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What's new in the Grapevine this week?

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Upcoming events

Last week we announced the Spring Wine Dinner at the **Madison Valley Ranch in Ennis. Chef Matt Pease just returned from Europe and he has proposed a very elegant and French influenced menu for the occasion. He will be putting a continental accent on five different courses which will feature locally sourced ingredients including Montana grown Wagyu beef, local pork and regionally grown trout. If you haven't enjoyed his culinary talents, avail yourself to the **Friday, April 12th or Saturday, April 13th dinners**. I will be there for both events with wine pairings to complement the feast.

If you plan to make a night of it, check with the Madison Valley Ranch (**1-800-891-6158**). They have overnight packages in their luxurious accommodations that include a delicious breakfast the next morning. The dinner by itself is \$89 per person (including gratuity) but check with reservations at the Madison Valley Ranch for the full package. I know they are offering great off-season rates for folks who just want a relaxing time out of town.

** We don't have the final arrangements completed yet but we have a special treat in store with a visit by DeLancelotti Vineyards on May 8th. You need to mark your calendars for this one. DeLancelotti Vineyards grow grapes in some of the best vineyards in the Willamette Valley. Their Chardonnay just received a 95 point rating from Wine Spectator and their Pinots have yet to receive a rating below 90. DeLancelotti vineyard holdings are organic and/or biodynamic. Their holdings include the Fromaglini Vineyard and Lachini Vineyard in the Chehalem Mountains AVA and the Anderson Valley Vineyard in the Dundee Hills.

We will have the venue and more specifics finalized next week.

Learn the Major Wine Grapes

We just concluded our first class in the Spring Wine Smarts program this past weekend. The next installment of our **Spring Wine Smarts** class will take place on April 13th and April 15th and we have had many folks from the first group enthusiastically signed up for the second in the series. The agenda is for the next class is to identify the major red and white grape varietals, their characteristics, and the wine regions that produce the best expressions. This class will cover botany, geology, geography, chemistry, history, folk lore, and the arts in a wide ranging overview of the core of wine culture. All that “book learnin’” will be followed by a lab session where we identify and compare grapes using wine evaluation methods that will last a lifetime. The cost for this class is just \$49.

We will be presenting two sessions: one from 1-3 PM on April 13 and an identical session on Monday, April 15 from 7-9 PM. To reserve your spot, just call us at 586-8828 or send an e-mail to bozemanwinegallery@gmail.com.

Big City, Home Grown

One of the best things about living in Bozeman is the great offering we have from the performing arts. Bozeman is home to a world class natural history museum, the finest symphony in the region, and the only professional opera company in the state.

It is our good fortune that we live in a community that affords us the services of these fine organizations. Even though they require local support, these institutions add much more back to our city and region than we think.

In particular, information provided by Intermountain Opera Bozeman shows that performances are attended by folks from 55 towns and cities. These attendees for the weekend performances bring patrons who rent local hotel rooms, feast at our best restaurants, and shop at our locally owned businesses. This is our Opera making our community the envy of every other town our size in America supporting, by giving back and enriching our beloved Bozeman.

I can't think a better way to keep this force ongoing than to attend the upcoming performances of Tchaikovsky's "Eugene Onegin" April 26 and 28th. Intermountain Opera is a professional opera company with a special approach to its productions. There is no standing, resident company. Each production features new, nationally known, conservatory trained professional singers and directors. We always get the best singers for each part; performers who have sung their roles in Chicago, Salt Lake City, Orlando, Santa Fe, New York or Houston before they even get to Bozeman. The conductor for the "Eugene Onegin" for instance, is the conductor for The Virginia Opera while our stage director comes to us from the Boston Lyric Opera. The singers hail from all over America and have performed all over the world.

Bozeman supports these fine performers with professional musicians in the orchestra pit and local professional dancers to complete the musical charm of

Tchaikovsky's masterpiece. Tchaikovsky, after all, wrote "The Nutcracker" so we should expect some memorable song and dance to grace the Willson stage. (You might know this little ditty: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cz7JREul22g>.)

