

Hyde Park Wine Experiences and Culinary Adventures

Winter is a great time to become more acquainted with hearty wines that enhance heavier foods. In this issue of our newsletter, we will focus on big red wines and serious white wines, for the more sophisticated wine consumer.

For the novice consumer I will focus on a few interesting and easy to find wines that are good bargains. In addition, we have some ideas on how to help you to sample wines, member questions, wine alerts, wine terms, holiday gift suggestions, and the most unbelievable priced wine event this club has ever had.

THE SOPHISTICATED WINE CONSUMER

Have you ever had a conversation with a very sophisticated wine consumer and mentioned that you enjoy drinking inexpensive Chardonnays at home? The person whom you are talking to just gives you that long stare like their saying to themselves boy you have missed the boat. It happens all of the time. More and more wine consumers are stepping up to more sophisticated wines and are moving away for grocery store closeouts. We hear it all of the time at the bar as members tell us that they often pop a bottle of Cakebread Chardonnay at home after a long day at the office. The majority of American wine consumers are moving into the high-end direction as vineyards are producing more complex, French in style, buttery and creamy in nature Chardonnays.

For example: a heavier Chardonnay is more complex and offers creamy butter and oak, yet the advantage is “less sulfites” - the element that sometimes gives you those headaches and sniffles. The drawback is always the price. The winemaker spends a longer length of time handcrafting the wine. Production is limited, and the juice

needs more time in the barrel. Everything must be just perfect before the final process and bottling takes place.

Listed below are a few very good Chardonnays, all handcrafted, that are readily available at your favorite wine merchant.

Chalk Hill, Estate Bottled Sonoma County Chardonnay 2001

Bright golden color offering concentrated flavors of pear, pineapple, spice and savory oak *Rated 93 by the Wine Spectator Retails for \$59.95*

Cuvaison, Carneros Chardonnay 2000

This is a big and bold Chardonnay showing fig, honeysuckle and lemon cream. Intense and full-bodied. *Rated 91 by the Wine Enthusiast and retails for \$24.99*

Cakebread, Estate Bottled Napa Valley 2000

Ripe and delicate with a touch of ripe apple, tropical and peach flavors. Nice French oak and a creamy finish. *Rated 90 by the Wine Spectator and retails for \$34.99*

Rudd, Russian River Chardonnay 2000

Creamy golden butter, and round French oak shading with hints of apricot, peach, pear, and ripe apple. The finish is long and brilliant. A wonderful bottle of wine according to Robert Parker. *Rated 96 by The Wine Advocate and retails for \$62.95*

Neyers, Carneros Chardonnay 2002

Big and juicy with nice tropical fruit, citrus, hazelnut, and a dash of spice. The finish is long and intense. *Rated 92 by the Wine Advocate and retails for \$29.95*

Far Niente, Napa Valley Chardonnay 2000

Big structure showing a glaze of caramelized apples, honeydew, and fig. A lovely hug of golden creamy butter and aged twelve months in French oak. *Rated 94 by the Wine Enthusiast. Retails for \$62.99*

THE FOUR BASICS TO ENJOYING A BOTTLE OF WINE

There needs to be four important elements in place to enjoy a bottle of wine. First, you need to start with a nice bottle of wine. Second, you must have a good corkscrew so you can open the wine properly. Third, you must have a nice wine glass to allow way the wine to open up.

Finally, one needs to clean the palate with a nice glass of still water and not water from the tap or some type of inexpensive Sam's water, but a quality still water for example: Evian, Ty Nant, Hildon, Panna, or Sole. These waters are pure clean waters that accent a nice bottle of wine. Before you begin to taste the desired wine you have selected, take a few sips of still water to clean your pallet.

Now sit back and enjoy.

NOTE: NEVER CHEW GUM OR USE BREATH MINTS BEFORE DRINKING A GLASS OF WINE. ALWAYS CLEAN YOUR PALLET WITH A NICE GLASS OF STILL WATER.

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER:

WHEN WE GO OUT TO DINNER, WE USUALLY HAVE A FEW COCKTAILS THEN WE ORDER A BOTTLE OF WINE WITH DINNER. IS IT ALL RIGHT TO HAVE A HARD ALCOHOLIC DRINK BEFORE DRINKING A BOTTLE OF WINE?

