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What's new in the Grapevine this week?

- **Are Wine Drinkers Healthier?**
- **Art Walk this Friday**
- **Keeping things in balance**

Are Wine Drinkers Healthier?

For Earth Day a few months ago, Jeanie and I went out to the road that runs near us and filled up garbage bags with litter that had collected over the winter. As an observation, the folks who litter are probably not the healthiest people on the planet. The only indication that litterbugs may have any healthy habits at all was the most of the beer cans we found were low calorie--Coors Lite or Bud Lite. As far as the rest of the litter, it was decidedly in the unhealthy junk food category. Chee-tohs wrappers were the clear choice followed by MacDonald's French fry cartons and Burger King, Wendy's and MacDonald's (in that order) burger wrappers. We only found one wine bottle and it was Barefoot Moscato. Again, the only clue I had about the health concerns of that litterbug was Moscato is low in alcohol (10%) but high in sugar (8% residual sugar).

So that is my anecdotal evidence about the health of wine drinkers. People who do study that subject have more scientific conclusions. One set of data shows that of the Australians who consumed alcohol in the last 7 days, the people who drank red wine were found to have a stronger Health Index Score than sparkling wine drinkers, white wine drinkers, beer drinkers and distilled spirits drinkers.

Some studies have noted the health benefits of red wine, due to its inclusion of a plant-based compound called resveratrol. This is believed to contain antioxidant properties that could have anti-carcinogenic effect and help protect the body against conditions such as heart disease. My own opinion is that even though there is resveratrol in red wine, there really isn't enough to impact your health one way or the other. It could be that combined with other phenols,

alcohol, and plant esters, the synergy of the combined effects does impart some health benefit.

But like all great things in life, moderation is key. In fact, data shows that while red wine drinkers are the healthiest of those who drink, the Health Index Score of red wine drinkers does decrease with each extra drink consumed per week.

So, how much red wine is too much? Dr. Tim Crowe, Advanced Accredited Practicing Dietitian, sheds some light: "We have well-developed Government guidelines for alcohol consumption, and all drinkers – including those who favor red wine – should stick to these." By now you are familiar with rules: One 5 ounce glass of wine per day for women, a maximum of two glasses for men. It's important to remember that while there is some merit to favoring red wine over other types of alcohol, it can be just as harmful when consumed in high amounts. Put simply – stick to the guidelines.

Art Walk this Friday

The July Art Walk will take place this Friday in Downtown Bozeman. As is our custom, we will be at Miller's Jewelry at the corner of Main and Tracy to pour some great sample wines while you peruse Miller's special sale on loose and mounted diamonds.

To add some fun, Millers have taken specially selected loose diamonds and jewelry mounted diamonds and put different "dots" on them. A red dot will save you \$50, a green dot will save you \$100, a yellow dot \$200, and a dot in "Miller's Blue" will save you a whopping \$500. The staff will also be dressed in attire featuring dots, (polka and other).

We have tentatively planned for two white wines, a rose', and three reds for sampling while you peruse the store. Miller's is famous for having the best wine at the Art Walk so come down, have a sip and check out the deals.

The weather should be great so make a night of it. Enjoy Downtown Bozeman and have a fun time! The Art Walk goes from 6-8 PM this Friday July 13th.

Keeping things in Balance

Simply stated, "wine balance" is the manner in which individual wine components work in harmony with one another. The topic is a bit more complex, however, because determining balance is somewhat arbitrary – it may differ dramatically depending on the taster, the type of wine, or the setting.



Wine balance is the synergy of all the components that formulate an enjoyable tasting experience. It involves two of our most important wine enjoyment senses: smell and taste. The sense of smell helps us derive the aroma while the sense of taste tells us about the acid, the sugar, the tannins, the oak and the fruit flavors in the wine. The sense of feel involves the mouthfeel or the tactile sensations in the mouth from the tannins, the alcohol and the body or viscosity of the wine. In a balanced wine, individual component do not overshadow one another.

One of the wonderful things about wine is that it stimulates debates about the various components and their relationship to each other or to the food with which it is paired. One only need to mention “Chardonnay” to spark the debate on how an oaky, buttery, California Chardonnay is perceived. Depending on the taster, someone who prefers oaky wines will perceive components quite differently than someone who dislikes high doses of oak. Fifteen years ago, everyone loved oak-laden Chardonnay. Today, about two thirds of the people who ask for Chardonnay at the Wine Gallery ask for minimally oaked or Unoaked Chardonnay.

Current styles and what's in vogue also have an effect on what wine tasters perceive as balanced. In Kansas City, the wines that are younger, fruitier, lower in acid and higher in alcohol are considered balanced. In Newcastle, England, well-aged wines with less fruit, less alcohol and more acid are considered balanced. In Italy, high acid and more tannic wines are considered ideal.

To really start a debate, throw in the factor of what food is being served or if food is being serve at all. The fat in rib-eyes and T-bones mitigate the drying effect of highly tannic wines like Cabernet and Barolo. The saltiness of ham brings out the refreshing fruit in Riesling. A glass of Australian Shiraz that is high

in alcohol, rich in fruit, has a bit of oak and is low in acid tastes pretty good just by itself. Pinot Noir with its earthy nuances and tart fruit goes well with almost any food.

Lastly, most wines appear to be out of balance if they are served too warm or too cold. Red wines that are too warm will be out of balance because the alcohol comes to the forefront and overpowers the fruit. A bottle of Cabernet at 72 F. (room temperature) will taste alcoholic and tannic. Served at 63 F (cool to the touch) the balance of the berry flavors, tannins, oak and mouth feel are all in harmony and the wine is much more enjoyable.

Likewise with white wine: a white wine just out of the refrigerator will be flavorless and tart. Warmed up to 50 F. the flavors, the crispness and the refreshing character comes to the forefront and the wine is much more in balance.

Wine components share an interdependent relationship with their siblings:

- Sweetness vs. acidity. Most sweet wines require higher acidity in order to remain in balance. That is why Riesling makes such a good dessert wine: the sweetness is balanced out with a crisp acidity that harmonizes the experience.
- Tannin vs. acidity. Highly extracted red wines like Australian Shiraz or Paso Robles Cabernet benefit from lower acidity to avoid exaggerating the perception of their astringent tannins.
- Suppleness vs. harshness Wines with proper alcohol levels, ripe fine-grained tannins, and well-balanced acids feel soft and velvety to the tongue and cheeks. Young Bordeaux will almost feel gritty.
- Oak vs. aroma and flavor. Judicious use of oak integrates quality factors and adds new dimensions to the flavors. Too much oak masks fruitiness and all you taste is wood. Oak is a spice not a sauce.
- Alcohol vs. aroma and flavor. Too much alcohol provides a "hot" vodka-like sensation on the back of the throat, overpowering the aroma and flavor. Too little will make the wine seem light bodied and more tart.

There are few moments in life more sublime than finding the perfect balance with food and wine. That moment when the food and wine harmoniously fit together so that each and every wine and food component is present and contributes to the meal is absolute nirvana. It's not difficult to find; just enjoy it when you do