

Hyde Park Wine Experiences and Culinary Adventures

Now that winter is almost behind us and spring is only a few months away, we need to begin to focus on wines that show depth, yet are soft and vibrant. We will look at several price points of Merlot and find one that is good for your taste. As you may know, Merlot is a good varietal that blends very nicely with almost any kind of meal. Spanish wines are now in demand, and I have four good recommendations for you to try. Are you ready to set up a wine cellar at home? I have a few suggestions to help you get started. We will explore the mystery of Kendall-Jackson Chardonnay. Buying opportunities are a plus with it comes to boutique wines. We will list a few of these gems to buy now. Plus, we will answer some good member wine questions and look at upcoming events at your club.

A LOOK AT MERLOT

Merlots can really add life to a meal. To pick out the perfect bottle, one needs to research, taste if possible, and look up some information on the internet before making the final purchase. Merlots are all different in style and taste. Inexpensive Merlots are generally soft and supple, easy to drink, and sometimes a bit on the watery side. The medium-priced Merlots spend more time in the barrel and pick up more spicy flavors. They are full-bodied with deep, dark fruit showing vanilla and mocha flavors. High end Merlots are aged in the French barrels for twelve to fourteen months. They are more robust with dark inky fruit, elegant and the tannins are more rounded and rustic.

Here are a few classic examples of Merlots that are easy to drink:

Blackstone, California 2002 retails at \$11.99

Wolf Blass, South Australia 2002 Merlot retails at \$8.99

Penfolds, Rawson's Retreat 2003 retails for \$9.99

Buena Vista, Central Coast 2002 retails for \$10.99

Rabbit Ridge, Central Coast 2002 retails for \$10.99

Now here are a few examples of very nice Merlots with ripe, rich fruit yet the wine is soft with some backbone ranging in a retail price of \$16.99 a bottle:

Rutherford Hill, Napa Valley 2001 retails for \$15.99

Chateau Ste. Michelle, Washington State Cold Creek Merlot 2002 retails for \$16.99

Columbia Crest, Washington State 2002 retails for \$15.99

Chateau Ste. Jean, Sonoma 2001 County retails for \$16.99
Raymond, Napa Valley 2002 retails for \$15.99

These are the big fat Merlots that are elegant in style showcasing dark inky fruit, artful tannins and long seductive finishes. These wines retail over \$19.99 to well over \$100.00 a bottle. All of these wines are gems and can be kept in your cellar for years.

Merryvale, Starmont Napa 2001 Valley Retails for \$28.99
Robert Stemmler, 2000 Sonoma County retails for \$29.99
Beringer, Howell Mountain Bancroft Ranch 1997 retails for \$107.00
Burgess, Napa Valley 1999 retails for \$49.99
Stags Leap Winery, 1998 retails for \$59.99
Stonestreet, Napa Valley 1999 retails for \$39.99

WINNERS OF LAST MONTH'S CONTEST

Congratulations to **Ms. Tuck Fraser**, **Mr. Carl Rhodes**, **Mr. Ron Ganote** and **Mr. Jim Gaede** who came up with the correct answers to the two-part question: how many master Sommeliers currently live in the United States and what is the name of the only appointed Master Sommelier in America? There are 56 current master Sommeliers and Eddie Osterland is the first American Master Sommelier. These members will receive a very nice set of martini glasses.

KENDALL-JACKSON CHARDONNAY

Three years ago, when one asked for a premium glass of Chardonnay six, out of ten consumers would ask for a glass of Kendall-Jackson. Today the number has changed as only two out of ten consumers ask for Kendall-Jackson Chardonnay. What happened to this popular Chardonnay? Supply and demand could be the two most important factors that brought this small winery fame and fortune in the 80's and 90's. Today slipping sales of their mainstay has forced this winery to bend with the times.

Twenty years ago, Kendall-Jackson produced estate-grown wines for their popular Chardonnay. All the grapes KJ produced for their award winning Chardonnay came from their own vineyard. With increased popularity of this well oaked and creamy chardonnay, Kendall-Jackson just could not keep up with the demand. Thus, Kendall-Jackson began to outsource grapes from other wineries. Production increased from 125,000 cases to well over 600,000 cases of this popular varietal.

The only problem Kendall-Jackson had by going to this new method is cost and consistency. The wine became a little sweeter, the color was not as golden and the quality inconsistent. Eddie Osterland, Master Sommelier, was recently at our club to give a wine presentation for a private member event. Mr. Osterland and I had a conversation about wines for over an hour, and this is what he had to say about Kendall-Jackson Vintners Chardonnay: "The wine is loaded with sugar,

lacks structure and body.” It is a massively produce wine that is way overpriced.” Yet consumers buy the wine, not on taste but on name recognition.

