

Hyde Park Wine Experiences And Culinary Adventures



I hope some of you had the opportunity to take in the International Wine Festival in February. There were over 130 wineries represented at the Cinergy Center and well over 600 different types of wine offered during the Friday night grand gala tasting. This was most definitely a treat for wine lovers. I did not make it to the Friday night grand tasting, however I did make it to the trade tasting during the day on Friday. Many wine-makers and owners are present at the booths, and it is a unique privilege to talk to them one on one about their they have in their portfolio. Out of all the tasting during the course of the year, I find this one to be the very best as it gets me motivated to purchase wines for the club.

Talking about motivation, we purchase a number of first-growths Bordeaux a few months back and added them to our newly designed wine list. Within the first few weeks, we sold three first-growths Bordeaux off the list. Just last week, I purchased a few more first-growths, including some 1996 Chateau Margaux and a few 2000 vintage Bordeaux. We are very excited about our new wine list, and the members are really putting a dent in our domestic offerings as well as our imported varietals.

Now moving on, here are the subjects we are going to cover in this issue of the email wine newsletter. Many readers out there are novice wine consumers and have a hard time purchasing wines that they enjoy. No problem. Everyone begins as a novice wine consumer. Educating the palate, reading about wines, and tasting one can move on from a novice consumer to a seasoned wine connoisseur. I have a few recommendations to help you on this issue.

Sauvignon Blanc is a hot wine during this time of the year. I read a great article on the Mystique of Sauvignon Blanc a few months ago. I have a few suggestions to help you find a Sauvignon Blanc to fit your taste. We will look into the world of wine packaging, and explore some spirits that may catch your interest. How about a nice Riesling with your lunch? I have a suggestion. Of course, I have some readers' questions to address.

Before we get started, I would like to mention one important item. For those of you who have Road Runner, Zoom Town and AOL as your service provider, I have had problems sending out the email newsletter in a one time massive email. These three providers cannot handle massive emailing. Therefore, I have been sending out individual emails for those of you who have this service provider. You may have been receiving duplicate newsletters. If so, this is why. If you change, your email address, please let me know. As always, the newsletter goes out on the ninth of every other month.

WINE CLOSURES:

I receive email questions every week, and one of the most often asked question is concerning the cork vs. the screw cap (Stelvin) closures. Will corks ever disappear? The simple answer to this question is NO. Cork closures will always be around, especially in the high-end wines. Beringer, Simi, Caymus, Shafer and other high-end producers would never think about switching to Stelvin closures. The reality is that two to five percent of all wine are tainted by bad corks. Even high-end produces have corked bottles. There are many reasons for this problem. One reason is a faster production of wines by machine packaging. Storage and shipping problems are another reason and, of course, the poor quality of cork.

Screw caps (Stelvin) are okay, but they have that inexpensive perception, yet the wine inside the bottle will last far longer than the traditional cork. Many wineries are going to this style of closure, especially wines produced in Argentina, Chile, and Australia. Recently, Domaine Chandon from Napa Valley introduced their first premium Stelvin cap Chardonnay. *This fine bottle of wine retails for \$21.99.*

The synthetic, or fake corks, as the wine industry wine geeks call them, have their advantages. However, they also have some issues. Synthetic corks sometime leave a funky taste in the wine. A prime example of this would be Cakebread Napa Valley Chardonnay. Last year, the winery bottled some of their Chardonnay with cork and others using a synthetic cork. Several consumers sent back bottles of Cakebread Chardonnay complaining that the wine tasted funny... The reason- synthetic corks give off a plastic taste in the wine. Here at the club, several members sent back bottles of Cakebread Chardonnay last year. Cakebread Chardonnay's most recent vintages have now gone back to real cork packaging.

What is a Tetra Pak? This new breed of packaging now seen in some stores looks more like juice containers than wine vessels. Vandange Winery is marketing their wines in the new Tetra Pak, yet most wine producers are not buying into this new fangled idea. This packaging idea is just another gimmick that plays on the old bag in the box wine.

The bottom line: it is all up to you, the wine consumer. I always prefer cork, yet I do like the Stelvin, as wine will stay fresher longer. My experience with synthetic corks is not good. The cork is harder to pull out of the bottle and sometimes impossible to put back into the bottle if one cannot consume the entire contents in one sitting. Some synthetic corks do give the wine a peculiar taste than can be sometime offending to the wine. Tatra Pak? Well...a wine packed in a bag is not for me.

