

San Francisco Chronicle

1/16/2014

Fentimans bubbles to top of tonics - San Francisco Chronicle

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It's tonic week at The Chronicle's Food & Wine headquarters. With Lou Bustamante writing about the rise of homemade tonic water in today's Spirits column (see Page M8), Taster's Choice is rating the commercial alternatives. After all, we can't have too many options for our gin and tonics, can we?

Since the quinine-containing sodas all looked the same, our panel rated the tonic waters on taste and texture, with the former counting twice as much as the latter. The regular tasters were also joined by a special sixth judge, Chronicle Wine Editor Jon Bonne. The scores were then adjusted to our usual 100-point scale.

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Which is a good thing, because our winning tonic water made the official leap into the Taster's Choice Hall of Fame, reserved for products that score 80 or more points.

Fentimans (\$6.99 for four 9.3-ounce bottles at Whole Foods) blew away the field with its complex "bitter and herbal" flavors. It balanced a "pronounced acidity" of "citrus and lime notes" with a "faintly sweet finish." Five tasters would buy our winning brand, and one might.



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Tonic water

Fentimans 83

Canada Dry 66

Fever Tree (Mediterranean) 61

Schweppes 58

Fever Tree (Indian) 56

Safeway 52

Q Tonic 44

365 39

Panelists were Linda Anusasananan, food writer, San Mateo; Jon Bonne, Chronicle wine editor; John Carroll, cookbook author, San Francisco; Marc