

HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPE VINE

DECEMBER 2011



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

GHC ANNUAL FOOD AND WINE EVENT	2
BECKER VINEYARDS NEWS	2
CHARIVARI MENU	3
CHAPTER EVENT AT PLEASANT HILL WINERY	4
WST ANNOUNCES SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS	5
SULFITES IN EUROPEAN WINE TOO	6
A FOWL VISIT TO LONDON	7
READERS RECIPE — CHICKEN STEW	11
WST STATE MEETING	12
BORDEAUX, BURGUNDY OR . . . ?	13
UNDERSTANDING A GERMAN WINE LABEL	14
WINE — PRICE AND VALUE	16
VIRGINIA IS FOR VIOGNIER	17
MCKITTRICK CANYON WINE HIKE	19
EDITOR'S CORNER	21
PLEASANT HILL EVENT PICTURES	22

GREATER HOUSTON CHAPTER NEWS BY ED DENT

First, I would like to wish everyone a Happy Holiday and a better New Year. 2011 was a great year for the chapter as we continue to grow in membership. Before we reflect on 2011, I would like to thank and congratulate, **Flat Creek Estates** for elevating their membership to supporting member level with The Wine Society of Texas and the Greater Houston Chapter. We continued to work closely with Madelyn and Rick and appreciate their support of our organization. Thanks again.

As we reflect on 2011 and look forward to 2012, our goal is to continue to have quality and educational events which fit the needs and desires of the membership. Our 2011 highlights were as follows: Hungarian Food and Wine Event at Charivari, French with a Twist at Aura's, Food and Wine pairing at Pleasant Hill in November, along with our annual Meet and Greet in May. In addition, some members attended the state meeting in Fredericksburg in October.

2012 should also bring some exciting events. In January our annual food and wine event will again be at Charivari Restaurant with the theme, "Discovering Austria without the Jet Lag." March or April we're hoping to have an event with a winemaker supplied by one of the local wine distributors. We're also working with one of our new members to have a German food and wine event.

June 23rd, the Greater Houston Chapter will host the state meeting at Messina Hof Winery in Bryan/College Station. Plans are being finalized, but I can share with you what I know right now. Paul Bonnarigo will put on a workshop on how wine is made and there will be a contest between teams making and tasting wines. To the victor goes the spoil. An opportunity to tour the George Bush library will be an option for those who arrive on Friday. Saturday will end with a great pairing of food and wine. Final details will be included in our first quarter 2012 newsletter.

We are excited to have three new members join our chapter. They are Danielle Lutz, Sandra Bienavides, and Robin Zachry. Welcome aboard.

GREATER HOUSTON CHAPTER ANNUAL FOOD AND WINE EVENT

Our annual food and wine event will be held on Sunday, January 29, 2012. We are again happy to hold this event at Charivari Restaurant, recognized for Excellence by Zagat Survey with 29 points for food. Charivari is located at 2521 Bagby at McGowen. The theme this year will be “A Trip to Austria without the Jet Lag” and feature Austrian food and wine pairings.

The event will start at 4:00 P.M. and consist of an authentic five course Austrian meal paired with Austrian Wine. The cost is \$85.00 per person, all inclusive tax and gratuity, for Wine Society of Texas members. All non- WST members will be asked to pay an additional \$10 payable, by cash or check, at the door for the Wine Society of Texas scholarship. Reservations can be made by calling (713) 521-7231. A credit card number must be given to hold your reservation and must be made by January 26, 2012. Reservations may be transferred, but not canceled during the final 72 hours prior to the dinner. If you have certain dietary restrictions, please let it be known when making your reservations.

There will be a representative from the Austrian Consulate to talk to us about exciting things happening in Austria and why we should visit their country in the not too distant future. - Ed Dent

BECKER VINEYARDS NEWS BY NICHOLE A. BENDELE

Happy Holidays!

We are celebrating our Annual Port & Stilton Tasting, and Port Shots, too, the first three weekends of December! It is fun to try a rich, complex cheese like a Stilton Blue with a dessert wine like the Port. A fabulous and classic pairing! We also have our Annual Boxing Day Celebration, Dec. 26 from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Traditionally, it is a British holiday from feudal England where the lords and ladies of the manor would “box up” food and take it to their serfs. In later years, it became a tradition where employers gave their staff Christmas gifts or bonuses. At Becker Vineyards, it started because the Beckers had many family and friends visiting the winery. There will be holiday hors d’oeuvres, yuletide music, and fireside readings. The event is complimentary; no reservations required. Due to the holiday season, Becker Vineyards will be closed Christmas Day (December 25) and New Year’s Day (January 1).

Our vineyards in Stonewall, Ballinger, and Mason went into dormancy the beginning of November. Bud break usually begins the end of March or beginning of April.

New vintages of Gewurztraminer, Riesling, & Chenin Blanc have been bottled and are available at the winery. We have some new vintages due for release in the next few weeks: Petit Syrah, Viognier, Chardonnay, Raven, and Provencal (the dry rose).

In February, we have our Annual Merlot & Chocolate Tasting, February, 11 & 12. We will have guest chocolatier, Delysia Chocolatiers from Austin, TX. There will also be a February vintner dinner with Chef Ross Burtwell of the Cabernet Grill at The Cotton Gin Village in Fredericksburg – date TBA.

Many of our wines are available at retailers near you, for winery only wines, you can order on-line at www.beckervineyards.com.

We hope you will join us soon!

Salud!