NOVICE WINE CONSUMER:

I have received so many questions from novice wine drinkers who are upset and perplexed because they don't know how to select wines for home consumption. Do not get so upset... It really is not that difficult. The easiest way to begin your wine journey is to purchase easy to drink inexpensive wines; you know the ones you see for *\$6.99 to 9.99 retail cost*. Try a few and see which one appeals to your taste. The best way to do this is try a new wine every week. Always try to find something under ten bucks. There are so many different wines in this particular price point, and some are just as good as the expensive wines. Here are a few examples of quality wines that are very easy to drink and are priced fewer than ten bucks.

Black Swan Chardonnay

Little Penguin Merlot

Fish Eye Pinot Grigio

Red Bicyclette Merlot

Twin Fin Cabernet Sauvignon

Red Diamond Chardonnay

Winking Owl Pinot Noir

14 Hands Zinfandel

Distant Bay Riesling

Tisdale Chardonnay

Black Box White Zinfandel

Century Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon

The novice wine consumers find themselves attracted to the catchy labels, interesting graphics, and gimmicky names. This wine category is the fastest selling segment in America within the last five years. These wines are for the discerning drinker, the novice wine consumer.

I would highly recommend you start here. Purchase wines under ten bucks, and then after three months start to move up. When you go out to dinner, ask for a sample wine by the glass. Order something more expensive like a Wente Chardonnay, or a Clos du Bois Merlot. You need to educate yourself when it comes to wine and not be frustrated. Look in the newspaper to see if there is a wine tasting in your area. Many wine stores offer wine tasting during the week. Go to a bookstore and purchase a good book on the basics of wine. Wine is a great hobby, and the best way to reap the reward, is to experiment.

TRY A NICE RIESLING THIS SUMMER:

Chardonnay is a popular wine with food, but another that is not mentioned too often is Riesling. A good crisp Riesling will add nicely to any lunchtime meal. Try

a glass of Riesling with chicken salad and melon or a grilled halibut with ripe strawberries, honeydew, and pineapple slices on the side. Riesling pairs well with

grilled Dover sole, scallops, shrimp cocktail or grilled pork. Here are a few Rieslings I would recommend:

Kendall-Jacksons, not one of my favorites when it comes to Chardonnay, but they do offer a nice **Vintners Reserve Riesling**. The 2003 offering is a classic example of forward aromas of peaches, apricots and apple skins in a light-bodied, off-dry style. *Rated 87 points in the Wine Spectator and retails for \$8.99.*

The Finger Lakes produces some of the finest Riesling. Check out **Dr. Frank, Simi Dry Riesling 2004**. This is a nice wine with fruit overtones showing an expression of pear, peach and melon flavors and *retails for \$11.99.*

Sometimes German Rieslings can be too sweet. Here are two nice bottles of wine that work well with food or just for a sip on a nice warm summer day.

Schmitts Kinder, Randersackerer Marsberg Riesling Spätlese Trocken 2003 is the most elegant and expressive Riesling to ever come from Franken. Layers of nice soft fruit with a glaze of honey, vanilla and peach toast on the finish. *Retails for \$29.99.*

Schloss Wallhausen, Riesling Kabinett 2004

Very intense and vibrant fruit on the palate. Finishes with a perfect balance and dry finish. *Retails for \$15.99.*

A LOOK AT SINGLE MALT SCOTCH:

I have been asked a by many members “why don’t you write something about spirits in your newsletter?” OK, here is our first shot at a hot brown spirits that is popular anytime of the year. Single Malt Scotch is expensive, yet it is the fastest growing specialty segment in the liquor business today. There are so many Single Malts on the market today. In this issue, I will focus on **Balvenie**. This distillery was built back at the end of the nineteenth century and produces some of the most sought after Single Malts in the United States today. The novice Single Malt consumer may want to start with **Balvenie 10 year** old plateau first. This one retails for around \$40.99 a bottle. A hot seller at the club is **Balvenie 12 year old double wood**. Aged in sherry and oak casks, this is one of the most popular Single Malts from this old distillery. The 12 year old retails for around \$47.99 a bottle. **The 15 year old Balvenie** is eloquent with hints of honey, vanilla and oak notes. Aged in oak barrels, this Single Malt retails for around 59.99 a bottle. The gem of the **Balvenie line is the 21-year-old Port Barrel**. This very soft, darkly flavored old Scotch has loads of butterscotch with a cigar box nose and hints of spice that hang to the long finish. This exceptional Single Malt Scotch retails for \$95.99.

MEMBER QUESTION:

Les, my husband is really into red Italian wines. I really think the red Italian wines are too dry and very hard to drink. Is there a good Italian wine that is a little lighter?

red Italian wines are dry. A prime example is the Chianti. This is a great wine with pasta, veal parmesan, and lasagna, but to drink it without food is not for a novice wine consumer or even a person who likes a full-bodied wine with soft fruit. I would recommend a nice Michelo Cairalo Barbera d' Asit 2003.

