

WINE, SPIRITS & FINER FOODS SPEC'S Update!



Mon-Sat March 15,
to March 20, 2010

DEFINING VALUE

CALL TOLL-FREE AT 1-888-526-8787

www.specsonline.com

Houston family owned since 1962!




Wine Basics Class
March 18

Champagne Class
March 31

for more details see page 6

Cheese Fest
April 8-10 at
Spec's Smith Superstore



The Great Grapes Class
Five Mondays, April 19-May 17, 2010,
7:00 p.m.- 9:00 p.m.

for more details go to:
www.specsonline.com



Cruise Through
France...

The tour will depart
August 15th -26th, 2010.

For more information see page 7

COMING SOON


TEMPLE
3550 S. General Bruce Dr

NOW OPEN

CORPUS CHRISTI
5625 South Padre Island Drive

SPEC'S UPDATE is a publication of Spec's Wines, Spirits & Finer Foods. All prices listed are subject to change without notice. ALL PRICES LISTED ARE FOR SPEC'S SMITH STREET SUPERSTORE AND INCLUDE A FIVE PERCENT DISCOUNT FOR CASH. (Many items are available at Spec's Neighborhood Stores at different prices.) All items are offered "first come, first served" and are subject to availability; some quantities may be limited. Spec's reserves the right to restrict quantities. Spec's is not responsible for errors in printing. Typographical errors will not be honored. "Spec's" and the rabbit logo are service marks of Spec's Family Partners and are registered with the State of Texas.

WINE OF THE MONTH!



Kono Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, 2009
\$9.99 cash

Tech: 13% Alcohol. 100% Sauvignon Blanc tank fermented using no ML and no oak. Green straw in color with good legs; dry, medium light-bodied with crisp acidity. Fresh and alive with citrus and pomegranate fruit. Lovely, sweet fruit and plenty of minerality. Crisp, vibrant, and alive.



Understanding Endorsement

by Charles M. Bear Dalton

Walk down any aisle at Spec's and you will see endorsements. You may not think of them as such but most of the shelf talkers are in fact more about endorsements than they are informational. They read "93 points Robert Parker" or "94 points Wine Spectator" or 89 points Burghound. They may or may not contain any of the text from the actual review. You also might see shelf talkers that read "Gold Medal - Riverside Fair", "Sweepstakes Award - California State Fair", "Double Gold Medal - Dallas Morning News Wine Competition", or "Grand Champion Best of Show - Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo International Wine Competition." You might even see a review I wrote with a score attached.

As long as you have areas of commonality with a certain reviewer, you can find fine wines to drink by following that reviewer's advice. That makes that critic's positive review a useful endorsement.

Medals earned in wine competitions offer a different sort of endorsement. Instead of being the endorsement of one reviewer, wine competition medals and other higher awards reflect the endorsement of a panel. While it is possible that no one panelist may think that a panel's certain "Double Gold" (unanimous gold medal votes from the whole panel) medal winner is the single best wine in the class, all the panelist certainly agree that the wine is excellent. The panel's endorsement is therefore less reflective of one person's taste or bias. Rather, the panel's endorsement in the form of a medal is reflective of a consensus across the panel on the quality of the wine. Golds and especially double golds can be great endorsements but a lot of excellent wines get silvers and even bronzes because they are idiosyncratic enough that one or more panel members found something not to like about them.

Continues on page 3

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

Understanding Endorsement continued from *page 1*

I used to be a big fan of reviews and I didn't think much one way or the other about competition medals and awards. As time has passed and as I have written thousands of reviews of wines Spec's carries (and perhaps just as many of wines we will never carry), I still find them useful but I now give more credence to medals and competition awards. On reviews, I find the note part of the review at least as useful as the score, especially if the reviewer includes some of the technical detail on how the wine was made. That detail tells me something of why the wine tastes like it does and that helps me make a buy/no buy decision. While the panel endorsement includes no comment whatsoever beyond the actual award, I find that additional information less necessary because I know that five people have agreed on a quality assessment. While a highly awarded wine may not be my personal favorite, it will almost always have a broad appeal and therefore be enjoyed by most everyone.