Nichole A. Bendele, Public Relations & Tasting Room Coordinator, Becker Vineyards



Charivari Restaurant

Continental & European Cuisine

2521 Bagby @ Mc Gowen

Tel. 713 521 ~7231

www.charivarirest.com

Sunday, January 29.2012 @ 4pm

Trip to Austria with out Jet lag

Menu

Chicken Liver Paté

Traminer

Wild Mushroom Strudel

Grüner Veltliner, Berger

Fritaten Soup

(Beef Consommé with Strips of herbed Pancakes)

Grüner Veltliner, Berger

Venison Rahm Schnitzel with Wild Mushroom herbed Spaetzle &
Broussle sprouts

Claus Cuvée, Zweigelt, Paul Lehrner, Mittelburgenland

Dialogue of Strudel

Apple & Cherry with vanilla Sauce

Ice Wine

Cost \$85

Inclusive Tax & gratuity

CHAPTER EVENT AT PLEASANT HILL WINERY



On November 12, 2011, our chapter held a food and wine event at Pleasant Hill Winery in Brenham, Texas. Ten members were present at the event and were joined by ten other guests, mostly residents of Houston. Bob and Jeanne Cottle were very gracious hosts and the food catered by Volare Italian Restaurant was truly excellent. I particularly enjoyed the marinated shrimp paired with Sauvignon Blanc and the Caprese Salad paired

with Collina Bianco, a blend of aromatic grapes including Muscat Blanc and Orange Muscat.

The highlight was a vertical barrel tasting of 2005, 2006, and 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon. We came expecting a tasting of one wine from the barrel and we were treated to three. It was a great experience.

Thanks Bob and Jeanne for a wonderful evening!

By Ed Dent

There are more pictures starting on page 22.



THE WINE SOCIETY OF TEXAS ANNOUNCES SCHOLARSHIP GRANT PROGRAM AWARDS TOTALING \$5,000 FOR ASSISTANCE IN EDUCATION AND PROMOTION OF THE TEXAS WINE INDUSTRY.

Midland, Texas (25 October 2011) - The Wine Society of Texas (WST), a 501c3 non-profit educational organization, announced that it is awarding grants totaling \$5,000 in support of ten individuals from around the State.

This scholarship assistance program is consistent with the founding ideas of WST and its continued mission to enhance the appreciation of wines, foster the knowledge of enology and viticulture, support charitable activities, and educate wine consumers throughout the State of Texas. The funding for the WST Scholarship program is provided from charitable donations, local WST Chapter fund raising events, and annual statewide wine events/competitions.

Following is a summary of this year's award recipients:

\$750 awarded to Todd Webster. Todd is currently the winemaker at Brennan Vineyards and plans to use the funds for education programs at Washington State University.

\$750 awarded to Rich Gold. Rich will be enrolling in the Certificate Program in Viticulture at Texas Tech and the Agrilife Extension Service of Texas A&M University.

\$750 awarded to Chris Berger. Chris is currently enrolled in the Texas Tech Viticulture/Oenology program and works at Cap Rock Winery.

\$750 awarded to Anjalika Avants. Angie attends the Conrad N. Hilton College for Hotel & Restaurant Management and hopes to focus on the wine industry after graduation.

\$500 awarded to Cassandra Plank. Cassandra is currently enrolled in the Texas Tech Viticulture/Oenology program as a PhD candidate.

\$500 awarded to Joshua Fritsche. Joshua plans to enroll in the Texas Tech Viticulture Certificate program.

\$250 awarded to Channing Fawcett. Channing is enrolled at the Conrad N. Hilton College for Hotel & Restaurant Management Master's program.

\$250 awarded to Cameron Barber. Cameron is enrolled at Texas Tech University and will use the financial assistance to pay for Viticulture and Wine Production classes.

\$250 awarded to Spenser Igo. Spenser is enrolled in the Viticulture/Enology program at Texas Tech and is interning at McPherson Cellars.

\$250 awarded to Shi Wang. Shi is in the Masters Program at Texas Tech in Plant & Soil Sciences and wants to study more about grape growing.

This is the tenth consecutive year that the WST has provided grant assistance through the Scholarship Grant Program providing over \$30,000 in total. The Wine Society of Texas is pleased to continue its long tradition of providing meaningful scholarships to worthy individuals. This is our way of going local to support Texas talent and invest in the future of the Texas wine industry said Ms. Elizabeth Lutton, State President of the WST.

For more information about the scholarship program or the WST please visit the website at www.winesocietyoftexas.org or contact WST by phone (210-863-3684).

SULFITES IN EUROPEAN WINE TOO BY PAUL BONARRIGO

In America, prior to May 2007, the perception of European wines is that they do not contain sulfites. Prior to May 2007 European wines were not required to list if they contained sulfites. Since May 2007 European community wineries that add sulfites are required to list it. As a winemaker I believe that there is a misunderstanding that sulfites are bad. Sulfite is an antioxidant. Many people spend a lot of money at the health food store buying antioxidants. Sulfite is only bad if you happen to be the 1 in 10,000 in our population who has an allergy to sulfite. These individuals are usually asthmatics. Many people misunderstand sensitivity or allergy to sulfite. Individuals who say I can drink white wine without a headache but I cannot drink red wine due to headache, do not have sulfite sensitivity since there are sulfites in both types of wine. Instead they might have an allergy to the skin of the red grape which creates a histamine reaction.

Since May 2007, Americans are finally realizing that European wines also contain sulfites due to required disclosure.

MESSINA HOF NAMED "BEST" AT 4TH ANNUAL TEXAS MEETINGS AND EVENTS BEST OF AWARDS

HOUSTON, TX - (October 3, 2011) -- Messina Hof Winery and Resort, one of the fastest growing, award-winning winery and resorts in Texas, recently won the award for best meeting/event venue, hotel or resort for less than 500 people at the 4th Annual Readers Choice Best of Awards, announced Messina Hof Co-founders Paul and Merrill Bonarrigo.

The Reader's Choice Best of Awards are awarded to those that go above-and-beyond and are voted on by meeting planners, suppliers, vendors and event planners. Messina Hof was the winner for best meeting/event venue that holds less than 500 in the Prairies and Lakes section.

Texas Meetings and Events is a premier magazine for meetings and events professionals and is published regionally four times a year by Tiger Oak Media. The magazine is circulated to approximately 10,000 planners, suppliers and related professionals per region. *Texas Meetings and Events* magazine includes essential information that ranges from venue and supplier news, to tips, best practices and industry developments.

