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### Featured Web-Site Customer:

Crystal Lake Wine and Home Brew

Owners:

Dave Childress & Dave O'Malley

Location: Crystal Lake, IL

Everything you need for brewing beer and making wine at home is available on-line. These guys put a lot of thought and effort into making this a great web site. Dave and Dave have carefully hand-selected high-quality products and informative books for your selection and can ship your order quickly direct to your door.



[www.clwineandhomebrew.com](http://www.clwineandhomebrew.com)

## How to pick the right computer (part 1 of 2)

Picking out a new PC can seem more confusing than just about anything. Everyone's got an opinion and is willing to share it with someone less experienced. There are so many brands, so many different features and so very many price differences.

Here are some tips on buying a PC -

Recognize that there are two types of computers on the market. The first is defined as a "consumer grade" computer. It normally has a shorter warranty and uses Window XP Home (formerly Windows ME) because it's cheaper. Professional grade computers are not typically sold in superstores. They have longer warranties that include on-site service and usually have Windows XP Pro which is better in an office environment. We'll talk more about the differences in operating systems a bit later.

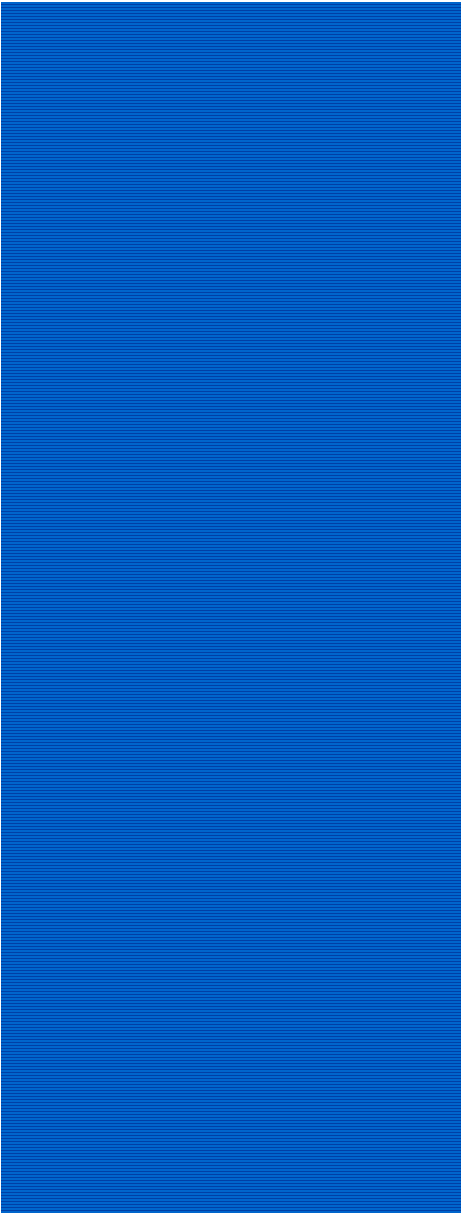
### A Warranty says a lot about quality

A warranty indicates the makers confidence in the durability of the product. Warranty is probably the biggest difference between consumer and professional systems. You'll get on-site service for up to 3 years on most professional grade systems while consumer systems will have to be returned to the manufacturers service center and may be gone up to a month while being repaired. If you don't want to part with your computer for an extended period, consider professional systems with on-site warranties from the manufacturer. Avoid add-on warranties sold by superstores because getting good and prompt service may be a problem.

### Monitors – too often an afterthought

Everybody gets hung up on the computer but monitor quality should be one of your top considerations. Brand names are everything is monitors. Avoid "white box" monitors that don't display the makers name prominently. If the maker isn't proud enough to put his name on it, don't spend any money on it. In our opinion the best manufacturers of monitors are Sony (kind of expensive), NEC (really good) and Samsung (nice blend of price and performance). Most computer makers like HP and Dell have monitor companies like these make their monitors for them to exacting performance criteria. We think than HP has some of the best monitors made for their professional grade PC's. Again, some consumer grade systems also get "economy versions" of monitors. Brands to avoid? Acer, e-machine, Lucky Goldstar, white box and brands from companies you've never heard of.

Flat Panel LCD vs. CRT (traditional) monitors. Flat panel monitors by name brand companies offer a more stable image that will reduce eye strain for you when using it. It also uses less electricity so it's cheaper (and cooler) to operate. Plus, it saves a lot of space on your desk. CRT's are cheaper but the prices of flat panels have tumbled over the last year so you can get a 15"



flat panel for about \$300 and a 17" version for about \$400. This is the most critical piece of equipment you're going to buy. **DON'T CHEAP OUT HERE !** Your eyes are at stake here! Don't hang on to an old CRT monitor just because it still works. Avoid going to bifocals any sooner than necessary. Spend Your eyes are at stake here! Don't hang on to an old CRT monitor just because it still works. Avoid going to bifocals sooner than necessary. Spend the extra \$100 for the good Flat Panel LCD if it all possible and you'll save a lot of strain on your eyes the extra \$100 for the good Flat Panel LCD if it all possible and you'll save a lot of strain on your eyes.

#### **Which version of Windows to choose**

The current version of Windows is XP. It comes in two flavors. The Pro version is best for businesses and organizations that have a server-based network. It's also a more full-featured operating system that handles security and communications better than the consumer version. XP Home is not designed for business networks and if used in an office will take a lot of "body-English" to make it work correctly. XP Home is fine for mom and pop operations in a single computer home environment where security and connectivity are not as critical. It's also about \$100 cheaper than XP Pro so systems with XP Home will should automatically be that much cheaper.

We hope this information helps you in choosing your next computer.

In part 2, we'll talk about processor speeds, the mail-in rebate scam and what brands to consider and which ones we recommend that you avoid.