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What's new in the Grapevine this week?

- **New arrivals**
- **Update on Grand Tasting**
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- **Reminders**

New Arrivals

Yesterday we received the last of the **2011 Reininger “Helix” Syrah**. (Reininger is the winery that has made our “**Tosca**” wines.) All of the Reininger wines are delicious and this is an excellent effort in a tough vintage. The **2011 Helix Syrah** offers up classic blackberry fruit, crushed rock minerality, underbrush and hints of game to go with a medium-bodied, lightly textured yet balanced profile on the taste buds. The palate brings lighter-styled yet still generous-feeling fruit flavors that linger. Enjoy this straight forward Syrah over the coming 4-6 years. Now for the icing on the cake: This wine is normally \$31 but **will be \$15.95 while supplies last**.

Last weekend at the Taste of Haven, the best seller of the night was the **2015 Atance Bobal**. The dark red wine was fermented in stainless steel, and malolactic fermentation was performed in oak vats where the wine matured for four months before bottling. This Spanish red is very expressive, clean and focused, nicely balanced, with vibrant fruit, laser focus, high pitched fruit and a thin layer of spices. It has a fine texture with some tannins and a mineral sensation balanced by dark fruit on a clean finish. It opens up nicely with time in the glass, showing some floral notes. This represents great value. **90 points Wine Advocate \$13**

The wine we poured the most of at The Taste of Haven was the **2015 Coto de Hayas Centenario Garnacha**. This luscious red is rich and alluring, with rich raspberry ganache and vanilla flavors that impart a lush character, supported by lively citrusy acidity that keeps it balanced. Everyone seemed to love its bold, fruity style. **89 points Wine Spectator \$16.95**.

It should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the geography of the southern Rhône that the soils in the shadow of Mt Ventoux are rich in limestone, or that the vineyards which are located at a higher elevation than in the neighboring Rhône Valley, or that the older vines produce more concentrated and complex fruit. At Château Pesquié all of the conditions combine to create wines that are rich in fruit with remarkable balance and purity from the geography in the shadow of Mt. Ventoux. One result is the tight, crisp and focused, **2015**

Chateau Pesquie Les Terrasses Blanc. It is made in a lean, crisp style and offers medium-bodied notes of buttered citrus, toast and apple blossom. Based on Viognier, Roussanne, and Clairette, it has notions of lavender, apricot, honey blossom and poached pear all emerging from the glass. **(\$14.95)**

The truck that brought the Chateau Pesquie also brought our allocations of **the 2015 Sea Smoke Pinot Noirs.** These wines, made famous in the movie “Sideways” are much sought after and highly allocated.

The ever-changing nose of the **2015 Sea Smoke Southing** exhibits dark fruits, such as blackberry and plum skin, as well as some baking spice and fresh flowers (violet and lilac). The fine tannins and minerality are enhanced by the estate vineyard’s characteristic cool climate acidity. (\$69.95)

Our **2015 Sea Smoke Ten** is a brooding and intense wine. The dark fruit dominant aromas begin with notes of cola, black cherry and blueberry, then some Asian spice, chocolate and a hint of rose petals. Firm, mature tannins—evidence of Ten’s age ability—are followed by a long, velvety finish. (\$89.95)

Also new this week is the new generation of the **Go Vino Wine Glass.** The original Go Vino glasses would warp and distort in the dishwasher but the new edition is called “Top Rack” because they can now be considered dishwasher safe. Comprised of flexible BPA & BPS free polymer, they reflect a wine's color and project its aromatics much like fine crystal. The patented ergonomic thumb-notch and contoured base provide a secure grip when swirling. Each shatterproof, reusable and recyclable glass is proudly made in the USA. From the factory or from Amazon.com, a boxed set of four costs \$17.95 plus shipping. You can get a set of four today **at the Wine Gallery for \$16.95** (no shipping, no handling, and no tax)

Cocktail attire?

I don’t know how many times I have heard “There is no place to go in Montana where I can get dressed up!” Every year at the Grand Tasting, we have folks who take advantage of a grand occasion to dress up. You can’t do it every day but this is a grand occasion to dress up.

In this Amazon.com and “Google it” world we have grown accustomed to having anything we want by tapping on our smart phones. I agree that it’s a fine idea for a lot of things but not for the wines that fit our own palate as original, distinctive and unique. For wine, there is one way to decide if it is to your liking and that is to taste it. Read about it, look at the pictures or see the podcast and you won’t be any closer to truly knowing if you like the wine without that critical tasting step.

If you have a nickel and want to hear me rant about Montana law not allowing us to do wine tasting in the Wine Gallery, you can. But it makes much more sense to avoid the rant and come to the **2017 Grand Tasting on November 4th at the Hilton Garden Inn.** We will have approximately 60 wines rated 90 points and above with price tags from \$12-\$20. It is your chance to find the wines you love and get them for gifts, Holiday parties, or just for your cellar.

One other enticement: the Hilton chef loves this event and every year, he puts out some amazing small plate delicacies for us to sample with the wines. This year I saw Seafood Risotto, Roast Tri-tip, Wild Mushroom Pizza, Bangers and Mash, juicy slices of Pork Loin, a gourmet assortment of cheese and charcuteries and something with dark chocolate for dessert.