"We are so proud to be awarded a 'best of' award for meeting/event venue, hotel or resort. The award showcases our hard work and dedication towards events held at the winery," said Paul and Merrill Bonarrigo.

For more information on Messina Hof Winery and Resort, visit <http://www.messinahof.com>.

A FOWL VISIT TO LONDON WITH A FRENCH TAKE ON A CHICKEN IN EVERY POT

BY MERIL MARKLEY

The British Isles have endured their share of invasions in centuries past, including culinary conquests by the likes of the Romans, Vikings, and Normans. Recent decades have seen an influx of Indian, Thai, French, Italian, Japanese, and other nationalities of restauranteurs who, coupled with the efforts of outstanding homegrown chefs, have made London one of the world's culinary capitals.

On our visits to London in May of 2010 and in October of 2011, my husband, Michael, and I enjoyed memorable meals and outstanding wines. With only one exception, we managed to avoid the dreaded Carvery where hunks of roasted beef, lamb, and pork may languish for hours under heat lamps until a dried-out slice is hived off and piled onto a plate with desiccated potatoes or Yorkshire pudding. Instead, we found ourselves feasting on exquisitely prepared succulent fowl, tame or wild, and loving it.

In 2010 we first discovered La Poule au Pot, on Mozart Square in London's Belgravia neighborhood, thanks to a recommendation for French restaurants serving duck from the concierge at our hotel, a short stroll away. A London institution since the 1960s, La Poule au Pot offers traditional French fare in a tiny building on a corner, its kitchen in the basement. From the ceiling hang baskets, pots, and dried flowers above small tables channeling the cozy atmosphere of a French restaurant in the countryside, devoted to seriously good eating.



France's King Henri IV (1553-1610), the first monarch in the Bourbon dynasty, is revered for saying that French families should be sufficiently prosperous to have *poule-au-pot* every Sunday. While controversy remains over whether he uttered this maxim, the traditional dish of stuffed hen, cooked in a pot, remains a staple of French cuisine, including on the menu of this London eatery of the same name.

On our first visit, I ordered what was described as duck breast with lime. Michael feared it would be too citrusy and so opted for veal liver instead, but the lime flavor proved subtle within the sauce made from pan drippings. The duck was perfectly cooked and delicious, especially with the accompaniment of the red Burgundy wine we had chosen. What transformed Michael into a devoted fan of the restaurant was his dessert of bananas in a caramelized sauce. So enthusiastic were we that, as we left, we booked dinner for the following week after our short business trip to Croatia.

Our 2011 visit to London, for UHY International's annual meeting, was sandwiched between stays in Paris for Michael's antiques business but happened to coincide with grouse season in the U.K. The perfect place to try this most British of birds, never successfully domesticated and still hunted on the moors of Scotland, was Racine, a French restaurant in Knightsbridge with a gifted British chef and owner, Henry Harris.

A FOWL VISIT TO LONDON WITH A FRENCH TAKE ON A CHICKEN IN EVERY POT, CONT.

On bustling Brompton Road and caddy-corner from the Victoria and Albert Museum, Racine is a popular destination for lunch and dinner. I first ate there in 2004 with Christopher Wilk, my classmate from college and the Keeper of Furniture, Textiles and Fashion at the Museum. Coinciding with my two-year absence from visiting France, Racine's offering of the Deux Charentes region's incomparable and hard-to-find Echiré Butter provoked raptures of delight and my consumption of way too much bread and butter while we reminisced about Professor Eugene Carroll and how his Art History lectures shaped both of our careers. Our most recent visit to Racine was for lunch with Laura Holt, another former student of Eugene's, and a long-time resident of London.

Sticking with our fowl theme, we shared a starter of *foie gras* of goose accompanied by glasses of Sauternes. Michael opted for a main course of grouse, bread sauce, and Armagnac gravy. I know little about grouse except that its American cousin, the ruffed grouse, is the official bird of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania where my father used to hunt it and my mother attempted to make it edible. Nothing prepared us for the plate placed in front of Michael. The entire bird, in size somewhere between a Cornish hen and a chicken, was exquisitely roasted. Michael dug in and carved it up while Laura and I enjoyed tastes. The meat was dark red in color, a bit disconcerting, but not from being undercooked. It was gamey but delicious, an acquired taste and one well worth cultivating.



Laura and I both opted for the day's special, breast of pheasant stuffed with leg meat and mushrooms. A far more subtle taste than the grouse, it was especially flavorful when complemented by the deeply purpleish Malbec from Cahors which we had selected to accompany our birds.

As if legendary butter and fowl were not enough, Laura and I indulged in desserts. Called *Mont Blanc* after France's Alpine peak, this traditional and beloved concoction involves a base of meringue below a mound of chestnut cream (forced through a sieve or small gauge pastry bag and looking like whole wheat spaghetti) and topped with whipped cream. Racine's version was innovative and huge, benefiting from the addition of a rich chocolate sauce.



No discussion of fowl in London would be complete without considering George Frideric Handel (1685-1759), the Baroque era musician who, despite being born in Germany as Georg Friedrich Händel, spent almost his entire life in England and became one of the country's most adored composers. His last name, in German, evokes the beloved roast, stuffed chicken known as *Brathändel*, a sort of Teutonic version of *poule-au-pot*, on which Georg Friedrich must have grown up in Saxony.

Handel lived in London for a half century, most of that time in

A FOWL VISIT TO LONDON WITH A FRENCH TAKE ON A CHICKEN IN EVERY POT, CONT.

the house on Brook Street in Mayfair that, for the last decade, has been home to the Handel House Museum. Well worth a visit, it is awe-inspiring to stand in the tiny room where the great man composed and presided over rehearsals with the vocal superstars of his day. His output of over 40 operas (including *Rodelinda*, which had its Houston premiere last month in a performance by Mercury Baroque), close to 30 oratorios (including *Messiah*, also being performed this season by Mercury Baroque), and some of the most famous pieces ever composed to accompany royal pageantry (*Music for the Royal Fireworks* and the *Water Music*), guaranteed his perch in the pantheon of great composers and his final resting place in Westminster Abbey.