This is a bright, lively wine with nice ripe cherries, blueberries, and strawberry jam. The wine is mellow yet shows some style. Barbera is always great with spicy food, grilled meats, baked chicken, pizza or stuffed pork chops. Michelo Chiarlo *retails for \$13.99* at any fine wine merchant in town.

MEMBER QUESTION:

We love Rombauer Chardonnay, and for the past few months we have gone to several wine shops and cannot find their Chardonnay. We keep getting the same answer from the wine merchants informing us that the winery is out. Is this true?

Rombauer Chardonnay 2003 has been out of the winery for months. There really are not too many places in town that has the Chardonnay in stock. The past few years, Rombauer has been overwhelmed with the increased sales of their Chardonnay and frankly, they are unable to produce enough Chardonnay for consumer demand. Starting this year, Rombauer has invested in a new facility, so it can produce more Chardonnay from their grapes. This will help keep up with the demand. Rombauer Chardonnay should start appearing in local wine stores come late August or the middle of September.

SMART WINE BUYS:

Are you tired of paying an arm and a leg for a good bottle of wine? Then shop for smart wine buys at your local wine merchant. Here are a few good bottles of wine conservatively priced and worth every penny:

Ken Forrester, Stellenbosch South Africa Petit Chenin Blanc 2005 \$9.99 Retail
Monkey Bay, New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc 2005 \$10.99 Retail
Norton, Argentina Malbec 2004 \$10.99 Retail
Prospero, California Chardonnay 2002 \$11.99 Retail
Paradiso, Italy 2003 Pinot Grigio \$7.99 Retail
Sabatucci, Italy 2002 Merlot \$6.99 Retail
Clovely Estates, Australia 2003 Chardonnay \$9.99 Retail
Cheeky Chick, Australia Pecker's Blend 2004 \$9.99 Retail (This is a nice Red Blend)
Castillo de Monseran, Spain Grenache 2000 \$7.99 Retail
Veneto Villa Del Re, Italy Pinot Grigio 2003 \$8.99 Retail
Crane Lake, Cabernet Sauvignon California 2003 \$4.99 Retail
Crystal Valley, Chardonnay 2004 California 9.99 Retail
Taft Street, 2004 Chardonnay California \$6.99 Retail
Cloudline, Pinot Noir 2003 Oregon \$17.99 Retail
Berberana, Dragon Tempranillo Spain 2004 \$10.99 Retail
Dow's, fine Ruby Port Non-Vintage \$14.99 Retail

THE MYSTIQUE OF SAUVIGNON BLANC:

One either loves it or hates it, but Sauvignon Blanc continues to be a very popular varietal for wine makers and connoisseurs. Offered during cocktail hour or for receptions, Sauvignon Blanc sets the mood and offers a new and different style to any occasion. The wine is fresh and lively with some zip, usually showing fresh grapefruit, tropical fruit flavors, hints of lemon peel, melon, peach and straw flavors. Yet every winemaker offers a different style to their creations all with the same traditional traits. Some Sauvignon Blancs are loaded with grapefruit and citrus flavors. You may find that a common trait Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand, Argentine, or Australia. In California or Washington State, Sauvignon Blanc has a more distinctive character. Layers of fresh melon, honeydew, peach, light grapefruit, and citrus flavor are very pronounced.

Sauvignon Blanc complements the following food items: Summer salads, cream cheese, salmon, cream herring, grilled or baked chicken, and sautéed fish dishes.

Generally, Sauvignon Blanc is not barrel aged, but rather uses the stainless steel fermentation process. Fumé Blanc is aged in oak for several months. Fumé Blanc has a more distinctive taste, with less citrus flavors, with more of a nuttier and a grassy hay-like note. The novice wine consumer may want to start with a Sauvignon Blanc first, then move to the more aggressive Fumé Blanc down the road.

Sauvignon Blancs are a great wine to purchase at a friendly price. They range from prices of \$5.99 to \$29.99 and some can be a little higher depending on the producer. Here are a few good selections that are available at your local wine merchant:

Canyon Road, California 2003, Retails for \$9.99

Meridian, Napa Valley 2003, Retails \$7.99

Merryvale, Napa Valley 2003, Retails for \$18.99

Robert Pepi, California 2003, Retails for \$8.99

Trinchero, "Mary's Vineyard" 2003, Napa Valley Retails for \$24.99 (Recommended)