Ask anyone who went last year; this event combines great food, great wine and a great time. I know we set a record for number of bottles sold last year because the quality and value of this event outshines any other event in Montana.

It's a very modern mistake to think that today's most interesting and memorable wines will come to you without any effort. You've got to know about, and care enough to go find them. Never have so many great wines been created and yet been so challenging both to know about and to acquire. It is not impossible: you can find the right ones for your own self by just purchasing a ticket for \$79 at bozemanwinegallery@gmail.com or calling us at 586-8828.

I know 60 wines seems daunting but you don't have to randomly taste every one. As a service to our guests, we can forward the line-up of wines so you can put your priorities together. If you want to taste Pinot Noir, you will know our offerings and table locations ahead of time. If Chardonnay is lower on your list or if you just want to try something you've never had before, you can organize your evening based on your own curiosity and preference. Watch for the chart the week.

More icing on the cake: we will once again have the pleasure of welcoming Atlanta area wine critic and gourmand, E. Ray Babcock. He will be available with his perspicacious insights and bon mots on a one-on-one basis for everyone to enjoy.

This is a wonderful "date" night or a special event for just rounding up your friends. We encourage you to dress up in cocktail attire and make a really great night of it. Along with good wine and good food, you are guaranteed good conversation as well. There are still tickets left so get them while you can!

Amazon.com out of the wine business

It seems its three strikes and you are out when it comes to the wine business. After their third try in the last 10+ years, Amazon.com is leaving the wine business. The decision to shut down seems to be due to so-called "tied-house laws," which prohibit an alcohol merchant from receiving payments from other suppliers to advertise their goods. When Amazon completed their acquisition of Whole Foods, they essentially became a merchant, a brick-and-mortar establishment, inheriting retail alcohol licenses in multiple states. Amazon could previously collect their marketing fees from online sales because they were piggybacking on represented winery's individual licenses.

Amazon had been lobbying to amend these laws, but ultimately had to choose between selling wine through Whole Foods or through Amazon.com. While it's unclear if Whole Foods' sales numbers from their more than 470 stores superseded that of Amazon's sales, it is likely.

Amazon sought to take advantage of their status as the largest online retailer in the U.S. when launching its online wine marketplace. It had one of the largest selections of wines offered online, with nearly 10,000 wines from around the world. Still, Tiffany thinks we ran them out of business because the Wine Gallery stocks 1,600 wines from 21 different countries and we have access to 58,000 labels. We also can help you pick a great wine for dinner **tonight** and still beat most of Amazon's prices. (Again, no shipping, no handling, no tax)

Reminders

Bozeman Magazine sponsors a reader poll where area citizens get a chance to vote on their favorite local venues and activities. This year you can vote on line at <http://bozemanmagazine.com/bestof/> to voice your favorite selections.

I am deeply prejudiced but I think the Wine Gallery deserves being on the ballot for “Your Choice for Wine Retailer” and “Your Choice for Wine Selection”. My prejudices aside, please spend a few minutes and fill out the ballot. There are probably 15 categories but you don’t have to vote for everything listed. (I sure didn’t have a clue about best hip hop group in Bozeman or best place to buy yoga pants so I just left those questions to the cognoscenti.)

We would certainly appreciate your time and favorable votes cast. It is sort of fun to go through all the questions even if you don’t vote for us. Click on the link above and VOTE!!

Madison Valley Ranch plans wine dinners

After having experienced the beauty and hospitality of the Madison Valley Ranch over Easter weekend, I was delighted to be presented a chance to offer two more wine dinners at this gorgeous venue on November 10th and November 11th. The Madison Valley Ranch sold out every seat for our last dinner and they would love to have another congenial group come by for a great evening in November.

The Madison Valley Ranch is located across the Madison River from Ennis in Jeffers, Montana. This beautiful setting won the Lodge of the Year from Orvis in 2015 and I can see why. There is a pond and a creek where you can practice your fly casting and it is a short walk through the Channels to the Madison if you prefer to river fish. At dusk we watched ring neck pheasants, sand hill cranes and osprey fly by serenaded by meadowlarks. In the adjacent field a moose family made daily appearances last summer and we were lucky enough to see a herd of deer foraging as we ate.

Our dinner was prepared by Chef Matt Pease who stoked his creative energies to bring out dishes made with a variety of locally sourced victuals including smoked trout, Wagyu beef, spring lamb as well as beets, parsnips and cheeses. I came up with some delicious wines to pair and I would say, in all false modesty, it was one of the best dining experiences in Madison County.

Jeanie and I as well as some other folks from Bozeman employed a strategy of staying at the lodge overnight instead travelling back in the dark. Believe me, the accommodations are first rate. The good news is the Madison Valley Ranch has a special deal for those who stay over (just mention the Wine Gallery dinner). It really can’t be beat for a fun night away from the city. As a bonus, in the morning, we were served a delicious breakfast with some of the best coffee I’ve had in years.

If you just want a ticket for dinner, it is \$89 including everything. Call us for the wine dinner only option at 586-8828 and we will get you a seat. If you wish to book the dinner and lodging package, I would suggest a call to the Madison Valley ranch directly at 800-891-6158. Call soon, the last event sold out quickly.