Described by contemporaries as “corpulent,” particularly in his later years, it is a fair bet that Handel enjoyed some of the same rich fowl dishes as today’s visitors to his house can enjoy throughout his adopted hometown. Handel’s imagination ran to fowl as well, including one of his most famous compositions, *the Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, a concerto for organ and orchestra in which bird calls are imitated in the organ’s highest register.

Fabled birds also played a role in our lodgings in London. Having visited Saint Pancras Station in 2010, we were captivated by the magnificent renovation of what has become the terminus of the Eurostar high-speed train from Paris. Dating back to the 1870s, when British railway companies outdid themselves in competing for passengers and in erecting Gothic Revival stations with hotels attached, Saint Pancras dodged the wrecker’s ball and the Luftwaffe’s bombs but lay dormant for decades before a multi-million Pound face-lift assured the future of the Renaissance Hotel Saint Pancras that opened in 2011. As soon as we learned we would be heading for London, we reserved a room and garnered the chance to wander this magnificent edifice used in films as diverse as *Batman Begins*, *King Ralph*, and *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. The renovation of the station included cleaning and preserving many fearsome looking mythical yet inedible birds, such as those shown on the column capital in the photo.



Before heading back to Paris, we had one last meal at La Poule au Pot with international marketing guru and friend from our sojourn in Southern California, Allyson Stewart-Allen. I opted for a starter of arugula, mushrooms and cheese – a captivating and rich combination of peppery greens and mild cheese in a salad large enough for a meal. As the main course, Michael had the duck with lime. I had guinea fowl (*pintade*), another first for us, in a sauce incorporating Calvados and cream. The bird was tender and delicious, the sauce so scrumptious I would have happily licked every drop from the plate. Allyson had the day’s special, partridge, which involved a struggle to prize every morsel from the bones. She pronounced it well worth the effort. Accompanying it all was a red wine from Pic Saint Loup, another winner in our quest to enjoy excellent wines from the less heralded Languedoc region of France.

Having flown the coop for two food and wine-filled weeks, we were happy to return home to a

A FOWL VISIT TO LONDON WITH A FRENCH TAKE ON A CHICKEN IN EVERY POT, CONT.

steady diet of chicken -- but with cherished memories of our staple's more exotic cousins.

Next time, feasting *en famille* on the outskirts of Paris.

To read more about the types of wild fowl we sampled and how to obtain them in the U.S., go to D'Artagnan's website <http://www.dartagnan.com>. For the restaurants, visit the following: <http://www.pouleaupot.co.uk> and <http://www.racine-restaurant.com>. The website for the Handel House Museum is <http://www.handelhouse.org> and the website for Mercury Baroque is: <http://www.mercurybaroque.org>. For an incomparable taste of Handel's music, order Drew Minter's recording, Handel Operas Vol. 1 on Harmonia Mundi, available from Arkivmusic (<http://www.arkivmusic.com>).

WINES WE LIKE FOR \$20 OR LESS

Continuing with our list of wines for \$20 or less which we have enjoyed, listed below is our fourth quarter update. Those in bold lettering are the new additions to the list. Please feel free to submit your recommendations to edent24@aol.com and they will be included. Thank you to this quarter's contributors.

- Becker Vineyard Voigner
- Blackstone Pinot Noir
- Bottega Moscato Spumante Dolce Wine Sparkling Wine
- Errazuriz Single Vineyard 2009 Carmenere
- Flat Creek Estate Bucking Horse White
- Francis Ford Coppola Merlot
- Grape Creek 2009 Pinot Grigio
- Haak Winery 2009 Blanc du Bois (Dry) – Green Label
- Il Dolce Sparkling Torrentes from Argentina
- Kitchen Sink White rated 90 by June Wine Enthusiast
- **Layer Cake Shiraz**
- Louis Martini Cabernet Sauvignon
- **McManis Merlot**
- **Ménage à Trois**
- Messina Hof Barrel Reserve Cabernet Franc
- **Peachy Canyon West Side Vineyard Zinfandel**
- Penfolds, Koonunga Hills Shiraz
- PLEASANT HILL WINERY'S 2008 SANGIOVESE
- Rutherford Hill Merlot from Napa Valley
- **2010 Santa Julian Malbec**
- Testamento 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon



READERS RECIPE – CHICKEN STEW

BY ED DENT



One day, we were feeling lazy and it turned a little chilly outside so we decided to fix a chicken stew or chicken soup. We opted for chicken stew, which we had not had one since I didn't know when. We went to our favorite recipe source, Food Network, and found this excellent recipe which was rated five stars. It turned out this was a great choice which we tried with a **2010 Santa Julian Malbec** from Argentina, see a review on page 12. Who would have thought it would work, but it did. The nice thing about this wine was that it was \$9.00 from My HEB.

The only changes we made were to use Organic Pinto Beans and we didn't drain and rinse. We also added celery leaves to give it more flavoring. I thought about trying Escarole or Swiss chard.

It stated that it would serve 4-6. I don't know who they were serving, but Sandra and I practically ate it all with the full bottle of Malbec.
- Enjoy, Ed Dent

Chicken Stew

Recipe courtesy of Giada De Laurentiis

Prep Time: 10 min

Inactive Prep Time: 5 min

Cook Time: 35 min

Level: Easy

Serves: 4 to 6 servings

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 stalks celery, cut into bite-size pieces

1 carrot, peeled, cut into bite-size pieces

1 small onion, chopped

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 (14 1/2-ounce) can chopped tomatoes

1 (14-ounce) can low-salt chicken broth

1/2 cup fresh basil leaves, torn into pieces

1 tablespoon tomato paste

1 bay leaf

1/2 teaspoon dried thyme leaves

2 chicken breast with ribs (about 1 1/2 pounds total)

1 (15-ounce) can organic kidney beans, drained
(rinsed if not organic)

Serving suggestion: crusty bread

DIRECTIONS

Heat the oil in a heavy 5 1/2-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add the celery, carrot, and onion. Sauté the vegetables until the onion is translucent, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir in the tomatoes with their juices, chicken broth, basil, tomato paste, bay leaf, and thyme. Add the chicken breasts; press to submerge.