When you are whiling away a pleasant afternoon perusing the aisles at Spec's, don't ignore those endorsements on the shelf talkers. Just remember where the information comes from and what each of those different sorts of endorsements means. You know I can't write a column with no endorsements (Ok, it has happened but it is rare and it is not today) so here are my notes on the top three award winning red wines from this year's Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo International Wine Competition. All of these wines won double gold medals and then were selected above all their fellow double gold winners to receive these top awards.



GRAND CHAMPION BEST OF SHOW
DAVIS Family Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, 2005

12x750ml \$43.33 \$487.95

Tech: 14.3% Alcohol. 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, fermented using pump-over and aged 22 months

in all oak barrels (all French; 45% new). Winemaker/owner Guy Davis made this 2005 Cabernet from grapes purchased from two vineyards in the warmer Napa Valley: the Lewelling/Wight Vineyard in the western foothills near the Rutherford/St. Helena border and the Stagecoach Vineyard 2000 feet above the valley floor on the east side of Napa County. Deep purple-black-red in color, and with well formed legs; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity; chewy phenolics. Juicy, lively, spicy, ripe mostly black fruit offering blackberry, black cherry, and black raspberry with some cassis-mure perfume, gravelly dusty terroir, spicy-dusty somewhat Bourbony oak, and accents of tobacco, black pepper, chocolate, and a hint of pencil shavings. Very long finish. Satisfying, complete, integrated but still a bit rustic; robust and alive-in-the-mouth. **Excellent. BS: 94 VHR.**

RESERVE GRAND CHAMPION BEST OF SHOW
NADIA Red, Arroyo Grande Valley (California), 2005

6x750ml \$27.95 \$157.38

Tech: 14.3% Alcohol. 100% Cabernet Sauvignon fermented using pump-over and aged 22 months in all oak barrels (all French; 45% new). The secret to the Nadia red is the cool (for Cabernet and the other Bordeaux varieties) climate in which the grapes are grown. Deep purple-black-red in color, and with well formed legs; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity; chewy phenolics. Juicy, lively, spicy, ripe mostly black fruit offering blackberry, black cherry, and black raspberry with some cassis-mure perfume, gravelly dusty terroir, spicy-dusty somewhat Bourbony oak, and accents of tobacco, black pepper, chocolate, and a hint of pencil shavings. Very long finish. Satisfying, complete, integrated but still a bit rustic; robust and alive-in-the-mouth.

Excellent. BS: 94 VHR.



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-Bourbon American oak. A bit rustic but balanced and satisfying. **Excellent. BS: 92+ VHR.**



There. Now I feel better.

Were there other wines in the competition that I liked better than these? A couple. But I know that whenever I serve one of these wines, almost everyone is sure to enjoy it. ■



The Italian Cultural and Community Center presents

Vini d'Italia

Overview of Italian Wines

Join fellow wine lovers at the Italian Cultural Center for an educational lecture and tasting of fine wines of Italy presented by Italian wine expert Philip Cusimano.

Each of the six wines we will taste and discuss are selected from highly esteemed smaller producers in Italy. The selections (2 whites and 4 reds) are chosen to represent the styles broader spectrum of Italian wines. In this overview we will enjoy some of the more important and varieties of Italian wines:

Gavi (Valdittera)
Pinot Grigio (Sant'Elena)
Dolcetto (Chionetti)
Nebbiolo (Cascina Chicco)
Rosso di Montalcino (Friggiali)
Negroamaro (Scaliere)

Appetizers will be served including artiginal Italian cheeses, prosciutto and other antipasto items.

Thursday, March 18th, 2010 6:30pm

Italian Cultural and Community Center.

1101 Milford Houston, Texas, 77006.

<http://www.iccchouston.com/>

Reservation Required—RSVP at (713) 524-4222

\$40.00 for ICC members

\$45.00 for non-members.



THE RETURN OF THE PERU TRIP!

**Gourmet Trip to Peru:
April 30-May 9, 2010**

Experience the culture and cuisine of the fabled country of Peru, home of such reknowned sights such as Macchu Picchu and Lima. Spec's offers you a chance to see wineries, breweries, distilleries and food establishments that are so abundant in Peru.

For more information see:

www.perugourmettours.com

or email Pablo Valqui at: pablovalqui@specsonline.com