

Hyde Park Wine Experiences And Culinary Adventures

Have you noticed the chill in the air and the leaves starting to turn color? Yes, summer is a fond memory and the cold long days of winter are quickly approaching. In this issue, we will focus on big hearty wines for cool fall nights. The holidays are not too far away and sparkling wines will be in demand. In the first few pages of our newsletter, we will explore the confusing world of Champagne and Sparkling Wines. Then we will travel to the other side of the world and find some great deals on South African wines. We will then look at members questions, check out some interesting facts, hit on some hot wine deals, explore the wines to buy now for your home and give you a preview of upcoming beverage events at your club.

CHAMPAGNE AND SPARKLING WINES

One can write a book on the differences between these two wine venues. Every Sparkling wine produced has a new and different process to produce the sparkle in the wine. Yet no sparkling wine is a Champagne unless it comes from the Champagne region of France. Without getting technical or too confusing, I have tried to make the differences a little easier to understand with the information listed below.

What is Sparkling Wine?

Simply stated Sparkling Wine is a class of wine that has been carbonated. The highest quality versions are carbonated through the action of yeast in a sealed bottle. This is the Champagne method, and all Champagne are made in this fashion. Another method is to start the wine in the bottle, then to transfer all the wine to a tank and filter out the sediment. This is called the transfer method. Less expensive sparkling wines are made in a tank, with the yeast again adding the carbon dioxide. These wines are then bottled. The final method is to add carbon dioxide to the finished wine, much as done to soda pop. No quality sparkling wine is made using this method.

FACT

Champagne is a method and a region in France.

FACT

Sparkling wines can only be called Champagne when they come from the region in France.

What is Champagne?

The Champagne region is the most northerly wine producing area in France. The vineyards are located on chalky hills south of the city of Reims. The Champagne is produced mainly in Reims and the small town of Epernay.

The wine is made from a blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes. After the grapes are pressed, the resulting juice is colorless. The color of red or rose develops when the black grape skins are left in contact with the juice.

Champagne is made using a long and well-defined process called the “*méthod champenoise*” which can take up to six years for the best quality wines.

What determines a quality Champagne?

Like any wine, the vintage year determines the quality of Champagne. For example, 1990, 1992 and 1995 were fantastic Champagne years for French Champagne. When one opens lets say, a bottle of 1990 Dom Perignon the bubbles are very tiny, showing layers of lovely Chardonnay with a nice round dryness and soft mouth feel. The finish is long, fresh and memorable. For example, a 1990 bottle of Dom Perignon may be found at a fine wine merchant or on the internet at prices ranging from &120.00 to well over 200 dollars per bottle, depending on the weekly market value.

What determines the price of a good bottle of Champagne?

Like all wines, rating by wine publications can increase a wine price from inexpensive to very expensive. The amount of production, demand, and or course the name can all determine the price of a bottle of Champagne or wine. For example, I purchased several bottles of Dom Perignon a few years ago before the Champagne received any type of rating. At the time of purchase, we paid slightly over seventy-five dollars a bottle. Shortly thereafter, the Wine Spectator rated the wine 95 points out of 100. Dom Perignon price skyrocketed to over one hundred dollars per bottle. As you can see, wine publications play a key factor in the price of quality Champagne.

FACT Four factors determine the price of a bottle of Champagne; aging, the vintner, wine publication ratings, and the amount of production.

Why do some sparkling wines go flat faster than other sparkling wines?

There are several reasons.

One is the use of carbon dioxide to produce the sparkle. For example, Frexinett of Spain induces plenty of carbon dioxide in their wines and then they cork the wine under high pressure. When one opens a bottle of their sparkling wines the carbon dioxide is lost in a matter of minutes thus the wine begins to flatten and in the matter of a half hour the wine is completely flat.

Domain Chandon of California uses a different process and only induces half the amount of carbon dioxide in their sparkling wines. Chandon wines are made with some of the finest Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes thus adding their own concentration of natural gas. When the cork is pulled, the wine stays lively for longer periods.