Bring the cooking liquid to a simmer. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer gently uncovered until the chicken is almost cooked through, turning the chicken breasts over and stirring the mixture occasionally, about 25 minutes. Using tongs, transfer the chicken breasts to a work surface and cool for 5 minutes. Discard the bay leaf. Add the kidney beans to the pot and simmer until the liquid has reduced into a stew consistency, about 10 minutes.

Discard the skin and bones from the chicken breasts. Shred or cut the chicken into bite-size pieces. Return the chicken meat to the stew. Bring the stew just to a simmer. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Ladle the stew into serving bowls and serve with the bread.

WINE SOCIETY OF TEXAS STATE MEETING

A few members from our chapter attended A Hill Country Weekend in Fredericksburg from September 30-October 2 to celebrate WST 15th anniversary. Those of us who arrived on Thursday took a tour of some wineries which offered some surprisingly good wines. We first visited Stone House Winery where we enjoyed Claros, made from a grape grown at their vineyard known as Norton. Later we visited Texas Hills. On Friday we stopped at Sister Creek and Bending Branch Winery. A great lunch was had at the Terrace Grill at Riven Rock Ranch in Comfort. That evening chapter members from DFW, Permian Basin, and our chapter had dinner at The Cabernet Grill, a wonderful restaurant.

On Friday we started the morning off with a private tasting at Perdernales Cellars, followed by lunch and a private barrel tasting tour at Grape Creek Cellars. What a great experience and tasting at both locations. Both wineries went over and above to make our group feel welcomed, especially on a busy weekend.

That evening our venue switched to Becker Winery where we started with a private tour and tasting of many of their award winning wines. A special treat was ending with a tasting of Raven, a blend of Malbec and Petit Verdot. A reception, silent auction and dinner followed.

We want to thank the Hill Country Chapter for setting up this wonderful event. For a slide show of pictures taken at this event go to: <http://share.shutterfly.com/view/flashShareSlideshow.jsp?sid=0AYtGzVs2auWbr4>

Sunday, October 2nd, the Wine Society held their election and annual meeting. It was reported that 50% of the membership voted. The results are as follows:

President – Elizabeth Lutton

Vice President – Shirley Choate

Treasurer – Kent Oberle

Secretary – Ed Dent

Directors – Bill Cowley and Paul Marko

Nancy Pape and Ross Asher, from our chapter, were nominated to be Directors and the board approved the nomination. Welcome Nancy and Ross.

- Ed Dent

REVIEW ON SANTA JULIA MALBEC

Santa Julia Malbec

Familia Zuccardi

Style [Heavy red New World](#), Country Argentina Price \$10

Vintage tasted 2009 Grapes Malbec

Website www.familiazuccardi.com

Overview It's hard not to like the sentiment behind proudly organic growers, even if they can occasionally seem preachy. This eco-friendly Argentine winery turns out a fruity but complex wine that's delicious. Like several of our picks from South America, this wine expertly walks the line between New World and Old World styles, with berries and a nice herbaceous quality.

The nose has berry and grape aromas dominating (yes, we know—all wines may be made of grapes, but not all wines smell like them). There's also a nice herbal note that lends this bottle some Old World class.

Mouth consists of big red berries, herbs, and a healthy dose of food-friendly acid which appealed instantly to our blind tasters.

- Ed Dent

BORDEAUX, BURGUNDY OR . . . ? BY TIM SMITH

For the last twenty years the prices of wines from Bordeaux and Burgundy have steadily escalated to the point where they are all but unreachable to the man in the street, some of whom still have a curious notion that they would like to learn more about French wines. Every week we have customers coming into our shop professing little or no knowledge of French wines. Others come in looking only for Bordeaux or Burgundies, nothing else. This is truly a very wide gap in experience and generated in part by the larger and better known “names,” the owners of which have a lot of money to spend on PR and advertising. However, there are other ways to experience the delightfulness of French wines and that is to venture further afield than the two aforementioned regions.

There are many lesser known regions in France that produce some beautiful wines, not for collecting but for drinking. Drink them now, tonight, or a few years from now but don't sit on them for decades waiting for them to mellow out and gain value. Do that and you can go into the vinegar business!

The south of France – Provence, the Luberon Valley, the Rhône Valley and the Languedoc – are now producing wines that are breathtakingly good but with very affordable price tags. However, beware of the very cheap versions which are almost always made at local wine co-operatives and do not survive the shipping and transportation exercises well. On the label, search for the words, “Mis en Bouteille au Domaine” or “. . . au Château.” These words tell you that the wines were bottled where the grapes were grown and fermented, a very important consideration. It will also, usually, give you a clue as to which wines have lower sulfites than others.

So, if you are tired of feeling as if you have a mouthful of oak when you sip your Cabernet or Chardonnay, try the more subtle French versions of the same grapes. Or, better yet, try the French blends that combine several different grape varieties that fit together like your hand into your glove. And don't forget the extraordinary dry French rosés. These wines are excellent with food or as an aperitif year-round in our climate. For those of you who have burned out on White Zins or Spanish/Portugese rosés (remember Mateus & Lancers?), you owe it to yourself to give these a try.

French wines will provide you with much variety, subtlety and enjoyment and you don't have to take out a bank loan to buy them.

