

Boise Co-op Uncorked!

WINE DEPARTMENT
NEWSLETTER

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Bubbly Transcends Celebrations

—Rosemary S. Gray

There are a few conceptions that the present day wine consumer needs to re-evaluate. The most fun change is reorienting our notion of when to drink Champagne and other sparkling wines. The myth is that bubbly should be reserved for celebrations, special events and romantic evenings, but the truth is bubbly should be counted amongst wines for everyday drinking. Sparklers are special because there is no other wine that is as versatile a food companion, and there is no other wine that without fail makes any moment, mundane or special, better. The truth is bubbly is nearly always the perfect drink; think about it: Before dinner? Bubbly. After dinner? Bubbly. Savory or sweet food? Bubbly. Brunch? Bubbly. Picnics? Bubbly. In the bathtub? Bubbly. Weddings, graduations, births, wakes? Bubbly. Watching endless episodes of *Sex & the City*? Bubbly. Cooking? Bubbly. Playing board games? Bubbly. Writing articles about Champagne? Bubb... okay you get the idea.

Most of us can't afford Krug three meals a day, but thankfully there are fantastic sparkling wines out there for everyday drinking. Seek out Prosecco from Italy, Cava from Spain, and sparklers from the Loire, Burgundy and Alsace regions of France; there are even some great examples from California (since most of the producers are actually French!). I recommend the same for sparklers that I do for still wines: look for family owned estates and artisanal producers and you're likely to be satisfied. Another mark of quality is wines made by the traditional Méthode Champenoise, avoid anything made by adding carbonation — that's for soda pop.

When it comes to Champagne itself, there is nothing better than quality artisanal, grower Champagne. What do I mean by "grower Champagne?" At the

bottom of every Champagne label is a tiny, tiny abbreviation and set of numbers that clue you in on the story behind the bottle. There are four options – R.M., N.M., C.M., and M.A. – without going into too much info, the two of note are R.M. and N.M. The most common is N.M. for *Negociant-Manipulant*, which is what all of the mass-market Champagnes are. They come from dealer/producers who may own some vineyards but for the most part source fruit from various sites and blend juice to create a consistent non-vintage "house style." Many of these producers also make vintage Champagnes in particularly good years. There are some excellent examples out there of N.M. wines, but unfortunately can be overpriced for what too often amounts to underperformance.

That's why we recommend you look for "R.M" on your label, which stands for *Recoltant-Manipulant*, which comes from growers/producers who vinify and bottle Champagne from grapes they grow themselves. These wines are hand-crafted, small-production and often speak of terroir – standing in stark contrast to the brand/"house style" of many mass-market N.M.s. And fortunately, most grower Champagnes are a little less spendy and almost always offer far superior quality.

No, it's not Christmas or New Years or Valentines Day, but summer, like all times is a great time to enjoy sparkling wine. So pop a bottle with a good friend while snacking on some mushroom toast (see back page for recipe) and your day will go from average to special in just a few sips.



JULY CLUB PICKS

Bassermann Riesling Trocken

Two Princes Riesling 2005

Hegarty No. 3 Red Blend 04

Montpezat Palombieres 05

Chidaine La Bouchet 05

Breton Bourgueil Trinch! 04

Joly Les Clos Sacres 04

Magnien Gevrey-Chambertin



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- *Grower Champagne from North Berkeley*
- *A Divit Recipe!*
- *Christian tells about enzymes & cocktailing*
- *July Wine Club Picks*

Check out the back page
for our
recommended bubbly
and a
Divit Recipe
to pair with them.

What's in your wine: Grape Juice or Enzyme Cocktail?

—*Christian Robertson*

The last episode of “What’s in your wine?” dealt with commercial and natural yeasts and their place in the wine world. Yeast of course is a necessary ingredient in the winemaking process. Today however I’d like to address the use of enzymes in winemaking, a not so essential ingredient in winemaking but one whose use is more and more frequent within the industry.