Mayacamas, Napa Valley Retails 2003, for \$28.99

Kelham Vineyards, Napa Valley 2003, Retails for \$27.99

Prospero, California 2004, Retails for \$11.99

Caroline Bay, New Zealand 2003, Retails for \$17.99

Giesen, New Zealand 2004, Retails for \$9.99

Umkhulu, Stellenbosch South 2003, Africa Retails for \$11.99

Boeger, El dorado California 2003, Retails for \$11.99

Castle Rock, California 2004, Retails for \$9.99

Hedges Cellars, Washington State Fumé Blanc 2003, Retails for \$9.99 (Very nice)

WINE OF THE MONTH:

Sterling Vineyards has been in a transition period for several years. New management, new owners, and a new winemaker or two has hurt the sales and the quality of this well-known winery. Diageo now owns the winery is beginning to make positive changes-building new facilities, changing the marketing philosophy, and hiring notch winemakers from around the world. Today Sterling Vineyards is becoming a powerhouse among the wine giants in California, producing some outstanding wines in Napa and in the Central Coast of Monterey.

The latest introduction of their 2003 Central Coast Chardonnay is a perfect example of their positive change. Nested between Gavilan and the Santa Lucia mountain ranges this property enjoys coastal fog in the morning and cool afternoon breezes from the Pacific that temper the warm climate of the Central coast. These conditions allow for a long, cool growing season resulting in grapes with well-defined varietal character.

The 2004 Sterling Vintner's Collection Chardonnay has a pale straw color, with concentrated aromas of floral fruit, honeysuckle, pineapple, green apple, soft oak and vanilla toast. The wine shows bright acidity on the entry with a creamy mid palate. I highly recommend this Chardonnay from the novice to the seasoned wine consumer. This Chardonnay works well with grilled beef, pork, seafood, pasta, and chicken dishes. It will not pair well with gamy foods or lamb. *Sterling Central Coast Vintner's Collection Chardonnay 2004 retails for \$11.99 a bottle.*

CHIPS AHOY:

In the last issue, I wrote about manipulation and how French winemakers produce wines in the traditional method. Beginning this month, the French government will allow vintners to flavor their wine with wood chips. According to the Associated Press, the traditional wine making methods must change so the French producers can compete on the same plateau as all the other wine producing countries. French vineyard owners have struggled in recent years and now want access to the same techniques as their competitors.

WINE EVENTS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS:

The Merryvale Wine Makers dinner was a complete success, as the event was sold out a week after it was advertised in the newsletter. Merryvale is a very popular high-end winery and produces some outstanding varietals. Currently, I have been entertaining an idea about doing another tasting with Merryvale, for the members who couldn't make the first event. My idea is to have a tasting and not a full wine makes dinner with some of the wines from the Merryvale portfolio. This would be an informal wine tasting and Chef Paul will prepare some light appetizers to complement the wines featured.

The idea is still in the early stages of planning and I still need to confirm a date with Paul Ciminero the Regional Manager from Merryvale. I will keep everyone posted when I find out more details.

The next Wine Makers Dinner date has been established. Mark your calendars for Wednesday night October 11th 7:00 in the Terrace and Braemar Room. The wines featured will be from the Dan Phillips Winery in Australia. The Grateful Palate has a vast portfolio of some outstanding red and white varietals. Mr. Phillips will be visiting Cincinnati in early October and is looking forward to hosting this dinner event at your club. The new vintages from the Grateful Palate will be released in a few weeks. When the distributor receives these new vintages, Chef Paul and I will sit down with the Regional Sales Manager, taste the wines and design a menu that will complement the wines we select.

The past three wine maker's dinners sold out in a matter of days, so I would strongly recommend you make your reservations in a timely manner. Reservations will be limited to 30 people. The price will be determined by August 25th. When the final details are worked out with the menu, wines, and price I will send out a special email to everyone on the email newsletter list.

TWO BEST BUY WINES:

If you really want to try a nice Merlot for a very friendly price, I suggest Columbia Crest, Two Vines 2002 for the great retail price of \$7.99. This drink now Washington State Merlot is yummy with nice roasted pepper flavors, ripe black cherry and plum fruit with a nice silky finish.

2 Brothers, Big Tattoo Red 2004 is a delicious Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah red blend from Chile. Loaded with strawberry jam, blueberries, black cherry and mocha flavors, this is a wine with a bargain price at \$8.99 a bottle.

That is all I have for this issue. As promised, the newsletter will provide more content using fewer pages. In the next issue, we will examine the 2003 Red Burgundies from France and what you should stock up on during this stellar vintage. Take care and drink well.

Les Hemingway
Bar Manager

Some of the content in this newsletter was sourced from these publications:

**The Wine Spectator
The Ohio Tavern News
Bartender Magazine
Cheers Magazine
Market Watch
The Wall Street Journal (online edition)
Wine and Spirits Magazine
Cigar Aficionado
Santé**