- Tim Smith, French Country Wines, 2433 Bartlett Street, Houston



UNDERSTANDING A GERMAN WINE LABEL BY ROBYN ZACHRY

It's easy to be turned off from buying a wine when the label is hard to understand. This certainly seems to be the case when it comes to buying German wine. The good news is, Germany as a wine producing country is actually fairly easy to understand. They have laws in place that keep things straightforward. The tricky part is learning all of those laws. Hopefully this article will help make buying German wine easier.

Some quick facts:

Germany is the northern most country in which wine can grow.

Germany is the third largest producer of Pinot Noir (Spätburgunder).

Germany produces dry Riesling!

Six points to understanding the label

1. Producer's Name — Generally the family's name preceded by "Weingut" which simply means estate or winery

2. Wine Region — There are 13 designated wine regions in Germany. Single vineyard wines will also give the name of the vineyard, preceded by the name of the town (Example: Westhofener Morstein). The starred regions are more commonly found in the States.

Ahr	Baden	Franken-
Hessische Bergstrasse		Mittelrhein
*Mosel	*Nahe	*Pfalz
*Rheingau	*Reinhessen	Saale-Unstrut
SachsenWürttemberg		

3. Grape Varietal — Below are a few of the more common varieties found in Germany. By law the labeled variety must be at least 85% of the wine.

White:

Riesling: The most noble grape varietal

Müller-Thurgau: Cross of Riesling and Chasselas

Silvaner: Cross of Traminer and Österreichisch Weiss

Grauburgunder: Pinot Gris (literally: gray Burgundy)

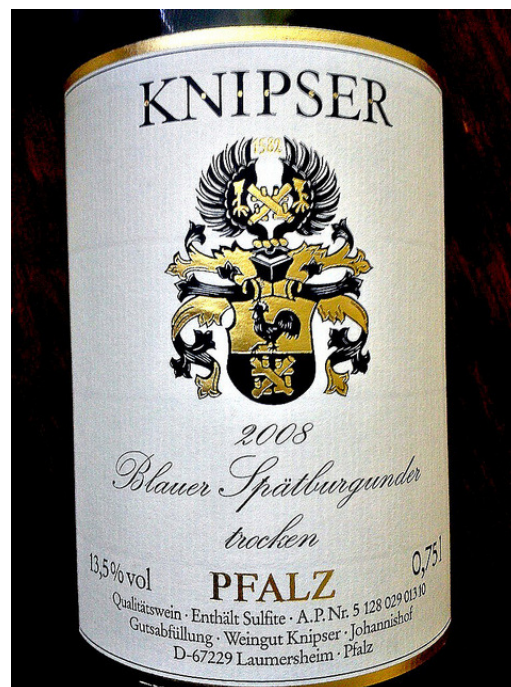
Weißburgunder: Pinot Blanc (literally: white Burgundy)

Red:

Spätburgunder: Pinot Noir (literally: late burgundy)

Blauer Portugieser: Often made into a rosé

Dornfelder: Cross between Helfensteiner & Heroldrebe



UNDERSTANDING A GERMAN WINE LABEL, CONT.

4. Ripeness & Classification — This is where it gets a bit tricky. There are basically two ways to classify German wine: Qualitätswein and Prädikatswein. Within Germany there is also Landwein & Tafelwein, but you won't see any of that here. Of the two (Qualitätswein and Prädikatswein) I would argue that one is not better than the other. Prädikatswein simply states a designation of when the grapes were picked. Knowing this gives you an idea about the sweetness of the wine, but not a rule. The sweetness is better determined by the alcohol percentage. This gives you an idea on the amount of sugar that was fermented out of the wine. Since chaptalization (adding sugar to the must) is not allowed with Prädikatswein, I find this to be a better indicator. It's certainly possible to have a dry Spätlese, for example.

Levels of Prädikatswein

Kabinett: main harvest, dry to semi-sweet

Spätlese: late harvest, dry to semi-sweet

Auslese: select harvest, sweet

Beerenauslese: select berry harvest, dessert wine

Eiswein: ice wine, dessert wine

Trockenbeerenauslese: dry berry selection, sweet dessert wine

If you see "Qualitätswein" on the label, it must come from one of the 13 wine-growing regions. The rules for these wines are lower, but doesn't make for a lesser product. It is not uncommon for a producer to release a Qualitätswein that actually meets all the requirements to be a Spätlese. Because of the heavy trend towards dry wines in Germany, it's more difficult to sell a Spätlese trocken than a Qualitätswein trocken. That term Spätlese just seems to make people think of sugar.

5. Sweetness of Wine — Sometimes the sweetness of wine will be indicated on the bottle with either Prädikatswein or Qualitätswein.

Trocken: Dry, maximum residual sugar of 9 grams per liter

Halbtrocken: Half-dry, maximum residual sugar of 18 grams per liter

Feinherb: Off-dry, generally high acid wines that cancel out their higher residual sugar

Lieblich: Semi-sweet, maximum residual sugar of 45 grams per liter

Süß: Sweet, more than 45 grams per liter of residual sugar

6. Other terms you may see:

Gutsabfüllung: Estate bottled

Enthält Sulfite: Contains sulfites

A.P. Nr.: Quality control number

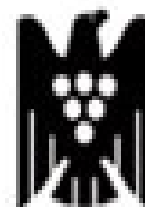
G.G.: Grosses Gewächs (you've found a Great Growth!)

It could be argued that if you simply find the bottle with the VDP logo, you're safe when it comes to buying quality German wine.

The logo of the eagle with a grape cluster at its center can be found on the capsule of the bottle. The VDP (Verband

Deutscher Prädikatsweingüter) is an association of top growers in Germany with less than 200 members. Of course, there are many great producers that don't sport this logo.

Cheers! Or as they say - zum Wohl! Here's to drinking more German wine.



VDP. Prädikatsweingut

WINE — PRICE AND VALUE BY JEFF BINNEY, GRAPE CREEK VINEYARDS

Let's face it, sometimes purchasing a bottle of wine can be a pretty daunting experience. We see rows and rows of Cabernet Sauvignon ranging in price from 10 to 150 dollars a bottle. Is the latter really 15 times better, and, if so, why?

