From the President

By Joe Borrello

As of June 1, 2017 Tasters Guild has officially become affiliated with the American Wine Society, a 6,000 member non-profit organization based in Scranton, PA.

This affiliation will give you the opportunity for additional wine and food educational experiences. There is no cost to you through your current membership expiration date. AWS has similar educational objectives as Tasters Guild and it sponsors a large, three day informative wine conference for its membership. This conference is moved to different locations around the country in November of each year. My wife, Barb, and I attended the conference last November in California and participated in a number of excellent wine tasting seminars. Over 600 AWS members were in attendance. AWS also publishes an AWS Journal quarterly magazine and a newsletter which will be distributed to Tasters Guild members either electronically or in a printed copy.

All Tasters Guild members in good standing as of July 1, 2017 will receive a complimentary membership to AWS through at least December of 2017 or until their current Tasters Guild membership expires. You will be eligible for all the benefits of both organizations.

You Remain a Tasters Guild Member
Tasters Guild chapters will retain their individual identity as well as an affiliation with the American Wine Society and will continue to hold local events for their members as they have always been doing. Your local chapter will be identified as a “Tasters Guild Chapter of the American Wine Society.” It will be up to the discretion of all Tasters Guild and AWS Chapter Directors as to whether individual chapters within the same geographical vicinity wish to merge their membership into one combined chapter. AWS and TG members within the vicinity of neighboring chapters may request to be added to more than one chapter mailing for additional event notices sponsored by both groups. “Snowbirds” may ask to be added to chapter mailings in seasonal residencies.

The national office of Tasters Guild will continue to sponsor the International Wine Judging and the Consumer’s Wine Judging as well as publish the summer and holiday issue of the Tasters Guild Journal. TG will also organize and host at least one of its popular wine cruises each year.

The Tasters Guild national office will not, however, be involved with new or renewed membership issues after June 1, 2017. That will become the responsibility and jurisdiction of AWS.

If you have any comments or questions regarding this affiliation, feel free to contact our national office or your local Chapter Director.
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The Red Blend Trend

By Michael Schafer

The fastest growing category of wine in the USA is wine made from a blend of red grapes, or, as they are popularly called, “red blends.” Red blends now rank third behind Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon in US sales. While many younger wine enthusiasts may believe they “discovered” red blends, blended wines are as old as wine itself. The range of blended wines is vast so we’ll focus on blends of red grapes.

A Bit of History
Way back in the day before viticulture (the science of grape-growing) evolved, farmers would plant “field blends” of different grapes. From Germany to Sicily and from Portugal to Georgia, the earliest wines were blends of grapes that grew best in their native habitats. Frequently these field blends were wild grapes that had just grown together without any cultivation. As wine-making progressed, grape growers noticed that some grapes “played better” together than others.

In California, many of the early winemakers were of Italian descent. It was perfectly natural to them to plant field blends of Zinfandel, Charbono, Petite Sirah and other grapes in a single row of vines. They would frequently pick all the grapes at the same time, even if they were not all ripe. They would then ferment them together, a process known as co-fermentation. After the phylloxera louse struck in the 1880s, vines were re-planted and the mix became more predictable. Today’s winemakers usually ferment different grapes separately and then blend them together for the finished wine.

Why Blend Different Grapes
Why blend different grapes or types of wines? If the grapes were great and the quality of their juice is good enough to bottle on its own, why blend? The goal of the winemaker as she/he blends different wines from individual grapes is to create wine that tastes better blended than “straight” ones. Another reason is to soften the “edges” of the wine. In other words, to soften the tannins. The best reason to blend different grapes is to create a more interesting, enjoyable and complex wine. It can enhance aromas, color, texture, body and finish, making it a much more enjoyable beverage. In essence, sometimes the sum is greater than the parts!

In most of the United States, wine, by federal law, must be 75% of whatever varietal is on the label. The other 25% is, shall we say, “negotiable,” meaning it can be any grapes whatsoever! Many domestic Pinot Noirs are “enhanced” with Syrah or other red grapes, to darken their color. While you may be surprised, many American wine drinkers believe the darker the red wine, the better it is. While you know better, having enjoyed a beautiful Barolo or Barbaresco, much less an ethereal Burgundy, this misconception still persists!

Famous Red Blend Styled Wines
In Bordeaux red wines have been blends for centuries. While not all red Bordeaux wines are blends, the majority of these classic wines are blends of up to five different grapes.

The classic blends of Bordeaux are many and varied. By law, only five grapes are used in red wines from this famous region of France. They are Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petite Verdot, Cabernet Franc, Carménère, St. Macaire, Gros Verdat, and that oh so popular grape from Argentina, Malbec. That’s it, and only five or six of them are normally blended to assemble those long-lived reds from the Left and Right Banks of the Gironde River.

Each vintage brings new challenges and different amounts of each wine for the final blend. While a Right Bank chateau may traditionally use 60% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc and 5% Petite Verdot, that blend may very well change depending on the harvest. Left Bank chateaus historically use a higher percentage of Cabernet Sauvignon than Merlot, so the blend could be 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, 5% Petit Verdot and 5% Malbec. It’s all a matter of taste by the winemaker!

Meritage wines, pronounced “MEHR ih tijh,” not “MEHR ih tage” are blends from mostly California. The made-up name was coined in 1989 from the words merit and heritage to describe blended wines from the USA. To be labeled a Meritage, the wine must adhere to the following standards: 1. It must be a blend of two or more of the Bordeaux grape varieties listed above (no more than 90 percent of any single variety may go into a Meritage wine); 2. It must be the winery’s best wine of its type; 3. It must be produced and bottled by a U.S. winery from grapes that carry a U.S. appellation; and 4. Its production is limited to a maximum 25,000 cases per vintage. Rather strict standards for a blended wine.

Chianti is another very famous red blend. This Italian classic features the Sangiovese grape which comprises the majority of this red blend. Up to 20% of other grapes, usually Cabernet, Merlot or Syrah are permitted to enhance, soften and add to the complexity of this Tuscan treasure.

In Côtes du Rhône wines from the south of France, the classic blend is composed of Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvèdre (GSM). Other grapes frequently used to blend a better wine are Cinsault and Carignan. Legendary Chateauneuf-du-Pape wines are primarily Grenache-based, yet 15 different grape varieties are permitted in the blend!

Robust Australian red blends are frequently modeled after the GSM formula. However the Aussies can be extremely unconventional with their blends. While Shiraz (also known as Syrah) is the grape usually associated with wines from Down Under, it’s often blended with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Grenache, and Mourvèdre.

Spanish wines from the Rioja region are usually blends of predominantly Tempranillo followed by Garnacha (Grenache in France) with smaller proportions of Mazuelo and Graciano. These wines, particularly the Reservas and Grand Reservas are amazing values and have long-lasting aging potential.

One wine many aficionados don’t think of as being a red blend is Port, the classic dessert wine. Before brandy is added to the wine to stop fermentation, the wine is a blend of native Portuguese grapes. The most popular of these include Touriga Franca and Tinta Barroca, as well as many others, each of which provides a unique note, ultimately resulting in a better wine than simply a single grape.

Red blends have a long and storied history. They continue to evolve, limited only by your thirst and the creativity of winemakers. Slainte!

Michael Schafer Esq., The Wine Counselor® is the charismatic wine educator, speaker, Sommelier, C.S.W., writer and consultant who entertains while educating. His humorous and fun approach to wine is reflected in his trademark phrase, “I taste bad wine so you don’t have to.”

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The Zinfandel grape can be traced back to Croatia where it is still alive and well. There they call it Crljenak Kastelanski (Red Castel), Plavac Veliki or historically Tribidrag. When in Chicago several years ago, my wife spotted a bottle of Croatian Plavac produced by a joint venture headed by Mike Grgich. We excitedly shared it with our Bosnian friend who owned a small restaurant in our town. As we tasted this wonderful wine I told our friend how I was blown away by the quality. I compared the Croatian Plavac to a French Grand Cru thinking that I was giving it an extraordinary compliment. His reply was, “of course, our people were making fine wine and serving haut cuisine back when the French were still living in caves.” His assessment was absolutely correct.

The Path of the Grape

We westerners forget how much older the cultures of the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean are relative to Western Europe, which most Americans perceive as “really, really old!” Much later, maybe 2000 years ago, the Phoenicians brought that grape which became known as Primitivo to the southern “heel” of the Italian peninsula in what is now the Apulia region. And, much, much, much later during the early 19th century, Count Agoston Haraszy of Hungary brought it to California. Although in Italy the grape was known as Primitivo, it was a favorite of the Italian immigrants to California who for unknown reasons, called it Zinfandel.

