



Volume 15, No.35 (*published by the Wine Gallery, Bozeman, MT*) **Sept. 11, 2019**

What's new in the Grapevine this week?

- **Art Walk Friday**
- **Mark your calendars**
- **Wines of Southern Italy**
- **Wine Trivia quiz**
- **American vs French oak**

Art Walk this Friday

This Friday, September 13th, Bozeman will host the final Art Walk of the summer from 6 PM to 8PM. I will be at Miller's Jewelry in their beautiful new store at 35 West Main Street to serve some delicious wines while you take part in a remarkable art event.

I always am amazed at the artwork that goes into crafting fine jewelry. First of all, the September birthstone is the sapphire and Miller's has a HUGE selection of Montana Yogo sapphire jewelry that they will feature. I know I have presented Jeanie with a few beautiful Yogo Sapphire pieces from Miller's over the years. Please take my endorsement and make it a point to see what they have to offer.

As a kicker for Art Walk and Miller's, renowned international artist **Angie Crabtree** will in attendance. The folks at Miller's knew she specialized in spectacular detailed portraits of gemstones and they commissioned her to create one for Miller's. Ms. Crabtree will be at Miller's to finish her most recent gem portrait in the showroom between 6 and 8 pm during the Art Walk. She will also have some of her hand painted gemstones on display throughout the evening.

The weather should be warm and sunny at the start. A big full moon will be rising at 8 PM when the Art Walk is over and you hit the streets to find food and drink to finish your evening. Can you think of a more enjoyable time than sipping delicious wines while you peruse the Yogo Sapphire collection and Angie Crabtree's breathtaking art? See you Friday!!

Mark your calendars

We are planning a wine tasting event for **Friday, October 4** that will feature wines from renowned importer Eric Solomon. We have used many of the Eric Solomon wines in the Wine Club and as wines we feature in our Best Buys section. These wines from France, Spain, and Italy perennially receive 90+ point ratings while at the same time presenting outstanding value price points. We have not finalized the line-up but you can bet there won't be one wine rated 90 points or less and many will be under \$20.

While we are finalizing the tasting samples, we will finish up the details on venue, cost and start time. Watch the Grapevine next week for more details. Circle the date and get ready for an outstanding tasting.

We also are excited to announce that we will again be participating with the **Madison Valley Ranch** for two wine dinners **October 25 and October 26**. Again, we don't have all the details set in stone yet but I would definitely circle the dates. The Madison Valley Ranch is one of the best Orvis rated venues in the world and their chef continues to amaze us with his skill. The MVR has excellent packages for their first class accommodations for those of you who may want to stay in Ennis for the night. These events always sell out so make your plans early.

Lastly, the **Saffron Table** has asked us to do a special tasting **on Tuesday, November 5**. There are some exciting new wines to taste and your ticket to the tasting will come with a reservation for dinner. Watch the Grapevine as we get closer to the date!

Wines of Southern Italy

The south of Italy is warm, sunny and has a rich tradition of being at the crossroads of the Mediterranean Sea. Both the "toe", Calabria and Puglia, the "boot-heel" are important wine regions that are not as famous as the northern Italian regions like Piemonte, Tuscany, Veneto or Friuli but nevertheless produce wines with a great tradition,

This month we have a wine from Calabria as our red wine for the Wine Club. Calabria, once called *ENOTRIA* (land of wines) is the "toe" of Italy with that rich wine making tradition. Some vineyards are very ancient, going back to the Greek colonies 2800 years ago. These vineyards started producing 800 years B.C.E. and continue through today. Calabrian wine was offered to the winners of the Olympic Games in ancient Greece and temples to Dionysus (Bacchus) were supplied with wine from this region.

The people of Calabria have passed of years of experience and incalculable knowledge in winemaking techniques to make these wines packed with tradition and high value. This month we feature the Gaglioppo grape which was originally planted by

the Greeks. Gaglioppo is typified by a range of crushed berry flavors, and accented by cherry and spicy secondary notes. See if you get that profile while sipping this wine.

