

Boise Co-op Uncorked!

BOISE CO-OP WINE SHOP
NEWSLETTER

CORNER OF 8TH & FORT
BOISE, ID 83702

FEBRUARY CLUB PICKS

Explore Austrian Wine

by Robin Zimmermann

Why Austria, you ask? Why delve into something with unpronounceable names such as Smaragd?



The answer is simple. Austria has been consistently producing some of the world's most elegant and intriguing wines over the last decade. A viticulture once popular in the mid-nineties with industry professionals and oenophiles has recently enjoyed a mass international fan base that is rightfully deserved.

A common misconception about Austrian wine is that it is similar to the sweet wines produced in Germany. Austrian whites are nothing of the sort. Characterized by steely dryness, these wines have an amazing flavor portfolio distinctively Austrian. Backed by substantial minerality and acidity, these wines promote themselves as perfect food companions. Gruner Veltliner, the most popular and most produced white consistently amazes connoisseurs with its vast array of flavors. International wine critic Steven Tanzer said it best in his 2006 Buyer's Guide. "Capable of a wide stylistic range from crisp and light to full and rich, Gruner Veltliner will require a new tasting vocabulary for North American wine drinkers: cress, sweet pea, green bean, beet, rhubarb and roasted red pepper, plus a more familiar array of pit fruits,

citrus and flowers." Who wouldn't want to treat their palate to such an overwhelming and fascinating flavor experience?

Less common are the reds, but no less interesting. Blaufrankisch is the Austrian equivalent of Lemberger. These are intense, spicy wines with strong dark fruit flavors. I find Zweigelt similar in taste to domestic Zinfandel—these wines can be jammy and fruit forward. All Austrian reds are backed by ample acidity, also lending themselves to be perfect food companions. The 2005 Glatzer Blaufrankisch exhibits exquisite harmony between herbs, spice and bright, full fruit, with undertones of forest floor woodiness. This wine would show well with duck, game, herb and mushroom-based dishes.

Austria viticulture adheres to the strictest wine regulations in Europe. Barrel fermentation and chaptalization (addition of sugar prior to fermentation) of the whites is used infrequently. Many of the estates practice organic and biodynamic farming, and most wine produced in Austria is consumed by Austrians and Germans! Knowing they have an exceptional product, most of these fantastic wines never make it out of the country.

The Co-op Wine Shop recently bought in on Austrian wines, especially the outstanding 2006 vintage and selections from importer Terry Theise. Get what you can



while you can, and explore these viticultural gems. See why the Austrians drink Austrian wine, and see why the rest of the world is taking notice.

Hayman & Hill Interchange 2006

J. J. Vincent Bourgogne Blanc 2006

Venta Mazzaron Tempranillo 2004

Trust Syrah 2005

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As the Wine Bubbles

by Drew Graham

Episode 5 – Racking

The wine is now resting in two 5 gallon carboys doing a couple of things. First, it is undergoing malolactic fermentation which I discussed in the previous episode. Second, it is settling out the "lees." Remember back to the "Pressing" episode, the fabulous redhead and I basically squished the heck out the grapes trying to extract all of the juice. Well, as you might guess, the resulting must is far from crystal clear. As the wine sits in the carboys, all kinds of particulate matter settle to the bottom. The resulting layer of tiny bits of grape skins, seeds, yeast cells, etc. is called the lees.

The question now is how long should the must sit in the carboys before the next step. I would really like malolactic fermentation to complete but I suppose that that is not necessary since I am not bottling yet (we'll get to bottling in a later episode). Setting the question of complete malolactic, leaving the must on the lees can be beneficial. Extended contact with the lees can add depth and complexity to a wine. Leaving the must on the lees can also be harmful, in that it can impart off flavors to the resulting wine. If I remove the must from the lees too soon will I miss out on something great? If I leave it too long will it develop off-flavors? Would my novice palate even know if off-flavors were forming? Once again an opportunity for worry! As luck would have it, my benefactor stopped in the wine shop just a couple of days after I began worrying about this. He was most concerned about off-flavors and that made my decision for me. It's time to rack!

What is racking? Racking is the act of moving the must from one container to another. As I noted in the past those containers are often barrels but, in my case, they are carboys. Now, dear reader, you may be thinking that this is about the easiest thing in the world, just grab a big funnel and dump the contents of the carboy into another empty carboy. Well I'm here to tell you that, while not difficult, racking is surprisingly more complex than you might imagine. First there are several decisions to be made.

How many containers do I need to receive the must? I have 10 total gallons in two carboys. However, quite a bit of the bottom of each carboy is taken up with the lees that I don't intend to keep. Therefore, I will end up with some amount less than 10 gallons. Also, I will be racking a second time in the future and will again lose some juice. I go



around and around in my head trying to estimate my fluid loss, keeping in mind that I want to keep some extra must for topping up the containers after the second rack. I also factor that carboys come in 1, 3, 5 and 6 gallon sizes and I already own two 5 gallons and two 1 gallons.

