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SPEC'S

Update!

DEFINING VALUE



Mon-Sat October 26
to October 31, 2009

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Fun Things, Read on...

Oktoberfest Travels

WurstFest (New Braunfels, TX)
October 30th through November 8th.
www.wurstfest.com/

Italian Cultural and
Community Center
Tuscany Part 1: Montalcino &
Emerging Treasures

Wednesday, October 28 at 6:30pm

Classes

Symington Vintage Port
Seminar and Tasting

Thursday, October 29th at 7pm,

The State of Zinfandel

Tuesday, November 3rd at 7:00pm,

SAVE THE DATE'S

November 17 - Pinot Places: New Zealand
and Australia

Now Open!

Bee Cave-
13015 SHOPS PARKWAY
Bee Cave, Tx
512.263.9981

Rosenberg Grand Opening

Join us for our GRAND OPENING PARTY
for our Rosenberg Store! More
details coming soon. We're open and doing
great in Rosenberg's Town
Square Plaza, we just want to have a
party to celebrate!

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WOW! WHAT A DEAL!



Moët White Star NV

"A blend of 38% Pinot Meunier, 31% Pinot Noir, and 31% Chardonnay, this Moët flagship is an easy drinking, very commercial Champagne offering juicy spicy lemon fruit, good earthy-mineral notes, and a touch of Moët's trademark biscuity character. Try it with spicy foods or a simple snack of Parmegiano Reggiano. Still the best selling Champagne in the US, it is better than expected. Fine. Spec's score: 89+

\$28.99

Sale Good Through 10/31/09

The Pleasure of Wine

by Charles M. Bear Dalton

I was recently a guest at a tasting luncheon at Restaurant RDG featuring several Bordeaux wines. The wines ranged from fine to really excellent. The food was excellent as well (and as expected). RDG stands for Robert Del Grande but may as well stand for "Really Darn Good." We started with Ch. Leoville Barton 1999 and Ch. les Ormes de Pez 1999, then tasted Chx. Leoville Barton, Montrose, and Lynch Bages from both 2001 and 2005 (in two flights) and finished up with some Chx. Montrose and Leoville Barton 1989. Getting to taste these wines - both individually and in juxtaposition - was, for me, a real pleasure. For a brief moment, I had to remind myself to appreciate rather than analyze the wines. They were there to be enjoyed.

Unfortunately, I'm not so sure that all these wines were that same real pleasure for some of the other guests. I heard a number of comments during and just after the lunch that made me think that at least some of the guests thought most of these wines were just good but not great. Some guests seemed focused on only the 2005s (the current vintage of the century) and others seemed to be busy playing a game of wine cellar one upsmanship. Much of the conversation around the table seemed at least as concerned with California collectibles and who was on which mailing list as on the classic Bordeaux wines in front of us. I hope I'm wrong but I think a number of my fellow tasters missed the pleasure of a lovely meal paired beautifully with great food-friendly wines because they were busy playing the game. If so, they missed out on a great pleasure - or more precisely on several great pleasures. Even the almost-an-afterthought (in this context) Ch. les Ormes de Pez was pleasing.

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Inside This Issue: Collin's Column, The 12, Deli Specials, Beer Buzz, Delicious Mischief, Wine and Cheese of the Week & more!

The Pleasure of Wine from page 1

Of all the wines we tasted, the one that most dazzled me was the 1999 Leoville Barton. From an unheralded vintage ("good but not great", "pretty", etc.), it was a pure pleasure – ready to drink with lovely development that has yielded a beautiful bottle bouquet intertwined with still fresh fruit flavors. This wine (and pretty much the whole 1999 vintage) was easy to taste even from the barrel in April of 2000. On release, the wines were balanced and delicious and they have stayed that way, even as they have developed in the bottle. I can't recall tasting any 1999s that were at any point deep in the "dumb stage" that often represents the awkward adolescence of maturing wines. 1999 was/is a "pretty" vintage in the best sense.

Perhaps the wine of the lunch was the 1989 Montrose. 1989 was a great vintage that has always been overshadowed by the initially more opulent 1990. The consensus among the three vigneron present (Anthony Barton of Leoville Barton, Jean Charles Cazes of Lynch Bages, and Nicolas Glumineau of Montrose) seemed to be that 1989 has now eclipsed the initially more highly regarded 1990 pretty much across the board. They will get no argument to the contrary from me.