Kendall-Jackson needed to come up with another plan to bring back their loyal customers. They tried a better-looking package and lowered the prices, yet this did not do the trick. Then Jess Jackson decided to buy other properties and hire the best winemakers to develop more French style wines. They purchased properties in Napa, Sonoma, Monterey, Santa Barbara and Mendocino. At the end of 2002, Kendall-Jackson owned seven new properties producing estate grown wines under the names of La Cream, Camelot, Pepe, Edmeades, Calina (Chile), Tapiz (Argentina) and Yanganna of Australia. These wineries produce the cream of the crop for Kendall-Jackson and receive favorable reviews by wine aficionados.

Today Kendall-Jackson Vineyard is still family owned, and their new vineyards are producing some of the finest varietals, yet their mainstay Chardonnay that put them on the map is not nearly as good as it was back in the late 80’s. In my opinion, Kendall-Jackson Vintners Chardonnay is a good everyday wine, but for the price there are so many other options out there. Here are a few Chardonnays that I would recommend in the same price point:

Camelot Vineyard \$7.99
Bouchaine Carneros \$8.99
Hess Select Chardonnay \$9.99
Geyser Peak Chardonnay \$9.99
Hidden Mesa Monterey Chardonnay \$7.99
Clos du Bois Chardonnay \$10.99
Liberty Creek \$8.99

If you want to find out more about Eddie Osterland go to his site at www.eddieosterland.com

BUILDING YOUR WINE CELLAR

More and more wine consumers are building their own wine cellars as the popularity of wines continues to escalate. Here are a few questions you must answer before getting started:

Do you have room in your basement? If so, is your basement cool, climate controlled and dry?

How many wines do you want to store in your cellar? Do you want a combination of white wines and red wines?

Where do you get the wine racks? Do you want to build them or have them designed for the area you have in mind? You will need refrigeration. Where do you find the right refrigerator for the white wines you want stored?

How much am I willing to spend on my wine cellar?

Now here are the answers to these questions:

- First, you need to have a cool dry storage area in your basement free of foundation water leakage.
- Second, you need to decide on how many bottles of wine you want to cellar. The normal wine cellar capacity is around 1500 – 2000. The normal break out is 75% red wines and 25% white wines.
- Third, you can go two different routes setting up your cellar. You can call a professional company like Wine Cellar Innovations located here in Cincinnati to come over and look at the area you want to build your cellar. They have professionals that can make suggestions, custom build the wine racks you will need, give you ideas on lighting and how to maintain the proper temperature in your cellar. This company can provide you with temperature controlled white wine storage units. The usual price for a custom-built wine cellar of 2000 bottles capacity is around \$6000 to \$10,000.
- Fourth, you can also do it yourself by building your own wine racks, and purchasing refrigeration units from a company like Vinotemp Wine Cellars, setting up your own customized lighting system and spend somewhere around \$3000.00

Here are the three categories that come into play when building your own wine cellar: The wines you want to drink now, the wines you want to hold and the wines you want to cellar. Here is the usual breakdown:

Normally, one has 65% of their wines in their cellar that will be consumed in a year or less.

Wines you want to hold should stay around 12%.

Wines you want to cellar for years to come should be around 23%.

Of course, these percentages differ for individual preference. Some individuals consume less than 65% of their wines over the course of a year and some drink more. It all depends on how much entertaining you do at home.

Next month I will focus on what wines you need to buy now and what wines you should look into buying for long term cellaring.

WINERY OF THE MONTH

Pinot Noir continues to be the focus varietal of the year. Yet to find a good bottle of this unique grape one may need to dish out some money. Argyle produces four outstanding Pinot Noirs. Each one is completely different. I would strongly recommend all of these Pinots from this outstanding winery:

Argyle Nuthouse, 2002 Wild berries, spice, hints of licorice, cedar, and layers of dark juicy fruit leave a long silky finish that is unforgettable. *Retails for \$48.99*

Argyle Spirit House, 2002 Strawberry, red plum, and dark chocolate accent the long and cushioned finish *Retails for \$49.99*

Argyle Willamette. Valley 2003 Earthy with mineral framework showing hints of spice and mocha. *Retails for \$19.99*

Argyle Reserve, 2002 Black cherry and mint leaves with a touch of vanilla and butterscotch candy finish. *Retails for \$32.99*

