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## **What's new in the Grapevine this week?**

- **Tasting the Pinot Noir Clones**
- **The Truth about Wine Cellars**
- **Wine Spectator Honors the Wine Gallery again**

### **Tasting the Pinot Noir Clones**

Last Wednesday, the local chapter of the American Wine Society heard a program on the clones used in Pinot Noir. While I had always known that there were dozens of clones of Pinot Noir, I didn't really know what the differences were and why each one was used. Mitch Preston of Rodney Strong/Davis Bynum offered a short seminar whose outline is to taste six different Pinot Noirs made from each of the six clones they use. He explained the aroma and flavor characteristics of each clone and then demonstrated how they all come together in the finished wine. To do this experiment, participants sat at a place setting with eight glasses. Six of the glasses held wines made from the six individual clones, one held the commercially finished blend and one empty glass will be available for each participant to mix up a custom blend. This format is ideal for the American Wine Society because it is informative for average wine drinkers and wine geeks alike.

The first clone we tasted was Clone 2A (also known as Wädenswil). It was full of red fruit like cherry and raspberry but also had distinct earthy notes. The palate was medium bodied, ripe and slightly tannic.

Next was Clone 113. This clone had many of the same red fruits present in the 2A but had a distinct cedar/spice aroma. The palate was pleasantly weighted and it finished with firm tannins.

The third clone we tasted was Clone 777. This clone is very aromatic with dense and complex black fruit flavors (black cherry, cassis), with leather,

tobacco, and lavender notes. It also had a darker color and a bit more tannin.

After that we tasted Clone 115. This clone presented rich rose petal, red cherry and cola notes on the nose. To me it had the classic Pinot Noir flavors of black cherry and spice. The darker color hinted that it would have more structure and tannin.

Clone 114 was next. It had more red fruit like pomegranate and cranberry on the nose. It was a bit lower in acid than I expected but it had good structure and moderate tannins.

The last clone was Clone 667. The nose was not nearly as aromatic as the Clone 777 but still showed black cherry, strawberry and spice. The flavors were lighter as well with dark cherry, strawberry, tea and baking spices all in attendance. The body was firm and the tannins soft.

After we had tasted all the clones separately, we tasted the 2016 Davis Bynum “Jane’s Vineyard” Pinot Noir. The “Jane’s” has 2A, 114, 115, 667 and 777 clones in the blend but it has a more “finished” feel due to oak barrel aging. The 2016 Jane’s Vineyard Pinot Noir has a lovely ruby red hue with aromas of black cherry, plum, and earth. On the palate, this medium bodied wine begins with a wild brambly berry note along with purple floral characters and baking spices that shine through with balance, acidity and a long lingering finish. Warm, bright and full of flavor, the Jane’s Pinot Noir is a wonderful combination of fruit, earth, and spice found in the clones we tasted previously. Enjoy this wine with a warm beet salad, wild mushroom pasta or a roasted pork loin.

If events like this are something of interest to you, e-mail Larry Johnson at [awsbozeman@gmail.com](mailto:awsbozeman@gmail.com) and request to be on the mailing list.

## **The Truth about Wine Cellars**

*One of America’s greatest wine retailers is Doug Pendleton who owns two of the finest wine shops in America in the suburbs of Indianapolis. Doug writes a newsletter every week and last week he had some words of wisdom about cellaring wine. Here are some excerpts from his post:*

Nary a week goes by that someone doesn't come by the store to ask about purchasing a large format wine storage unit or building a wine cellar. Being a wine merchant, I know that I should do everything I can to encourage wine cellars, since so many of my customers spend money in our stores in an effort to fill them. I maintained a personal cellar for over 15 years (before I had two stores full of wine) and can personally attest to the

pleasure to be derived from opening a bottle of 12-year-old Cabernet that has aged to mellow perfection. The warmth you feel as it spreads its velvety richness across your palate is only rivaled by the sense of victory you have earned with your patience.

There is also a dark side to wine cellars, like the engraved anniversary magnum of a 1990 Sausal Zinfandel that we opened in 2005. It was rich and filled with fruit in its youth, but had withered into dull senility over 15 years. The fact is, far more wine is ruined in the finest wine cellars than is ever preserved. I cannot tell you the number of times I have watched the owners of magnificent wine cellars discard the rust colored liquid contained in what was once a prized bottle.

The truth is that no one can consume 3,000, 5,000, or in some extreme cases, 10,000 bottles of wine before a good portion of it goes bad. Not only am I certain that a high proportion of the cult wine and first growth Bordeaux are collectables that will never be consumed, even more popularly priced Cabernets and Pinot Noirs are routinely held well beyond their prime.

It took me a long time to understand that wine is like a living thing. It is born, enjoys an exuberant youth, gradually reaches the peak of its maturity and then slowly fades away to vinegar. Think of it as a bell curve... a fine bottle of Napa Cabernet might have a twenty year life and reach its own level of perfection at the eight-year mark before slowly fading away to an amber-colored death in its 20th year. This is true for all wines, with a vintage Port lasting 50 years or more, while an Italian Pinot Grigio might barely hold on for two.

The primary reason for maintaining a cellar should be to provide yourself with a well-chosen selection of wines that ensure that you always have the right wine for the right occasion. A wine cellar gives you the luxury of constantly selecting wines that you can allow to mature for future consumption. The secret is to keep your selections in balance. When I had my cellar, I always seemed to have racks filled with age-worthy Cabernet when what I really wanted with dinner was a Côtes du Rhône.

You need to think about your own consumption profile. What is your ratio of reds to whites... how about between varietals and regions? Think about logging the wines you consume over a few months and use those proportions to dictate the kind of balance you want to achieve in your cellar. And, be sure to take into account the potential maturity of the

wines. While you would never want to hold Sauvignon Blanc more than a year, you will need to be thinking 5 to 10 years down the road as you select age-worthy Cabernet Sauvignon or Bordeaux. So, before you embark on building a personal wine collection, here are a few thoughts.

- 1.) Is it the thrill of the hunt? If finding the truly great bottles is your goal, save room because there is a "vintage of the century" going on somewhere almost every year!
- 2.) Don't cellar more than you can drink unless you intend to sell it off before it's too late.
- 3.) Don't forget when to drink them. Always label your bottles with a tag that reminds you when you intend to serve them. (Shameless plug – the Wine Gallery sells the tags)
- 4.) Sample your wines over time. Don't wait 10 years to try the first bottle in a case. The top of the bell curve is very elusive. If I have a case of good Cabernet, I might wait a two or three years and start trying a bottle a year until I think it has peaked, then consume the rest over the following 12 to 18 months.
- 5.) Remember, modern wine making styles lean toward shorter and shorter maturities. Take into account the timelines provided in magazine reviews and pay close attention to the level of tannins in reds and acids in whites. Generally, longevity in white wine is all about acid just as age-worthy reds are based upon their tannic structure.

## **Wine Spectator Honors the Wine Gallery**

I got a call last week from Wine Spectator Magazine informing me that the Wine Gallery will be mentioned in the October 31 edition as “**one of the best stocked and best serviced wine retailers in the country and the world.**” We are one of seven stores from our five state region and the only one in a 200 mile radius to be honored with this distinction. This is also the fourth time we have received this award.

It probably doesn't hurt our ratings that we sell Wine Spectator... I'm just saying.