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What's new in the Grapevine this week?

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March Wine Club Preview

Once again the Wine Club will feature a great wine made from a lesser known grape. Our first red for March is the **2009 Alvarez de Toledo Mencia**. We loved the Alvarez de Toledo treatment of the Mencia grape because of its marked fruity character which brings out all the qualities and characteristics of the Mencia variety. Its time in the barrel accentuates these qualities by providing subtlety, elegance and complexity to the nose. In the mouth it is silky, fruity, with persistence and great depth. Leather, and black fruits are the principal notes struck by this suave effort that over-delivers in a big way. It received 91 points from Wine Advocate and represents a great value at **(\$14)**

Last month we had the Garzon Tannat that was in the Top 50 wines on the Wine Spectator Top 100 for 2017. In March, we will have the **2016 Garzón Reserve Albariño**. This Albarino portrays ripe aromas of white peaches, citrus fruits like grapefruit and tangerine, ripe apricot and also light floral notes of jasmine. It has a fresh, crisp and fruity mouthfeel with mineral notes, and is rounded off with balanced acidity, with good structure and a delicious mouth-watering finish. Bright, clean, and robust, the **2016 Garzón Albariño** shows a serious side of this grape variety that sometimes escapes other producers. This wine adds a firmness on the palate that makes it a beautiful and versatile food pairing wine. **(\$16.50)**

The second red wine for March is the **2016 Saint Cosme Cotes du Rhone**. Sourced from the Gigondas region in the southern Rhone, it combines old vines, magnificent terroirs, fairly low yields and an outstanding climate. This 2016 vintage shows top quality fruit of blackcurrant and wild raspberry, magnificently intense color and layered texture with notes of truffle and licorice. It's mostly Syrah offering lovely

floral and peppery aromas, dark fruits, medium to full body and a softly dusty finish. It should drink well for 6 years **(\$16.50)**

Historically “field blends” provided the winemaker with an ability to showcase multiple grape varieties thus limiting the risks associated with being tied to a single variety. Our second white wine this month is a nod to this celebrated tradition. This cuvée of **Scarpetta Frico Bianco** from the Italian hills of Friuli-Venezia Giulia is made by Master Sommelier Bobby Stuckey. It is a star bright blend of 80% Chardonnay and 20% Friulano done entirely in stainless steel. The nose gives aromas of fresh cut white flowers and crisp apple. On the palate, this blend is crisp and clean with a zesty, white grapefruit flavor. Pair it with grilled fish, green vegetables and salad. **(\$11).**

Millennium Club members will receive the **2012 Marquis de Bellefont** Bordeaux blend from Saint-Emilion. We think it shows a distinctly powerful and virile side of Saint-Emilion. Attractive scents of lavender, licorice, smoke, tobacco, game and earthiness add the shades of nuance on the nose. The wine is full-bodied, voluptuously textured and rich, with good acidity, surprising freshness and laser-like definition given its amplexity and length. The Marquis de Bellefont appears to have more than enough density to fill out that broad-shouldered profile. The blend is 90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc and should drink well from now to 2030. **(\$32)**

Menu for 93 point tasting

If you were to read Wine Spectator and note that there was a 93 point rating on a Syrah from the Northern Rhone, a Syrah from Washington State rated 93 and a 93 point Shiraz from the Barossa Valley, how would you decide which one fit your palate? I recommend that you taste them side by side and buy the one you like.

How can you do that? How about the **Wine Gallery annual 93 Point Tasting on March 8th**? This is by far the best wine tasting event in Montana and we seem to sell out every year. Where else would you have the chance to taste the best wines available AND nosh on the culinary creations of Chef Daniel Wendell? Our chef has hand selected some great cheeses and charcuterie as well as an array of gustatory delights to complement the extraordinary wines. He will be preparing Wagyu Beef, Crab Beignets, Coq au Vin, Foie gras Custard, “Grilled Cheese” made with ricotta, prosciutto, and tomato marmalade as well as a couple of desserts including a dark chocolate custard and Chef Wendell’s madeleines. If you can avail yourself to this magical synergy of gourmet delights, sign up! Live life! The **93 point tasting** will begin at 6:30 PM, March 8 at the Food Studio on West Kagy. Tickets are \$89 and are available by calling the Wine Gallery at 586-8828 or by e-mail at bozemanwinegallery@gmail.com

(Use that same e-mail address to request the wine list. We will have it ready for you to preview next Monday.)