THE WINES OF SPAIN

Several years ago, when American wine consumers thought about buying Spanish wines, the one name that was on the top of the list was Freixenet-the Spanish sparkling wine. Today Freixenet is still a popular Spanish sparkling wine, but the emphasis now in Spain is to produce quality wines at a value price. Thus, Spanish wines are increasing in production-especially the ever-popular varietal Tempranillo, Spain's most famous red grape. In 2000 Rioja became popular with the American wine consumer because the wine is very consumer friendly. Here are four nice Spanish wines that I recommend for your enjoyment:

Manuel Manzaneque, Finca Elez 2000

Dark cherry red color with a purple mahogany edge. Ripe black cherry, plum, sweet blackberry and spicy flavors. *Retails for \$11.99*

Bodegas Alicia, Rojas Finca Alicia Rojas Reserve 2001

Full-bodied fruit and well made with a blend of Tempranillo and Garnacha. Dark cherry, blackberry, blueberry, cloves and vanilla flavors accent this wonderful bottle of wine. *Retails for \$12.99*

Viñedos de Nieva, Blanco 2001

Bright pale straw color with rich aromas of orange peel and sweet flowers. Citrus ripe pear, and peach flavors dance together in this zippy wine. *Retails for \$9.99*

Bodegas Huertas, Rodrejo 2002

Bright strawberry pink color Rosé with sweet cranberries, ripe cherries, and strawberry jam flavors. This is an excellent summer wine. *Retails for \$7.99*

WINE BUYING OPPORTUNITIES (Wines for everyday)

Whites

Yellow Tail, Chardonnay Retails for \$6.99

B&G, Vouvray Retails for \$7.99

R.H. Phillips, Chardonnay \$7.99

Meridian, Chardonnay \$9.99

Fat Bastard, Chardonnay \$9.99 (No this is not a misprint)

Giesen, Sauvignon Blanc \$11.99

Zenato, Pinot Grigio \$10.99

Reds

Yellow Tail, Merlot \$6.99

Fat Bastard, Merlot \$8.99

Bogle, Petite Sirah \$9.99

Liberty School, Cabernet Sauvignon \$14.99

Michael-David, 7 Deadly Zins \$15.99 (This is one you need to try!)

Guigal, Cotes du Rhone \$13.99
Alamos, Ridge Malbac \$9.99

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER: LES, WHAT IS A BOUTIQUE WINE?

Simply stated, a Boutique wine is any wine varietal that has a production of fewer than 1000 cases. The winemaker carefully watches over these wines from the picking of the grapes to the final bottling process. Each barrel must pass very stringent testing, and if the wines don't meet the winemaker's expectations the wines will not be bottled. Usually the grape production from these vineyards are very small and the vines are mature. Thus, the wines are jammed packed with flavor and richness that refined wine consumers love to drink.

BOUTIQUE WINES FOR THE OFFERING

Here are a few boutique wines that are limited in production, but the quality of these wines is well worth the search:

Hanzell, Napa Valley Chardonnay 2001 retails for \$51.99
Hanzell, Napa Valley Pinot Noir 2000 retails for \$51.99
Handley, Anderson Valley Chardonnay 2001 retails for \$15.99
Hendry Ranch, Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 1999 retails for \$42.99
Au Bon Climat, Santa Barbara Pinot Noir 2001 retails for \$19.99
Robert Pecota, Kara's Vineyard Sonoma County 2001 retails for \$37.99
Schug Winery, Carneros Cabernet Sauvignon 2001 retails for \$19.99

TWO BUCK CHUCK

A wine for two bucks...can this be true? Indeed! Two years ago, I was in Venice, Florida, and I stopped at the ABC Liquor store to buy some Scotch to take down to Joe Hayden's home. I saw this big wine display that featured Two Buck Chuck. I saw several people just coming up and grabbing two or three bottles of this stuff. Then I grabbed a bottle of Two Buck Chuck Cabernet Sauvignon just for the heck of it.

A few days later, I tried it and to be quite honest it was pretty-good. Two Buck Chuck is another Cult wine with the quality a tad better than good old fashion box wine. Mass produced from outsourced grapes from Santa Rosa, Sonoma, Central Coast, and Santa Barbara, Trader Joes is selling over 3000 bottles a day in some locations.

David Coleman, owner of Adler Fels and Leaping Lizard Winery, recently said, “We started producing Two Buck as a kind of a joke. The first production we produced 10,000 cases and sold it all to Trader Joes. Within a week, the wine was sold-out. Mr. Coleman says, “The name was catchy and the juice is good.” Consumers love to drink the stuff, and for 2 bucks for a bottle of wine one can’t pass it up.”