Another reason is the storage of the wines.

If sparkling wines are stored in, an area, which is too hot, or cold the carbon dioxide can leak from the sides of the cork and thus the wine can become flat before it is even opened.

The key is to not let the cork just fly off the bottle when opening.

Yes, it sounds great but the carbonation and natural gas of the wine is lost in a matter of seconds. When opening a bottle of sparkling wine or champagne put a secure hand on the cork and your other hand around the neck of the bottle. Twist the cork slowly in one direction until you feel the cork coming out of the bottle. Carefully let the cork come out of the bottle gradually and slowly. One should never hear a pop just a slight hiss when the bottle is opened. Opening a bottle of bubbly in this fashion will always keep the wine fresh and lively for longer periods.

The Three Types of Champagne

Non-Vintage Champagne

The wine cannot be sold until it is at least 15 years old. Many non-vintage Champagnes are made with thirty or more different blends of wine.

Vintage Champagne

This is a blend of wine from a particular year. When the quality of the harvest is sufficient, the vineyard declares a "Vintage". Obviously, not every year is a "Vintage" year but it is left to the individual house to declare the Champagne a Vintage year. Vintage Champagne must be 39 months old before it can be sold at retail.

Rosé Champagne

After maceration the of black grapes are pressed so that the color leeches out from the skins. Then a very small proportion of red wine from the Champagne region is added to the wine to give it a Rosé tint.

I hope that this short but interesting information about these wines will give you a clearer view about the differences of Champagne and Sparkling Wine. Now take some notes and I will guide you though a list at quality Champagne and Sparklers you can find at most wine merchants in the local area.

- Freixenet, Cordon Negro Spanish *Retails for \$11.49*
- Domaine St. Michelle, Blanc De Noir Washington State *Retails for \$12.99*
- Gloria Ferrer, Royal Cuvee 1993 California Napa Valley *Retails for \$24.99*
- Mumm Cuveé, Napa Brut Prestige *Retails for \$22.99*
- **Schramsberg, Napa Valley Brut Rosé *Retails for \$34.99 Highly recommended***
- Taittinger, Domaine Carneros 1997 *Retails for \$52.99*
- Perrier Jouet, Fleur **Champagne** 1995 *Retails for \$139.95*
- Taittinger, Brut La Francaise **Champagne** *Retails for \$44.99*
- **Duval-Leroy, Blanc De Champagne *Retails for \$89.99 Highly recommended.***
- Piper Heidsick, Brut Rosé *Retails for \$19.99*
- Möet and Chandon, **Champagne** White Star *Retails for \$42.95*

- **Bollinger, France Brut Cave Champagne** *Retails for \$65.95 Highly recommended*
- Cooks, Imperial Reserve Sparkling Retails for \$7.99 *Not bad and a great price!*
- Louis Roederer, L'ermitage Brut **Champagne** *Retails for \$44.99*
- Domaine Chandon, Blanc D Noir *Retails for \$19.99*
- **Veuve Clicquot, Champagne Vintage Reserve Yellow Label Champagne France** *Retails for \$44.99*
- Gruet, Blanc De Noir Mexico Sparkling wine *Retails for \$14.99*

MEMBER QUESTION

I LOVE CHAMPAGNE AND SO DO MY FRIENDS. I LOVE VEUVE CLICQUOT YET MY FRIENDS LIKE MÖET WHITE STAR. WHICH IS BETTER?

Möet is just a shade better than Veuve. When one opens a bottle of Veuve Clicquot next to a bottle of White Star the only difference may be the color of the wine. White Star use the finest of Chardonnay in their wines, which provides a darker golden color and bubbles, are very small compared to Veuve. The price is more because Moët is produced only a few minutes away from Dom Perignon. Möet and Dom Perignon are the most popular names in the House of Champagne.

Veuve Clicquot is and has been a jet set wine for years. Very popular on the west coast and east coast, Clicquot is one of the most sought after Champagnes in America. The Champagne is very creamy and dry with nice acid and freshness. You can't go wrong with either choice.

