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What's new in the Grapevine this week?

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- **Higher faster at altitude?**
- **Are there blueberries in my wine?**
- **Wine and sex**

Art Walk this Friday

The **July Art Walk will be Friday, July 14th** in Downtown Bozeman. We will be At Miller's Jewelry with some incredible wines including two sparkling wines. What's the celebration? How about Miller's Jewelry **celebrating 135 years in business** in Bozeman? Miller's has lasted that long because of their excellent selection and superior service. While you are sipping on some bubbly, check out the huge array of Montana Yogo Sapphires and the curated collection of estate jewelry. Come tour the Art Walk and make a point to come by Miller's (corner of Main and Tracy) to toast 135 years in business!!

Higher faster at altitude?

I am a big fan of "Dr. Vinny" and his column in Wine Spectator. With all the visitors this summer and summer activities in the mountains, this article may be of some interest.

"First up, I need to squash the rumor that drinking alcohol at high altitudes will make you feel its effects sooner—multiple studies have proven that altitude alone does not have an effect on alcohol's potency. That's not to say altitude won't make you feel funny: I've personally experienced that light-

headed, lethargic feeling of “altitude sickness,” and a glass of wine on top of that will certainly amplify those feelings.

The biggest difference about high altitude is the dryness—you’ll need to drink plenty of water, because wine will also dehydrate you, and if your nose and palate are dry, they aren’t working as well and a wine’s flavors can seem dull. Altitude can also make a wine seem unpleasantly sharp with tannins. Typically, tannic wines cause us to salivate, as a way to reduce their astringent effect. But if you’re dehydrated, you’re going to have trouble producing that moisture you need, so the wine might seem more tannic.

Then there are the high altitudes of being in an airplane. Enjoying wine is especially bad in a pressurized plane cabin, where the reduced air pressure and lower oxygen can cause a wine's aroma to dissipate more quickly. In a plane, acid and tannins can really stick out, so airlines tend to pick fruity wines that aren’t too tannic or acidic. As a fascinating aside—airplanes are also very loud, and studies have indicated that loud noises can distract from our ability to taste (and also offers at least a partial explanation for why airline food can be so disappointing).

Altitude won’t make a sealed bottle of wine age slower or longer, but once an older wine is open, there’s some good news. Years ago I answered a question about storing wines at high altitude, and sommelier and vintner Richard Betts (last week’s featured vintner at the Museum Wine and Culinary Classic) pointed out that the lower atmospheric pressure means less relative oxygen in the air, and that causes wines to open up more slowly. "You get a protracted look at the evolution of older wines in the glass ... they don't fall apart as quickly," Betts said."

Are there blueberries in my wine?

Whenever one reads wine reviews, there are always comments about smelling “blueberries”, “citrus”, “sage”, “smoke”, “vanilla”, “coffee”, “earth”, “black pepper” or “tropical fruit”. The question I got from an alert Grapevine reader a few weeks ago was “How do those flavors and aromas get into wine?”

The short answer is that they come from compounds that are in grapes and are expressed in the terroir or in the winemaking process. Grapes have a huge inventory of genetic loci and many of the loci are involved with the same chemicals that produce those odors and flavors in other fruits and other organic products. Wine has literally thousands of organic compounds that make up its flavor profile.

Wine esters come from acids. Esters are used extensively in the flavor industry for everything from essential oils to candy. In wine, esters provide the building blocks of fruit flavors. The green apple flavor in Riesling comes from esters. The raspberry notes in Spanish Garnacha are also from esters.

Pyrazine is an aromatic organic compound that has vegetable-like smells. It's the class of chemical that adds green pepper aromas to Chilean Carmenere and the green grassy notes to Sauvignon Blanc.

The smell of rosemary and desert sage are two classic examples of terpenes. In wine, they can smell anywhere from sweet and floral to resinous and herbaceous. (By the way, terpenes are a highly desired trait of hops and beer making). The lychee smell in Gewurtztraminer and Torrontes as well as the lavender and sage notes in Rhone reds come from terpenes.

