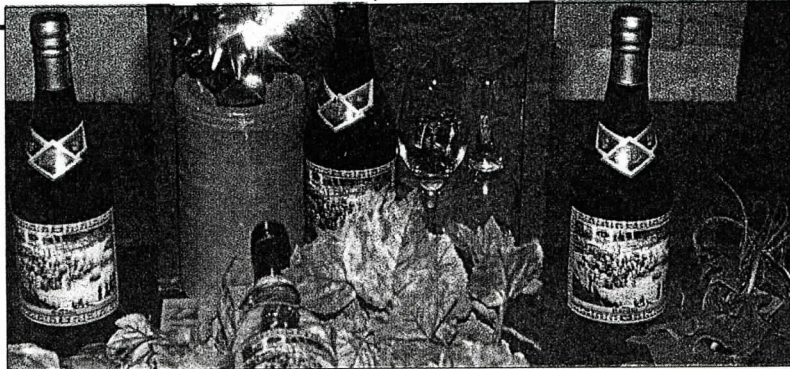


**Spotlight**

*'Steelbands have to get enterprising. We cannot survive as we are going right now'*



THE Skiffle Bunch wines on display.

By CHERYL ANN CHAITOO-BERNARD  
South Bureau

SKIFFLE Bunch Steel Orchestra has gone into business with its own brand of wine.

The Coffee Street, San Fernando-based band has a line of four wines, under the Skiffle Bunch label out in time for the Christmas holidays.

Band captain Junia Regrello said the project, first of its kind for a steelband, was one that came into fruition after just two weeks of organisation. The wines are being produced in conjunction with Mark Hopkins of Caribbean Cellars Ltd, Diego Martin.

The partnership, said Regrello, came about after Hopkins approached him with the idea. He said Skiffle Bunch will be paying for the cost of the manufacture of the wine and will retain the profits.

Hopkins, a Canadian, said he moved to this country with his Trinidadian wife in 1999 and started his wine-making business.

It was a field he was experienced in having grown up in a rural wine-making family.

Hopkins said he believed there was potential for merchandising through Carnival and, knowing of Skiffle Bunch's reputation, decided to approach them with the offer.

Wines under the Skiffle Bunch label are semi-dry red, dry full-bodied red, semi-dry white and dry white.

"We chose wines that are of good quality because Skiffle Bunch has a reputation to protect so we made sure they have a good quality for wine for their customers."

Regrello said he thought the idea of a steelband selling wine was an exciting one.

"Steelbands have to get enterprising. We cannot survive as we are going right now," said Regrello.

"We have to become competitive and we cannot be just about T-shirts, you have to be innovative in order to survive in this business."

Regrello said they have had a good response to the wines.

"We have a ready-made market with the members, family friends and supporters. We anticipate it should do well, especially from now till Carnival."

He said the wines retail from members of the band at \$50 a bottle.

"We want it to remain a bit of a novelty so we are not going into the supermarkets as such."

Regrello said the band has plans to open a gift shop at their Coffee Street pan theatre, where the wine, as well as other souvenir items, will be available.