When the University of California at Davis classified all of the known grapes growing in the Americas, they classified Zinfandel as a region II variety. In other words, it was viewed as a grape well suited to relatively cool regions. This is because it produces sugar very well and even in cool places like Carneros and Monterey, it easily builds enough sugar to make wine of 13% or above alcohol.

Perhaps because many of the immigrant farmers settled in some of the warmer areas of California or perhaps just chance, Zinfandel quickly earned a reputation as a grape that was quite heat and drought tolerant. Consequently, today, much of the best old vine Zinfandels come from vineyards planted 50 to 150 years ago in places like Amador County, Sonoma County, Paso Robles and even areas in the Central Valley like Lodi and Contra Costa County. Baja Mexico is producing remarkably fine Zinfandel these days too. The challenge here is not to get sugar.

In a warm, dry setting, Zinfandel will often be sugar ripe by mid-September. However, to gain complexity, finesse and nuanced subtleties, it may take until the later part of October. Consequently, in a warm climate, by the time flavors are completely mature, the sugars are at a point where the natural alcohol will push 15% or more. To make fine, elegant, balanced wine with a whopping 15% alcohol is a real challenge. Some wineries like Cline, Buena Vista and Bogle have done a splendid job of lightening up their Zins without making any wimpy wines. However, a few decades ago when Scott Harvey, then of Santino Vineyards in Amador county, made an experimental “second harvest” Zinfandel picked in January from secondary grape producing canes. The wine didn’t taste anything like what I think of Zinfandel. It was a remarkable example of liquid raspberry jam that had zip and sizzle to it.

That being said, most consumers, myself included, think of Zinfandel as a big, bold, ripe, jammy, deep black/red fruit bomb with subtle spice, chocolate and marmalade nuances, rich in body yet with a lighter, fresher finish than one could possibly expect from a 15% alcohol wine.

The History of Zinfandel Lingers

Scott Harvey, Amador County native who earned his winemaking credentials in Germany, landed his first professional winemaking job at Montevina Winery. He quickly learned the dynamics of producing big wines from ripe fruit while keeping elegance, complexity and balance as the hallmarks of his wine. Scott now has his own winery but his most sought after wine is his Old Vine Reserve Zinfandel. He tells the story that his grandfather grew grapes on a small four acre vineyard and sold the fruit to the local Portuguese and Basques. Whatever fruit was leftover would go into his home-made wine served at all the family gatherings. Once Scott became a pro, it became obvious that his grandfather was not exactly an astute winemaker. So Scott started buying all of his elder’s grapes that were not needed for family get-togethers. To this day, Scott still makes his signature Old Vine Reserve Zinfandel from that small family vineyard as well as his 1869 vineyard planted in that year by Italian immigrants who had come to Amador in search of Gold.

I don’t know if those Italian immigrants ever found their Gold, but I am sure thankful they left us some fantastic old Zinfandel vines. Grazie.
By Dick Scheer, Village Corner, Ann Arbor, MI

The Retailer's Shelf

**Rotari 2013 Trento Metodo Classico Brut, Italy $16**
Northeast Italy produces the country’s finest dry, Champagne-method sparkling wines, most notably the regions of Lombardy and Trentino. The latter’s Rotari winery, named after a medieval warrior king, selects Chardonnay from high-altitude vineyards in the shadow of the Dolomites. Aged 24 months on its bottle lees, this 2013 features outstanding bottle bouquet, class, and finesse. Serve with caviar and smoked salmon canapes.

**Clifford Bay 2016 Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, New Zealand $11**
Southern Marlborough’s Awatere River empties into Clifford Bay. Here the eponymous winery was founded in 1994. This region’s cool environs and unique greywacke alluvial soil foster a special sort of Sauvignon Blanc. Lovely, fresh, floral and penetrating aroma followed by a zesty taste of tangelo and passion fruit. I suggest steamed green lipped mussels in a lemon grass-scented broth.

**Adegas Morgadio 2015 Rias Baixas Albarino, Spain $16**
This wine comes from the Rias Baixas zone of Galicia, Spain’s green, northwest corner, which is under the influence of Atlantic, not Mediterranean, weather systems. Morgadio is at Condado do Tea, the easternmost Rias Baixas sector. Indigenous, scented white grape varieties such as Albarino account for unique and remarkable dry white wines here. This one’s rich, full, stone-fruit-scented, and ripe in sunny 2015. Impressively full extract, padding, volume. Big time Albarino in its full honeysuckle glory this summer, Morgadio’s is always one of the best. An excellent choice for shrimp salad.

**Nik Weis 2015 Mosel Riesling Urban, Germany $11**
Weis, the proprietor of Mittel Mosel’s St. Urbans Hof estate, is a restless winemaker involved in many vinous ventures. From purchased fruit, his Urban bottling offers pedigreed Riesling at a most affordable price. Oh, the nose spells stone, etch, and extract combined with bright central Mosel Riesling fruit. This vintage is a tad sweeter than the norm for this cuvee thanks to 2015’s warmth, and it’s slightly lower in acidity as well, though the finish is mighty tangy. Suits me. An attractive companion to sashimi.

**Cooper Mountain Vineyards 2015 Willamette Valley Pinot Gris Cooper Hill, Oregon $15**
Long-time Tasters Guild chapter director and wine judge, Jack Duey represented Cooper Mountain Vineyards for many years. Founded by the Gross Family, its first vines were planted in 1978 and first wines made in 1987. Today, there are over 100 acres under vine in the Chehalem Mountains zone of Oregon’s Willamette Valley. ‘Cooper Hill’ is the estate’s modest-priced second label. Good and full and ripe. A great introduction to 2015 Oregon Pinot Gris. Rich and round on the palate, soft and engaging. Proper acid too. Flavors of apple and nut. Put it right to use with poached salmon.

**True Myth 2014 Edna Valley Chardonnay, California $15**
The Niven family pioneered winegrowing in San Luis Obispo County’s Edna Valley starting in 1973. Jack Niven went on to secure American Viticultural Area status for his beloved valley. True Myth is his latest Paragon Vineyard brand. There’s something special about Edna Valley Chardonnay: its lift, its vitality. Fabulous light oak and very crisp fruit on the nose. Yes, the palate echoes crisp and juicy apple-citrus. A wonderfully versatile food Chardonnay, so let’s start with sage-rubbed, clay oven-roasted chicken.

**Bieler Pere Et Fils 2016 Coteaux D’aix En Provence Rose Sabine, France $13**
Provence is a font of dry rosés, its wines riding the crest of rosé’s wave of popularity in America. Most come from the broad appellation, Cotes de Provence. An elite few issue from the cooler hillside vineyards around Aix en Provence, where the University of Michigan’s French-language department has a sister school. Bieler’s is of 52% Grenache, with Syrah, Cabernet, Cinsault, and Rolle (Vermentino). Fresh and full and ideal for this appellation, it shows plenty of fruit on the nose. The palate offers an array of both body and beauty attractions. A natural with bouillabaisse.

**SeaGlass 2015 Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir, California $12**
Pinot Noir favors cool climate areas. Santa Barbara Pinot Noir reminds us that California’s microclimates go from cool to warm not in a north-south direction but rather west-east. Distance from the Pacific is the leading factor. SeaGlass’s Los Alamos-area vineyard receives plenty of ocean influence in terms of both cool breezes and fog. Bright, brisk, crunchy Santa Barbara take here. Spot on, it’s deep and snappy both. The palate reads rich and complete too. One of the best vintages of this. Luscious on the follow through, with acid to balance. Serve with sweet-and-sour spare ribs.

**Barista 2014 Western Cape Pinotage, South Africa $14**
He was here last month! In my office! Winemaker Bertus Fourie, the creator of coffee Pinotage. One year, he tried a new yeast strain to ferment his Pinotage. When he returned to the cellar the next day, the atmosphere was full of coffee aromas. At first, Bertus thought he was in big trouble, but after his British importer tasted the wine, he bought the whole lot! Coffee, mocha, black cherry aromas indeed. Yes, clear, dark fruit and dark roast coffee. Bitter espresso. On the palate, definite bitter chocolate and coffee. Great acid. Would be a fine companion to blackened ribeye.

**15 Finca Los Olmos 2015 Mendoza Malbec Mountain Door, Argentina $12**
Finca Los Olmos incorporates approximately 200 acres of vineyards on stony, alluvial soil at 3500 feet elevation. This terroir, with its wide-range diurnal temperature variations, fosters Malbec wines of striking finesse. Fresh and elegant, this is a decidedly high-
altitude, cool-vintage take on Malbec. Snappy, it sports attractive Morello cherry flavor and full charm. Fresh acidity plays a strong role at rendering this food-worthy. Peking duck with hoisin sauce would make a good match.