Rotundone is a kind of terpene that is found in the essential oils of black pepper, marjoram, oregano, rosemary, thyme and basil. It gives that classic peppery aroma that you've probably tasted on great red wines. Peppercorn shows up in cool weather Syrah in particular.

Sulphur compounds may be the secret to minerality in wine. Some sulfur compounds smell fantastic, such as the chalk-like aroma in fine Chablis. Some sulfur compounds are bad, like the smell of wet wool, which is a wine fault caused by UV damage. The chalk and mineral notes of Chablis and Champagne and the slightly metallic taste of freshly opened, young red wines come from sulfur.

Volatile acidity (a.k.a. acetic acid) is caused by bacteria that are present in wine making. In high doses, volatile acidity smells like acetone, but in low doses it can add great complexity and is a feature of many very fine wines. Balsamic notes in Amarone and Chianti come from Volatile Acidity. Too much acetic acid is vinegar.

Phenols are a group of chemical compounds that are similar to alcohols. Phenols are naturally occurring in many things including sesame seeds, peppers and even cannabis. In wine, one type of phenol is when a wild yeast called Brettanomyces can add either a lovely (clove and bacon) aroma or a very detestable (horse) aroma to wine. The clove part can show up in Chateaufort du Pape and some Rhone reds. However, I have had some older wines that smell like a corral in springtime. If you ever want to get the bacon notes from Brett, try a South African Pinotage.

Lactones, and particularly *gamma-Lactones* are esters found in sweet and creamy smelling foods such as honey wheat bread, peaches, coconut, roasted hazelnut, butter and even cooked pork! Lactones are what give oak aged Chardonnay that toasty, tropical fruit smell.

Thiols can taste like grapefruit pith and passion fruit, but in higher doses will smell and taste like smoky, skunk, tar and chocolate. The coffee, mocha or dark chocolate smells in Argentine Malbec all come from thiols.

Wine and sex

Since everyone who buys wine at the Wine Gallery is over twenty-one, I have a PG-rated column this week. We all know about euphoric feeling we get after a glass (or two) of wine that is decidedly different than the disorienting buzz that comes from tequila.

It turns out that the same red wine which has the power to prevent obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and dementia is also a relaxant which has a lot to do with how amorous we feel.

I have reported several times about the group of Italian researchers who kick-started research into red wine and sex back in 2009. It appears that drinking two glasses a day gives women a higher sex drive, and in men, seems to increase testosterone in the blood.

Without getting too bogged down in science, according to the research, red wine actually has compounds that stimulate our erogenous zones. A compound in red wine called Quercetin blocks the UGT2B17 enzyme, used by the male body to flush out testosterone, increasing our craving for “amour”.

Let's not get carried away though; this only applies to the first couple of glasses. It goes swiftly downhill from there. Like with all benefits of red wine, moderation is the key.

So, faced with some of the best news in recent history, I can save you a few bucks on Sinatra CD's and fuel for the fireplace. Allegedly women are aroused by musky, earthy, woody, licoricey, and cherry aromas. If that sounds like wine you would like, look no further than Oregon Pinot Noir. It is a wine that packs some serious sweet black cherry and earthy truffle notes. Also on the 'to drink list' should be Syrah, a high-octane grape with turbo-charged flavors of dark berries, licorice and black pepper and a decidedly masculine character.

Research suggests that a man's libido is stronger when encountering wines with aromas of lavender, caramel, butter, orange, licorice, baking spice and vanilla are sipped. Rioja Gran Reserva has all the necessary credentials, with more ageing than a Reserva, you'll get oaky flavors in the form of luxurious vanilla and butterscotch over dark plum. Reach for a Côtes de Rhone for some pheromonal foreplay, with nuanced red fruit, orange rind and peppery spice notes.