What are enzymes anyway? Enzymes, in their simplest definition, are proteins that catalyze chemical reactions. Fermentation is a basic chemical reaction or conversion that produces wine from grape juice and it’s a great example of naturally occurring enzymes aiding in a chemical reaction. Fermentation was one of the first observations of the existence of enzymes by good old Louis Pasteur in the 19th century. He observed that fermentation was catalyzed by a vital force contained within the yeast cells that he called “ferments”. Without the ferments the chemical conversion of sugar into alcohol could not take place or would take too long. Enzymes are, like all catalysts, helpful in speeding up a reaction. So without the “ferments” or what we now call Pectinases, fermentation might take months and by that time bacteria probably would spoil the juice.

Naturally occurring enzymes like Pectinase are found in many different industries. Today enzymes are used in drugs, poisons, stain removers, baby foods, contact lenses cleaners, cheeses, and all kinds of stuff. In wine making

however the uses are pretty straightforward. Pectinase speeds up fermentation and keeps the process hygienic. But with technology and new science, the ability to “cocktail” different enzymes together, that are not naturally found in grapes, is gaining popularity with some wine makers.

Commercial products like Lallzyme EX are finding their way into your bottle of wine by claiming to increase color by 10%, and releasing less astringent tannins in red wine, the product even claims to lessen the herbaceous character found in some wines bouquet. The product is a blend of three enzymes Pectinase (found naturally in all fruits), Cellulase (used in laundry detergents and biofuels), and Hemicellulase (normally used in baking). All of these enzymes help break down plant cells and as the company claims will have beneficial results for the wine produced with them.

The claims by companies that produce these “cocktailed” enzyme blends seem to have some scientific base. You can in fact produce a wine that has less astringent tannins and less herbaceous aromas. I however have been of the opinion that it takes away from the character of the wine. Mother nature gives us a grape every year that is going to have different characteristics. Making a recipe out of winemaking is a bit too industrial for me. I like some of those characteristics these enzymes are muting; they keep things, well, interesting. Long live interesting wines!

R & R Club: Robin picks highlights from her tour of the Valckenberg portfolio

Dr. Von Bassermann Riesling Trocken 2005

The Bassermann-Jordan estate dates back to the 17th century, situated in the sandstone laden Pfalz region of southwest Germany. This estate is known for its famous wine museum, showcasing old wines, with wines dating as far back as a Forster Ungeheuer from 1706. While visiting, I was fortunate to sample a 1912 Auslese! The dark brown color of the Riesling was shocking, but the palate was surprisingly still intact, although hedging on sherry characteristics.

The vineyards are located on the southeast slopes of the Haardt mountains, just hinging on the Rhine valley. With vines averaging 15 years of age and careful attention in harvest to avoid botrytis, the resulting wines achieve a rare elegance and refinement. The 2005 Trocken (“Trocken” meaning “dry” in German) is characterized by shimmering minerality and soft fruit. With notes of peach, green apple and a touch of honey backed by subtle acidity and a light finish, this wine is a perfect example of German winemaking at its finest, a diversion from the sweet wines commonly produced.

Two Princes Riesling Schloss Wallhausen

In between the famous wine producing regions of Rheingau and Rheinhessen in western Germany lies the vineyards of Nahe and the Schloss Wallhausen estate. An ancient tradition of winemaking and boar hunting dating back to the 1200s with 32 generations of family winemakers, Schloss Wallhausen is currently maintained by estate owner Prince Michael zu Salm-Salm and his son, Prince Constantin.

The desirable location of the Nahe region, overlapping both Mosel and Rhine soil, allows winemakers to take advantage of the mineral rich terroir. The Two Princes Riesling is unique in doing just that. Utilizing a combination of green slate common to the Mosel and red slate common to the Rhein, the resulting wine is a vibrant mixture of minerality and delicate sweetness. With the green slate offering floral and grassy notes, met with the dandelion acidity of the red slate, the result is an interesting combination of flavors, all blanketed under a creamy lemon sweetness. An interesting, delicious wine and a study in terroir!

Wine Club Selections

Cru Classe Club

Nicholas Joly Le Clos Sacre Savenierres 04

To say I'm partial to Nicolas Joly's wines is an understatement, to say I'm a fan might also be an understatement. Joly is one of the most vocal proponents of biodynamic viticulture and aims to allow all of his wines to speak in a clear, unique voice about their time and place of origin.