13 Lange Twins 2014 Lodi Zinfandel Caricature Old Vine, California $13
When I stand next to one of the Lange twins, it’s a picture of Mutt and Jeff. They are TALL! Randall’s wife comes from Chelsea MI, 15 miles west of my shop. The twins’ grandfather put in the family’s first Zinfandel vines 100 years back, so this label’s ‘Old Vine’ claim is plainly legit. At 15.4% alcohol, it’s no wimpy wine. Wow! The complete picture here. Ultra spicy oak and old vines black fruit concentration. Solid, coastal-kissed, large. Wears its alcohol well. Yes, berry fruit and oak echo on the palate. Good form. Density and ripe fruit sweetness, balanced by power. Long aftertaste with fine, ending tannins to keep it dry and honest. Enjoy this with lamb burgers off the grill.

Tavernello 2015 Romagna Sangiovese, Italy $6
Caviro winery’s Tavernello is the Number 1 wine brand in Italy. Based on the quality and price of this wine, little wonder. Good, accurate Sangiovese character in the lighter-than-Tuscan Romagna style, with sunny 2015 oomph too, it makes an attractive combo of warmth and vigor. The taste is racy, spicy. Plus it features Sangiovese smoothness against fine tannic grip. A versatile food wine value, I recommend serving this with oregano-rubbed roasted game hen.

Bodegas San Valero 2014 Carinena Garnacha Castillo De Monseran, Spain $9
In France it’s Grenache, in Spain, Garnacha (and in Sardinia, Cannonau). From Chateauneuf du Pape to Priorat, it’s a leading player in western Mediterranean basin vineyards. The dry, stony landscape of Carinena, in the kingdom of Aragon between Rioja and Madrid, grow gnarly old Garnacha vines that yield wines of intense varietal character. Full, sweet, spicy, peppery, ideal Carinena Garnacha nose. Wow, great acid and structure, with Garnacha sweet strawberry and raspberry center. Cracked pepper, raspberry-seed zestiness against glycerol roundness play out on the finish. Here’s a great paella wine!

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Mont Gravet 2016 Herault Carignan Vieilles Vignes, France $9
Mont Gravet is a creation of Melvin Master, author, restaurateur, and wine importer extraordinaire. The rouge in this range comes from Carignan (pronounced ‘carry-on’) vines up to 100 years old growing on the high hillsides of Herault, a sub-zone of France’s great Languedoc region. Fresh fruited and very peppery, vigorous, accomplished, all-embracing aromatic set, The palate reconfirms that this Carignan has it all. It’s balanced, fresh, spicy, vital, and fully useful at its tender age. Impressive length and bargain price to boot. Match it with cassoulet.

Domingo Perez Marin Sanlucar De Barrameda Manzanilla La Guita, Spain $15
Sanlucar lies at the Atlantic point of Sherry’s triangle. Its sea breeze-influenced Palomino vineyards yield dry Sherries of ultimate levity and freshness. When patrons inquired after Senor Marin’s top Manzanilla, he responded: ‘Do you have the guita’ (slang for ‘the bucks’)? Guita’s more familiar meaning is ‘string;’ thus there is a string attached to each bottle. Oh, this is clean as a whistle, and fully alert. It’s total, textbook Manzanilla. The palate reads lithe and pure, tasting of almond, green olive, and sea salt. At this price, I’ve got the guita to have some of this in my fridge. A simple tapas platter featuring almonds and assorted olives would be ideal.
When I go to grill a steak, bake a loaf of bread, or fry chicken, I look for the food to have some shade of brown when it is finished. Where does this color come from? The steak was red even after I cooked it in my sous vide bath, the bread and coated chicken were white. What made them change their color?

The answer to both questions is the Maillard reaction (pronounced my-yar.) Named after French physician and chemist Louis Camille Maillard; the Maillard reaction is the reaction of amino acids, from proteins with sugars or carbohydrates, at temperatures above 250°F (120°C).  

So what? Why should I want to have this reaction occur? Well, just like caramelization, the Maillard reaction adds flavors to the food I am cooking. My sous-vide steak is OK, see it in the first photograph but finishing it on a hot grill or pan gives it an extra depth of flavor as well as color, we can see that color in the second photograph.

One myth that needs to be addressed at this point, is that the Maillard reaction, or searing meat, does not “seal in the juices” of the meat. We can see in the picture that juices from the meat have come through the crust formed, (see the right hand portion of the second photo about 2/3 of the way up.) The juices were not “sealed” in the meat.

I can poach chicken and make dinner but the crunch of fried chicken is a welcome addition. A piece of bread is fine, but if I put it in the toaster it becomes something different and more complex.

The fact that this reaction does not occur very rapidly until the temperature reaches 250°F, means that when we boil potatoes, rice or anything else this reaction does not happen. Because water boils at 212°F our food does not get to the temperature we need to carry out the reaction. We need higher temperatures for this reaction to occur, for example with dry heat, in the oven; on a hot skillet; over a hot fire; in hot fat or oil.

The Chemistry of It All

Okay, now comes the science-y part, what we are doing when we brown meats, bread and other protein containing food is that we are performing a chemical reaction. The reaction starts with a part of the amino acid referred to as an “amine” that can react with a part of the sugar called a “carboxyl group.” This reaction takes these amino acids and carbohydrate sugars and converts them into larger molecules through this polymerization reaction; the Maillard reaction that gives the characteristic brown color and texture to our burgers, steaks, chops and bread crust.

We can help the Maillard reaction along using chemistry, as we increase the pH of the food the Maillard reaction will proceed faster. What is pH? Well, pH is a way to measure how acidic a mixture is. The lower the pH the more acidic something is. How do we increase the pH of food? The easy way is to add something basic (let’s call a base is an anti-acid*) and we have one around our kitchen, it is baking soda.

If you make up a batch of pancakes and leave the baking soda out of the recipe (if your recipe does not include it, or buttermilk, find a new one) you will notice that your pancakes will not brown as well as they do with it added. By adding the baking soda we increase the pH of the batter and encourage the browning of the pancakes on the griddle. Baking soda and buttermilk also combine to make pancakes light and fluffy by forming carbon dioxide in the batter that give tiny air pockets. The making of soft pretzels also uses this chemical enhancement of the Maillard reaction, the step of boiling the uncooked pretzel dough in lye (we can use baking soda at home) then, baking the pretzels gives the deep brown color we associate with German soft pretzels.

The Maillard reaction is an important part of cooking in our home kitchens, and now it is another bit of science you can use to enhance your cooking at home.

* Yes, antacids are bases that we use to take care of upset stomachs.

This recipe comes from my family’s pastor’s wife when I was a youth. This whole-wheat bread is great toasted and while the recipe makes 6 loaves, the loaves freeze well. Note: I have always used the oatmeal in making this bread.

Maillard Reaction Whole Wheat Bread

**Ingredients**

1/3 cup yeast (5-6 Tbs)
2 cups whole wheat flour
1 1/2 cups - 2 cups rye flour
1 1/2 cups - 2 cups corn meal
3 cups white or unbleached flour
6 cups water + 2 cups pwd milk (or 6 cups milk)
1 cup honey
3 Tbs salt
2/3 cup veg. oil
(optional: add 1-2 cups cooked oatmeal added to liquid)

**Instructions**

In large pan mix together: water, powdered milk (or milk), 1 cup honey, 3 Tbs salt, 2/3 cup veg. oil, (optional: add 1-2 cups cooked oatmeal to liquid), heat to warm temp and add to dry ingredients.

Stir together and gradually add white flour 1 cup at a time until a firm dough is formed.

Knead 5-10 minutes, place in greased bowl. Allow to rise until doubled, (about 1 hour) punch down and form into 6 loaves. Allow loaves to rise until doubled and bake at 350°F, until done, internal bread temperature should reach 180°F

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**By David Theiste, PhD**

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**Browning of Food II**

Maillard Reaction

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Q. What would be the rough cost of starting a winery?

A. According to some vineyard developers we spoke with, first you must first purchase “about twice as many acres of land as you wish to plant in order to get the plantable acreage you need, at anywhere from $2,000 to $500,000 per acre, depending on the popularity and availability of the land in the desired area. Once the land has been cleared and planted, it will take five years of maintenance to develop a vineyard capable of producing a crop that will eventually bring back a return on your investment. If you set up a management contract with a local farmer, add on another $6,000 to $9,000 per acre.” Many vineyard consultants advise a four to five acre plot to start out, selling off the grapes to other wineries and getting a feel for the business before expanding. If you want to establish a bona fide winery, “that’s a whole different ball game.” Now the cost of equipment is added on and your investment is up over several hundred thousand dollars in no time at all — and that’s for a very small winery. You will have to start out with a minimum of 15 to 20 acres of plantable land to make it feasible. From a purely economic point of view, when the cost of marketing and distribution is added on, it doesn’t make much sense to consider investing in starting a winery, but fortunately there is more to life than the short term bottom line.

Q: Could you make some suggestions about which wines to serve with cheese?