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER:

WE ENJOY NICE WHITE WINES AT HOME AND I HAVE OUR WINE REFRIGERATOR SET AT 40 DEGREES. IS THIS THE PROPER TEMPERATURE TO SERVE WHITE WINES?

No, 40 degrees is too cold. Set your wine refrigerator between 48 and 53 degrees. By the time you serve the bottle of wine, it should be around 58 degrees. When you drink white wines too cold, one does not taste the fruit of the wine, only the alcohol. Drinking white wines at a warmer temperature the wine opens up better and one can taste the fruit, spices, and oak in the wine.

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER:

IF I LEAVE A CASE OF RED WINE IN MY GARAGE FOR A WEEK OR TWO DURING THE WINTER MONTHS, WILL THIS IN ANY WAY DAMAGE THE WINE?

It depends if your garage is heated or not. If you were to leave a case of wine in your garage in the winter months and the temperature went below 45 degrees for two days, then I would say it would be a bad idea. Red wines are very delicate- especially expensive reds. Red wines should not be stored at temperatures below 45 degrees for any length of time as the balance and the molecular structure of the wine changes. When the wine warms up to slightly below room temperature, the wine never regains the balance it had when bottled. Many times one may see the cork slightly pushed up at the lip of the bottle. This lets air seep into the bottle. Thus, when the wine is ready to be consumed and is opened the wine can taste musty. This is known as the oxidation process, and this will turn any wine into vinegar.

During the winter months, I purchase red wines for the club. They are often delivered on very cold days when the temperature outside is under 35 degrees.

When the wine enters the clubhouse, I always check the temperature of the red wines. If the red bottles of wine are extremely cold to the touch, I will then mark each bottle and send them back to the distributor. Later in the week, I will then reorder the wines and my wine sales representative will hand deliver the product. I then look at each bottle to make sure the mark I put on the original bottles is not present. If it is, I send them back again.

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER:

LES, WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A COGNAC AND AN ARMAGNAC?

France has two great brandies: Cognac and Armagnac, Both are made near each other from similar grapes but are very different. Cognac is double distilled in pot stills, then wood aged, blended into a house style and bottled by large firms. Armagnac is single-distilled in a continuous still, and then wood aged and bottled by a small landholder, usually unblended and vintage dated. Cognac tends to be more polished and uniform in nature, Armagnac tends to have a greater aromatic fruit expression with more of a bite.

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER:

LES, AT LAST MONTH'S WINE TASTING THERE WAS A BOTTLE OF WINE ON THE TABLE AND IT WAS IN A DECANTER. YOU SAID THE WINE WAS UNFILTERED. WHAT DOES THAT REALLY MEAN?

One of the wines on the table was from Lane Tanner. Mrs. Tanner produces many red wine varietals yet several of them are unfiltered. This particular French Camp Syrah is hand crafted and aged twelve months in French and American oak. The wine is poured from the barrel into the wine bottles and then labeled. Stems, part of the skins, and some of the sediment called "lees" can be found at the bottom of the bottle when opened. The best way to consume a bottle of unfiltered wine is to open the bottle and then straining the juice into a decanter. This takes out all of the lees.

Connoisseurs, members of the wine trade and particularly wine critics, are under the increasingly popular notion that unfiltered wines, because they are manipulated less and therefore considered more authentic, are superior in quality. Since these practices do not necessarily guarantee or compromise wine quality, the best way to evaluate a wine is by drinking it.

Many winemakers filter their wines during the bottling process, however you can still find some wineries that like to produce wines using this old world process.

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER:

LES, THIS NEWSLETTER HAS MANY INTERESTING FACTS AND PLENTY OF INFORMATION. HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE YOU TO WRITE THIS NEWSLETTER?

I spend two hours a day, three times a week for about a month writing this publication. I research five wines, and trade magazines and get first hand information from my wine salespeople about wines that are available now that may include good pricing at the retail level. Plus, I listen to what members and guests say about wine and include that information in my articles. I feel this publication is one of the finest newsletters about wine anywhere in the city, and the best part of it is I enjoy writing the dang thing.

