

Search by Occasion

Front and center on the home page, the user can search for wines based upon a specific occasion. The large images add to the core personality of the site by associating social situations with a wine experience. Images were chosen to match the themes developed in the moodboard portion of the design. We looked to our user studies to identify the common situations where users buy wine and identified dinner parties, individual consumption, celebrations, and relationship scenarios. For each of these situations, we wanted images that conveyed the themes from our moodboard: Friendly, Engaging, Simple and Casual.

Search Results

We've limited the number of results that the user sees in order to show them only a manageable amount of selections. More would be overwhelming. The results are displayed above the “fold” with those facts that users said were of primary importance: label image, name/year of wine, brief description, factoid, and price. There was limited space to list more than five per page without an annoying level of scrolling. To accommodate users who want to browse further, we included links at the bottom to move through the next set of five selections. This treatment supports both the more leisurely user as well as “quickie.”

Tabs for Top Picks, Boutique and All the Rage....

These tabs allow users to further self-select their recommended wines. At the top of each search results page, based on which tab is clicked, a sentence describes why the results were selected specifically for the individual user. As U5 expressed “I have a personal relationship with Tony, I don't know a magazine.” We wanted to transfer this element of customizing and personalizing the recommendations to the experience of searching for a wine on our site.

Top Picks are based on your wine rack. These are wines that you should like based on how they taste. Boutique wines are for those in the mood for a smaller label, funkier winery, but are also based on the users' profiles. All The Rage is for those who want to select a trendy wine, again coupled as closely as possible with the users' preferences. Based on the zip code sales for your area, all of these are what the stores near you stock most often.

Information contained in results:

Descriptions are witty but educational. We wanted an alternative to the staid, traditional web sites that we repeatedly observed in our competitive analyses. Our target user audience is in the 25 – 40 age range. We wanted to introduce fun into the transaction and give them a reason to choose our site over the competitors. The targeted recommendations and the interesting factoids are our tools for becoming the users' recommendation site of choice.

Users are at the cusp of transitioning from beginners to more knowledgeable wine drinkers. We want to make it not only a painless experience but an enjoyable one as well. Sense of humor is integrated into the users' profiles when they first register for the site. The answers to questions like Leno or Letterman give us a sense of how quirky we can be with the tone of our personal comments to users.

Factoid is an additional element, not offered by other sites, that gives users some more interesting trivia about the wine they've selected. Users who want to appear more knowledgeable than they are or just want to entertain their friends can tell an interesting story about the wine at the dinner party.

Browse Feature

This section is broken out by occasion. It helps us make a more personal connection with the user as well as more appropriately refine our recommendations to fit their social situations. For each occasion we present additional sliders that ask about the occasion. In order to tailor the recommendation. We ask the users for more context about their occasion, in our sample page, the party, and what sort of impression the user wants to make on the guests. The questions on the sliders are asked in a tongue-in-cheek tone that aligns with the users' humor profiles.

For example, Birkenstocks vs. Tuxedo maps to the cost of the selection. For Under the Radar vs. Impress. Impress would map to a more "boutique" selection, whereas Under the Radar would lean more toward "All the rage." Small gathering vs. Rager tells us whether or not to stick close to the users' preferences (if the party is a "rager," they're less likely to drink the wine themselves). Funky to Traditional helps us narrow the recommendations based on the label design.