This is a good question. When going out for dinner and you know ahead of time you will be ordering a bottle of wine with your meal then it is always best to order a glass of wine before dinner. For example, order a nice glass of Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio. Hard alcohol like scotch, bourbon or even gin can distort your pallet-especially if you want to order a nice bottle of red or white wine with dinner. One needs to remember that hard alcohol deadens the taste sensation of ones pallet.

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER:

MY HUSBAND AND I ATTENDED A DINNER PARTY LAST MONTH AND THE HOST OPENED SEVERAL BOTTLES OF EXPENSIVE RED WINES FROM HIS CELLAR. WE HAD SCALLOPS FOR THE APPETIZER THAT WAS IN A HEAVY GARLIC SAUCE. WHEN I BEGAN TO EAT THE ENTRÉE THE RED WINE TASTED VERY BITTER AND ALMOST SOUR. I NOTICE EVERYONE ENJOYED DRINKING THE WINE YET I THOUGHT IT WAS BAD.

This is a good question with a very logical answer. Some foods seasoned with different spices or even garlic can change your taste buds. For example, drinking a Meritage after just consuming a dish such as scallops with a heavy garlic sauce will affect the taste of wine. I find it always better to drink plenty of water after every course this way your pallet stays clean and fresh.

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER:

MY WIFE AND I ARE STARTING TO ENJOY PORT. CAN YOU GIVE US SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THIS INTERESTING DRINK?

ABSOLUTELY! Port, a fortified wine, characterized as sweet, grapey and rich. There are three basic types – ruby, tawny, and white, but the wine’s final character depends on whether it reaches maturity in bottle or cast.

Wood ports are only bottled when ready to drink and are not meant for further aging in the bottle. They will, however, hold fine for years. These ports retain their freshness after being opened and need no decanting. Wood-aged Ports all have stopper corks.

Bottle ports mature in the bottle after two years of cask aging. They will age for decades in the bottle, softening and maturing, and will develop sediment as they received no filtration prior to

bottling. There are two other styles of bottle-matured Ports: Traditional Late Bottle Vintage and Crusted Ports.

Port had been crafted in the Douro Valley of Northern Portugal for centuries. It was the British merchants of the 17th and 18th centuries who helped transform Port (*or Porto as the Portuguese call it*) into one of the world's finest of wine selections.

Five grape varietals make up Port wine: Touriga Nacional, Tinto Cão, Tinta Barroca, Tinta Roriz and Touriga Francesa.

Normally Port is best enjoyed after the entrée or with dessert. A rich blue cheese, such as Stilton, is probably the best-known accompaniment to Port but it is certainly not the only one. The taste of Port combines nicely with dried fruit, nuts – (particularly walnuts) chocolate and Paté de fois gras.

Here are a few good Ports that I recommend and they are very accessible at your local wine merchant.

Dows Non Vintage, Fonseca, Bin 27, Non-Vintage, Graham's, 10 year old Tawny, and Taylor Flatgate, 10, or 20 year old Tawny and Warre's, Otima 10 year old Tawny Port.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON OF THE MONTH

From their single Napa Valley vineyard named after Jerry Lohr's wife Carol, comes the much anticipated 2001 J. LOHR, CAROL'S VINEYARD Cabernet Sauvignon 2001. This wine is loaded with powerful aromas of black currants, red ripe cherries, and licorice with a complex bouquet of vanilla, tar, and French oak on the long finish. Robert Parker has stated that J. Lohr Carol's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon is reminiscent of a quality Bordeaux, dark and plush with big refined tannins.

I recently tried this wine at a tasting, and this is a marvelous Cabernet Sauvignon. Recently rated 92 by Robert Parker, this Cabernet needs to sit down for a few months as it is still too young and the tannins are very restless. The wine will begin arriving in town in early December at the retail price tag of \$44.99.