SPECIAL PRICE ON A GREAT BOTTLE OF CABERNET

Here is an outstanding Cabernet Sauvignon that is on sale for the months of February and March and is readily available at any fine wine shop in the area. Pedroncelli, Three Vineyards Dry Creek Cabernet Sauvignon 2000 Aromas of black currant, blackberry, licorice and black pepper and hints of vanilla and milk chocolate show nicely on the long and solid finish. Pedroncelli just released their 2001 vintage of this Cabernet and are running a promotional price on this wine for the next two months. *Retail price \$13.99*

WINES NOW AVAILABLE

The wines listed below are now available at your local wine retailer. These wines have already been rated in the several national wine publications and are well worth trying.

Whitehall Lane, Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc 2003

Lovely pale gold hue, with peach and grass aromas that carry through on the finish. Goes very well with sea bass *Retails \$9.99*

Hanna, Russian River Valley Sauvignon Blanc 2003

Medium bodied with complex layers of lemon/lime zest, grapefruit and caramel. Excellent aperitif or goes well with poultry *Retails for \$10.99*

Chateau St. Jean, Robert Young Vineyard Chardonnay 2001

Full-bodied, nutty, rich, and elegant with a rich mouth-feel of apricot and green apples. The finish is long and satisfying. Enjoy with grilled swordfish. *Retails for \$19.99*

Talbott, Logan Sleepy Hollow Vineyard Santa Lucia Chardonnay 2001 Deeply scented and hugely fruity, exhibiting breadfruit and other lush tropical flavors accented by French

oak and creamy butter. Compliments sauté scallop or blackened shrimp. *Retails for \$16.99*

Dunnewood, Signature Anderson Valley Chardonnay 2002

Medium to full bodied with canned peach, apple, vanilla and sweet spice on the long finish. Serve with Pasta with wild-mushroom cream sauce *Retails for \$10.99*

One.9, Stonybrook Vineyards California Merlot 2002

Nicely composed with tart cherry, blackberry and a fruits of the forest underpinning that zips with refreshing acidity. Great with braised veal or beef. *Retails for \$9.99*

Bollinger Grand Année Champagne 1996

Full-bodied, classis, elegant, rich and complex with pear, apple, honey, toasted wheat, nutmeg and ginger on the long and seductive finish. Serve with grilled shrimp. \$72.99

Stonestreet, Napa Valley Merlot 2000

Medium to full-bodied with black cherry, licorice, mocha, and soft spices. Excellent with duck. Retails for \$16.99

INTERNATIONAL WINE FESTIVAL

The early kickoff for the Cincinnati International Wine Festival begins with a Charity Auction and Dinner Saturday February 19th at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. The kickoff for the weekend of great wines and delicious food will begin on Thursday March 10th with a host of wine makers dinners at many area hotels and restaurants. The Grand Tasting will be held on Friday and Saturday nights at the Cincinnati Convention Center. This year's honorary guest is Ed Sbragia of Beringer Winery.

For more information about the International Wine Festival please go to www.winefestival.com

COMING EVENTS TO YOUR CLUB

Guest Bartender Night was a blast in January and it will continue in February. Just look at this lineup of stars.

Friday February 11th

Robin Hughes

Scott Scharfenberger

Jon. Blohm

Dr. James Bingham

Fred and Stephanie Berghausen

Friday February 18th

Bill and Via Gerwin

Tim and Lisa Underhill
Derk and Jenni Roudebush

Friday February 25th

Tom and Maridot Long
Pat and Holly Long
Matt and Carole Chamberlin
Jeff and Laurie McGrath
Bart and Kelley Fitzpartick

**Our last Guests Bartender Night will be held on Friday March 4th.
The theme of the night will be the 70s. **Cort Stein and his band Fresh
Out will provide the musical entertainment. Featured bartenders for
the evening:****

Rick and Nancy Fehr
Fred and Mariann Fehr
Bob and Cindy Kelly
Steve and Cindy Ortner
Don and Vicky Richter
Joe and Lynne Weldon

**This popular promotion has been selling out the club on Friday and we strongly
recommend, if you want to stay for dinner, please make your reservations a few
days ahead of time. All the action begins at 7:00 p.m. in the old Main Bar.**

A TOAST TO THE WEEKEND

Friday night March 11th we are going to have an **After Dinner Champagne Tasting**
in the Terrace Room from the hours of 8:30 p.m. until 10:30 p.m. Taste some fine
sparkling wines and Champagnes from around the world. To complement these
selections, sample some delicious sinful chocolate deserts, strawberries soaked
in Amaretto and chocolate, Bushmills Irish Cream and white chocolate mousse,
and some soft fruit and cheese from around the world. Guests are welcome,
dress is casual, and the price is ONLY \$34.95 per person.

Cheers!

Les Hemingway
Bar Manager