Pop up Tasting tomorrow

Linne Calodo's name is synonymous with a bold, innovative approach to winemaking that embraces the Paso Robles appellation and eschews the rigid traditions of the past. The winemaking style is a perfect blend of art, science, passion, and talent, with years of experience for good measure. Linne Calodo produces seven to ten exclusive blends per year using rich, lush varietals as well as more esoteric varietals from the Willow Creek District. The vineyards are farmed sustainably and the crop loads reflect the natural balance of the vine. By harvesting at peak ripeness, **Linne Calodo** produces wines that are rich and concentrated in both flavor and texture, with a lush, full-bodied mouthfeel. If your palate goes to the lean and austere, Linne Calodo is NOT for you!

We got a last minute opportunity for 24-30 people to enjoy an impromptu tasting tomorrow March 1, at the Food Studio from 5:30 to 7:30 PM. The assistant wine maker and national sales manager for Linne Calodo will be on hand to answer questions and explain the wines. We do not plan on a formal program so just call and we will get you in. There will be six wines accompanied by cheese and charcuterie from the Food Studio to give you some pairing options.

If you want to join in on this spur of the moment tasting, just give us a call at 586-8828 to get your seats. Since it is short notice your seat is just **\$25**.

A Little Stress is Good

Almost everyone is familiar with Nietzsche's observation that what doesn't kill us makes us stronger. Too much stress leads to high blood pressure, a depressed immune system, depression and all that is a good recipe for an early death. The stress we get from moderate to strenuous exercise makes our muscles work better, our cardiovascular systems work more efficiently, and protects us from obesity and diabetes. A little stress is good.

The same is true for grapevines. It seems odd that all of the world's great vineyards are in climates that are in some way marginal. If the level of stress, (lack of water, sun, or nutrients) doesn't kill the vine, an endurable amount of adversity forces grapevines to struggle and adapt.

Some of this is an evolutionary adaptation to keep the species alive. When resources are scarce, the plants are forced to concentrate their sugars in a smaller number of grape clusters. The evolutionary strategy is to nurture and protect the smaller number of seeds for the next generation. Fewer and smaller grape clusters ripen more evenly and result in wines of great character and concentration.

Take a look at the Columbia Valley in Washington State, for instance. Cold winters and dry summers make this area a near desert. This climate is consistent so when the cold winter is over, bud break comes at the right time and the crop ripens

slowly and evenly. Grapevines also flourish here because growers are able to drip irrigate the rows of vines. This allows the vines enough water to survive, but still be stressed by the hot sun. One of the reasons Washington State wines are so good is that growers manage the stress on the vines so grapes can be harvested at the height of their physiological ripeness.

Jug wines are usually made from grapes that have had the life of Riley. No one has reduced the size or number of the clusters or stressed the vines with meager water rations. The result from these spoiled brats is wine of little character and remarkable blandness. Just like artists, comedians and musicians, suffering makes wine more worthy of our attention and appreciation. The hard work they all did to survive makes them bold and memorable. Think about that when you take your next sip.

New Spanish wines

We just received some new wines from the small winery operation, Las Cepas, in La Rioja, Spain. The Rioja region is known for the deep limestone soils and ancient winemaking heritage. Most of Las Cepas vines – Tempranillo, Grenache, Graciano and Viura – are more than 40-50 years old. Further, all wines are certified by the Regulating Council of Origin Rioja. La Rioja was the first community to grant such a certification in 1991. Les Cepas firmly believes in the philosophy of organic/sustainable viticulture and oenology to keep their soils pure and wines of consistent quality.

Las Cepas Serezhade 2015, 100% Viura. Serezhade (Scheherezade) is made from Viura grapevines that are 50+ years old. The wine is golden yellow in color, intense and elegant nose, hints of vanilla come from maturing in the cellar 3 months. Unctuous in the mouth with balanced acidity and great expression, it offers a fruity and pleasant white wine for all occasions. **(\$15.50.)**

Bodegas Vinya Els Vilars is made from a 50-50% blend of Merlot and Syrah. It has an intense color and aromas of fresh, dark fruit. In the mouth it has full, powerful, round yet ripe tannins. Try it with grilled meats, heavy cheeses or stew. **(\$17.50)**

Las Cepas 1921, 100% Garnacha is named for the year the Garnacha vines were planted. On the nose, red fruit and blackberry exude perfume from the glass with hints of licorice and violets. It has a lush and silky mouthfeel with concentrated dark fruit flavors. For a brief moment, crisp acidity kicks in to help balance out the weight of this wine. A long, concentrated finish with mature tannins hangs at the end. Only 5000 bottles were made. **(\$26.95)**