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WINE OF THE MONTH!



El Bon Hombre DO Valencia, 2008 \$14.24 cash

50% Monastrell/50% Cabernet Sauvignon
Big strawberry and red fruit on the nose followed by light mocha notes. The palate displays generous acidity and highlights flavors of strawberry candy with an underlying truffle nuance. Easy finish with medium tannins.

If you enjoyed this selection try some more of the new Spanish selections:

Real de Aragon Garnacha 2007 (Calatayud)
88pts Wine Advocate - \$9.98 cash

Milcampos Tempranillo 2006 (Ribera del Duero)
90pts Wine Advocate - \$12.72 cash

Ready to Rodeo?

"Top" wines, the 7th Annual Rodeo Uncorked!, and More

by Charles M. Bear Dalton

Rodeo Uncorked!



"Are you ready for the Rodeo?" This time of year, that is with out a doubt the question I am asked most frequently. For two months, it beats out "Where's the Kendall-Jackson?", "Which wine should I serve with _(fill in the blank)_?", and even "Are we there yet?" (I do have kids) combined. And the answer is "No, I am not ready for the Rodeo." To paraphrase my fellow Sharpstown High alumnus Robert Earl Keen: "The Rodeo goes on forever and the planning never ends." Nevertheless, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ is coming and with it come three significant wine enjoyment opportunities. Beginning in the 2004 "show year", the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo has held an International Wine Competition. The actual competition is held in November of the preceding year but Rodeo Uncorked (the public tasting and awards event) is held just before the Rodeo (this year on Sunday February 21st) and The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Champion Wine Auction and Dinner is held on the first Saturday of the Show (this year on March 6th). Beginning in 2008, the show has offered a wine bar open during the run of the Rodeo.

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Inside This Issue: *Deli Specials, Collin's Column, Beer Buzz, Delicious Mischief, Wine and Cheese of the Week & more!*

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To recap the Competition, here's a round up (I know, it's a Rodeo thing) of the saddle winners for 2010 ...

GRAND CHAMPION BEST OF SHOW, the award for the best wine of the show went to **Davis Family Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, 2005**. Past winners have been Vina Robles Suendero (2009), Stags' Leap Winery Cabernet Sauvignon (2008), Clos du Bois Marlstone (2007), Raymond Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (2006), Hang Time Pinot Noir (2005), and Alexander Valley Vineyards "Cyrus" (2004). Each bested all comers to take the Grand Champion Best of Show trophy saddle.

The **RESERVE GRAND CHAMPION BEST OF SHOW**, the award for the runner-up – which is no slouch when you beat out almost 1800 other wines for that honor, is **Nadia Red, Arroyo Grande Valley, 2005**. The **TOP TEXAS WINE** saddle went to vigneron Rick Naber for his **Flat Creek Estate "Mistella"**, a Texas Muscat made somewhat in the style of a Muscat Beumes de Venise.

An award that is new for the 2010 show year is **TOP ARGENTINE WINERY**. That coveted trophy saddle goes to Ca' de CALLE Reserva, Mendoza, 2008. This wine which was new to the market has proven so popular that Spec's may well be out for the year by the time the Rodeo opens on Tuesday March 2nd.

The award for **TOP ALL AROUND WINERY** goes to the winery that puts on the best show in terms of winning awards in the competition. To really understand it, think Top All Around Cowboy in traditional rodeo terms. It recognizes the winery (one "label" or name) that enters at least six wines and has the highest entry-adjusted award point total. For the third year in a row, that winery is Australia's **d'Arenberg**.

Back in November of 2009, I wrote in some detail about the top five award winners from the Show's 2010 International Wine Competition. To see that article, please go to <http://204.128.208.250/docs/mailings/20091128.pdf>.

CHAPS AWARDS

The Chap awards are the wines (other than the saddle winners) that are recognized as the top scorers in five groups: Top Red Wine, Top White Wine, Top Sparkling Wine, Top Dessert Wine, and Top Value Wine. The award is stamped into the leg of the chaps along with the year, the Show's "Bew-legged H" Logo (aka "Howdy") and the wine competition's double horseshoe-wine glass logo. Here are my notes on the 2010 "Top" award winners ...

Top Red Wine:

SEQUOIA GROVE Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, 2006
12x750ml \$27.99 \$335.85

Tech: 14.2% Alcohol. 100% Cabernet Sauvignon made with a 2 day cold soak, fermented using pump-overs, and aged 18 months in American oak barrels (45% new). Deep purple-black-red in color with well formed legs that stain the glass; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity; chewy phenolics. Dusty ripe, juicy, chewy Cabernet Sauvignon offering black cherry berry fruit accented with black pepper, tobacco, and subtle pencil shavings. Rich with dusty-Bourbony American oak. A bit rustic but balanced and satisfying. Excellent. BS: 92+VHR

Top White Wine:

KALLFELZ Riesling Kabinett, Mosel (Merler Fettgarten), 2007
12x750ml \$14.51 \$159.71

Tech: 11.5% Alcohol. 100% Riesling fermented in tanks using no ML (no oak). Straw in color, with green highlights, day bright and clear with good legs; semi-dry, light-bodied with crisp acidity. This doesn't taste particularly Mosel-like to me but it does offer plenty of spicy, more Rheingau-tasting Riesling fruit in the lime and green apple range. It is also drier than the typical Mosel Kabinett and so is absolutely appropriate with a lot of fresh seafood and lots of up to moderately spicy (think Latin American and Pacific Rim) dishes. Really holds your attention with its fruit acid tension and fine beam of minerality. Delicious. Really Fine. BS: 90VHR

So what makes the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo International Wine Competition unique? A key difference is that In addition to the standard medals, the Show awards Champion and Reserve Champion rodeo belt buckles to the top two wines in each class. The top Champion Buckle winners are considered by a super panel for the Show's "top" awards. The big four - Grand Champion Best of Show, Reserve Grand Champion Best of Show, Top Texas Wine, and new for 2010, Top Argentine Wine - each earn Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo trophy saddles with the award engraved into the stirrup leathers. The next five each earn trophy chaps with the award won branded into the leg of the chap. A "Top" saddle is also awarded to the Top All Around Winery.