How am I going to work out the logistics of the fluid transfer? If I intend to reuse one of the 5 gallon carboys (remember, I won't have enough left to fill both) I need to get the must out of it so that I can clean it. I have to think about the possibility of an interim container.

Furthermore, are the contents of the two carboys different? I wouldn't have guessed that they were since they came from the same pressing and have been sitting in the same place. However, after tasting each, I find that they are different. Likely this is due to the fact that one carboy was easily filled with juice that ran out of the grapes, while the other received a large proportion of juice that was pressed out the fruit. Should I mix the contents of the two carboys together or maintain their differences?

Should I try to get some oxygen into the wine or be as gentle as possible? Oxygen can help wine by opening up flavors, softening tannins and rounding out mouthfeel. Sometimes winemakers want to get oxygen into the wine. There is even a process called micro-oxygenation in which oxygen molecules are intentionally integrated into the must. On the other hand, as anyone who has left an opened bottle of wine on the counter for several days can tell you, oxygen can damage your wine. Oftentimes, winemakers take special care to introduce as little oxygen as possible. What tack should I take with my precious little batch of must?

Should I use any oak additives in some or all of the wine? If you want to start a knock-down, drag-out argument, put several different winemakers in a room together and ask them to discuss the use of oak additives! Oak barrels are not the only way to get the flavor of oak into a wine and, as I've mentioned before, they are not an option for me at this time. Oak additives come in many forms from what is basically sawdust up to large sticks that can be submerged into tanks. A readily available format is the oak chip.



Like barrels, these come in many variations: e.g. French or American; light, medium, dark or no toast. Last year I added medium toasted, American oak chips to 5 gallons of my wine and left the remaining 1 gallon

As the Wine Bubbles continued

R & R Club

2006 Hayman & Hill Interchange White Blend

A partnership between two wine industry veterans. Aussie David Hayman is a VP at wine giant Constellation Brands. He has almost 20 years experience in the international wine trade including 5 years overseeing production at Hardys. Dennis Hill has been a winemaker for some 25 years and is currently heading that post at California's Blackstone. Together they have utilized their insider connections to source some of the best grapes from California's top appellations. This intriguing blend of Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscat Canelli, Malvasia Bianca, Semillon, and Gewürztraminer, offers a little something for everyone. It has enticingly spicy aromatics with fresh clover, spring greens (arugula and mustard), gooseberry, pineapple and honeysuckle. That spicy component carries through on the palate complementing ripe melon and peach backed by orange and sweet lemon. There's ample richness with nice acidity that's balanced by a hint of sweetness. Would make a great companion for spicy Asian cuisine or be absolutely charming as an aperitif. **David*

2004 Venta Mazzaron Tempranillo

Importer Jorge Ordonez ferrets out the finest Spanish wines looking for exceptional values. From the relatively obscure region of Zamora on the western fringes of the Castile y Leon he has discovered this exceptional red. Big, bold aromas of dark chocolate covered strawberries with spicy accents and just a light touch of tobacco. It's just as big on the palate with richly concentrated fruit flavors of plum and berry backed by hits of anise, mocha, roast meat, cinnamon and leather. The overall impression is velvety smooth with soft tannins and lush fruit. There's just enough acid to help this wine pair well with everything from grilled salmon to burgers or roast chicken. This is only the winery's second release but the fruit comes from 60 year old ungrafted vines. **David*

Passport Club

2006 J.J. Vincent Bourgogne Blanc

This 100% Chardonnay comes from the sunny southern Maconnais region of France. The area is known for its warm temperatures and clay-laden soil, a *terroir* ideal for producing rich, fruity whites. Jean-Jacques Vincent is the current winemaker and great-grandson of Marcel Vincent & Fils, whose Chateau Fuisse estate dates back to 1864. J.J. Vincent combines both modern and traditional winemaking techniques to produce classic yet exotic white wine. Although mostly stainless steel fermented, a portion of the wine is aged in oak to round it out and maintain tradition. This particular vintage shows its fruit extremely well. A nose of lemon, peach and pistachio opens to a refreshing body of lemon cream and powdered sugar with a mid palate and finish of nectarine and honeydew. The citric notes make this wine a suitable pairing for spicy seafood dishes, particularly ceviche, while the creamier front palate pairs well with milk chocolate. A flexible wine for any occasion!. **Robin*

2005 Trust Syrah

Owners Steve Brooks and his wife Lori are escapees from the corporate world of a media giant located in Atlanta, Georgia. They found their way to wine in Walla Walla to, in their words: ". . . move from a life style rooted in technology and speed to an existence focusing on soil and sun. Taking a giant step requires **trust**." Hence the winery's name. This, their first vintage shows surprising elegance and restraint for a Walla Walla wine which too often is about big oak and over extracted fruit. Touches of roasted meat and road tar, along with soft, dark fruit on the nose make you think Côte Rôtie. Subtle, toasty oak backs the smooth berry fruit in this impeccably balanced wine. Smooth and delicious. **David*

Notable Wine Quotes

"As I raised the glass to my lips, I stopped. The aroma of the wine rushed out to meet me, and all the smells that I had ever known fell away. I didn't know how to describe it, but I knew how it made me feel.