RED WINES TO CELLAR NOW

Peter Michael, Cabernet Sauvignon 1997 Rated 94 The Wine Spectator
Price over \$100.00 retail

Peter Michael, Cabernet Sauvignon 1999 Rated 93 The Wine Spectator
Retails for over \$100.00

Jaboulet, Hermitage La Chapelle 1989 Rated 92 The Wine Spectator Retails
for \$89.99

Robert Sinskey, Carneros Claret 1989 Rated 90 The Wine Spectator Retails
for \$72.99

Paradigm, Cabernet Sauvignon 2000 Rated 90 The Wine Enthusiast Retails
for \$49.99

Rivetti, Barbaresco Valeiano 2000 Rated 92 Robert Parker Retails for
\$119.99

Paul Hobbs, Bramare Malbec Mendeoza 2002 Not rated yet Retails for
\$30.99

Livingston-Moffett, Gemstone Napa Valley Meritage 2001 Rated 96 Robert
Parker Retails for \$74.99 Very Limited!

SOPHISTICATED CHARDONNAY'S TO HOLD

Talobott, Diamond T Chardonnay 2000 Rated 96 Retails for \$72.99

Peter Michael, Mom Plasir Chardonnay 1999 Rated 94 by Robert Parker
Retails for \$78.99

Truchard, Estate, Carneros Chardonnay 2000 Rated 89 by Robert Parker
Retails for \$25.99

Newton, Unfiltered Napa Valley Chardonnay Rated 92 by Robert Parker
Retails for \$51.99

Fisher, Paladini Carneros Chardonnay 2000 Rated 90 by Robert Parker
Retails for \$45.99

Silverado, Napa Valley Chardonnay 2000 Rated 90 by The Wine Spectator
Retails for \$21.99

Harrison, Napa Valley Chardonnay Rated 92 by Robert Parker Retails for
\$42.99

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER:

I really get overwhelmed at the wine store with all the different brands of wine on the shelf. Les, it must be hard for you to select the wines we have at the club. How do you do it?

I always feel we need to change things up every now in then. We recently changed our red wine and white wine selections by the glass, and this change has been well received by the membership. Sometimes I make a change on a house wine by the glass and a few weeks later I start hearing complaints. If the wine receives complaints from members, then I need to look for something different. For example, we have recently switched our house Merlot from Wolf Blass to Jacobs Creek. At first, I thought this was a good move, but after tasting a few glasses over the past few weeks, I was not impressed with the new vintage. We also had a few complaints from the membership about the color and taste of the wine.

So, it was back to the drawing board. I needed to come up with a quality Merlot that had style and body that is easy to drink as a cocktail wine, yet it needed to work well with food. I tasted about 10 Merlots and came up with a winner. Finca El Portilla Merlot 2002 from Argentina is dynamite and was recently rated

89 by Robert Parker. In a few more weeks, this will be our new house and banquet Merlot.

Making the right purchase of wines is very important, so I do my homework and look at several key factors to make the right decision. Member's input is very important, and in addition, I read six wine publications every month. My salespeople from the distributors help me tremendously with pricing, availability, and quality of the wines.

Creative and suggestive selling is essential. It is very important that we sell the wines quickly after they have been opened.

Good quality wines and very reasonable prices will keep everyone raising their glass for a refill.

WHAT IS SANGIOVESE?

Sangiovese is a red wine grape variety originating in Italy. Although it can be found as a varietal, and as a single variety wine such as Brunello di Montalcino (Brunello as a synonym for Sangiovese), it usually forms part of a blend. Sangiovese is a major component in blends such as Chianti, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano and some Meritage or red wine blends in California.

THE WINES OF ROCCADELLE MACIÈ

Rocca delle Maciè, under the ownership of the Zingarelli family since 1973, has become a model Tuscan wine estate, employing organic fertilization, careful pruning, small oak barriques of aging, and harvesting by hand.

In just three decades, Rocca delle Maciè has forged a stellar reputation as one of Tuscany's best-known, most highly regarded wineries with a well-established presence in over 40 countries worldwide.