The point of all this? Well there are two points. 1) Enjoy the wines in your glass for what they are, not for what they are reputed to be. Enjoy the pleasure each wine gives. Thinking about wine can be a pleasant enough intellectual exercise - I should know, I do a lot of it - and it is even necessary to really enjoy wine but, thinking too much about wine while you are drinking wine interferes with your enjoyment of the wine you are drinking. The moment you begin to analyze, you cease to appreciate. Enjoy the moment – and think about it once your glass is empty.

2) Don't worry about drinking only the great or greatest vintages. Skipping 1999 would be a shame, just as skipping 2004, 1989, or even 1994 would be a shame. All but the unarguably great 1989 wines were really good, actually pretty vintages that were completely overshadowed by "great" vintages that immediately followed them. While the great vintages gave pleasure, they were much more expensive and take longer to come around. Serve a super 1999 or 1994 today and you will dazzle all but your most jaded wine snob friends. The current opportunity vintages still available to buy at good prices are 2004, 2002, and 2001.

That same day, I included a wine in the Tasting and Enjoying Wine class I teach at the Rice University Glasscock School of Continuing Studies that no one will ever rate 93 points or above: Castello del Poggio Moscato d'Asti. This 4.5% alcohol, non-vintage, 100% Muscat, somewhat fizzy white Italian wine is the essence of a sunny spring afternoon. It is pure pleasure as an aperitif and can be a brilliant accompaniment to prosciutto and melon or even a spicy ceviche. With its sweet lemon and lemon drop (think movie theater candy), peach and apricot, honey and honeysuckle flavors and aromas, and frothy texture, it is frankly delicious. It wakes up your mouth and makes you smile. It is not expensive or even remotely collectible and in fact benefits not at all from cellaring. It is a "now pleasure" on the order of a hot glazed Shipley's donut or a perfect James' Coney Island hot dog. None are fancy, but anyone who turns their nose up to any of these three is missing out on a great pleasure of life – and they are poorer for it.

Isn't that what wine is ultimately all about – the pleasure? If, for you just now, it isn't, let me recommend a nice bottle of Moscato d'Asti...



SPEC'S Events & Classes

Symington Vintage Port Seminar and Tasting

On Thursday, October 29th at 7pm, please join Spec's Fine Wine Buyer Bear Dalton and the Wine School at l'Alliance Française in welcoming Dominic Symington for a seminar on Vintage Port. Dominic is a director in the Symington Port Wine business. He will be in Houston to present the 2007 vintage and speak on behalf of his family's Port houses including Graham's, Dow's, Warre's, Smith Woodhouse, and Quinta da Vesuvio. Dominic will present – and we will taste – 10 vintage ports including Graham's 2003 & 2007, Dow's 1985 & 2007, Warres 1980 & 2007, Vesuvio 1994 & 2007, and Smith Woodhouse 1995 and 2007. The Symington Vintage Port Seminar and Tasting will cost \$35.00 "cash" per person (\$36.84 regular). For directions, reservations, or more information on this class, please call SPEC's at 832-660-0250. Please see Wine School cancellation policy below.

The State of Zinfandel

On Tuesday, November 3rd at 7:00pm, please join the Wine School at l'Alliance Francaise and SPEC's Fine Wine Buyer Bear Dalton for The State of Zinfandel. We'll look at the best Zins and Zin blends at a variety of price ranges available in the market today. We'll talk about how and when Zinfandel got to the US and the changes in winemaking that have brought us to the styles we drink today; the emergence of terroir as a factor in Zinfandel; the current alcohol/ripeness controversy, and where Zin is headed in the future. We will taste ten wines from the 2005 through 2008 vintages. The State of Zinfandel will cost \$65.00 per person cash (\$68.42 regular). For directions, reservations, or more information on this class, please call SPEC's at 713-526-8787. Please See Wine School Cancellation Policy Below.

SAVE THE DATE'S

November 17 - Pinot Places: New Zealand and Australia

WINE SCHOOL CANCELLATION POLICY

To cancel a reservation, please call Jessica Toner at 832-660-0250 as soon as possible. Reservations canceled before 4pm on the last business day before the event will not be charged. Late cancellations may be charged. No-shows will be charged.

L'Alliance Francaise is located at 427 Lovett Blvd. (on the Southeast corner of Lovett and Whitney, one block south of Westheimer, three blocks east of Montrose).



Italian
Cultural & Community Center

The Italian Cultural and Community Center presents Vini d'Italia Tuscany Part 1: Montalcino & Emerging Treasures

Wednesday, Oct 28, 2009 6:30pm
Italian Cultural and Community Center
1101 Milford Houston, Texas, 77006

See full wine menu and details on
www.specsonline.com