The 2002 Le Clos Sacres is one of the most memorable wine experiences of my life, the 2004 is more svelte than the 2002, but it's elegance is not a detriment. This wine is a beautiful golden color, with intense aromatics and flavors of honey, red apple, and a twinge of butterscotch. Decant vigorously — recommended aeration 24 hours to a week. I tasted it after it had been open for a week and it was breathtaking. Will age for many years if you can keep your paws off it.

Fédéric Magnien Gevrey-Chambertin 2004

We are big fans of Fédéric Magnien's wines. Both those he makes as a negotiant and for his father, Michel Magnien's estate. Magnien is a native Burgundian from Morey-St-Denis, and this Gevrey-Chambertin shows he knows his stuff. 2004 is a great vintage to drink young, so enjoy.

Amongst the black cherry aromatics is a musky, mushroom quality. This rich Pinot Noir has thick tannins that show the full potential to integrate with the fruit over time. It is delicious now, but if you can have the discipline to wait 4-5 years the fruit will meld perfectly with the racy tannin structure.

Passport Club

2005 Breton Trinch! Bourgueil

Cabernet Franc may be finally getting the recognition it deserves for making fantastic wine. It produces textured and juicy reds with notes of violet and licorice.

Breton is chief among the best Loire winemakers, and his last name is also the word for Cab Franc in the local dialect. The Trinch! (in French, the sound of two wine glasses clinking) is made in an accessible style for drinking young. It is done in stainless-steel in order to reveal the essence of the Cab Franc fruit. Perfect for summer, it can be served with a slight chill. This Bourgueil will turn you on to Cab Franc.

2005 Francois Chidaine La Bouchet Vouvray

Francois Chidaine has worked alongside his father for many years on two different estates in the Loire. Although his wines are certified organic, he refrains from labeling or marketing them as such, preferring to modestly work the vines the old-fashioned way in order to allow the "wine to be born of the vine," as he phrases it.

The La Bouchet Vouvray is beautiful and lush showing intensely herbal qualities amongst flavors of candied fruit and honeysuckle, finishes clean with a mineral lift. Nowhere near ready to drink, I've been letting it decant and sipping it over the last 5 days. Will age for many years(10-20?). WS gave it 93.

R & R: Rosemary picks highlights from her tour of the Robert Kacher portfolio

Montpezat Palombieres 2005

Christophe Blanc is the young winemaker of Domaine de Montpezat. "Palombières" is the result of meticulous work in the vineyard. Only organic fertilizer is used, no herbicides. The vineyards are planted on the gravelly hill-sides behind the village of Pèzenas, located on the edge of a small forest where many Palombières — or small thatch hunting blinds for game birds can be found. This is one of the warmest microclimates in the Languedoc.

Christophe uses traditional methods throughout the vinification process which all takes place on-site and under his own care, including tending to the vines, maintaining low yields, ageing the wines in tanks and barrels, and finally bottling without filtration.

80%Grenache, 20%Mourvedre. Not totally opaque, this wine has a lavender and cranberry nose. It is not heavy on the palate and yet the mourvedre adds a depth and texture that makes the wine very sultry.

"Palombières" can be kept for up to 3 years if it is properly stored, but you can also enjoy it immediately. It pairs well with barbecued meat as well as stews.

Chamans Hegarty No. 3 Red Blend 2004

Domaine de Chamans is located in the Minervois appellation of southwestern France. The vineyards lie in the south facing foothills of the Montagne Noire surrounded by woodland. Its isolation from any surrounding vineyards allows for the domaine's non-interventionist farming philosophy to have a maximum impact. The soil, composed of limestone, clay and schist, is worked and treated with organic matter to ensure the land has balance and energy. A small flock of sheep help keep the weeds down between the vines. And yes, there is a black sheep.

The fruit is all hand-harvested. The winemaking philosophy leans toward minimal intervention; using natural yeasts that are native to the vineyard. Vinified in tank, the Hegarty Cuvée No 3 is a blend of Syrah, Carignan, and Grenache. Bottled un-fined and un-filtered. The dark wine with aromas that elude description, and the texture is distinctively rich. This wine is deliciously unlike anything you've ever tasted. A black sheep of wine and dead on good.