To answer this question, I'm going to borrow from an article written years ago by my old friend Bill Stevens. Bill writes about our perceptions of the cost of a wine on either a "price/value ratio" or a "price/image ratio".

A simple analogy can help explain this. I drive the least expensive Saturn made (price/value). It gets me from point "A" to point "B" just fine. A Lamborghini (price/image) will do the same, but with a whole lot more perks, bells and whistles. It would also do a great deal more for my self-image and, if I were single, my ability to get dates.

Expensive wines definitely cost more to produce, but not 15 times more. In return, they provide us with much greater sensual pleasure. These wines are more complex and intense in both flavor and aroma. Very pricey wines are also richer in color, with a much longer finish and excellent balance. In addition, they are very age worthy; and with limited availability become more desirable and collectable.

When we choose a wine for price/value, we tend to think "This is a good wine for the price." When we move to price/image, we say to ourselves "This is a great wine, I don't care what it costs." The cost of a price/value wine is often figured on a "cost-plus" basis; where the winery adds up its production cost and then marks it up to whatever point it feels necessary for a desired profit. When we cross over to a price/image wine, the bottle cost is most often determined by what we are willing to pay for it. As a wine becomes more desirable and sought after, the price tag goes up.

Since pricey wine costs more to produce, let's look at three factors that can drive up a bottle's cost: the grapes, the vineyard and the barrels.

The price of grapes (even among the same varietal) can vary greatly depending on their quality. Cabernet Sauvignon (integral to many of the world's most expensive wines) is often the most costly to produce. A well-managed Cabernet vineyard will typically have a low yield per acre, and labor cost will increase (and tonnage decrease) because a percentage of clusters are pruned so the vines produce even less, but more intense, fruit. This, in turn, gives us a more complex wine.

Other things happen in the vineyard to increase costs. Grape leaves can be hand pruned (called canopy management) to allow more direct sunlight to strike the grapes.

Also, some of the very best vineyards are terraced on sloping hills at as much as a 70 degree angle. This allows more sun to hit the grapes, but terracing requires hand harvesting which is expensive. Terraced vineyards also allow better drainage when it rains, which, because the grapes take on less water, yields more concentrated fruit. This drainage, however, causes erosion that requires costly soil maintenance.

Now, let's talk about oak. Pricey wines are aged in a higher percentage of new oak for a longer period of time. New barrels, both French and American, are expensive, but allow greater extraction of flavor and tannin. This again creates a more intense, complex wine. The extra time at the winery also increases labor cost, with more money possibly spent on marketing and packaging.

VIRGINIA IS FOR VIOGNIER BY TENLEY FUKUI

Remember the bumper stickers that said Virginia is for Lovers? On our trip this summer we learned that Viognier was made the state grape of Virginia. I had fondly remembered the Horton Viognier from 1995 that Robert Parker classified as a 92-point wine. I ventured there and thought I was drinking ambrosia; the wine was so redolent with the scent of honeysuckle and peonies. This trip I brought my husband, Dave, along.

Virginia truly is a Viognier lover's paradise. However, there are plenty of reds to keep red wine drinkers happy too. Dave will write about them in detail later. The Horton Viognier did not disappoint, the floral notes with honey and tropical fruit nose was wonderful. We were extremely lucky to speak to the owner, Mr. Dennis Horton, about growing the Rkatsiteli grape and the differences in growing grapes and making wine in Virginia from Texas. His Rkatsiteli tasted faintly like orange



peels, a lovely white. Both Horton's Viognier and Barboursville's Phileo (Moscato, Gewurztraminer and other varietals) have stayed consistently good since I tasted them in the 1990s. Barboursville is another must see winery, and their Viognier was selected by Prince William and Kate for their Royal wedding across the pond. For history buffs, Barboursville is on the grounds of a house designed by Thomas Jefferson for Mr. Barboursville. The ruins remain.



At Barboursville's restaurant, Palladio, we had a five course meal paired with their 2010 Brut Rosé, 2008 Chardonnay Reserve, 2009 Viognier Reserve and we ended with Phileo—all wonderful wines. What sticks in my memory the most was the superb cheese plate that we had for dessert. There were 12

VIRGINIA IS FOR VIOGNIER, CONT.

different cheeses from Italy or Virginia, each accompanied by a dollop of something tasty to go with it (mango, honey, raspberry coulis, etc.). Two stand out cheeses were an Alta Langa La Tor Piemonte with cow, sheep and goat's milk and our favorite, the Brescia Taleggio from Lombardy which was 100% cow's milk. They even accommodated my inability to eat gluten and provided a separate gluten free cookie I could eat with the cheeses. Now that's service.

However, our favorite dinner was at Restaurant Pomme in Gordonsville. Chef Gerard Gasparini was a chef for the French Pavilion at the World Expo in Montréal which Dave attended in 1967. I found the salad with Brie de Meaux and apples was perfect as a light summer starter after a heavy day of wine tasting. I'm still savoring the memory of the pork loin with a cranberry reduction sauce. Dave had a strip steak with a good peppercorn sauce. Of course, I finished with a flourless chocolate cake. This was the most authentic French food I had tasted since I was in Paris. They even had a Laguiole steak knife.

If you only have time for two wineries on a trip to Virginia I highly recommend stopping at Horton and Barboursville. However, it would be a shame if you missed out on the other 194 wineries; Virginia surpassed Texas for more wineries last year. Virginia also has quite a few distilleries and Dave was chomping at the bit to visit them.