Recently I had the opportunity to taste some of the wines from this prestigious winery. Below are the wines I recommend from this vineyard:

Chianti Classico Riserva DOCG 2001: A blend of Sangiovese Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot from the finest Chianti Classico vineyards in the commune of Castellina in Chianti. Aged in oak barrels at least two years followed by six months in the bottle prior to release, this is a vibrant, assertive wine, with flavors reminiscent of ripe plums combined with earthy notes. Retails for \$19.99

Ser Gioveto 2000 (Super Tuscan): One hundred percent Sangiovese Grosso from the Le Macie and Santa'Alfonso estates aged 6-12 months in small French oak barrels and further matured in bottle for another nine months prior to release. This sensational and compelling Sangiovese delivers a rich, lingering bouquet of a dry, refined finish. Retails for \$39.99

Vernaccia di San Gimignano 2001 DOCG: One hundred percent Vernaccia grapes from the hillside vineyards surrounding the ancient and scenic town of San Gimignano, near Siena, in Tuscany. This is the white wine of Tuscany, immensely popular, clean, crisp, and well-balanced with graceful fruit flavors. Retails for \$16.99

WHAT IS DOCG?

D.O.C.G. (Denominazione di Controllata e Garantita) is an Italian Government quality assurance label that is found across every cork or cap of wine produced in Italy. The D.O.C.G. regulates crop size, varietals and the blending process of all Italian wines. Government licensed personnel must taste each barrel varietal before they are bottled. What a great job!

ANOTHER GOOD QUESTION FROM A MEMBER: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CLARET, A RED TABLE WINE AND A MERITAGE?

Claret is a very misunderstood wine varietal, yet Claret is one of the fastest growing cult wines sold in America today. Claret is a blend similar to a Meritage. The W.D.G.B. (Wine Designation Governing Body of California) says that before a wine can be

classified as a Meritage it must have at least 55% or more of Cabernet Sauvignon in the blend.

A Claret is usually comprised of 45 % Cabernet Sauvignon, a percentage of Cabernet Franc, and Merlot or Petite Verdot.

A Red Table Wine designation on a bottle of wine means that there is less than 35% Cabernet Sauvignon and various percentages of Merlot, Sangiovese, Cabernet Franc and Syrah.

**QUESTION FROM SEVERAL MEMBERS:
LES, CAN YOU EXPLAIN HOW THE WINE RATING
PROCESS WORKS?**

This is a multiple step question and I will try to make it easy for everyone to understand. Robert Parker has a publication that is mailed out every three months named “The Wine Advocate.” Mr. Parker employs two sommeliers and seven wine experts from around the world just to taste wine. >From the hours of 11:00 A.M. until 12:30 P.M. five days a week, these ladies and gentleman taste ten different wines each day. Sounds crazy, but between these hours of the day one’s taste buds are at their peak.

Robert Parker uses a rating system that begins at 50 for a poor quality wine to 100, which is outstanding. During the tasting process, the wine is given a numbered measured rating based on color, intensity levels, aromas, flavor, balance, depth, finish and length on the palate.

Wines that are rated 50 - 60 should be avoided.

Wines that are rated 61 - 69 are below average

Wines that are rated 70 – 76 are average

Wines that are rated 77 – 86 are good and consumer friendly

Wines that are rated 86 - 89 are very good

Wines that are rated 90 - 96 are outstanding

Wines that are rated 97 - 100 are exceptional to exquisite.

The Wine Spectator rating system is set up the same way. The difference between these two major wine publications is advertisement. The Wine Spectator has pages upon pages of wine producers, paid-advertisements in their magazine. The Wine

Advocate has no advertising. Therefore, many wine collectors and consumers feel that Robert Parkers wine ratings are far more accurate than the Wine Spectator or any other wine publication.

As Robert Parker often says “like anything else, no scoring system is perfect, but a system that provides flexibility in scores, if applied by the same taster without prejudice, can quantify different levels of wine quality and provide the reader with one professional’s judgment”.