A. Flavored cream cheeses match well with fruit wines. Chardonnay is a hit with almost any mild, soft cheese offered as an appetizer. White Cheddar and Merlot are natural partners, as are Brie and Pinot Gris. Try Pinot Noir or Zinfandel with the popular goat cheeses and Chianti Classico or Cabernet Sauvignon with fresh Parmesan or Asiago. How about pairing a blue cheese with either Cream Sherry or a Late Harvest Riesling for dessert? Of course, port and aged cheddar or Stilton are classic matches. You should have no problem finding either the cheeses or the wines at the specialty food and wine section of the supermarket. Wine and cheese are natural food partners and have a lot in common. Both are products of the fermentation process and offer a wide variety of styles from simple and mild to complex and aged. “Wine and cheese” is one of the most popular and appealing party themes for contemporary entertaining.

Q. Are liqueurs and cordials wine-based or are they derived from distilled products?

A. Originally liqueurs, also known as cordials, are believed to have been wine-based with various herbs, roots, spices and peels added to flavor the drink. Today most liqueurs start with distilled products from grapes, potatoes, grains or fruits, depending on the country where they are made. The blending of herbs, spices, etc. are closely guarded secrets, even within the companies that make them. France and Italy are the leading manufacturers of liqueurs and have mastered the blending and marketing of the product over the centuries.

Q. When we were in France last year we visited an area near the German border called Alsace. The wines were very Germanic, but one white wine tasted like it might have had a little spice in it. What was it?

A. Though the German Riesling grape is widely grown in the Alsace, I’m sure you are referring to the area’s noted Gewürztraminer (pronounced Geh-VIRTS trah-men-er) grape that does leave a slightly spicy taste in the flavor of the wine. The Gewürztraminer grape is also grown in the cooler areas of the Pacific Coast and in the Great Lakes Region quite successfully.

Q. I have noticed that some local wine labels do not declare the alcohol content of its wine. Are small wineries exempt from this B.A.T.F. requirement?

A. The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB), formerly the B.A.T.F (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms), requires all wine labels to state the alcohol content on the bottle (with a tolerance of 1 1/2 percent, either way) or to simply print the words “table wine” prominently on the label. The TTB considers that these words indicate the bottled wine contains 7 to 14% alcohol. Wineries that produce a non-vintage “proprietary” wine, which is blended from year to year, save money in printing costs when they don’t have to reprint a new label each year with different information. It’s just a matter of economics for small wineries - not an exemption.

Q. What makes U.S. hybrid grape varieties different from European grapes?

A. The French-American grape varieties you refer to are the result of carefully selected crosses between European vinifera and native American grape vines. The goal has been to increase adaptability to the environment of Eastern U.S. growing regions by increasing resistance to extreme cold, insects, diseases, mildews, etc., while achieving optimum production of quality grapes for winemaking. Many of these so-called hybrid grapes trace back over 50% of their parentage to European varieties. For example, the versatile Vignoles grape claims one of its direct parents as Pinot Noir, a highly regarded variety from Champagne and Burgundy. The popular Great Lakes Vidal Blanc’s heritage is directly connected to the widely used Italian grape known as Trebbiano. The hybrid varieties of Seyval, Foch and Chancellor also have a strong European heritage in their development. Maybe hybrid grape varieties are not so different from European vines, after all. Besides, it is the end result that counts.

Q. I have found quite a difference in "dry" wines, especially in the current popular “dry rosé” wines. Is it me or are some less dry than others?

A. It is not you. Winemakers will sometimes label their wines "dry" because they believe that their customers will not perceive the wine as sweet. Wines are chemically dry (the opposite of sweet) when there is no grape sugar left that could be fermented by yeasts. From a sensory standpoint, wines are considered dry when any sweetness present is not perceived by the taster. Since the popular image of "sweet" wines is often limited to dessert wines and the old fashion rosé of the 50s, 60s etc. Many people believe that they like dry wines when they actually prefer wines with some residual sugar. The taste threshold for sweetness generally falls between .5% and 1% residual sugar in wine. Since the word "dry" has no legal definition on a wine label, some wineries will label wines "dry" with as much as 2% sugar because they feel that is the level of sweetness the consumer favors.
The results of many wine competitions staged in the United States often are the result of American wines, largely from the West Coast where there is lots of sun. These results are often created by the palates of American wine judges for whom the vast majority of their favorite wines are those exhibiting higher alcohol, fruit forward aromas and tastes, and where subtlety is not a major issue.

There is clearly nothing wrong with this, of course. It is what we expect from the sunny shores of California, Oregon, and Washington. But the fact is, the style of wine that is European in origin also has a significant place in the world, and that style seems always to be considered kind of quaint in today’s Americanized fruit-is-everything world.

The European Outlook

The food/wine culture of Europe is so vastly different from what we experience in the United States there’s almost no comparison. After spending two weeks in the Mediterranean, briefly visiting towns in four countries, it was clear to us that those who are adventurous eaters and drinkers can find an almost infinite array of comestibles in Europe -- a culture of dining that puts America to shame. We have developed chain eateries that have essentially spelled doom for thousands of family-owned dining establishments.

Europe is regionally fascinating: Simple sandwiches displayed in ways that would make a U.S. restaurant inspector apoplectic. Evidence of this culture is obvious in the wine offerings. Whether it was in Portugal (where wine is so cheap you think it’s a misprint), in France (with a mind-boggling array of choices), or Italy (with wines from grapes most people never heard of), wine lovers are in heaven. Well, maybe not all wine lovers. If you want a 15% alcohol fruit bomb with a slug of wood, you’d be out of luck. Nor can you find fat, lugubrious Chardonnays and over-the-top Syrahs.

Wine is everywhere, even included with some “fixed-priced” lunches. In some cases the wine was simply termed “vin de table” or “vino ross.” It is usually fairly straightforward and uncomplicated. When we asked English-speaking servers what grapes were used, we merely got a shrug. And for 3-4 euros ($4 to $5) for a quarter-liter, the wine was fine with our pasta or finger foods, even if it might have been extremely simple.

Back Home in America

American chain restaurants, by contrast, offer us soft wines with less food compatibility, and at prices that would seem to a European to be absurdly high. A major reason for this is simply that most of Europe considers wine to be an integral part of a meal. It is simply a beverage.

Most Americans, however, look at wine as one of two different things. Either it’s equated with all intoxicants (it’s a gateway drug!) or it’s a specialty drink for the snooty.

Another factor is that many American wineries have an exalted view of their products. But at most smaller, family-owned wine farms in Europe, prices are routinely remarkably fair.

In particular, we visited two wineries on a trip a few years ago, one in Cadiz, Spain, one in Ajaccio, Corsica. Each made an excellent dry rosé wine. Each sold for less than four euros. A bottle! Most California wineries with rosés this good charge at least twice as much. Even the “reserve” red wines sold for less than $20 a bottle. In California, such wines would have been $35.

Perhaps one reason for the success of so many California wine brands is familiarity. Brand loyalty is a key factor for many; people find comfort in buying wine with a recognizable name. And they seem not to care that the wine is expensive.

But real wine lovers -- those who worry more about aroma and taste than they do brands or grape varieties -- know that the most excitement today comes from the obscure.

And one key point: price is usually unconnected to quality. A lot of exalted wines are far less interesting than they should be, and many lower-priced wines are perfectly compatible with food.

About one bottle in every three sold here is an import, an all-time high. That indicates that what we found on our trip isn’t going unnoticed. Imported wines are becoming far more important on the U.S. stage, and those who are adventurous are now being treated to some sensational values.

The best way to take advantage of all of this wealth of distinctiveness is to look to places like New Zealand, South Africa, Austria, Australia, Chile, and Portugal for some of the sensational values that we have always had, but now represent a greater value than ever before.

The cost of shipping wine into the United States has dropped significantly because some of it is now being sent here in large tankers that carry wine in giant bladders that are kept cool enough to protect the freshness of the wines. Some supermarket chains are taking advantage of this recent development to offer wines for $5-$6 per bottle, but with quality that years ago would have cost twice as much.

Our trip to Europe reminded us of how fascinating wines from the continent can be, and then a walk through a couple of discount grocery chains showed us that we are being offered some products at prices that are lower than ever.

Happy shopping!

