



Grapevine

May 2009

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Have you checked out our web site!

<http://www.columbiawillamettewine.org>

President's Message

Greetings and welcome!

I hope you had the opportunity to attend our Library Zinfandel tasting last month. I thought it rated among the very best events we've hosted in the last couple of years. The Zins were from different areas and thus had different attributes, but WOW! Throw in some well matched food bites, and it made for an outstanding event.

As an educational organization, we provide a monthly opportunity to gain a better understanding of and appreciation for wine. I am very pleased with our offering this month. Amavi Cellars is a young winery from Walla Walla, but already they have won high critical praise in various circles, including Wine Spectator. I hope you can attend this tasting, and please bring along a friend!

Neal Hammel

Future Programs (Payment at the door by **cash or check** only)

May = **Amavi Winery (Walla Walla). Mid-size producer scoring a National reputation. BRING A FRIEND!!!**

June = **Wineries of Clark County and Reunion Night!**

July = **There is never a CWES event in July.**

August = **Annual CWES Picnic – Venue & Date to be announced**

Varietal Notes (from Norman Banks, *Wine Maker Confluence Winery*)

This is the seventh of a series of Varietal Notes taken from my pamphlet on wine varieties. Viognier is a delightful fruity white vinifera that is gaining renewed popularity.

VIIGNIER (Vee-yawn-knee-ay)—France—Condrieu (Northern Rhône).

Wine Characteristics: Abundant stone fruit (peach and apricot) sometimes with pine kernel aromas and frequently with musk, exotic fruit, melon, and a bit of spice. Depending on the producer, the wine can range from exquisite to ordinary. Usually made sweet, **Viognier** made dry stands well as a cocktail wine or with foods often served with Chardonnay. Dry or sweet, the wine matches well with 'Asian Infusion' dishes and other spicy foods.

Grape Profile: **Viognier** grows as large loose bunches, and the grapes are slightly darker than Chardonnay. Once at risk of extinction, with just a few hectares maintained in the fine Northern Rhône appellation of Condrieu of southwestern France,

Viognier is experiencing a resurgence in popularity as more is being planted in California, WASHINGTON and elsewhere in the world. It makes fruity wines of full to medium body. The U.S. Examples, if well made, make a welcome alternative to the excellent although usually expensive Condrieu bottlings. Many have hailed the grape as the 'new Chardonnay.'

Problems with some non-European wines include lack of balance due to excessive alcohol and, in my opinion, excessive sugar content. The grape 'feels' the land and climate, as some areas develop strong musk, exotic fruits, and mineral tones while others develop a bland product.

Viognier is commonly blended into Chardonnay to obtain more fruit and nose, and the wine is not infrequently blended in small quantity into reds to achieve similar improvement.

Education Corner (from Nicholas Meyerhofer)

Notes on reading a wine label: (called "etiquette" in French)

1. Don't judge a book by its cover. A pretty label says nothing about the quality of the wine in the bottle.
2. The most important piece of information given by a wine label is the wine's place of origin, also known as its appellation. Examples range from the broad ("California") to very specific ("Sonoma County's Dry Creek Valley").
3. Second in importance is the producer of the wine. Wineries that enjoy a reputation for quality can generally be counted on to be good.
4. Third in importance is the vintage (what year bottled).
5. Next in importance is where the wine was bottled. As a general rule, wines bottled by the vintner at his/her estate will be a step up in quality.
6. Next are special designations on the label such as "Reserve," "Vintner's Selection," or "Special Cuvee." Note, however, that such wording is not legally defined and should be treated as a general indicator of quality, but not a guarantee.
7. A wine labeled as a varietal (e.g. "Cabernet Sauvignon" as opposed to "Claret.") might not be made entirely of that varietal. In the USA, a varietal may consist of as little as 75% of the variety listed.
8. Finally, if the bottle has a back label, take a look at it. Often it will give you additional information about the wine or winery.

Wine Recipe (from Nicholas Meyerhofer)

Rabbit Ragu

Ingredients:

¼ Cup + 1 T Olive Oil	1 medium onion, chopped
2 T butter	1 medium carrot, chopped
¼ lb. Bacon diced	1 celery rib, chopped
1 T finely chopped fresh sage	1 cup dry red wine
2 T finely chopped rosemary	14 oz. can plum tomatoes, drained & chopped
1 3 lb. Rabbit, boned & cut into 1-2" pieces	1 T sea salt
	1 t black pepper

Preparation:

Heat oil and butter in heavy skillet, then add bacon and cook, stirring for two minutes. Add sage and rosemary for thirty seconds. Add rabbit and cook, stirring until rabbit is no longer pink on outside two to three minutes. Add onion, carrot, and celery and cook about five minutes. Add wine and simmer uncovered for ten to fifteen minutes. Add tomatoes, sea salt, and pepper stirring occasionally until sauce is thickened five to ten minutes. Voila!

Note: This dish can be made one day ahead and then cooled. Then reheat when ready to eat. This dish can also be made using a veal shoulder instead of rabbit. The veal will need to cook longer, about seventy-five minutes.

Serve with polenta or mashed potatoes and fresh green beans.