**QUESTION OF THE MONTH:
HOW MANY MASTER SOMMELIERS CURRENTLY LIVE IN THE UNITED STATES? TIE BREAKER: DO YOU KNOW THE NAME OF THE FIRST MASTER SOMMELIER WHO PASSED THE TEST IN AMERICA?**

If you guess the correct answer, you will win a very nice gift. Send responses to les@hydeparkcc.com

THINK CRANBERRIES FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Black Duck is a brand new product that is simply awesome when you want to entertain family and friends at home for the holidays. Black Duck is cranberry liquor made with 100% cranberry and goes perfectly with Cosmopolitans, served neat, or

blended into a dessert or splashed in a glass of Champagne. **Black Duck is now available at most wine retail shops in the area and retails for *\$23.99 a bottle***

HOLLIDAY GIFT SUGGESTIONS

I have a few Holliday gift ideas that may interest you. First, everybody needs a set of nice wine glasses. Riedel, Spiegelau or Tritan stemware is a perfect gift for the real wine lover. Prices vary on style, type, and glassware specification. These wine glasses are available at any fine wine retailer or department store in the area.

The Sharper Image has great gifts for wine consumers. Check out the Rabbit 6 piece Wine Tool Kit. This particular kit comes with a Rabbit Corkscrew, Deluxe Foilcutter, Wax Wacker, an airtight wine/champagne stopper, drip-stop ring and extra worm package in a very nice leather carrying case. *Retails for \$64.95*

Robert Parker Software Deluxe 2004 Edition Package is the most advanced Windows based wine cellar and manager software package available. Keep track of ratings and notes on over 60,000 tasted wines from 1992 though 2004. You can even create your own custom inventory. Ideal for the real wine connoisseur or a novice wine lover. *Retails for \$149.95 from www.robertparker.com*

Sam's has a few Mini Wine Cellars Refrigerators that hold 12 to 30 bottles of wine. These double-glass door cellars have separate compartments for red wines and chilled white wines. *Retails from \$199.99 to \$259.95*

Everybody who drinks wine needs a Vacu-Vin Preservation System. Keep your opened wine fresh for up to a week. This device removes virtually all the air from the bottle, preventing spoilage from oxidation. This device can be found in any retail wine shop for only *\$13.95*

Macy's Lazarus sells several types of beautiful wine decanters for the home. Riedel, Spiegelau, Nachtmann are a few recommendations; however, I did see one very rare decanter on display at Macy's Lazarus at the Kenwood Town Center. Orrefors is a limited production and has exquisitely rounded curves and clean lines combined with a modern feel. Designed by Erika Lagerbielke in collaboration with Bengt G. Kronstrarm, well-known connoisseur and critic, this crystal decanter has an adequate opening at the top to let the wine breathe and open up. It is a lovely piece to have behind your bar at home and priced at only *\$69.99 retail*.

UPCOMING WINE EVENT

If you enjoy wines, you don't want to miss this event. FRIDAY NIGHT JANUARY 21 we will have our third Cellar Wine Tasting in the Terrace Room. I have begun to select some of the wines we will be pouring for the evening. Here is just a short list. Chalk Hill Chardonnay 2000, Rombauer Cabernet Sauvignon 2000, Robert Stemmler Cabernet Sauvignon 1999, Cakebread Napa Valley Chardonnay 2000, B.V. Tapestry Reserve Meritage 2001, Guenoc Serpentine (Very Limited) Petite Syrah 2001, Umkahulu Titan Meritage 2001, and Coll di Lapio Romano Delia Italian White Wine 2000 just to name a few of the fourteen wines I have carefully selected. Some of these bottles of wine retail for over eighty dollars a bottle.

A wine tasting of this magnitude could become very costly, yet we have worked out an unbelievable price for you, the member. This event is only *\$14.95 per person*. You cannot find a deal like

this in any club or restaurant in town. Chef Mike will have some international cheeses available to complement the wines for the evening.

After you finish tasting the wines, head over to the dining rooms for a bite to eat and stay for a night cap or two with William at the Donald Ross Bar. Bring a guest or round up a group of club members. Enjoy a wonderful Saturday night at your club. Make your reservations today by calling Sarah at 871 3111, extension 12.

IN CLOSING

We hope you enjoyed our wine newsletter this year. We are very excited on how the newsletter email list has grown every month as more and more members and non-members of the club look forward to every mailing. Remember, if you missed an issue or two of this newsletter, just let me know, and I will be happy to send one to you with a click of a button.

Chef Mike and I hope your season is a merry one and that your stockings will be filled with good health and happiness for the New Year.

Salute

Les P. Hemingway