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A Divit Recipe: Killer Mushroom Toast!

This is easy and delicious!

- 2 – 4 Tablespoons minced shallots or garlic
- 2 – 4 Cups Sliced Mushrooms (mix of shitake and buttons)
- Olive Oil
- Nutmeg
- Black Pepper
- Salt
- ¼ cup fresh basil (sliced thin)
- ¼ - ½ of cream or stock
- 8 oz. Brie cheese

Sauté shallots/garlic in olive oil for a minute then add mushrooms. Stir and sauté for about five minutes. Add cream/stock, nutmeg, pepper and salt to taste. Add basil. Trim rind off the Brie and add in chunks, stir in until all the cheese is melted. Allow to reduce until thick. Spoon onto buttered toast and serve warm.

*Pair with Champagne or sparkling wine as an appetizer or afternoon snack

Grower Champagne We Like to Drink:

Divit picks highlights from his France tour with North Berkeley Imports

Egly-Ouriet: Almost no one does the work that Egly does in Champagne. All of his vineyards are Grand Cru except his Pinot Munier, All of his

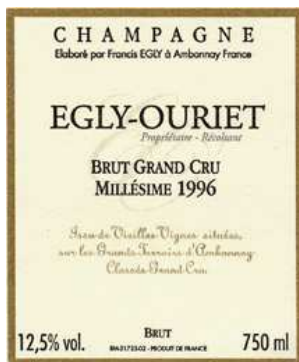
grapes are harvested fully ripe and barrel fermented, there is no sugar added to the dosage and every bottle is labeled with the disgorgement date and the time in bottle on the lees. This is true artisan Champagne. Each N.V. cuvee is a blend of 50% of one vintage and 50% reserve wine from three previous vintages. A longer elevage is a point of honor for Egly. While many producers disgorge after two years, Egly waits between 3 and 7 years, Sometimes even longer for vintage wines. We tasted barrel samples of Pinot noir & Chardonnay as well as a finished Pinot Noir from 2005 from Ambonnay and finished Champagne Brut & Rose. It is enough for me to say if you like Champagne you have to get Egly in your cellar. Serious Wine. **Brut Tradition Grand Cru \$46 & “Les Vignes de Vriigny” Premier Cru \$46**

Jean Vesselle: Another fine house with a softer touch from the village of Bouzy is Jean Vesselle. Run by Jean Vesselles daughter Deplhine since 1993, this is one of the minor-



Jean & Deplhine Vesselle

ity houses with a woman winemaker at the helm. Perhaps it is the predominance of Pinot Noir in all of the blends or the “woman’s touch” of Delphine that gives these wines their soft, round mouthfeel, either way they are delicious creamy styled wines that are easy to enjoy. There are seven separate cuvees here that are aged between 2 ½ years and 9 years before disgorgement and contain from 70%



to 100% pinot noir (with the rest chardonnay). We currently carry Brut Reserve & 98 vintage and we hope to do a complete tasting of these wines this fall.

1998 Prestige Grand Cru Brut \$48

Michel Turgy: This fifth generation Champagne grower has vineyards in between Krug and Salon in the village of Mesnil. Creating wines from 100% Chardonnay grapes, the wines are bright and focused with precise green apple, bread dough and lemon in the mouth. They show superb power and precision throughout but especially in the vintage wines. Turgy farms 40 small parcels with a vine average age of 30 yrs which he blends for his cuvees. Like Egly he uses no dosage, only a small quan-



tity of still wine to top after disgorgement. He says, for him, he makes wine first, bubbles second.

5 cases of 99 vintage will arrive in July

Lancelot Royer: very small quantities of wine are made at this estate that is carved into the hillside chalk above the village of Cramant. The cuvees he creates for North Berkeley Imports are 100% Chardonnay and 100%

Grand Cru vineyard selections aged a minimum of 4 years (1 in old barrels, 3 in bottle) before



Vines chalk-rich soil of Cramant

disgorgement. The amazing story here was how well these wines age. We tried older bottles going back more than 20 years that were fresh and complex with plenty of life left to go another 20! Excellent artisan wines.