For some good reading check out

www.chandon.com

www.veuve-clicquot.com

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER.

LAST MONTH YOU WERE FOCUSING ON PINOT NOIR AND YOU MENTION THAT SOME KINDS OF PINOT NOIR HAVE A BARNYARD SMELL. IS THIS THE CORRECT TERM?

Absolutely, specifically the correct term is brettanomyces or Brett for short. Brett is a wild yeast that is sometimes found on the grape skins that can get into the barrels where it resides, grows, and is almost impossible to remove.

When Brett appears in the wine it creates an earthy organic aroma. The nose of the wine has a wet-fur, hay, leather to mousy smell. Some high end Pinot Noir, Rhone and red Burgundies have the Brett nose yet this is not bad for the wine but good. Most wine consumers enjoy a light Barnyard nose in a wine but too much Brett can be very offending to any coninsurer.

QUESTION FROM A NON-MEMBER

MANY TIMES IN THE SUMMER, WE PURCHASE WINES LATE IN THE DAY AND TOSS THEM IN BUCKETS OF ICE TO GIVE THEM A QUICK CHILL. DOES THIS HURT THE WINE?

Absolutely, this is not a recommended practice for a bottle wine. The term for this is called "SHOCKING THE WINE." When one shocks a bottle of wine by chilling it too fast, it changes the molecular structure of the wine. The alcohol of the wine changes along with the texture and quality of the product.

SOUTH AFRICAN WINES

Because of an oppressive political regime for so many years, South Africa was behind the eight ball in wine production and trends. They are now trying desperately to catch up, and for the most part, they are doing a good job of it.

One of the problems with their isolationist period was that South African vineyards were producing varietals that were little known. One example is Pinotage, a red grape variety consisting of a cross between Pinot Noir and Cinsault (Referred to as Hermitage in South Africa). Another example is Cape Riesling, which is now extinct.

South Africa vineyards needed to change its viticulture focus and begin producing the varietals and types of wine the rest of the world was drinking.

In order for South Africa to make its mark, the wine produces are now offering incentives, such as good wines for the money, packing wines 15 to a case instead of the normal 12 bottles to a case. South Africa now ranks seventh in wine production in the world and the wine quality is outstanding.

Here is a sampling of wines that I highly recommend and are easily accessible at local wine merchants.

Vera Cruz Shiraz 2001

Inky, dark and juicy with strawberries, and ripe plum Retails for \$36.99 a bottle

Klein Constantia Marlbrook 1999,

A Bordeaux blend that received 90 points in the Wine Spectator and sells for only 20 bucks a bottle

Delheim Chardonnay 2000

Juicy lemons and grapefruit with vanilla butter and toasty oak. Retails for \$14.99

Laibach Pinotage 2001.

Think of Pinotage as a hearty Pinot Noir. Retails for \$15.99 a bottle and its great!

Freedom Road Sauvignon Blanc 2001

Zippy, zesty with ripe grapefruit, and crispy green apple flavors. Retails or \$9.99 a bottle.

Umkhulu Titan Meritage.

A good hearty red wine full of dark black juicy fruit and nice spicy overtones. Retails for \$24.99 a bottle

HOT OFF THE PRESS

As the wine buyer of the club, I get the **hot tips** from my wine distributors regarding what to buy now. Today I received the pre-sell list on Barolo, and Barbaresco wines that will be available this fall. The 2000 vintage of these wines are magnificent from a flawless vintage. If you want to read two articles of sufficient interest look at the July 31st issue of the Wine Spectator at www.winespectator.com

Here are some good recommendations that will be available in limited quantities at your local wine merchant.