Dan Berger lives in Sonoma County, Calif., where he publishes “Vintage Experiences,” a weekly wine newsletter. Write to him at winenut@gmail.com.
### DOUBLE GOLD

- **Up to $8.00**
  - 16 Chardonnay/Torrontes
  - NV Pink Moscato
  - NV Red Moscato
  - NV Reggae White
  - 16 Shiraz-Classic
  - 16 Shiraz/Cabernet-Classick

- **$8.01 - $10.00**
  - 16 Diamond
  - 16 Niagara Crystal Lake
  - 16 Pinot Grigio
  - 16 Prairie Fume
  - NV Sweet Revenge
  - 16 Vidal Blanc

- **$10.01 - $13.00**
  - 16 Chelan Blanc
  - NV Cock of the Walk
  - NV Fire Boat Red
  - 15 Jazz
  - 15 Pinot Grigio
  - 15 Raspberry Beret
  - NV Red Raspberry
  - NV Sparkling Traminette
  - 15 Tempranillo Roja
  - NV Thirty Mile Point
  - 16 Vignoles
  - NV Wild One

- **$13.01 - $16.00**
  - 15 Aromella
  - NV Barbera
  - NV Bouquet Rosé
  - NV Chardonnay
  - NV Fire Boat Red
  - NV Grappa
  - NV Grenache

- **$16.01 - $20.00**
  - NV Cabernet Franc
  - NV Cabernet/Sangiovese
  - 16 Shiraz Barossa Vly
  - 16 Malbec
  - 15 Riesling-Dry

- **$20.01 - $25.00**
  - 16 Chardonnay
  - NV Cabernet Sauvignon
  - NV Pinot Noir
  - 16 Riesling Dry
  - 15 Zinfandel Old Vines

- **$25.01 - $35.00**
  - 15 Cabernet Merlot Blend
  - 15 Cabernet Sauvignon
  - 15 Chardonnay-Dekalb-Muscat Clone
  - NV Grappa
  - 13 Grenache Lafond Vyd
  - NV Grey Heron Vodka

- **$35.01 - $50.00**
  - 16 Cabernet Sauvignon
  - 16 Cabernet Sauvignon- Alexander's Vyd
  - 16 Cabernet Sauvignon- Clairey Vyd
  - 12 Hafaz
  - NV Thirty Mile Point
  - 15 Cabernet Sauvignon Blend

- **$50.01 - $65.00**
  - 16 Cabernet Sauvignon Blend
  - NV Classic Demi Sec

- **$65.01+**
  - NV Shiraz Reserve

### GOLD

- **Up to $8.00**
  - NV Chardonnay
  - NV Chardonnay-Blend 9
  - NV Chardonnay-Blend 11
  - NV Classic Demi Sec

- **$8.01 - $10.00**
  - NV Cabernet/Temperrnilo-Blend 9
  - NV Chardonnay
  - NV Pinot Grigio/Chardonnay-Blend 11
  - NV Rich Red Blend

- **$10.01 - $13.00**
  - NV Cabernet Sauvignon-Blend 15
  - NV Chardonnay
  - NV Pinot Grigio
  - NV Rich Red Blend

- **$13.01 - $16.00**
  - NV Chardonnay
  - NV Chardonnay
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$16.01 - $20.00**
  - NV Chardonnay
  - NV Chardonnay
  - NV Chardonnay-Blend 11

- **$20.01 - $25.00**
  - NV Chardonnay
  - NV Malbec
  - NV Riesling-Dry

- **$25.01 - $35.00**
  - NV Chardonnay
  - NV Chardonnay
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$35.01 - $50.00**
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$50.01 - $65.00**
  - NV Chardonnay
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$65.01+**
  - NV Chardonnay

### SEMI GOLD

- **$10.01 - $13.00**
  - NV Chardonnay
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$13.01 - $16.00**
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$16.01 - $20.00**
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$20.01 - $25.00**
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$25.01 - $35.00**
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$35.01 - $50.00**
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$50.01 - $65.00**
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$65.01+**
  - NV Chardonnay

### SEMI GOLD

- **$10.01 - $13.00**
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$13.01 - $16.00**
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$16.01 - $20.00**
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$20.01 - $25.00**
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$25.01 - $35.00**
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$35.01 - $50.00**
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$50.01 - $65.00**
  - NV Chardonnay

- **$65.01+**
  - NV Chardonnay
| 15 Pinot Grigio | Hawthorne Vineyards MI | 15 Merlot | Whitehorse Hill Vly CO |
| 16 Pinot Grigio | Leelanau Wine Cellars MI | 15 Nebbiolo | L.A. Cetto, Mexico |
| 15 Pinot Grigio | Vereto Italy | 16 Pinot Noir | Poggioli Ranch CA |
| 15 Pinot Noir | Bliss Family Vlyds CA | 16 Red Phoenix Soaring Wings NE |
| 15 Pinot Noir | Large/Twins Family Vly CA | 16 Riesling Armstrong Vly Winery PA |
| 15 Pinot Noir | The Crusher CA | 16 Sauvignon Blanc Chateau Lafayete Reneau NY |
| 15 Port-Style | Lakewood MI | 15 Riesling Soave Castello | |
| NV Raspberry | Garden Bay Winery MI | 16 Riesling Beltrin NY |
| 16 Raspberry | Black Bear Winery NY | 16 Rosé | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
| 16 Red Seraph | Sharpe Hill Vineyard MN | 16 Seydol | Grey Ghost VLY WA |
| 16 Red Wine | Caricature CA | 16 Syrah | Santa Barbara CA |
| 12 Reserve | Campo Viejo Spain | 16 Syrah | Paso Robles CA |
| NV Rhubarb | Forestedge Winery MN | 16 Syrah | W. Kendall Valley MI |
| 16 Riesling | Vina Costeria Spain | 16 Syrah | Traminette Tenafly NJ |
| 16 Riesling | Glera Wine Cellars CA | 16 Syrah | Tulipano East Lyme CT |
| 16 Riesling Semi-Sweet | Thirty One Vly CA | 16 Syrah | Windham Vly NY |
| 16 Riesling Semi-Sweet | Laurentide Winery MI | 16 Syrah | Woodmouth CA |
| 16 Riesling | Chateau Chantal MI | 16 Syrah | Ferrante Winery OH |
| 16 Riesling | Chateau Lafayete NY | 16 Zinfandel | Lodi CA |
| 16 Riesling Dry | Chateau Dry NY | 16 Zinfandel | Lodi CA |
| 16 Riesling Dry | Chateau Dry NY | 15 Zinfandel | Greek Cellars CA |
| 16 Riesling Dry | Carry Wine NY | 15 Zinfandel | Greengate CA |
| 16 Riesling Dry | Warner Vineyards NY | 16 Zinfandel | Hallertau CA |
| 16 Riverstone White | 12 Corners Winery MI | 16 Zinfandel | Halterich CA |
| 16 Rosé-Pinot Noir | Thirsty Owl Vly CA | 15 Zinfandel | H. Lincoln CA |
| NV Rosso | M. Lawrence CA | 16 Zinfandel | Bonney CA |
| 15 Rubies Bubbling Blush | Americana Vly NY | 16 Zinfandel | Black Mountain CA |
| 16 Sauvignon Blanc | Fenn Valley Vly MI | 16 Zinfandel | Ferrante Winery OH |
| 15 Sauvignon Blanc | Lange News Family Vly CA | 15 Zinfandel | Lodi CA |
| 13 Selección Terra Don Luis Mexico | 2016.01 - $20.00 | 15 Zinfandel | Tenafly NJ |
| 13 Silhouette | Chateau Grand Traverse MI | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
| 16 SoCo Grigo | Karma Vly Vds CA | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
| NV Sparkling Blueberry | Sweet Nance MI | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
| NV Sparkling Cherry | Chateau Chantal MI | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
| 14 Tenacious Red | Purple Cowboy CA | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
| 15 Top Rail Red | Picket Fence CA | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
| 15 Tranimeste | Bragonini Reserve MI | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
| 15 Tranimite | Thritys Owl Vly NY | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
| 15 Tranimite | White Wine MI | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
| NV Twisted Sister | Coyote Moon Vly NY | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
| 16 Wild Thing Bordeaux Rosé | Carol Shelton Vly CA | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
| 08 Zinfandel | Vino E Buono CA | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
| 15 Zinfandel | Vino E Buono CA | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
| 15 Zinfandel | Vino E Buono CA | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
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| 16 Zinfandel | Vino E Buono CA | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |
| 16 Zinfandel | Vino E Buono CA | 16 Zinfandel | Tabor Hill Winery MI |

**SUMMER 2017 TASTERS GUILD JOURNAL**
**Pinot Noir** Freestone Hills Sonoma Coast Vyds CA

**Syrah** Talbott #214 Balistreri Vyds CO

**Wine Maker’s Red** Blustone Vineyards MI

**Zinfandel** Rockpile Rosenblum Vyds CA

**Cabernet Franc** Abigails Vyd Nathaniel Rose MI

**Cabernet Sauvignon** - Napa Clos Pegase Winery CA

Up To $8.00

**Chenin Blanc** Luna Rossa Winery NM

**NV Pinot Noir** Resv Adelaide Hills Jacob’s Creek Australia

$50.01 - $65.00

**Wine judging results can be found at**

www.tastersguild.com
Double Gold Notes
From the May 2017 International Wine Judging
(Notes submitted by Wine Judges A. Brian Cain, Dick Scheer and Ron Perry)

May 2017

Up to $8.00

Stone Cellars 2015 Merlot, California
The very deep rich black red robe seems out of place for a wine of this price range. The powerful sweet black fruit nose and monster sweet oak throughout suggest a high end Cab! Rich velvety black berry essence and soft tannin on the finish complete the picture. Serve it with your finest grilled meats and surprise your guests. It’s a STEAL!!!

