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What's new in the Grapevine this week?

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Malbec tasting at Saffron Table Tonight

Today, **April 17th, is International Malbec Day**. Tonight we will be teaming up with the **Saffron Table** to showcase some wonderful examples of Malbec as a prelude to dinner at Bozeman's Best Restaurant. We plan for one of the wines to be a 93 pointer from Wine Enthusiast, one wine was on the Top 100 for Wine Spectator, and we will even have a Rose' of Malbec for when summer gets here.

There will be three seatings (5 PM, 5:30 PM and 6 PM) for the tasting portion. You may reserve a table for dinner immediately following your tasting session and pair your favorite wines with the Saffron Table's award winning cuisine. Call us at 586-8828 for seating at the tasting portion and we will reserve your seats for dinner. Call us but hurry; these events have filled up quickly every time we do them. The price for the tasting portion is \$15; your dinner will be billed separately.

Half-bottles can fit right in

I am stocking more and more of the 375 ml. bottles. The half bottle format appeals to folks who just want to have a glass of good wine with dinner but don't want to drink a whole bottle. Many of you recall the experiment we did recently concerning the storage of opened bottles. By opening a half bottle, you don't have to worry about leftovers or if that nice red wine is going to taste as good in a few days.

There are other advantages too. Half bottles are approximately half the price of the full 750 ml bottle. It is also the perfect size for two people to share with dinner on a weeknight. One more bit of good news about half bottles is that wine ages faster in the half bottle so you can take a year or two off the normal wait time to taste the deliciousness.

Right now we stock the 375 ml bottles of Sancerre and Pouilly-Fume for nights where seafood is on the menu. If you just want a nice \$9.95 half bottle of Alexander Valley Chardonnay, we have that too. We also have Zinfandel, Cabernet Franc, Pinot Noir, Cabernet and other reds to choose from. Check out our selection the next time you are in the Wine Gallery.

Update your Calendar!

As we previously announced, on **May 8th**, we have a special treat in store with a visit by **DeLancelotti Vineyards**. You need to mark your calendars for this one. DeLancelotti Vineyards grow grapes in some of the best vineyards in the Willamette Valley. Their newest Chardonnay just received a 95 point rating from Wine Spectator and their Pinots always seem to receive ratings above 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 plan to taste the 2017 **La Sorella Chardonnay** and **2017 La Sorella Pinot Noir** (not yet rated), the **2015 Anderson Chardonnay** (92 points Wine Advocate), the **2013 and 2015 Lachini Pinot Noir** (92 Wine Advocate).

Our evening will not only feature these great wines, but food pairings from Chef Daniel Wendell at the Food Studio. We only plan to have 24-30 people so make your reservations early. The event will start at 6:30 PM at the Food Studio (2251 West Kagy). Tickets are \$79 and include dinner, wines, and gratuity. Send us an e-mail at bozemanwinegallery@gmail.com or call us at 586-8828 to reserve your seat for what should be a memorable event.

We just completed two sold out tasting dinners at the Madison Valley Ranch this week end. I was tickled to be invited back for the weekend of **May 10 and 11** for a totally new program. If you have forgotten the format for this extraordinary experience, I will remind you. The Madison Valley Ranch is across the Madison River from Ennis. There are miles of Madison River, Jack Creek and O'Dell creek to fish or you can just practice your fly

casting in the onsite pond. The views of the Madison Range are spectacular and all of this is before you get inside the door. For dinner, Chef Matt Pease usually conjures up four or five courses plus a delicious dessert and I pair the wines for each course. Dinner by itself is \$89 but if you are like me, you will stay overnight at this “real Montana” lodge and enjoy a great breakfast the next morning. It is always a great deal with off season rates so call the Madison River Ranch at 800-891-6158 to get seats and a room.

Earth Day Wines

For those of you who like to preserve the environment and are into a healthy lifestyle with food and drink, we have some more good news. Last week we announced the Luna Apoge' wines which are dry farmed, Demeter certified biodynamic and less than 50 ppm sulfites.

This week we discovered a new line of wines that are double certified, all organic and sulfite free. Natural Merchants is a leading importer of high-quality, family produced no sulfites added certified organic wine, organically grown wine, Biodynamic wine and Vegan wine. They will be a source for the best natural wines from Europe and South America. We have tasted through their sample line-up and have found them to be of great quality and reasonable price. We will follow up with more information as soon as it is available.

New Arrival

Last month at our 93 point tasting, we sold a lot of the Peake Ranch John Sebastiano Pinot Noir. We just got two more Peake Ranch wines that are not only great wines but we got a great deal on them.

The 2015 Peake Ranch Pinot Noir from the Santa Rita Hills offers smooth aromas of red cherry, licorice and dried chaparral. It lands effortlessly on the palate, with an elegant yet expressive array of black raspberries, toasted spice, forest floor and hints of earth which all give way to a rich, voluptuous, beautifully pure Pinot that has a great finish. It rated 94 points from Wine Advocate and only 356 cases were made. This wine normally retails north of \$40 but we have it for just **\$29.95**.

From a cool site in the Santa Maria Valley and a barrel selection made in the cellar, the **2015 Peake Ranch Chardonnay Sierra Madre Vineyard** is a stunning, hedonistic, pedal-to-the-metal beauty that offers tons of stone fruits, buttered citrus, crushed rocks and honeysuckle aromas and flavors. Big, rich, layered and decadent, with a killer finish, it's a

sensational Chardonnay that will compete with the best out there. It also rated 94 points and was made in a 326 case cuvee. As with the Pinot, it is normally priced at \$40 or more. The Wine Gallery has it (while supplies last) for just **\$29.95**.

Are Screwcaps better than cork?

It is now 2019 and we still get people who don't want bottles sealed with the Stelvin (screwcap) closure. Yes, I am old enough to remember when a screwcap was a sign of cheap wine but in modern times it is an outward sign that a winemaker cares about the people who drink his/her wine. It isn't just inexpensive wines now either. More wineries are offering screwcaps for their expensive offerings as well.

I understand there can be an emotional connection to wines bottled under cork. But cork brings with it the possibility of cork taint ("corked wine"), when a wine becomes contaminated by TCA (the chemical compound 2,4,6-trichloroanisole), which mutes wine's aromas and flavors and can cause it to smell musty or moldy. To be fair, TCA can also come from barrels or other sources of wood, but eliminating corks is one way to battle the problem. Using screwcaps also eliminates the problems of crumbly or otherwise compromised corks, which can lead to sherried or oxidized wines. No industry in the world accepts a 3-4% failure rate in its finished product and that is what we get with a cork seal. The screw-top greatly improves the chances that the wine will be good.

My own experience with wines aged under screwcaps is pretty good. The wines seem to be fresher, there is no cork taint, and there is no oxidation. I have noticed many wines from New Zealand, the Pacific Northwest and lately even France are covered with a screw cap.

The quality boost from screwcaps has had a competitive boost from cork manufacturers. The cork industry has invested millions of dollars in improving the quality and consistency of the product over the past decade, and I can say we have run into fewer and fewer corked wines in the past 3-4 years. So even if cork is 17th century technology, the industry has been forced to produce a better product. That is good all around.

I know it is hard to give up on old prejudices and reliable rules of thumb, but I suggest doing the same thing I suggest about wine labels. Taste the wine inside the bottle and then make a judgment. Don't dismiss, accept, reject or embrace a wine by what is on the outside whether it be the closure or the label.