

Boise Co-op Uncorked!

BOISE CO-OP WINE SHOP
NEWSLETTER

CORNER OF 8TH & FORT
BOISE, ID 83702

DECEMBER CLUB PICKS

Holiday Wines—Sparkling Choices

It's a shame that so many people save Champagne and other sparkling wines for special occasions, but since it is the holiday season you should be able to find an excuse for celebrating most any day. And of course New Year's Eve wouldn't be complete without that light pop of the cork and the bubbles that pour freely.

To be called Champagne the wine must come from that region of France. The



United States is one of the last nations to allow long time domestic producers to label their sparkling wine Champagne. Methode

Traditionnelle is the term now used to identify wines that were fermented in the bottle as it has been done in Champagne for centuries. It is a labor intensive and expensive technique, but you can still find worthy sparklers at many different price points.

Since every day is worth celebrating and because sparkling wine is so versatile, great as an aperitif, great with a dizzying array of foods, you need an every day value. Ten bucks or so will buy you some surprisingly good bottles. One of our perennial favorites is the **Charles de Fere Brut Tradition**. Made with Chardonnay grapes this has been called "good enough to come from Champagne" by the *Wine Spectator*. It's an elegant bubbly that's fresh, clean and flavorful. If you prefer a darker hue to your sparkler try **Cristalino Rosé**. This Spanish Cava is as impressively austere as it is charming with bright red fruit flavors. At \$6.99 a bottle it is an absurd bargain.

In the \$15 to \$20 range you have a number of surprisingly good choices. A Co-op Wine Shop go to sparkler is the **Roederer Estate Brut**, a California transplant from one of Champagne's top houses. The extra money gets you greater complexity with rich pear and hazelnut flavors backed by touches of spice and toast. The finish lingers on beautifully.

If Italian **Prosecco** is your preference you have to try the **Col Vectoraz**. For \$16.50 you get all the forward fruit flavors you expect, but with a rich creaminess and a fuller bodied finish that is absolutely irresistible. And don't overlook sparkling Vouvray. The **2005 Doman du Margaleau Brut** from the Loire Valley leads off with crisp apple that segues into creamy fruit that begs to be paired with rich cheeses.

The Oregon microclimate is ideal for Champagne grape varieties and Argyle has taken full advantage of that creating an admirably consistent bubbly. The **2002 Argyle Brut** is a delicate charmer with soft pear and spice up front, backed by lime and grapefruit with a nicely lingering finish.



If you have to have Champagne the real stuff can be had for thirty bucks and up with the first

entry **Duval-Leroy** coming in at the bottom of that scale. It is a undeniable bargain, a full-bodied sparkler with layers of flavor including mineral, toast, citrus and hazelnut. It shows exceptional balance with a nicely assertive finish.

Elderton Chardonnay 2006

Chateau des Graves 2003

J J Prum Riesling Kabinet 2005

Fraser Vineyard Cabernet 2005

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- *As the Wine Bubbles Episode 2 Fermentation*
- *December Wine Club Picks*
- *Champagne Tasting*
- *Holiday Wine Gifts*



Sparkling continued on back page....

As the Wine Bubbles

by Drew Graham

Episode 2 – Fermentation

When we left off, my wife Bridget (hereafter known as ‘the fabulous redhead’) and I were headed home with more than enough crushed Cabernet Sauvignon grapes to create at least 5 gallons of, hopefully, drinkable wine. Forgive me, dear reader, while I pause to introduce the following wine making jargon, specifically the terms must, fermentor, sulfites, yeast, fermentation and punch down. That’s a bit of a list but we’ll get to them all in short order.

Must is what we were carrying home, namely the juice, skins, seeds and other “goo” that resulted from destemming and crushing the grapes. This

must was riding home in a *fermentor* in the bed of our truck. The fermentor is simply the container in which fermentation occurs. It can take many forms. In my case, it takes the incredibly high-tech form of a 20 gallon Rubbermaid Brute garbage can. Snicker all you want, but I have seen actual wineries that charge good money for their wines using garbage cans for small lot fermentation. Anyway, we arrive safely home and grunt and groan as we muscle our must into the kitchen. Now what?

First I must consider *sulfites*. Sulfites are a substance that can be added to wine at several stages throughout the wine making process. They have the very beneficial effects of killing off bad bacteria, spoilage yeasts and other nasties that might exist in the vineyard, as well as limiting the deleterious effects of oxygen on wine. In my humble opinion, they have been unduly vilified. That said, I am basically lazy and lean toward a non-interventionist approach to wine making. By that I mean that I’d like to toss in as little foreign stuff as possible. Last year in class, the instructor handed us the correct amount of sulfites and we stirred them in. This year I asked my benefactor his opinion and he stated that he did not sulfite his reds prior to fermentation. Good enough for me! No pre-fermentation sulfites this year.