Jacob’s Creek 2016 Shiraz Classic, Australia
The real deal, svelte and sexy. For the money, I’d like to take this one home by the case. One upscale production in this price range. Young, but already suave and accomplished. Gotta love it. A good match for chicken tikka masala.

Barefoot NV Red Moscato, California
Pretty red rose transparent color and very mild, slightly floral scents greet you, while orange peel and apricot nectar slide across the palate. It is not too sweet to serve with brunch fare.

Jacob’s Creek 2015 Shiraz/Cabernet Classic, Australia
Wow, is this silky on the approach! A cool and convincing customer. On the palate too, smooth and engaging. Ready to enjoy. The price certainly invites frequent service. Such as with mu shu pork.

Bodega Estancia Mendoza 2016 Chardonnay/Torrontes Casco Varela, Argentina
Chardonnay forms an appealing foundation over which Torrontes’ musky perfume hovers. The overall impression is one of subtlety. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Soft, and just off dry, this is a super value, so versatile at the table. Such as with chorizo quesadillas.

Barefoot NV Pink Moscato, California
For fans of light clean delicately aromatic Moscato, this is your wine. In no way overpowering, the very soft melon and star fruit-like character dances very lightly on the palate and should pair nicely with appetizers such as baked brie and cut fruit.

Cedar Creek 2016 Pinot Grigio, Wisconsin
The pale color shows a fresh, citrusy, crisp Pinot Grigio with pineapple nuances and minerals on the finish. Enjoy it with Linguini in white wine clam sauce.

Thirsty Owl 2016 Diamond, Finger Lakes, New York
The big hybrid aroma combines some native Labrusca scents with citrus and subtle nutmeg. On the palate, ripe wild white grapes dominate. Here is the perfect wine with sushi and California rolls.

Wollersheim 2016 Seyval Prairie Fume, Wisconsin
Ripe green apples, pear and yellow plum greet the nose. Subtle mineral nuances finish clean and elegant. A perennial Gold Medal winner at Tasters Guild. This bright wine is made for Tuscan herbed roast chicken.

Ferrante 2016 Vidal Blanc, Ohio
It’s a beauty! It has green pear, melon, and grassy Vidal character. Reminds a little of a Muscadet. Good grip and racy acid, with sweetness in harmony. Flattering sweetness. Suits me to a T. I plan to enjoy it with a pear, walnut, and gorgonzola salad.

Americana Vineyards 2015 Crystal Lake White, Finger Lakes, New York

St. Julian NV Sweet Revenge, Michigan
www.stjulian.com
Plenty fruity and sweet.Lovely, smoky array of red hybrid varietals, with inherent and attractive spiciness. Enticing brown-sugar syrupy taste. Well conceived and executed cuvee with decided dessert applications. Kudos to the winemaker. This would be a treat with cherries jubilee.

$8.01 to $10.00

Breezy Hills Vineyard 2016 Vignoles, Iowa
Here is a plump, ripe, juicy pineapple scented Vignoles with luscious honeydew melon through the bright crisp finish. Serve it with shell fish and mollusks.

Middle Sister NV “Wild One” Malbec, Argentina
Delicate, light red fruit fills the nose while pleasantly balanced texture comforts the palate finishing with a light dose of black cherry essence. Enjoy this easy drinking red with a steak sandwich or protein salad.

Sweet Nancie, Sparkling Traminette, St. Julian Wine Co., Michigan
www.stjulian.com
Aromas of Kiwi fruit and violets. Thirst-quenching flavors of fresh kiwi fruit. Serve chilled with some Asian dishes and fruity desserts; great for summer afternoons.
Campo Viejo 2013 Tempranillo Rioja, Spain
Rich, plump, red fruit mingles with dusty, earthy notes while the wine expands in the mouth and finishes large and fruity. Paella and especially with grilled pork on an open fire begs for this wine.

St. Julian 2016 Pinot Grigio Reserve, Lake Michigan Shore, Michigan
Geez, this is nice. It has a nut creme aspect. Apple and cream, too. Good grip; nice and crisp texture. And an attractively tender core. Million-dollar nose and mighty appealing palate that will blossom further as the warm months progress. I’d like to serve this on the deck with smoked whitefish spread and crusty baguettes.

Chateau Grand Traverse 2015 Pinot Grigio, Michigan
A wonderful balance of acidity, minerality and cool climate fruit. The delightful combination of citrus and herbaceous flavors make this refreshing dry wine a natural to serve with a number of seafood, chicken or Asian dishes, but broiled or sautéed fresh water white fish would be top of the culinary companion list.

$13.01 to $16.00

Brutocao 2015 Chardonnay Mendocino, California
Contrary to what some might think, barrel fermentation is like a vaccine to prevent the wine from tasting like oak. Here, oak serves to enrich the mouth feel with a soft wide stimulus to every part of the oral cavity. It remains elegant with lovely understated fruit and hints of gravel. If you have access to quail or Cornish game hens, this is your wine.

Chateau Chantal NV Twilight, Michigan
Sometimes a wine captures the essence of its birthplace. This pink wine tastes of Northern Michigan with light floral fruit and a clean fresh finish and nice texture in the mouth. This would pair nicely with seared tuna and wasabi sauce.

Winery at Holy Cross Abbey 2016 Wild Canon Harvest, Colorado
Hints of fruity chocolate and the fall day smells of a blend of multiple grape varieties mingle with a fresh mouth feel making this a very easy sipping rosé table wine for a warm summer night.

Bluemenhof 2015 Rayon d’Or, Missouri
This variety can be acidic, but, not here. The acidity is in perfect balance with lots of fine fresh lemon oil essence, exotic dry vermouth-like spice and alpine flowers. The wine finishes with more citrus peel, pure peach and pear essence with star fruit all the way to the end. Enjoy it with a lump crabmeat salad.
Double Gold Notes Continued...

Cosentino Winery 2015 “The Dark,” Lodi, California
Aromas of Chocolate and cocoa, herbal aromas of juniper and black pepper. A food friendly red wine with cocoa flavors, well structured tannins, jammy fruit flavors like plum, blueberry and cassis with a long finish that is smooth and full. Grilled or roasted meats with rich sauces but is equally delicious to indulge in after dinner alongside aged Gouda or a cocoa nib flourless chocolate cake.

Soaring Wings 2016 Edelweiss, Nebraska
An airy, clear, spring morning comes to mind as one’s nose enters the glass. Emphatic Labrusca varietal grape aromas abound while wild grape textures dominate the palate. A refreshing somewhat mineral laden finish completes the picture. Lake perch, walleye or pan fish right out of the fryer would be a great excuse to enjoy this wine’s virtues.

Vino è Buono, 2011 Barbera, Colorado
Peppery aromas with oak lactones from barrel aging dominate aromas and taste. Cinnamon and cocoa flavors with full body and soft tannins. Red sauce pasta and grilled meats including lamb.

Maize Valley 2016 LaCrescent, Ohio
Minnesota cold hardy hybrid with high acids and citrus notes. Finish is tart, but food friendly. Grilled chicken, fish and pesto dishes.

Purple Cowboy 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, California
Cabernet Sauvignon fruit from primarily Paso Robles. Aromas of chocolate and coffeee. Soft sweet tannins. Pastas and meat dishes as well as dark chocolate desserts


Lange Twins 2016 Sangiovese Rose, Lodi, California
Rosé bright pink color. Aromas of wild strawberry. Flavors of fresh blood orange, creating a well-rounded mouthfeel. Crisp acidity and a long finish. Excellent with many different light menus including fish, grilled chicken and Asian dishes

Braganini Reserve 2016 Gruner Veltliner, Michigan
An old signature variety from Austria, Gruner Veltliner grown in Southwest Michigan vineyards. Aromas of peach, lemon and grapefruit. Citrus flavors that are dry with a definitive mouthfeel that has a light body. Match fish dishes including sushi, cured salmon with dill, and fennel.

St. Julian Solera Cream Sherry, Michigan
The solera was started in 1971 and that trace of 46 year old nectar still exhibits its personality batch after batch. Pure maraschino liqueur and honey fill the room when the cap is pulled. Caramel, toffee, burnt sugar, black walnut and crème brûlé come together on the palate. Any dessert or biscuit becomes an audience with the queen when served with this remarkable Cream Sherry.

