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What's New in the Grapevine this week?

- **Hot weather and wine**
- **Fewer headaches with “natural” wines**
- **Art Walk on Friday**
- **Wooden wine boxes for sale**

Hot weather advice for wine drinkers

Wine consumers have a special set of problems to deal with when the hot weather arrives. We have to get the wine home without “cooking” it, make sure it is served at the appropriate temperature, and we have to select the right wines for summer menus.

Fortunately, we keep the Wine Gallery air-conditioned to protect our wines. Air conditioning also gives comfort to our customers who step in from the summer swelter (yet to appear this year) to peruse the wine and food selection. At the checkout counter, almost everyone asks me about how to get the bottle of wine home without letting it get too hot.

On a 90 degree day, if left parked in the sun, the inside of an automobile can reach temperatures of over 140 degrees. We all know that children and pets cannot be left in a parked car with the windows rolled up. Neither Junior nor Fido can last very long in that sort of heat and neither can a bottle of wine. So how do we get all that precious cargo home if there are a lot of stops to make?

Atlanta area wine critic and gourmand Everett Babcock insists that the most important rule for the safe conduct of wine on a summer day is to **PARK IN THE SHADE**. Just parking in the shade can reduce the inside temperature of a sealed automobile by 25 degrees. Cracking the windows will also help keep the heat level below oven temperatures. The coolest place for wine is in the trunk. Your wine will be coolest away from the greenhouse of the passenger compartment and if it's parked in the shade it's even better.

One other way to keep wine cool is to take along a “blue ice” bag. We occasionally have a supply of “blue ice” bags that we give to customers who have a

long way to go home or lots of stops to make. These bags are free to our customers when we have them. You can also find them at hardware and camping stores. These bags can be used over and over again either by the original customer or by returning them to the store to be passed on to the next sweltering wine buyer.

(Here is the point where I state the obvious: These tips are for wine bottles only. Kids and dogs should NEVER be exposed to the hot interior of a car even for short periods of time. Drive Bowser and Junior directly home, don't put them in the trunk and don't pack dogs or kids in "blue ice.")

Hot weather is tough on wine. Leaving a bottle of wine in a car that gets much over 130-145 degrees Fahrenheit for several hours will literally push the cork out of the bottle. Yet, contrary to conventional wisdom, wine does not *immediately* turn dank, brown and sherry-like. The good news is if you let it cool right away and drink the bottle within a day or two, the injury will hardly be noticeable. Within weeks to months, however, the cooked wine will shed its flavors and turn dull and worthless - a particularly sad outcome if it was a bottle of your favorite "save-it-for-a-big-celebration" wines.

When it comes to drinking wine, don't let bottles (especially reds) get too warm when serving them in the hot weather. Keep all wines in the cellar until they are ready to serve or give them 15-20 minutes in the fridge before you bring them out. Red wines served at temperatures over 72 degrees will blow off a lot of alcohol and the alcohol is all you will smell and taste.

As a rule of thumb, the lighter and more tart the wine, the cooler it should be when served. Sauvignon Blanc with its streak of crisp acidity will taste best at about 45-48 F. To get that temperature, take a chilled bottle out of the refrigerator 15 minutes before serving. Chardonnay will taste better at a little warmer temperature; say 52-55 F. Lighter reds like Pinot Noir will be perfect if they are served at 60 degrees. Heavier reds like Zinfandel, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon will be best at 62-65 degrees. At that temperature, you will taste all the red wine flavors without the alcohol burning off your nose hairs.

Chilled wines are a real blessing in the hot weather and a great match for salads and other light fare that delights us in summer. It is no wonder that lighter, low-alcohol fizzy wines like Italian Moscato D'Asti and Portuguese Vinho Verde are popular when the weather is hot. Prosecco is the traditional "pick-me-up" for a hot afternoon in Italy and Cava enjoys the same sort of popularity in Spain. Both are dry sparkling wines that will match with almost any food. They are most refreshing on a hot day served chilled straight out of the ice bucket.

Happy Summer!! It will start next week.

Can “natural wines” give you a headache?