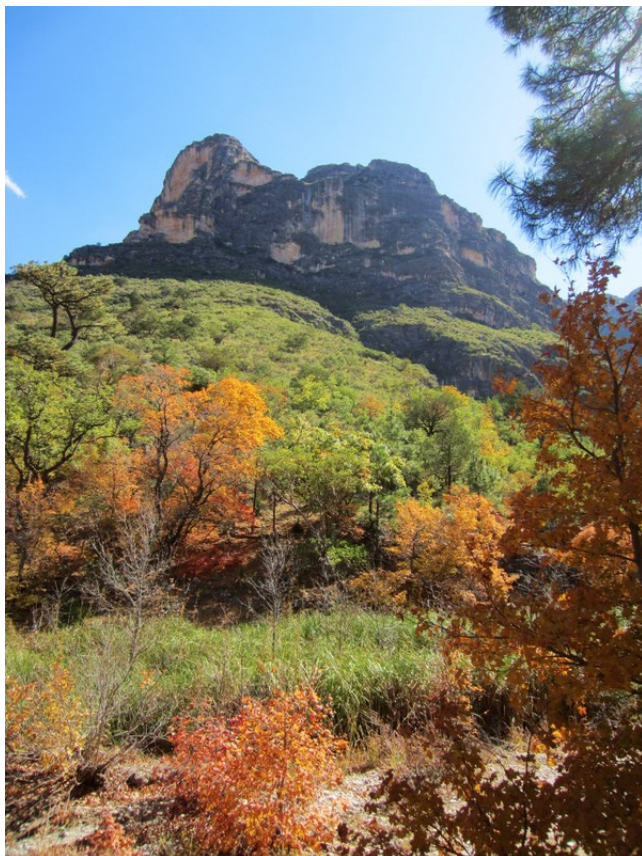


Horton

2011 ANNUAL MCKITTRICK CANYON WINE HIKE BY ANGELA COOPER

November 5 & 6, 2011 – The Wine Society of Texas – Permian Basin Chapter – Once again had another successful wine tasting and hike in beautiful McKittrick Canyon. Each year on the first weekend of November, the group journeys to the Guadalupe Mountains National Park to visit McKittrick Canyon for the annual wine tasting picnic and hike. Attendees arrived Saturday afternoon in Carlsbad, NM for an overnight stay before the day of the hike. A pizza party was hosted by the society event committee at the hotel for a fun social gathering the evening before the hike.

Sunday morning the group embarked on an hour drive to Guadalupe Mountains National Park – McKittrick Canyon for an 8:30 am start on the trail. Those that found the trail too strenuous walked a short distance just past the canyon entrance to set up for drawing or painting and enjoyed a smaller picnic and wine tasting together.



The annual event brings the society as well as visitors passing through the park together for sharing of members' personal selection of wines and specially prepared picnic foods. The 2-mile hike this time of year is beautiful with the gorgeous fall colors at their peak. This year, there were approximately 30 members that attended and 20 visitors that joined the group at the final destination in the heart of the canyon "Pratt's Cabin." An optional 1-mile hike further up the trail to the "Grotto" was pursued by several of the members who are interested in exploring and enjoying additional spectacular scenery after the picnic gathering.

Members of the group traveled from as far as Dallas to attend the special event. The Permian Basin Chapter members were happy to welcome fellow hikers passing by to indulge in the lavish wine tasting and picnic event. Some of the visitors included groups from Sweden and Poland. The event has become a tradition each year for the society, and continues to grow in number for attendees each year. In the past and present, many groups from all over the world and sur-

2011 ANNUAL MCKITTRICK CANYON WINE HIKE, CONT.

rounding areas will plan a visit to the canyon on this particular weekend so they may join the Wine Society of Texas' – Permian Basin Chapter – for this memorable event. Many who have experienced this event express that it is like celebrating “Thanksgiving in the Canyon.” What a great way to experience the beauty of nature with great friends, making new friends, tasting fine wines and enjoying fabulous foods!

The Wine Society of Texas' mission is to enhance the appreciation of wine and to educate the experienced as well as the beginning wine taster. The society supports the promotion of wine makers, grape growers and fosters the knowledge of oenology and viticulture. The society is also active in helping with charitable activities throughout the state of Texas and promoting the responsible consumption of wine. If you are interested in joining The Wine Society of Texas next year - We welcome you! Visit our Website at: <http://www.winesocietyoftexas.org>



LINK PAGE

I am not certain why, but some of the embedded internet links do not translate correctly when our Microsoft Publisher source document is printed to its final PDF format. If you have any problems with any of the internet links in the newsletter, please check here for the original connection.

Thanks, Dave

P06. Heavy red New World <http://www.fearlesscritic.com/wine/style/19/heavy-red-new-world>

THE WINE SOCIETY OF TEXAS - GREATER HOUSTON

WWW.WINESOCIETYOFTEXAS.ORG

Wine Appreciation Through Education

Newsletter E-mail:

winesoctxhoustonnewsltr@live.com



Do you know this cat? Which Texas winery is the home of this cat? At the next meeting that I attend, there will be a drawing, from the correct entries submitted, for a bottle of wine. - David

EDITOR'S CORNER

Winter is here with the drop in temperature, solstice and the taste for bolder bodied wines. Even though we are busy with holidays it's a great time to look back at the wonderful wines we sipped this year.

The Wine Society of Texas' Greater Houston Chapter had several events this fall including the annual state meeting in Fredericksburg with wine tastings and tours plus an event at Pleasant Hills with great wine and food. We even had a surprise vertical tasting of their Cabernet Sauvignons. Please join us in January for "Discovering Austria without the Jet Lag" at Charivari.

The articles in this newsletter were created by members, winery owners, wine experts and friends of the Wine Society of Texas' Greater Houston Chapter. Thank you for your continued support. We are always looking for additional wine-related articles. What can you share? Perhaps you found a fantastic food and wine pairing, a wine bar with boutique wines or don't mind sharing a favorite recipe incorporating wine. Or tell us about your recent wine stories both local and while you were traveling.

PLEASANT HILL EVENT PICTURES



PLEASANT HILL EVENT PICTURES



PLEASANT HILL EVENT PICTURES



PLEASANT HILL EVENT PICTURES