Jacob’s Creek 2015 Reserve Shiraz, Barossa Valley, Australia
Here is a winery that consistently has the formula to balance ripe, sweet, black berry fruit with hints of vanilla and chocolate that build the structure finishing both big and powerful yet surprisingly fresh, fruity and juicy. Anyone who loves lamb shoulder chops with a hint of garlic, rosemary and mint can imagine this wine served along side.

Harbor Ridge Winery NV “Bouquet Rosé” Wisconsin
Bright pink blush color. Aromas of enticing candied apple. Takes me back to the County fair grounds. Summer BBQ with lighter fare like spicy garlic shrimp off the grill.

Coyote Moon Vineyards, Razzle Dazzle, New York
Sweet, luscious raspberries, fresh on the pallet with enchanting aromas. Everything you love about raspberries - without the seeds. Perfect with chocolate and raspberry desserts. I’m thinking of a fludy brownie.

Vino è Buono, 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon, Colorado
Aromas of ripe black cherry and liquorish. Chocolate and dark cherry flavors with soft tannins and finish, nicely balanced. Perfect with a family dinner of penne pasta coated with mom’s special meat sauce.

$16.01 to $20.00

Big Smooth 2015 Old Vine Zinfandel, Lodi, CA
Blend of Zinfandel (76%), with touches of Petite Sirah, Merlot, Primitivo, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Sauvignon from Lodi, Sonoma and Napa. Classic raspberry aromas, combined with plum, bramble, vanilla, cinnamon and American oak. Well balanced with soft tannins. Pull out the smoker and pair this wine. Did I mention the really neat purple velvet label?

12 Corners 2016 Aromella Lake Michigan Shore, Michigan

Cosentino 2015 Cabernet Franc “The Franc” Lodi, California
Oh, boy, this hits the spot! All about varietal character. Epitomizes the distinction of Cabernet Franc from Cabernet Sauvignon: that lighter touch in regards to tannin, the more immediate desire to please, the joyous red versus black fruits. Judicious oak of a very savory, spicy sort, which echoes on the palate and picks up tuffee flavor. Well proportioned, low in tannin, soft but not wanting for acid balance. A good match for turkey tetrazzini.
Lanthier NV Mill Street Red, Indiana
Lots of raspberry essence in the nose with sweet Concord grape smells and flavors throughout the palate and finish keeps it sweet, fresh and clean. This is clearly a sipping wine, no food required.

Wagner 2014 Riesling, Finger Lakes, New York
Floral and fine with fusil oil, stones and apple blossoms make this a classic. The rich body and long, clean, steely finish define the Finger Lakes “banana belt.” What better wine to serve with baked ham and the sandwiches that follow?

Bodega Estrella de Los Andes 2014 Malbec Legende Unique, Argentina
Sandalwood incense allure. Masterfully imparted barrel contributions build upon a hefty Malbec fruit basis. Delightful and pure, satin textured. Oak and fruit completely integrated. Full bodied but seemingly weightless, it has so much aromatic buoyancy. Would do immense justice to prime rib.

Verterra 2016 Pinot Blanc, Michigan
Grapes from the Leelanau Peninsula. Notes of melon and fresh citrus fruit and flowers. Full, soft palate of flavors that linger. Serve chilled with Asian dishes, salads, fish dishes including pan fried white fish.

Fiore 2014 Cabernet Franc, Maryland
Proper weight and freshness of Cabernet Franc from a cool growing zone. Attractive oak contribution, seemingly American oak for its zesty quality. A beautiful achievement in Eastern America Cabernet Franc. This varietal seems naturally suited to the Mid-Atlantic winegrowing region. Time in cooperage has opened this one up nicely, and it makes a pleasing glass for summer enjoyment with spicy Maryland crab cakes.

$20.01 to $25.00

Victor Hugo 2014 Malbec Paso Robles, California
Remarkably airy and floral for such a dark colored wine; exotic green herb, red fruit and rich, spicy oak tannins coat the mouth. This complex, layered wine will enhance some of the rich sauces of Northern Italian country dishes like wild boar.

Bel Lago 2016 Dry Riesling, Leelanau Peninsula, Michigan
Creamy lemon chiffon nose with hints of gravel greets you while a nice grip and good texture engages the palate. This is a hearty Riesling for Kielbasa and other flavorful sausages.

Luna Rosa 2016 Chardonnay, New Mexico
Aromas of melon and apple. Rich and full-bodied wine with a tart finish. Created by a craftsman of Old World experience. Serve with poultry, pork, or seafood.

Golden Rule Vyd. 2014 Commonwealth, Arizona
A blend dominated by Cabernet Sauvignon with Petite Sirah. Black cherry aromas typical of Cabernet Sauvignon. Liquorish flavors with soft tannins. Matches well with beef or lamb from the grill.

Husch Estate 2015 Old Vine Zinfandel, Mendocino, California
Classic raspberry aromas, combined with plum, and an enticing hint of chocolate. Medium soft tannins with strong structure that lingers in the palate. An interesting combination with Risotto Milanese or as a treat with blue cheese.

Rove Estate 2016 Chardonnay, Leelanau Peninsula, Michigan
Unoaked Chardonnay. Clean citrus aromas of lemon and cut grass. Fresh, well balanced flavors of apple, soft melon, papaya and banana. Excellent with fresh grilled salmon wrapped with bacon slices or lemon basted chicken.

Eduardo Vidal 2014 Malbec Nube Negra, Argentina

$25.01 to $35.00

Lafond 2014 Chardonnay Musque Clone, Rita Hills, California

Garreé 2011 Petite Sirah Livermore, California
The black currant fruit in the nose is nicely complicated by subtle nuances of compost and forest floor. The big mid-palate is a mélange of spice and dried fruit with a long firm tannic finish. This is a wine to serve with herb crusted chicken or roast turkey.
Double Gold Notes Continued...

Plagido’s Winery 2015 Cabernet/Merlot, New Jersey

Santa Barbara Winery 2013 Grenache, Santa Ynez Valley, California
From the winery’s Lafound vineyard, Grenache aged in Hungarian oak barrels. Fruity aromas well balanced with soft tannins and tart flavors. A plate of Blue and Romano cheeses, sourdough bread and a weekend football game – I can see it coming!

Carol Shelton 2014 Pinot Noir, Carneros, California
Classic strawberry aromas in combination with pepper spices. Firm tannins with pleasing, spicy and tart finish. Spit roasted turkey or salmon off the summer grill.

Cooper Vineyards Fifty Third 2014 Norton, Virginia
Black as ink! Huge black berry jam infused with exotic cooking and roasting spices hit the nose while a firm texture appears in the mid-palate. Softens in the long finish. A hunter’s wine. Enjoy it with venison, duck or other game.

Clayhouse 2014 Old Vine Petite Sirah, Paso Robles, California
Pure blackberry with a rich silky smooth mouth feel, it is remarkably elegant, clean, and soft yet fills the mouth with a fine memory of ripe fruit. There’s nothing better with a milder Petite Sirah than roast meat and vegetables bathed in the roasting fats.

Girard 2015 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, California
This is the definition of luxury Chardonnay; just enough lemon curd to offset a hint of sweet oak and crème brûlé. The finish is straight from the nose staying slightly minerally yet lush. Lemon sole is made for this wine.

Winery at Holy Cross Abbey 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Colorado
Fine, elegant black currant fruit with hints of cedar, leather and tobacco, not unlike a classy Bordeaux Merlot. It is very accessible now, yet should continue to develop further. Either now or later, it is a great candidate to enjoy with prime rib.

Chateau Fontaine 2016 Gruner Veltliner Leelanau Peninsula, Michigan
A clear statement of green apple and snow pea free of the earthy terroir stuff of many an Austrian rendition. Oodles of flavor. Very striking, cool climate gruner statement with fleshy fruit texture all the way to the finish. Good acid and burnished mouth-feel. Enjoy this with a chilled lentil salad on baby greens or your favorite quiche.

Santa Barbara Winery 2013 Lagrein, Santa Ynez Valley, California
A grape variety commonly grown in Alto Adige near Bolzano, Italy, aged in barrels 16 months. Black cherry aromas. Nicely balanced, well structured tannins with tart flavors in this red wine, full bodied. Grilled meats, pasta or risotto with marinara sauce.

B.R. Cohen 2015 Pinot Noir (Silver Label), California
Luscious berries aged in French oak produce enhancing flavors of cinnamon and spice. What a lovely combination to take pleasure in, a superb example of premium Russian River Pinot Noir. How about a bacon-wrapped fresh salmon from the grill?

Morais Vineyards 2015 Select Collection Red, Virginia
Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Shy, elegant, well proportioned. A good example of what Virginia can do with these varieties, emphasizing brightness. Silky; beautifully textured. Oak makes a savory seasoning of brown spices. The varietals certainly present a united front. Every fruit aspect is fully ripe and harmonious. Low tannin. I recommend wiener schnitzel.