Giovanni Manzone, Barolo Le Gramolere 2000 Rated 94

Loads of spices, cinnamon and cloves on the nose follow thorough to a full-bodied palate with silky tannins and a long, long finish. Retails for \$40.99

Fratelli Revello, Barolo 2000 Rated 93

This wine has a nose of pure crushed berries and then freshly cut flowers. Super concentration of ultra ripe fruit and silky tannins, yet refined and elegant at the same time. Needs some cellaring to 2008. Retails for \$45.99

Aldo & Riccardo Segheslo Barolo Vigneto La Villa 2000 Rated 92

This wine shows plenty of blackberry, spices, tar and roses on the nose. Full-bodied and firm with chewy tannins and chocolate and vanilla flavors. Retails for \$54.99

2002 WHITE BURGUNDY

The white wines of the 2002 vintage in the Burgundy district of France, from Pouilly-Fuissè in the south to Chablis in the north, are generally excellent in quality and will be eagerly sought by collectors. They will also be expensive when they arrive in the United States, reflecting the dollar's ongoing weakness against the euro.

Producers are comparing their 2002 whites with the superb 1996s and the lush 1992a, although the '02s have personalities all of their own, with firmer structures than the '92s and more up-front fruit than the '96s

Here are a few White Burgundy's that you may want to try to find in the next few months. Many of the prices are not set in stone, as they have not hit the market yet however I can give you a rough estimate on the retail cost.

Domaine Vincent Dauvissat Chablis 2002

Smoky, aromatic white fruit and slate nose. Round and rich with mineral notes and a crisp texture Estimate retail price 14.99

Maison Louis Latour Chablis 2002

Loaded with honeysuckle peach and nice white fruit. Lean and very clean. Estimate price 19.99

Maison Joseph Drouhin ler Cru 2002

Mildly fruity nose with mineral notes. Nice crisp and elegant fruit. Estimate retail price of 22.99

Maison Bouchard Père & Fils Chevalier-Montrachet 2002

Concentrated vanilla-extrac and white-fruit aromas. Rich and very firm with very crisp and concentrated pear apple and buttery nuance. Estimate retail 49.99

Maison Louis Latour Puligny-Montrachet 1er Cru Latuffière 2002

Concntrated nose of vanillin and smoke. Nice citrus and honey notes of poached pear and peaches. Estimate retail 46.99

Maison Louis Latour Mâcon –Lugny Les Genièvres 2002

This is a big value for a nice bottle of wine Subtle white-fruit nose with a hit of hay. Elegant, clean and bright. Estimate retail 12.99

Daniel Barraud, Pouilly-Fuissè Alliance Vergisson 2002

Chablis like with a nice concentration of mineral and citrus fruit. Rated 90 by the Wine Advocate Retails for \$22.99

Danie Barraud, Pouilly-Fuissè En Buland V.V. 2002

Honey floral, herbal and sizzling citric in the manner of a great Austrian Riesling Rated 90 by the Wine Advocate Retails for 35.99

Daniel Barraud, Pouilly-FuissèLes Crays V.V. 2002

Pale, bright yellow. Super ripe if somewhat subdued aromas of soft citrus fruits, apricot and minerals. Rated 89 By the Wine Advocate Retails for \$35.99

HEARTY RED WINES FOR THE WINTER MONTH ALL RATED 90

The Hess Estate Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2000

Deep, dark, rich purple, with a big bouquet the smells like powered mocha sprinkled on top of subtle blackberry and blueberry aromas. Long prevalent tannins. Retails for \$10.99

Mt. Vedeer California Cabernet Sauvignon. 2000

Black current and cassis aromas; very fruit forward; a full mouth-feel with a lingering finish. Retails for \$29.99

Louis Martini Sonoma County Cabernet Sauvignon 2001

A very well-made Cabernet with well-integrated soft plum, strawberry, and blackberry fruit. The finish is long and delicious. Retails for \$13.99

Buehler Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2001

Perfume nose of hints of oak; fleshy plum and blackberry fill the body backed by light oak and tannins; spectacular finish Retails for \$24.99

CLEARING UP THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DESIGNATIONS OF CALIFORNIA WINE

One can spend an entire newsletter defining the differences between designations of California wine. Yet I am going to make this confusing issue brief and easy to understand.