I realize I am going on a bit here for a wine rag, so I will get around to the point. To help support the Intermountain Opera (our Opera), there is a raffle going on right now. First prize is a week-long stay at an 18th-century Cape Cod home just steps from the beautiful Howe's Street Beach! The secluded property has a private beach on Scargo Lake and a boathouse with a bar, plus a kayak, a canoe, and a catamaran sailboat. The prize is donated by IOB founder Verity Bostick. The second prize winner will receive premier tickets for IOB's 2019-2020 season (which will feature Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro). Third prize is a magnificent box of fantastic wines that I will personally choose. You can purchase raffle tickets from the Wine Gallery for \$25 each or 5 for \$100. If you are a Wine Club member, just call us and we will arrange to charge your account. Remember, in two of the last three years, it was a Wine Club member that took home prizes. The drawing will take place at the Sunday April 28th performance. You need not be present to win, but seeing "Eugene Onegin" would be ice cream and frosting on the top.

April is Earth month

Grapes are the largest fruit crop in the world both in acreage and weight. That may not be news but it may surprise you to know that the wine industry is leading the world in sustainable, organic agricultural practices. There are a myriad of certifications and organizations that monitor eco-friendly farming practices and for the month of April we will look at some of the major forces in this field.

In America, the USDA is the watchdog of what is deemed "organic". The best bet for most wine consumers is to look for wines that say "Made with organically grown grapes". These wines are made from grapes independently certified as organic—no pesticides, no herbicides, no fungicides, no fertilizer. The yeasts used in making the wine are natural or indigenous but surely organic. Addition of sulfites are permitted up to 100 parts per million.

Wines labelled "Organic Wine" go beyond the above steps including regulations that do not allow addition of sulfites. "Organic Wines" are rare because without sulfites, these "healthy" wines are susceptible to spoilage, browning, and short life. This is unfortunate because in spite of a bad rap, since 1996, no one has ever died of a sulfite reaction. This bad rap is in spite of sulfites remaining one of the safest and most efficacious preservatives ever invented.

No one has ever successfully made the case that "Organic Wine" tastes better so retailers like myself are reluctant to sell them. Who wants to sell wines that have off flavors and God knows what growing in them? It is difficult to persuade wine consumers to repeatedly buy wines that have turned to sauerkraut juice or smell like a corral in springtime.

To further cloud the issue. In the European Union, “Organic Wines” allow up to 100 parts per million sulfites. This makes things confusing because “Organic Wine” in Europe means something closer to the US designation “Made with Organic Grapes”.

That said, it is probably better to focus on the environmental factors that affect air, water and health in agricultural practice rather than innocuous sanitation safeguards in deciding what is best from an ecological standpoint.

Next week, we will examine biodynamic agriculture and how it treats the earth.

Wine Pairings for Easter

Easter is just weeks away and we have a few suggested wines to pair with traditional entrees:

Ham: The salt and smoky flavor of ham is effectively complemented with wines that have good acidity and a low tannic profile. Austrians and Germans favor wines like Riesling and Gewurtztraminer because they are mouthwatering and provide contrast to the savory notes in ham. (Think Hawaiian pizza and how pineapple and Canadian bacon banter back and forth. Other wines that fit into that profile include Torrontes from Argentina and Dry Muscat from Oregon.

Red wines like Pinot Noir and Beaujolais have bright red fruit and low tannin. The salt in ham will react with tannic wine and either the ham or the wine will taste extraordinarily bitter. Pinot Noir and Beaujolais circumvent the bitterness problem because they have little tannin to interfere. If you just have to have a heavier red, try a Spanish Garnacha—that grape loves all things pork.

Lamb: Folks who prefer to have a leg of lamb for their Pascal feast should look to heavier reds. Lamb can have hints of game and is certainly well represented in juiciness and fat. Bigger, tannic reds are appropriate because strong flavors stand up to lamb and tannin cuts through the fat. My favorite grape with lamb is Syrah. Washington State Syrah in particular has the elements of meatiness and dark blue fruit that make a leg of lamb cooked in red wine, rosemary and garlic absolutely sing.

You can preview some of our other Easter suggestions as you walk around the Wine Gallery. We have Easter suggestions and even a few recommendations for brunch mimosas.