All this talk of fermentation! What the heck is it? Fermentation is the process by which yeast consume sugar and create, as byproducts, alcohol, carbon dioxide, heat and some other odds and ends. *Yeast* are rather odd little single celled critters that come in many different strains with different characteristics. There are strains that occur naturally everywhere, most notably in vineyards, so that fermentation might occur on its own with the wild yeasts already present. This is a bit risky, though, since the natural yeast might be composed of spoilage yeast that make wine taste terrible or simply may not be up to the task of consuming all of the sugar without being poisoned by the resulting alcohol levels. This is especially a concern when you start out with high brix (remember those?). So, like last year, I accept the advice and generosity of my benefactor and prepare and add the yeast that he provided for me.

It is past time to introduce the most pervasive and recurring theme in wine making – worrying. Did I properly rehydrate the yeast? Did I add enough to the must? Is the must too cold, those little yeasties don’t like the cold? Will fermentation complete in spite of the high Brix? Will fermentation even start? Arghhh!

After several hours of worrying, I get a whiff of that familiar odor, the smell of grape goo and yeast and carbon dioxide. It’s a beautiful thing! I lift the lid and, sure enough, all of the solids have come to the top and the must level has risen. It is time for my first *punch down*. As I said, all of the solids (grape skins, etc.) rise to the top of the must forming a “cap” that traps carbon dioxide and keeps the skins out of the juice. We need to release the carbon dioxide and we want the skins in contact with the juice since that’s where the color, some of the flavor, tannins and other goodness come from. So we punch down. This is simply the act of pushing the cap material back down into the juice. I



Continued on the next page...

Wine Club Selections

R & R Club

2006 Elderton Chardonnay, Unwooded

Elderton winery, made famous in recent years by its high scoring Command Shiraz, puts out wines of exceptional quality and value. This small family owned and operated winery located in Australia's Barossa Valley was named one of the top 100 wineries in the world by Wine and Spirit Magazine in 2005. Although best known their full-bodied reds, the 2006 Unwooded Chardonnay reflects a more elegant, softer side of Elderton. Unmasked by oak, this wine reveals the true nature of the Chardonnay varietal, with a nose of fresh peach, lemon and vanilla opening to a mineral based body with notes of pistachio and lime and a long luxurious finish. The medium acidity of this wine would lend it well as a food wine, particularly with seafood or white meat. **Robin*

2003 Chateau des Graves, Bordeaux Supérieur

Trying to find a worthy Burgundy for less than \$20 is a task bordering on the Herculean. But when it comes to Bordeaux, despite the pathetically weak dollar, good bottles in the \$15 range can still be had. Ch. de Graves is a consistent performer. The 2003 vintage in France was an exceptionally hot one, and many of the wines were atypical—big, overly extracted wines. The de Graves is undeniably rich but without being over the top. Bright cherry and berry fruit are backed by soft leather mocha and anise. The tannins are soft and light, the finish long and smooth.

**David*

Passport Club

2005 Jos. Jos. Prum Riesling Kabinett

Some of the best wine in the world comes from Germany, and J.J. Prum has been consistently at the forefront. Producing wine for over 400 years, the estate is currently run by Manfred Prum, grandson to J.J. Prum, and his daughter Katharina. From one of top Riesling producers comes this elegantly produced Kabinett, a classification of must weight reflecting grapes picked in standard harvest as opposed to aging on the vine for an extended period of time. The result is a wine less sweet and more suitable as a food companion. The 2005 vintage is heralded as one of the top vintages in years, and the quality is apparent in this wine. A rich, almost oily quality is the foundation for big, shimmering notes of lychee, pineapple, lemon, and powdered sugar. This is a great choice for the holidays; it can be paired with spicier fare or can be served alone as an aperitif. **Robin*

2005 Fraser Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

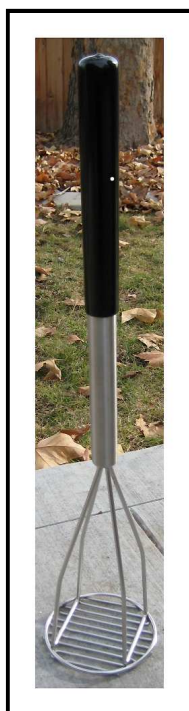
One of the newest wineries in Idaho and the only one right here in Boise (located just west of Capitol Blvd, call 345-9607 to schedule a visit). Their first wine was an exciting Viognier that sold out quickly. This 2005 Cab is their first red and it's one of the best produced in Idaho to date. Reserved aromas of berry and anise segue nicely into ripe cherry and dark berry fruit flavors backed by smooth oak and leather. Ripe tannins and good acidity come through most noticeably on the finish. Takes time to reveal itself in the glass and will certainly reward several years of aging.