As you well may know, California has several designated areas where grapes are grown. Examples of these are; Sonoma, Paso Robles, Napa Valley, Mt. Veder, Silverado, and Monterey. Then there are the Estate wines and the Single Vineyard along with the generic California and Central Coast.

Single Vineyard Wines are wines that are grown in one set area of the vineyard. All the grapes come from one vineyard and are not blended with any grapes from the same vineyard. These wines are much more expensive and are all handcrafted.

Estate Grown or Estate Vineyard are wines produced by the winery where the grapes are all from the same winery and are not sourced from somewhere else.

Wines labeled “**California**” or “**Central Coast**” are the grapes that come from any vineyard in that area. This designation is normally referred to as “outsourced grapes.” Here is a prime example. Kendall-Jackson Vintners Reserve Chardonnay now has a capacity production just fewer than one million cases of wine. To obtain this amount of product the winery must outsource grapes from several vineyards. Therefore, most of the juice is not from Kendall-Jackson at all and therefore you can see the writing “California” Chardonnay on the label. The same goes for wines that have Central Coast printed on the label.

Wines that have designations of Napa Valley, Sonoma, Paso, Robles and so on are grapes that have been sourced from that particular area. For example; the grapes from J. Lohr, Cabernet Sauvignon Seven Oaks Paso Robles are only from that particular area.

NEW RELEASES OF THE WINES FROM ROBERT KACHER

Recently I had a chance to taste some of the fine wines from Robert Kacher. Year after year, the wines from Robert Kacher are some of the most sought after wines in the United States. Kacher produces good quality wines at very affordable prices. Every one of Robert’s wines has a unique personality and hidden pleasures. Here are some of the wines I liked out of his new French portfolio that you may be interested in trying.

Grand Cassagne Rose 2003

A blend of 53% Grenache, 40% Syrah, and 7% Mourvedre, the wine possesses a medium deep ruby color, loads of flavor, medium body and a flamboyant finish. Retail for \$9.99

Lalande Sauvignon Blanc 2003

A delicious, exotic Sauvignon with hints of honeysuckle, ripe melons, and tropical fruit. Retail for \$9.99

Domaine Des Roches Macon-Ige Chardonnay 2002

Ige is a tiny village fifteen miles north of its famous neighbor, Pouilly-Fuisse. As is traditional, all the fruit here is still hand-harvested and whole-cluster, pressed. The Chardonnay is un-oaked with expresses the clean, flowery flavors of a noble Chardonnay grape. Retail for \$12.99

Domaine De Pouy Blanc 2003

Aromas of grape fruity and flowers jump for the glass for enjoyment. This wine is a wonderful accompaniment to any fish dish. Retail for \$8.99

Grand Cassagne, Le Triage 2003

A blend of 50 year old Grenache and a 34 years old Syrah. Deep ruby/purple color is followed by a rich perfume of black cherry jam intermixed with hits of licorice and a touch of pepper. Fleshy texture with a soft seductive finish. Retails for \$9.99

Domaine Font De Michelle LaFont Du Vent Cotes du Rohne 2003

Zesty, lively and vibrant. Loaded with black pepper and spice to bounce around of the smooth-tannin Retails for \$12.99

Domaine Santa Duc Cotes du Rhone Old Vines 2001

The substantial 2001 Cotes du Rhone Old Vines (primarily from Rasteau and Cairanne) exhibits a deep rub/purple color along with a meaty, milk chocolate notes intertwined with berry fruit, pepper and earth. Big and fat. Retails for \$14.99

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER

WE DO PLENTY OF ENTERTAINING AT HOME AND I ALWAYS FIND IT DIFFICULT TO OPEN A BOTTLE OF WINE. MANY TIMES THE CORKS BREAK OFF IN THE BOTTLE. WHAT WINE OPENER WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?

There are several different types of wine openers on the market today. For home use, the best wine opener is the Screwpull Lever. This relatively expensive corkscrew (starting at \$139.95) is the easiest to use and one will never break a cork off inside the bottle. You can buy one at the Sharper Image Store or any local wine shop. The foil cutter is usually included with the opener.