There is a movement afoot in the wine business for “natural wines”. These wines are made from organically or biodynamically produced grapes, fermented with native yeasts using minimal intervention during the wine making process. The “natural” wine makers try to use the barest minimum of added sulfites and they eschew filtering and fining. The market segment they are trying to appeal are folks who feel they will get fewer headaches from wines that have no added chemicals or added manipulation.

I am skeptical about these steps making wine “better” or “more natural”. Take the inclusion of natural yeast, for instance. Natural yeast is the yeast that naturally clings to the grape skins and floats in the air inside the winery. There may be several strains of yeast that start the fermentation process, but without controls, some of these yeasts may give off strange odors or generate unwanted microscopic compounds. Brettanomyces, for instance, is a wild yeast that imparts a definite manure-like odor. Most wine makers would not want that as part of their sales presentation. Who knows what else can be produced by wild strains of yeast? Who even knows the species of yeast that starts the fermentation?

The purpose of that example is because when people think of wine fermenting, they think that all the yeast does is change fruit sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide. Fermentation is much more complex than that. Pyrazines, esters, and all sorts of organic chemicals are side effects of that main alcohol fermentation. A good example of my point is that sulfites are produced during any fermentation whether it is for vinegar, beer, soy sauce, tea or yogurt. Where does the sulfur come from? There is no sulfur in sugar, no sulfur in carbon dioxide and certainly no sulfur in ethanol. The sulfur probably comes from the breakdown of plant proteins in the grapes. Since all wines have these naturally occurring sulfites, most folks can drink wine without any reactions

One other “bug” that is not well understood is the lactobacillus that is used in all red wines to convert malic acid to lactic acid. Lactic acid is a milder acid so converting the stronger malic acid, smooths out the wine. Here again, the bacterial fermentation is not limited to the malic/lactic conversion. Other chemicals like diacetyl (the chemical that makes movie theatre popcorn taste buttery) are also produced giving the wine a much smoother, toastier mouthfeel. I often wonder if European clones of that lactobacillus produce fewer side chemicals and thus people are less susceptible to red wine headaches when they are in Italy or France. Who knows?

The question that is posed concerning wine making is: Is it better to control the fermentation reactions by intervening with temperature controls and sulfites or is it better to allow any and all microbes into the wine making process and accept the by-products which we can't control?

In “natural” wine making, there is no guarantee on what is in the wine. We should do some experiments to find out if “natural” wines really do cause fewer headaches rather than assume the hype is real.

Art Walk is next Friday

Every summer Bozeman hosts its downtown Art Walk on the second Friday of the month. This annual tradition affords us the opportunity to spend a leisurely summer evening marveling at the local artists and their works. The Art Walk officially starts **at 6:00 PM this Friday July 12**. The weatherman says it will be a beautiful night so plan to come to Downtown.

Join the folks at Miller’s for their second annual Wine, Whiskey, & Watch Event! Once again, they will be featuring a large array of pre-owned luxury watches - in addition to the new Citizen, Tissot, and Michele timepieces. Miller’s Jewelry are very excited to partner with one of their new neighbors, The Cannery, to bring you a bonus--- everyone who buys a watch during this event will receive a free bottle of whiskey!

As always the Wine Gallery staff will be back serving several exceptional wines for you to enjoy.

Have a watch to sell or trade? Receive a FREE EVALUATION on your timepiece from Gary, Miller’s Jewelry visiting watch partner and expert. Make a night of it and plan some stops at Bozeman’s best restaurants and watering holes after the Walk. Summer is the best time of year to enjoy your city and the cultural benefits that are our blessing. See you next Friday!

Wooden wine boxes for sale

Every once in a while we come across the old-fashioned wooden wine boxes. We have 10-15 in stock now and they are taking up room. These boxes are great for storing things on pantry shelves, in the garage or in the basement. Each box comes with a set of internal wine racks in case you want to use the box for its original intent. We also saved the tops so you can have a sturdy resting place for whatever treasures you wish to store.

Each box includes rack dividers and top. We will sell as many as we can spare for \$5.00 each. Limit is 3 to a customer. Call us at 586-8828 or send an email to bozemanwinegallery@gmail.com to place your order.