

Hyde Park Wine Experiences

Issues 30



March is a month of transition in the wine business. The cold winter chill is almost behind us and higher temperatures are just over the horizon. Wine consumers begin to look toward Pinot Noir, Cabernet or a Meritage Red Blends, Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Grigio. For these, I have a few recommendations you may enjoy.

Also in this issue:

- Three nice Cabernets that may fit into your tasting profile.
- Insights on enjoying spirits in a way you never tried before.
- Member's questions
- A look at the sagging restaurant business in town and across the nation.

THE RECESSION:

Everyone has been on a wild ride at an amusement park at least once in their life. Some rides go through tunnels, up tall inclines or down steep grades. You get excited in anticipation and then, when a coaster travels downhill at blazing speeds, your stomach drops to your knees. That is how it has felt for every business across our fine nation and, most likely, with your own portfolios. We accelerated at high rates of speed over a year ago when things were going well, then we came to a free fall. With the recent drops in the market, most of us are in the dark with only a tiny light in the tunnel ahead.

This also applies for the restaurant business in every American town. Several restaurants here have closed or reduced hours of operation. Wholesale food and beverage prices have gone up and, therefore, portions have been reduced or the amount you're paying has risen. Places you formally needed reservations for during the week, you can now walk right in a select a table.

Weekends remain busy, yet sales during these times for food and beverage are down as much as twenty percent. Many companies that had holiday parties for their staff and clients have changed or cancelled their annual traditions. More and more people are saving their incomes rather than spending it, and uncertainty is on everyone's minds. All of these key declines have hit the restaurant business hard.

Dinning out is one area where consumers reduce spending during an economic recession, according to consulting firm Booz And Company. While people may be eating less restaurant food, they are not cutting back on alcohol consumption and purchases. Consumers are drinking more high-end wines, single malt Scotch, single barrel Bourbons, elite Vodka, and, of course, domestic and imported brews. Consumers are not purchasing the least expensive booze and wines in retail shops but are still buying popular brand names.

Here at the club, food and beverage sales have been very weak on the banquet side the last few months. Still, we continue to see members looking to consume high-end brands of alcoholic. For example, the Joe Carr Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon, Lava Cap Chardonnay, Sonoma Cutrer Chardonnay, Gray Goose, Single Malt Scotch, Blanton's, Knob Creek and Bookers Single Barrel Bourbons have been very hot items.

Additionally, all the high end draught-beers have been selling great. Stella and Harp have been selling at a rate of one-half barrels a week in the slow season to over two half barrels a week in the warmer months. On the wine list, we continue to see high-end wines moving out every week. While bar sales are down here at the club, mainly because banquet sales are non-existent, high end alcoholic products are moving at an accelerated clip.

Here in Ohio, retail alcohol sales are fairing well. Spirits sales are up as much as 26 percent and wine sales are booming. High-end spirit and wine sales are up as well, so consumers are not cutting back on alcohol sales in the retail arena. The expected trend will continue according to many food and beverage consulting firms.

The future remains uncertain, but hopefully, by this time next year, we may be over the hump and headed back up the hill. In the meantime, here at Hyde Park, we will continue to come up with promotions to entice the members to enjoy their club.

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER:

Les, we just got back from Florida and before we left we loaded up the car with two cases of J. Lohr Seven Oaks Cabernet Sauvignon. You got us hooked on this Cabernet last year and we really enjoy the wine at home and when we have people over the house. In Cincinnati we noticed this wine retails for \$14.99 but here in Florida we can get it for \$10.99 or less for a bottle. Who sets the prices in Cincinnati and why is the price of the bottle more expensive?

This state is not a friendly place to purchase any alcoholic beverage. Ohio is a controlled state, unlike Florida and many other states where prices are set by the retailer. This is a complicated question, yet I will make a stab at answering and give you the facts:

The Ohio Department of Liquor Control monitors, selects, approves and sets the prices for all alcoholic beverage sold in the state. There is a minimum wholesale markup of 33.3 percent on wine which was established during the prohibition years. From that point, the Ohio wine retailers can charge anything they wish for wine. This is why it is higher here than in other states.

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER:

Les we bought a nice bottle of Chateau Margaux twenty five years ago in March when my wife and I were married. I want to open it up on our anniversary but when I went down to the basement the other day I noticed that the foil around the top of the cork was pushed up about a centimeter or so. Does this mean that the wine is bad?

Well, this isn't a very good sign. If the foil at the top of the bottle has moved upwards, the cork is pushing it way out of the bottle. The is called "Oxidation," which generally means air has found its way into the bottle. When the Oxidation process occurs, the wine inside the bottle is not fit to consume. In your case, this is unfortunate, as that particular vintage received 93 points by the Wine Spectator - a very good rating. Wine storage is a key to cellaring wine for long periods of time. My recommendation would be to come over to the club on your anniversary, have dinner, order a nice bottle of wine of our Wine List and enjoy the evening.

THREE CABERNET SAUVIGNONS THAT MAY FIT YOUR LIFESTYLE:



I have selected three very nice Cabernet Sauvignons that always receives high marks by wine consumer magazines.

Heitz Cellar, Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2004

A bouquet of freshly crushed sweet grapes leads to soft, sweet flavors of cassis, mint, and vanilla which linger on the finish. *Retails for 49.99*

Liberty School, Paso Robles Cabernet Sauvignon 2006

An energetic wine with vibrant fruit and a solid backbone of tannin. This expression exhibits rich berry and overripe plum flavors that give it an added lift of flavor.