**David*

As the Wine Bubbles continued

quickly realize that I do not own a tool for doing this so ... in go the arms. Tons of carbon dioxide gas comes bubbling out. As luck would have it, a friend of mine left his refractometer at my house last time we made beer, so I take a reading. The must has already dropped to about 24 brix (we started at 27.5). Hooray, fermentation is well under way! Now I get to worry about whether the little Brute will overflow in the middle of the night and stain my hardwood floors!

In the morning, I learn that my floors have survived and that the must seems to only rise to a certain height. Whew! I also learn that punching down with my hands and arms hurts, not in a sore muscles sort of way but in a tingly skin sort of way. I have visions of ravenous yeast cells gnawing on whatever comes their way, includ-



ing my epidermis! A punch down tool must be found. During her day off the fabulous redhead makes a run to the restaurant supply store with my basic description in mind. She calls me to verify and then purchases the most perfect punch down tool for my scenario – a humongous potato masher. It is about 2 feet long and all stainless steel with a rubber cover for the handle. It's perfect!

Over the course of the next few days, I punch down twice a day and take a Brix reading each time. Sugar level is dropping fast. After only four days the must is down to 9 Brix and stabilizes there. That's a VERY fast fermentation since I expected it to take two weeks. Those were some hyper little yeasties I was given! Great, now I get to worry about it being too quick! Regardless, it's time for the next step.

Next time on *As the Wine Bubbles ...*
Pressing!



December Champagne Tasting

The new revolution in France is "Grower Champagnes," wines that are grown & produced by the same person. These "Grower Champagnes" have their own style & personality and are incredibly exciting. Egly, Larmandier, Gimonnet, Margaine Vilmart, Turgy, Lancelot-Royer, to name a few. We will also open a magnum of Alain Robert Rare tradition 1985. This was hand disgorged & corked in March of this year by order only. At \$550 a mag it is challenging Krug & Dom to a duel. It does come from Mesniel so we shall see!

GROWER CHAMPAGNE TASTING EXTRAORDINAIRE

Sunday, December 9 at 3 pm at Café Vicino

Reservations Required, \$40 per person

DECEMBER 2007



Boise Co-op Wine Shop

Corner of 8th & Fort

Boise, Idaho

208-472-4519

wineguys@boisecoop.com

www.boisecoopwineshop.com

Wine Shop Hours!

10 am to 8 pm

Mon thru Thurs

10 am to 9 pm

Friday

9 am to 9 pm

Saturday

10 am to 6 pm

Sunday

Holiday Wine Gift Ideas

Schott Zwiesel Congresso Stemware

Almost every wine lover could use more stemware, after all, they tend to break. How about one that doesn't, break that is? Well not quite, but the Schott Zwiesel Tritan series was made with professional use in mind. They are made of break-resistant glass that is dishwasher safe and optimally designed to serve different wines. We have them in three different shapes:

Bordeaux

Burgundy

Flute

and they are reasonably priced at just \$39.99 a 6-pack. That's less than \$7 a stem.

Private Reserve Wine Preserver

Forget vacuum sealers for those unfinished bottles. They are less than effective, but the Private Reserve system lays an environmentally safe inert gas blanket over the wine. It's the best way to preserve an open bottle. The can feels empty when you buy it, but it holds enough gas for 120 uses and runs just \$10.95.

Wine Away

Spills happen, but they are less of a problem with Wine Away. I'm surprised that there isn't some ex-pat Aussie on late night TV hawking this product. Then again, maybe there is because it works. It really, really works. Just spray it on and the wine stain is gone. Call today and it's yours for just \$8.95 a bottle.

Sparkling continued from front page

Another lovely Champagne priced at the lower end of the scale is the **Gosset Brut Excellence** for \$41. It's noteworthy for its rich aromatics and honeyed fruit flavors all packed in a well structured, medium-bodied bubbly.

Since it is the Holidays you might be tempted to splurge on one of the big names in Champagne, the prestige cuvees like La Grande Dame or Dom Perignon. Those will set you back well over a hundred bucks, but if you want a label that impresses feel free to splurge. If you want a remarkable experience in Champagne may I suggest an alternative: Grower Champagnes produced by small houses in small quantities from grapes grown on their estate (the joke is that giant Moet-Chandon breaks more bottles than most of these producers release).

Until recently very, very few of these Champagnes made it to the States, snapped up by savvy locals. But a few dedicated importers have begun to offer very small quantities of these truly remarkable wines. The best news is that they are available for about half the price of the mass produced big name bottles (fifty bucks give or take a few).

Here's a short list of some of what's available now, with several more expected to arrive in the first part of December:

Egly-Ouriet Brut Tradition

Lamiable Brut Grand Cru

Larmandier-Bernier Brut

1999 Michel Turgy Blanc de Blancs

1997 Pascal Doquet Blanc de Blancs