As the Texas Department of Agriculture says, "A medal may look nice but it won't hold your pants up." And you can't ride a trophy into town. As we have come to find out, a lot of grape growers and winemakers grew up in ag as members of 4H or FFA. They are proud of the buckles they win and they know the value of a real saddle.

As to the significance of these awards, this is OUR wine competition. The awards are decided by 75 judges. In the 2010 competition, only 5 were from outside the state of Texas. Each of the fifteen five-member panels is a mix of consumers and trade with no more than one press member. The endorsement implied by these awards is from our peers here in Texas insuring that the winning wines have a taste profile that insures a broad appeal in THIS area.

Top Sweet Wine:

HOPLER EISWEIN, Burgenland - Austria, 2004
12x375ml \$48.96 \$551.34

Tech: 11% Alcohol. A blend of Gruner Veltliner, Welschriesling made from frozen grapes. Yellow gold in color, bright and clear with well formed legs; very sweet, full-bodied with crisp acidity, very light phenolics, and an ultra-long finish. Honey, molasses, and (oddly but appropriately) sweet green beans with lemony citrus. Balanced and elegant with an interesting (and not unwelcome) herbal edge. Excellent. BS: 91+

Top Sparkling Wine:

Domaine Ste. Michelle Blanc de Blancs Sparkling, Columbia Valley, NV
12x750ml \$7.99 \$95.88

Tech: 11.5% Alcohol. 100% Chardonnay fermented using Methode Champenoise. Yellow straw in color and fully sparkling; dry, medium light-bodied with crisp acidity; fresh, lively mostly citrus fruit with subtle toast and spice notes. Clean with a nice beam of mineral running the length of it. Very long finish; Fine. BS: 89+VHR

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Top Value Wine:

NAPA LANDING Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, 2006

12x750ml \$10.99 \$123.71

Tech: 13.3% Alcohol. A blend of 86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Ruby Cabernet, 2% Segalin (no, I hadn't ever heard of it either), and 6% other varietals aged 6 months American Oak. This comes from Fred Franzia's Bronco Wine Company which is a consistent market leader in value-priced wines. Red-black in color with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity and lightly chewy phenolics. Offers lively juicy red & black fruit with a lot of Cabernet character along with mineral-dusty earth and accents of tobacco, cigar box, and black pepper. Long Finish. Really Very Good. BS: 87VHR



ALL THE AWARDS for the 2010 Competition will be presented at the Rodeo Uncorked Round Up and Best Bites Competition, (Sunday February 21st at Reliant Center). Here is the scoop on both events ...

Rodeo Uncorked!

Rodeo Uncorked! Roundup and Best Bites Competition:

Sunday, Feb. 21, 2010 6:30 p.m. in Reliant Center, Halls D and E

This event features the tasting of over 200 award-winning wines, including the Grand Champion and Reserve Champion from the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ International Wine Competition, and the signature dishes of 60+ regional culinary institutions and restaurants. Prizes are awarded to the culinary institutions and restaurants for the Best Bite as voted on by the guests. There will be musical entertainment for the evening as well as the saddle and chap presentations to the top 10 winners. Tickets are available for \$100 per guest in advance or \$125 at the door. Reserved tables of 10 are available for \$1,800. Valet parking will be available.

Rodeo Uncorked! Champion Wine Auction and Dinner:

Saturday, March 6, 2010

Reception: 6 p.m.

Dinner: 7 p.m.

Auction: 8 p.m.



The event will be held in Reliant Center in the 600 series rooms. This evening includes a reception with cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, a silent auction of champion wines and related items, a sumptuous seated dinner with wines served from the competition, and the excitement of live auction bidding for award-winning and champion wines.

Reserved tables of 10 for the Wine Auction Dinner in the categories below with a portion of the purchase price applied to live or silent auction.

Table Options:

- \$12,000 table (FMV \$1,500) with \$12,000 credit to be applied to live or silent auction
- \$ 8,000 table (FMV \$1,500) with \$7,000 credit to be applied to live or silent auction
- \$ 5,000 table (FMV \$1,500) with \$3,000 credit to be applied to live or silent auction
- \$ 3,000 table (FMV \$1,500) with \$500 credit to be applied to live or silent auction
- \$500 Individual Tickets

For more information or to buy tickets or tables for Rodeo Uncorked or the Champion Auction and Dinner, you may email me at [BearDalton@specsonline.com](mailto: BearDalton@specsonline.com).

While you are attending the 2010 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo running from Tuesday March 2 through Sunday March 21, 2001, stop into the **CHAMPION WINE GARDEN** and taste your way through a selection of over 50 award-winning wines from the 2010 International Wine Competition by the glass or bottle. Located in Carruth Plaza, the Champion Wine Garden is a great place to relax, take in the scenery, and enjoy some of the best wines from across the world. Gourmet pizza also will be available to enjoy with the wines. Carruth Plaza is located at the northwest corner of Reliant Astrodome between Reliant Center and Reliant Stadium. The Champion Wine Garden is open Monday - Friday from 4pm to 11pm, Saturday from 11am to 11pm, and on Sunday from noon to 11pm.

Maybe I'm not ready yet, but hopefully you are more than ready to Rodeo. ■