I moistened my lips with the wine and drank it slowly, letting it coat my tongue and slide from one side of my mouth to the other. The brunello trickled down my throat and out along a thousand fault lines through my body, dissolving them.

My second glass tasted like a sigh at the end of a long day: a gathering in, and a letting go. I felt the fingers of alcoholic warmth relax the muscles at the back of my jaw and curl under my ears. The wine flushed warmth up into my cheeks, down through my shoulders, and across my thighs. My mind was calm as a black ocean. The wine gently stirred the silt of memo-

ries on the bottom, helping me recall childhood moments of wordless abandon." — Natalie MacLean on first tasting Brunello, from her book *Red, White and Drunk All Over*

"Wine writing should be camped-up. The writer should never like a wine, he should be in love with it; never find a wine disappointing but identify it as a mortal enemy, an attempt to poison him; sulphuric acid should be discovered where there is the faintest hint of sharpness. Bizarre and improbable sidetastes should be proclaimed: mushroom, rotting wood, black treacle, burned pencils, condensed milk, sewage, the smell of French railway stations or ladies underwear." — Julian Waugh from his essay "Perils of Being a Wine Writer" in *Waugh on Wine*

Valentine's Day Suggestions

How a day marked by a depression era Chicago mobster's massacre of rival gang members came to be celebrated with cards proclaiming undying love and devotion is beyond me. Okay, I've heard something about a martyred saint, which is still a little odd, but if you ask me it's nothing more than a marketing scheme to help sell greeting cards after Christmas. Whatever. It's a good excuse to pop a bottle of bubbles, but please don't pair it with chocolate. That combo is an anathema and should be avoided. Champagne likes salty (think caviar or potato chips. If



it's chocolate you crave then try Port. Fortunately the Co-op Wine Shop has both bases covered with the Valley's best selection of Champagne (specializing in Grower bottlings) along with some very fine Proseccos and California sparklers, any number of which would make a great Valentine's Day libation. And of course we have dozens of bottles of different Ports at all price levels. Or how about a bottle of Trentadue Chocolate Amore—a Merlot based dessert wine with chocolate flavoring added. That should soothe you and your mate's sweet tooth. nicely.

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Wine Shop Hours!

10 am to 8 pm
Monday
through
Saturday

10 am to 6 pm
Sunday

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unoaked. So far I have preferred the unoaked version, but as time passes the oaked version has been getting better and better. What should I do this year?

How do I keep from making a complete wreck of my kitchen and staining my maple flooring? My experience last year taught me that it is incredibly easy to spill wine even when you are not drinking any of it!

Have I mentioned that I love to worry and over-think things? So, after much consternation and even more patience on the part of the fabulous redhead, I do the following. I decide that the must from the two carboys should be mixed so that all of the resulting containers have the same starting point. Since the carboys have been sealed up pretty tightly, I'm not going to worry about the wine getting oxygen during racking. It could probably use it. I decide to use my two 1 gallon jugs to experiment with two different oak additives. I purchase two 3 gallon carboys, a small bag of medium toast French oak chips and a small bag of untoasted American oak chips. I already own the carboys mentioned above, various 12 and 22 oz beer bottles for extra juice, a bucket, a racking wand (basically a big hard straw), tubing, and a blanket and towels that I don't mind seeing wine stained.

A big blanket goes on the kitchen floor with a step stool in the middle of it. I attach the tubing to the racking wand and place the bucket at the base of the step stool. With the assistance of the fabulous redhead, I get the first carboy in place and get the siphon started. This latter task is accomplished the old fashioned way, by sucking on the end of the tube until

you get a mouthful of fluid and then quickly putting the end of the tube into the bucket. We siphon off the contents of both carboys into the bucket which, luckily, is barely large enough to hold it all. I put some wood chips into each of the gallon jugs and then we siphon the must from the bucket into the two 1 gallon jugs and the two 3 gallon carboys. My estimations were correct and I have enough extra must to fill two 22 and one 12 oz beer bottle which I promptly cap.



Allow me to digress and suggest that no properly appointed kitchen should be without a bottle capper! I put fermentation locks on all of the uncapped vessels and everything gets tucked back into the corner. The blanket and towel scheme has served me well and clean up is a cinch. Finally, I take the 5 gallon carboys and dump the remaining lees into planters outside. Forgive me for mentioning that there is no end to the juvenile humor that can be enjoyed based on the sights and sounds of thick, Cabernet colored gunk making its way through the narrow neck of a glass carboy.

Now we wait until it is time to rack again and you, dear reader, must wait with bated breath for **Episode 6 – The Second Rack!!**