Grey Heron Vodka, St. Julian Winery, Paw Paw, MI
Fruity aroma, smooth tasting and a pleasing mouth feel. Straight out of the freezer, on the rocks, or a primary ingredient for a Moscow Mule. Very refreshing and classy aperitif.

Almaza Wine Cellars, Grappa, Texas
Smooth tasting distilled grape juice with a taste of liquorish candy and a kick of alcohol – a big kick! Mix with fruit juice or on ice along with bread sticks, cigars and conversation after dinner.

Coyote Moon 2012 Marquette, New York
A relatively new cold-hardy, hybrid grape variety. Bright black/red fruit wafts up from the glass with ripe scents of branded cherries. The finish is long and soft with ample acidity offering a nice, fresh zing in the aftertaste. Serve with braised meats.
Forchini 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Dry Creek, California
Ripe, warm condensed black cherry and blackberry jam emerge while the mid palate grows and fills out with big, ripe black fruit finishing with velvety tannins which grow as the wine slips past the palate. I image ripe cheese to finish the bottle after pairing it with grilled meat.

Herzog 2014 Special Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon Alexander Valley, California
This is classic Northern Sonoma Cab with elegance and power, big black currant aroma with fine nuances of forest floor, pine woods and a subtle sense of earth. The finish is as huge and still classy as the first impression. Present with a leg of lamb and this wine would be gustatory heaven.

Taylors St. Andrews 2014 Shiraz Clare Valley, Australia
The nose runs very deep and very elegant. And very pure. A model for South Australia Shiraz. No excesses of power, oak, or sweetness. Thoroughly delicious to taste, well balanced. Full fruit emphasis; no overt oakiness though there is a positive sense of barrel aging. This just lays so comfortably on my palate! A revelation. I’d love this with London broil.

Lafond 2013, Syrah/Grenache, Santa Barbara Co., California

Taylors St. Andrews 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Clare Valley, Australia
Deep, silky, refined, and noble. The way Clare Valley Cabernet Sauvignon ought to be. Sweet and pure, and distinct from that earther Coonawarra Cabernet character. Savory, velvety, romantic, well proportioned oak and fruit aromatics and textures. Just right. A Clare Valley classic. I wish I could drink this down right now! Remarkable. It deserves a well-marbled ribeye steak off the grill.

Fazeli 2012 Syrah/Cabernet “Hafez” Temecula, California
Solid structure and foundation of Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon. Compact and youthful for a 2012 at four years of age. Bright future. The varietal characters are subtle and well integrated. Firm on the palate too, but not without the inherently sweet fruit of 2012 California red wines. No imposing tannins, so it can be put to use soon. Just give it plenty of aeration to coax forth its aromatic profile. Then serve with simmered veal breast studded with fresh rosemary sprigs.

La Rural Vdos.y Bgas 2013 Antologia XL, Argentina
The color is extremely dense red, not black. Cabernet and Petite Verdot with exotic sweet oak and incense-like spice combine with condensed black fruit finally finishing with soft plump fruit and a hint of smoke. It is an ideal partner with pulled pork with a tangy napping sauce.

Prix 2012 Cabernet Franc Napa Valley, California
This is a Cabernet Franc that looks as dark and as rich as any Cabernet Sauvignon. The nose is endowed with big cassis essence and nuances of marmalade, chocolate and wisps of toasted oak. The finish is long with good grip and will cut right to the heart of your best medium rare steaks.

Fazeli 2013 Reserve Shiraz Temecula, California
Wow! Rich plum jam explodes, builds mouth feel and continues to get richer and fruitier on the palate finishing with long lasting berry fruit. There is no better wine to serve with seared duck breast.

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Available for purchase at barhyte.com.
800-227-4983

www.forchini.com
Most mid-century American wine lovers had, at most, only two or three different wine glasses for both every day and entertaining. Sparkling, dessert and table wine styles were typical. Then in the 1970’s Klaus Riedel’s Austrian glass works placed some fascinating magazine ads listing magical attributes in its wine glasses. One version pitched how their crystal stemware was responsible for expressing wine bouquet to the fullest – with a completely different wine shape and size being necessary for each varietal wine. Next was that such precise Riedel glass architecture also highlighted the mouthfeel of each varietal. Further was that these distinctions accurately balanced all the modes of taste and aftertaste. Curiously, the ad mentioned nothing about the visual mode. Whatever degree any wine buff took to these fanciful promotional assurances there could be no arguing that these wine glasses were beautifully crafted. There was no need for him to hawk their visual mode as my first time checking them out made it obvious they were thin rimless bowls allowing wine to flow into graceful sipping without the hurdle of thick beaded brims on typical stemware.

A Matter of Market Timing

Riedel’s timing could hardly have been more perfect as mid-century Americans had been slowly awakening to the concept of wines made from single varieties of grapes. The seemingly paper thin crystal Riedels were equally classy to traditional high-end Irish lead crystal and easier to handle, although far more delicate, recommended for dishwashers, and most certainly not meant for klutzes. More buyer concerns were the lofty price tags and massive storage space required for a complete set of ten – again, a different size and shape suggested for each of the more popular varietals and the major European appellations. Those, plus even more styles were distinctly designed for each aperitif, sparkling and dessert wine sorts. The math for a service for eight could well exceed more than 200 pieces – not considering any spares to replace the inevitable oops.

Despite these concerns, it seemed the world’s fine wine community was buying into this glassmaker’s fascinating notions beyond any dreams of success he may have foreseen. Some of my wine marketing friends literally bought into it by purchasing entire set components to keep competitive pace in retail tasting events. Consumers also went for the Riedels although usually not to the extent of gilding the proverbial lily with all of the advertised offerings. Such notoriety, of course, begged studies comparing bouquet, flavor and gustatory mode expressed by the Riedels against various other standard wine glasses. As might be expected, and diametric to much testimony, there were no significant differences. But the stylish new elegance of the Riedel crystal continued to be celebrated anyway as new lead-free crystal types were introduced - equally elegant and much more attractively priced. Competitors have since responded with nicely refined inexpensive wine stems that we find today in Crate & Barrel, Pottery Barn, Williams-Sonoma, as well other fine houseware stores.

From the Sublime to the Ridiculous

That creative progress in wine pleasure has also encouraged the ridiculous in wine drinking vessels. Consider a glass blown inside a larger glass to create what is called a “fountain aerating” feature. Folks having difficulty handling these without drips down their chins and beyond may wish to try a foolproof design with a thin straw-like tube blown into the base making them look like petite flower watering cans. Then there are the charming bent stem glasses eluding to drunkenness even before one takes a first sip. The concept of tall thin “splashing” glasses is puzzling as they are so fragile that even a dainty splash risks knocking them over. Worst among these renegade glasses are, again for me at least, the stemless shapes that seem more like large salt and pepper finger pots. They seem modeled after the common tumblers traditional for Old World style quaffing and thus new only in the sense of now being touted as chic nouveau fine wine service. They handle like a piece of fruit challenging anyone to get a graceful look at a wine’s color and clarity. A successful trip with them to the mouth and back is rewarded with having published some fingerprints. Even uglier orbs can be found with offset bottoms reputed to assist those having difficulty with swirling. Decorative concepts reach beyond the imagination.

A recent tasting program hosted by a regional wine distributor representative was set up with only two different styles of simple attractive wine stems to serve each of us. As she demonstrated the differences in how a smaller petite bowl accentuates shy white wine bouquets and a larger wider bowl broadens bold reds, I thought to myself, how very refreshing to hear such sensibility from a young person obviously well trained in realistic everyday wine service. Beyond that there are, of course, each of the other original Riedel styles remaining for however anyone desires to enjoy wine to the fullest.

Dr. Vine has authored four wine books and is Purdue University’s Professor of Enology Emeritus. He recently retired after 21 years as the Wine Consultant for American Airlines.
Azamara Cruise Line’s sommelier shows TG President Joe Borrello one of the wines for the Guild’s private wine tasting seminar.

A fantastic line up of great food and accomplished chefs on the deck of Azamara Cruise Lines Quest for TG’s winter cruise.

No cruise would be complete without a “Death by Chocolate” dessert buffet aboard Azamara Quest.

Wine judges concentrate on their tasting evaluations during Taster Guild’s 30th Annual Wine Judging last May.

Judges hard at work making over 1,500 wine evaluations at TG’s 30th Annual Wine Judging at Fenn Valley Vineyards in Michigan.

A fun-loving and contented group gathering after another successful chapter dinner event in Kalamazoo, MI.

Email .jpg pictures of your chapter’s events to: joeb@tastersguild.com and we will review them for publication in the next issue of Photo Gallery.