Retails for 15.99

Chalone, Vineyard Monterey County Cabernet Sauvignon 2006

A powerful yet approachable Cabernet that is medium full-bodied. Blackberry, cassis and notes of oaky vanilla give the wine richness and complexity. It has nicely balance tannins and acidity, along with a medium long finish. *Retails for 18.99*

MOVING INTO THE WARMER MONTHS:

As the months become warmer, people's tastes begin to change. Consumers move from heavy red wines and to more consumer friendly wines. Here are some nice bottles to stock up on for the months of April, May, and June:

Banrock Station Chardonnay 2006

This in tune Chardonnay is easy to drink, works well with most foods, sees little no oak all stainless steel fermentation. *Retails for \$6.99*

Clos Du Bois Merlot 2006

This little \$14.99 Merlot off plenty of punch for the money. Shows a dark rich fruit core of black cherry, plum and cassis with a nice long finish.

Wente, Southern Hills Livermore Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2005

This little Cabernet from northern California packs plenty of punch as well yet is complex as the flavors entwine with nice oak and spice. *Retails for \$14.99*

Tamas Estates Livermore Valley Pinot Grigio 2006

Tamas is a recently acquired property by Wente and is producing some awesome wines. Pinot Grigio is one of there flagships varietals. Nice crisp apple, ripe pear, and peach pie flavors are very evident on the beginning to the finish of this lovely Pinot Grigio. *Retails for \$8.99*

Tarantas Classic Spanish Red Blend 2006

A nice blend of 70% Tempranillo and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon give this wine a dark ruby color with a fading rim. Caramelized eggplant, ripe cherries, cranberry and spice is found in the early tasting pleasure followed by a soft and elegant finish. *Retails for \$11.99*

Glazebrook, Marlborough New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc 2006

Another typical Sauvignon Blanc for New Zealand with a good balance of ripe grapefruit, tropical flavors and citrus. *Retails for \$14.99*

Irony, Monterey Pinot Noir 2005

This is an excellent Pinot Noir for the price. Dark plum and strawberry fruit with some spice and vanilla. *Retails for \$15.99*

Wente, Riva Ranch Reserve Chardonnay 2006

The new vintage is out and this is a wonderful Chardonnay better than the previous vintage. Fresh green apples, some tropical fruit elegant mouth-feel, creamy and showing nice oak on the long and refined finish. *Retails for \$19.99*

TASTING PROFILES FOR SPIRITS:

Last month we looked at the three important factors in tasting wines. These are clarity, nose, and taste. The act of tasting spirits essentially has the same process. The terms for this process are: visual inspection, smell, taste, and observe. When tasting Cognac, Bourbon, Single Malt Scotch, or Tequila, you need to look at all four of these. Once done, you can make a more definite decision on what you enjoy and what brand you prefer to purchase:

1. Visual Inspection:
 - Look at the spirit. Is it clear, cloudy or murky? What does the color indicate?
2. Smell it:
 - You may swirl the liquid slightly, as you would do with wine. Wait for a moment and then lower your nose slowly, since swirling also brings out the alcohol. As you nose the spirit, you will be able to pick up the aromas .
3. Taste it:
 - Pour about one ounce into your mouth and observe what happens as the spirit moves across your tongue. Swish the liquid around your mouth. Breathe in a bit of air through your clenched teeth. Note your observations (Fruits? Nuts? Grain? Confections? Leather? Spice?), then spit and re-taste. Serious tasters wait until they have finished tasting to start drinking.
4. Observe the finish:
 - Does it dissipate quickly or is it long-lasting? Is it rich or weak? While finish matters more with aged spirits, it always must be clean.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

WINE MAKERS DINNER:

Here at the club we will have a June Wine Makers Dinner, however the time and date have not been established at press time. Chef Paul and I were thinking about a Spanish Wine Dinner as Spanish wines continue to gain popularity. More information will be available in the April or May "Hyde Parker."

CINCINNATI INTERNATIONAL WINE FESTIVAL:

If you enjoy wines then you don't want to miss the Grand Tasting of the Cincinnati Wine Festival, Friday, March 13th at the Duke Energy Center. The festivities begin at 6:30 p.m. on the third floor. Don't forget to meet this year's Honorary Chair, Charles and Molly Meeker of the Meeker Vineyard.

Friday Tasting: The price is \$65 per person if you make your reservations ahead of time \$70 dollars at the door

Admission includes a souvenir Riedel wine glass, delicious foods and an official Wine Festival Tasting Guide. I have gone to this event many times and, I must say, it is well worth the price. You will be able to taste some of the finest wines available from all over the world.

In closing, as I sit here typing the last sentences of the wine newsletter, sipping on a glass of Valpolicella Ripasso red wine from Italy, we have about three inches of snow outside with more on the way. I would highly recommend a nice bottle of Ripasso which retails for less than \$20 bucks. Stay warm and be careful.

Les Hemingway
Bar Manager

Some of the information in this publication was taken directly from the following sources:

Cheer's Magazine
The Ohio Beverage Journal
The Ohio Traven News
Bartender Magazine
The Wine Spectator
Market Watch
Restaurant News