If you want something less expensive but just as good there is the Boomerang, a wine opener with a built in foil cutter and a Teflon worm. Retails for \$7.95 Some people like the Two Prong Extractor as another alternative. This opener only costs \$4.95. To perfect your ability you need to practice, practice, practice, to get the corks to come out of the bottles clean.

Personally, I prefer the easy waiters corkscrew. The cost is only \$5.95 and it is equipped with a serrated blade a slightly longer Teflon screwworm. Check out this site www.AbesKitchen.com Here there is a wide variety of corkscrews with pictures, plenty of information and pricing.

HINT; TO OPEN A BOTTLE OF WINE MAKE SURE YOU INSERT THE SCREWWORM IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CORK.

CHANGES MADE TO HOUSE WINES

We have made some positive changes to our house wine by the glass selection the past few months. Here is a look at the wines we are now pouring by the glass

Wente Reserve Rive Ranch Chardonnay (Rated 90 by the Wine Spectator)
Lava Cap Reserve Chardonnay (Rated 90 by Robert Parker)
Sterling Coastal Chardonnay (Best Buy by the Wine Spectator)
Columbia Crest Chardonnay (Best Buy 5 years in the row by the Wine Spectator)
Mark West Russian River Valley Chardonnay (Rated 90 by Robert Parker)
Giesen Sauvignon Blanc New Zealand (Rated 89 by the Wine Enthusiast)
Murphy Goode Fume Blanc (Rated 90 by Robert Parker)
Chateau St. Michelle Riesling (Best Buy by the Wine Spectator)
Kris Pinot Grigio (Rated 90 by the Wine Enthusiast)
Lapis Luna Cabernet Sauvignon (Editors Choice by Wine and Spirits)
Jacobs Creek Merlot Australia (Rated 88 by Robert Parker)
J. Lohr Seven Oaks Cabernet Sauvignon Rated 88 by the Wine Enthusiasts
Perry Creek Eldorado Cabernet Sauvignon Rated 89 by Wine and Spirits
Parker Station Pinot Noir (Best Buy The Wine Spectator)
Deen Vat 8 Shiraz the number one selling Shiraz in Australia
Beringer White Zinfandel (the number one best selling Zinfandel in the country)

UPCOMING WINE PROMOTION

Get ready to drink wine as we have our fourth Cellar Wine Tasting in mid January. We have plenty of wine down in the basement that will be bought upstairs for you the members to enjoy. Enjoy big fat Cabernet's, Champagne, Chardonnay, Syrah, Italian Wines, and even some rare hard to find wines. Keep a close eye on the Newsletter for further details.

A DAY AT MAKERS MARK DISTILLERY

We are starting to make plans for a great event for late summer 2005. I talked with Bill Samuels in early September about doing a bus trip to Makers Mark Distillery. Due to the company's policy, Bill Samuels cannot visit our club for several more years. Therefore, Bill would like to invite the members of our Club to his home for lunch and take a VIP tour of his distillery.

The schedule of events is as follows

- Continental Breakfast begins at the club around 8:00 a.m.
- The bus leaves the club at 9:00 a.m.
- The bus arrives at the distillery at 11:00 a.m.
- Lunch served at Bill Samuels home at 11:45 a.m.
- VIP distillery guided tour with Bill Samuels at 1:00 p.m.
- Dip your own bottle
- Bill Samuels will gladly sign your Makers Mark Bottle
- Stop at the gift shop and take a stroll around the grounds.
- Departure back to the club at 4:30 p.m.
- Drinks in the Main Bar at 6:30 p.m.
- Dinner at the club is optional.

The price needs to be decided and the exact date still needs to be set. Right now, it appears the event will be held on a Friday in September (not the week of the Founders Cup.)

Keep you eyes glued to the newsletter for more details.

Cheers

**Les P. Hemingway
Bar Manager**