



# Twenty-Two Years, and Counting

by Charles M. Bear Dalton



Twenty-two years is a long time. Almost twenty-two years ago - in October of 1988, I started teaching wine classes for the Rice University

“Department of Continuing Studies.” That first class was held in the former nightclub space at the old Tidelands Motel that was by then known as the Rice Graduate House. It tickled me to teach there as I knew that my grandparents had seen acts, such as Louis Armstrong, play there when I was a very young child.

That Department of Continuing Studies later became the School of Continuing Studies and more recently the “Rice University ‘Susanne M. Glasscock School of Continuing Studies’”. When the Graduate House was torn down to make way for a new building, the class venue moved to the R Room above the south end zone of Rice Stadium. After a few years, we moved to the Grand Hall in the Rice Memorial Center where the classes are still held today.

In that twenty-two years, my “day-jobs” have been to work for Kobrand Corporation, run my own business, work for Quality Beverage, Prestige Wine Cellars, and - since 1996 - for Spec’s. Over the years, I have encountered several married couples who have told me that they met in my class. My wife tells me she met me in those classes – although I am still convinced I got to know her when she signed up for a trip I led to visit wineries in Europe. I even know of a few people who are now in the wine business as a result of a passion found in those Rice classes. I have made numerous long-term friends with folks I met in those classes and my life has been changed by all of them.

As far as teaching about wine is concerned, Rice University was not my first rodeo. I started teaching wine classes in 1984, in large part because I wanted to taste side by side some wines I could not afford to buy and open on my own. By organizing a class, I could come up with the funds to open and taste and learn about wines in comparative tastings. Since then I have started the Wine School, through which I originally offered classes at the Confederate House Restaurant’s special events facility. Those classes eventually turned into what is now called “The Wine School at l’Alliance Française”. The Wine School has been on hiatus this summer as I have been traveling too much but we will be starting back up soon. And I have sporadically taught college students about wine at the Conrad Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management at the University of Houston.

In case you are wondering, I still enjoy teaching about wine and I still especially enjoy organizing tastings where I – as well as my students – get to taste wines side by side. Despite all the different places I have taught, the Grand Hall at Rice University is still my favorite venue. In fact, I look forward each year to the next year of teaching for Rice. Other than my horse Luce (who I met through and later bought from my friend Stewart who I met because he was in that first “Department of Continuing Studies” class twenty-two years ago), teaching for Rice has been the most constant thing in my life over the length of those twenty-two years.

The original classes in the old graduate house started with about 75 students. We expanded to 90 students and then, at the R Room, to 120. Since we have been at the Grand Hall, we have set 150 as capacity for the class and we have mostly sold out at that level. Each year I teach a five-week Basics class in the fall. In the spring, I teach a more advanced, more focused five-week class that changes from year to year. Topics include The Wines of France, The New Classic Wines, The Wines of the New World, etc.

While most of my classes both at l’Alliance and at Rice are more specialized, the fall class at Rice – Tasting and Enjoying Wines (think of it as a sort of “Wine 101” offered twenty-two years and counting) offers the best general introduction to wine and wine tasting for the general and even casual consumer I know. It is my favorite of all the different classes I teach. Dozens of students have happily informed me that they “failed” it repeatedly so they “have to” take it again. It’s a good time and even experienced tasters will come away with new information on and insights into wine. And you are sure to taste some new wines you’ll fall in love with.

Here, from the Rice University Susanne M. Glasscock School of Continuing Studies fall catalogue, is the class description and information for the upcoming class at Rice.

## Tasting and Enjoying Wine

**Five Mondays, October 4-November 1, 7:00-9:00 p.m.**  
**Fee: \$285 Limited enrollment**



This course begins with the familiar – the popular California wine styles – as a way to introduce you to wine tasting, grape varieties and the wines of Europe and the world. Wine expert Bear Dalton will look at the Chardonnay and Cabernet wines of this country, then introduce you to their “ancestors” – wines grown and produced in France, those of Germany and Italy, and wines of Spain and Portugal. Finally, he will discuss new wines available from South America and Australia. In each session, Mr. Dalton will cover related topics such as glassware, ordering in restaurants, the etiquette of wine service, proper storage and the ageability of various wines. Each week you will taste both white and red wines, with sparkling and dessert wines served in selected sessions, and two appropriate cheeses will be served during each class. Following the conclusion of the course, Mr. Dalton will host an optional wine tasting and dinner (additional cost applies).

### Topics will include the following:

- Basics of wine tasting
- The wines of California, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal
- Wines from Chile, Argentina, Australia and New Zealand
- Buying, keeping and serving wine at home
- Ordering wine in restaurants

**Instructor: Charles M. Bear Dalton**, fine wine buyer for Spec’s Liquor Stores, has been involved in every facet of the wine business, including retail, restaurant, wholesale and supply, and is a wine consultant for a variety of area businesses. He teaches wine courses for local and regional restaurants and the Wine School at l’Alliance Française, and has also taught at the Conrad Hilton School of Hotel and Restaurant Management at the University of Houston. Mr. Dalton has regular contact with winemakers and winery owners from around the world and travels extensively in the wine regions of California, Europe, South America and Australia. He was instrumental in founding and has served as chair of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ Wine Competition Committee. He is the recipient of My Table magazine’s 2008 Legend Award. Mr. Dalton has been teaching for the Glasscock School of Continuing Studies since 1988.

### To register, go to:

[http://gscscatalog.rice.edu/NccCourseView.asp?Mode=View&clCourseID=89&clSessionID=1953&SnID=\\$LC:SNID\\$](http://gscscatalog.rice.edu/NccCourseView.asp?Mode=View&clCourseID=89&clSessionID=1953&SnID=$LC:SNID$)  
or call 713-348-4803. ✱