If you want fruit-forward, ripe, red wine for a good price, look no further than the “boot-heel “of Italy in the province of Puglia. Some of the best values in Italian wine come from this sunny, dry region. Most Puglia wine is red, full-bodied and will pair well with a wide variety of foods. Producers in Puglia have focused on making great red wines and local grapes like **Negroamaro and Primitivo**. Grapes are not the only crop that does well in Puglia; in fact, almost half of Italian olive oil is produced in the dry heat of Puglia.

One of the best known wines from Puglia is **Salice Salento**: The Salice Salentino region is named for the Salento Peninsula located on the backside of the heel of Italy’s “boot” that extends into the ocean. Salice Salentino is made from the Negroamaro grape, which in Italian means “black bitter.” Dry red wine made from Negroamaro has flavors of ripe plum, baked raspberries, and spice-cabinet notes like anise, allspice and cinnamon. Even though Negroamaro is full bodied it is not too tannic or acidic, and instead leads with bombastic fruit which makes it easy to sip, especially alongside meatballs or pizza.

If you’re searching for a richer, fuller-bodied red with abundant weight look towards Puglian **Primitivo**. Primitivo tastes of dark fruit like fresh figs, blueberries and baked blackberries. There’s a distinct dried fruit-leather character to it as well. The word Primitivo doesn’t mean primitive in Italian, but actually means early ripening since these grapes accumulate a lot of sugar early in the season. The early ripening means resulting wines are big, luscious and full of fruit. However, what’s fascinating about Primitivo is that sometimes the grape bunches ripen unevenly, so green grapes will get harvested along with the ripe ones. This keeps the jammy flavors in check and make Primitivo a great pizza wine.

Wine trivia

1. What percentage of restaurant wine sales do red wines represent?

- A) 55% B) 67% C) 75%

2. What percentage of legal-aged Americans contacted in a Nielson phone survey drink wine?

- A) 58% B) 68% C) 78%

3. What day of the year is the most wine consumed in the USA?

- A) New Year’s Eve B) Christmas Day C) Thanksgiving Day

4. What percentage of the sense of smell accounts for what many of us perceive as taste and mouthfeel?

- A) 25% B) 67% C) 90%

5) Where and when was the first patent issued for the corkscrew?

A) France 1589 C) England 1795 B) California 1821

6) How much fat and cholesterol are in a typical Washington State wine?

A) 2-3% depending on the grape B) Zero C) 18 grams per bottle

(Answers: 1-A, 2-B, 3-C, 4-C, 5-B, 6-B.)

Oak and Wine

French and American oak trees belong to different species and each imparts its own unique flavor. Because of the structure of its wood fibers, American oak contributes more vanilla and toasty flavors than its French counterpart. It also has more wood sugars. The influence of French oak is more subtle offering nutmeg and cinnamon notes.

That said, 10-15 years ago, some New World wines (specifically California and Australian) became so enamored with oak that the first whiff brought me back to 7th grade wood shop class. In more recent times, un-oaked Chardonnay has brought the pendulum back the other way. Some folks love it; some call it a passing fad. Ok, too much or too little oak is subject for debate. Let me say this: without oak, a Spanish Crianza, a big Brunello or a reserve Chianti would not hold the same balance and charm. The aroma, flavor interest, richness and complexity would be greatly diminished for any of these great wines without the required time in oak barrels. In fact, Spanish and Italian winemaking requires the use of oak both by custom and by law.

Winemakers are tinkerers by instinct and by training. Winemakers try different oak barrels to find the perfect match for the grape juice that ferments inside them. New oak barrels impart more flavor than used oak barrels so a winemaker can temper the impact of the wood by using new barrels for the first few months of aging and then racking into older barrels for a more nuanced finished wine. French oak may be more appropriate for a lighter wine. The possibilities are numerous but I'm almost sure they have all been tried.

I consider overpowering oak flavors a defect in wine. On the other hand, most wines would suffer in flavor and complexity without it. To me, oak in wine is like salt in soup. Too much salt will ruin the soup, not enough leaves the soup watery and uninteresting. Roger Eccleston said it best. "Oak should be a spice, not a sauce."