

# COLLIN'S COLUMN



## Looking forward to 2010: What I hope to see in the wine world

by Collin Williams

For starters, let me begin by addressing some of the happenings during this past year in the wine industry.

- A struggling world economy hurt wine sales across the globe.
- Customer's purchases trended toward less volume and a lower median price point. The general rule (via firsthand experience and market studies) showed the typical bottle was purchased at \$15 and below, trending down from \$20.
- Many wineries went out of business and some of the big conglomerates sold off many factions of their wine portfolio.
- Big name wineries showed more interest in producing an "entry line" of wines.
- Wine portfolios switched distributor's houses in attempts to refocus their sales efforts.
- Argentina continues to prove successful in a market hungry for inexpensive, great quality wines.
- Bordeaux and Burgundy sales continue to struggle. This effect prompted a drastic reduction in prices in many markets across the country and with many brokers all over the world.
- Highly allocated and limited production wines were sold to retail accounts due to the lack of interest from restaurants and on-premise accounts. We saw spectacular offerings like Harlan, Pride, Bond, and other "cult wines" become regular skus on our shelves and clientele lists.
- Spec's continues to grow in size in order to better serve all of our great customers across the state of Texas! We are now approaching 70 stores and recently moved into brand new markets including: San Antonio, Victoria, Rosenberg, Pearland, and Bastrop!

We, at Spec's, have been strategizing how to approach the next couple of years while the wine industry is going through this dramatic shift. It is our hope to be mindful of the trends, look at the new categories of interest, negotiate product buys to capitalize on great deals, and remain flexible to an ever-changing marketplace.

But, as the old saying goes "Some things change, while others remain the same." As our loyal customers you can expect different products to appear on the shelves as well as product development in many other aspects of our stores. Spec's will continue to bring you new, fantastic products and pricing that remains unrivaled.

Things I hope to see in the wine world in 2010:

-More consolidation amongst distributors and wineries. Whether this will be a good or bad thing is tough to determine. Consolidating may help struggling wineries to stay in business. However, those same wineries may get lost in the shuffle amongst hundreds of others in the same portfolio.

-Argentina will remain strong. Quality is rising here, and with overhead costs staying low we should expect to see amazing values in 2010.

-Australia will seek to improve its image and its presence on the global wine scene. Personally, I have already started talks with the Australian Trade Commission regarding new marketing campaigns and other methods to help foster sales.

-Pricing for Big Name wines should remain at record low prices. This will be tough to control if the economy rebounds for the better in 2010. However, we will continue work to provide you with the best values around.

-Many new, inexpensive wines will be coming out of Spain. With a large percentage of their total production in bulk wine, Spain will be eager to sell off their juice in the form of private labels. Expect this category to grow next year.

-Bordeaux and Burgundy will see new values in their categories. With supply and demand trending towards the former, many Chateaus will need to cut their prices and increase their offerings to the world market.

-Highly allocated wines will still be seen in the retail sector like never before.

However, many on-premise accounts should be performing better next year and will likely take more of their allocations.

In conclusion, my best advice for all of you is to sit back and enjoy the ride! 2010 will be exciting with new ideas, wines, and experiences.

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Here's a few wines that take reference from the discussion in this article:

### Bodegas Alma Negra 2006 (Argentina)

\*This is one of the extreme values from Argentina that we have seen lately. Hopefully, we will see more of these types of offerings in the future!

**\$19.99 cash**

89pts – *Wine Spectator*

"A big, broad, toasty style, with lots of dark plum, mocha, fig and currant notes. Rich, bittersweet cocoa-tinged finish. A showy wine for the hedonist crowd. Bonarda. Drink now. 6,000 cases made. –JM"

### Chateau Le Conseiller 2006

\*Who says great Bordeaux has to come from a first growth? Or, has to be expensive? This is an example of great wine from Bordeaux that can replace you California Cab.

**\$19.97 cash**

87pts – *Wine Spectator*

Raspberry and dried flowers on the nose lead to a medium body, with firm, slightly aggressive tannins and a tart finish. Needs time to mellow the citric acidity. Best after 2010. –JS



### Croix Mouton Bordeaux Superior 2005

\*Jean Phillippe Janiou is one of our partners in France that is producing incredible wines at great prices. Quickly becoming one of our best seller, this wine has the packaging and flavor profile that can help French wines rebound.

**\$19.86 cash**

86pts – *Wine Spectator*

Aromas of strawberry pie and cream follow through to a medium body, with soft tannins, a pretty texture and a fruity finish. Ready to go. Drink now. –JS



### Spada Tempranillo 2007 (Toro, Spain)

\*Just in from Spain, this wine came from one of the great bulk wine producers. Incredible drinkability with this wine at a great price. Just try to beat this price for a good DO Toro.

**\$7.97 cash**

Maintaining the bold, muscular style that is common of the Tinta de Toro (Tempranillo) from this DO, Spada is fruity with enough backbone to stand up to big meats and other foods. What's more, the screw cap is a nice edition as it beckons the everyday consumption attitude.



### Molly Dooker "The Maitre D" Cabernet Sauvignon 2008

This company is helping to create interest in Australian wines again with their great quality and impressive (yet whimsical) packaging.

**\$22.86 cash**

90pts – *Robert Parker*

The 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon The Maitre D' was raised in 50% new French and American oak for 11 months. Opaque purple-colored with legs that ooze down the glass, it displays a reticent bouquet that with coaxing reveals wood smoke, violets, black currant and blackberry. This is followed by a full-bodied wine with a glossy texture, succulent fruit, and excellent concentration. This pleasure bent effort can be enjoyed over the next 6-8 years.



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