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Musings on the Vine

Time Away

Recently, Betsy and I celebrated our wedding anniversary at our favorite local destination – The Jacob Hill Inn in Seekonk, Massachusetts (www.jacobhillinn.com).

The Inn is comprised of several buildings that have been fully restored and updated to include all of the most luxurious amenities. Bill and Eleonora Rezek are the loveliest hosts and hand prepare delicious breakfasts for their guests. The main building on the property dates back to 1722 and has a long, rich history of prominent owners. The Rezeks purchased the

property in 1991 and have completed all of the painstaking restorations themselves. The renovation work is quite a significant feat – accurately retaining the historic character of the property, while providing guests with up-to-date amenities such as whirlpool tubs and air conditioning. The Inn itself is located on a beautiful, secluded property surrounded by woods and meadows and is only 15 minutes from downtown Providence.

Speaking of Providence, on our recent stay at the Inn we enjoyed two dinners at the fabled Pot Au

Feu restaurant located on Custom House Street in downtown Providence, RI. We dined both evenings in the upstairs Salon, which offers a lovely prix fixe menu that is a tremendous value. The wine list is splendid with a solid selection of well-priced wines. Make sure you ask for a glass of Sauternes if you order the Foie Gras as your appetizer – it is perfectly sinful! You'll note that we enjoyed Pot Au Feu twice, largely because we voted with our wallets and walked out of the original restaurant at which we had planned to dine. We were

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Feature: Santa Rita Hills

Pinot Noir is the red grape of Burgundy, where it produces memorable wines at often stratospheric prices. I'm a big fan of Burgundy, but their scarcity and resultant high prices have sent me looking for wines with similar expression and better availability. Pinot Noir is a cool climate grape and much of the New World is blessed with

growing seasons that are too warm to produce truly note-worthy Pinot Noir. However, there is a portion of California that has seemingly ideal conditions for growing first class Pinot Noir – the Central Coast region. Most of my readers know that my favorite part of

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Upcoming 2007 Wine Events:

- December 1st—Wines of the Pacific Northwest
- December 15th—Champagne

We're in the process of putting together our schedule of events for Spring 2008, so please send your suggestions to us at Paul_Malagrifa@MusingsOnTheVine.com!

Feature: Santa Rita Hills

California is the Central Coast, home to a number of very special appellations. Anyone who saw the movie *Sideways* saw the picturesque countryside and heard tell of the many dedicated wine-makers producing some really fine wine. Recently, when attending the SWE Annual Conference in Monterey, I had the opportunity to learn more about many of the special appellations that make up the Central Coast. Among my favorites was an up-and-coming AVA entitled the Santa Rita Hills. The Santa Rita Hills AVA, newly established within the larger Santa Ynez Valley is distinguishing itself as the best place to grow and produce Pinot Noir-based wines. This is really no surprise to the gentleman who conducted the in-depth review at the SWE Conference: Richard Sanford. Richard came to the Santa Ynez Valley 35 years ago with the desire to create wines that would rival the best France had to offer. Richard was the first person to recognize the full potential of the Santa Rita Hills, and he was the first to plant Pinot Noir vines there. Richard is a pioneer with a well-established reputation for excellence in wine making.

For more than 30 years, Richard and Thekla Sanford have been involved in numerous successful wine growing enterprises, such as their namesake venture, Sanford Winery, a partnership they separated from in 2005. Their latest venture, Alma Rosa Winery and Vineyards represents the culmination of a lifetime's experience - an enterprise dedicated to creating high-quality wines and setting a benchmark for organic farming, sustainable agriculture methods, and environmentally friendly commerce.

In 1965, Richard Sanford graduated from UC Berkley with a degree in Geography. He was immediately drafted

into the military and served as a Naval Officer during the Vietnam War until 1968. Returning from the war and wanting to pursue a more earth-connected occupation, Richard set about discovering a local climate zone similar to Burgundy, where Pinot Noir would flourish and produce California-based wines to rival the best of France. Using his background in Geography and studying the climates of California going back to the 1900's, Richard discovered a remarkable geographic anomaly – the transverse mountain range of California. These mountains run east and west and allow cool maritime air to blow into the valley from the west, moderating the usually hot growing climate. After locating acreage with well-drained soils in the chosen climate zone Richard organized a partnership to purchase a ranch, and there he planted the first Pinot Noir vineyard in the region, known as the Sanford & Benedict Vineyard. The year was 1970.

At that time, growing grapes of any kind in the Santa Ynez Valley was unheard of, but as it turns out, Richard's hunch about the area was correct. The climate is ideal for the Pinot Noir with a long, cool growing season that results in well-structured, high-acid grapes. Since their first bottling, the wines from this area have been known for their extraordinary balance and depth, winning praise and accolades from wine writers and wine lovers alike.

In 1976 Richard met his future wife Thekla Brumder. They were married in 1978, and in 1981 they started Sanford Winery together and for the next 25 years produced some of the finest wine to come out of California. In 1983 the Sanford's planted their first entirely organic vineyard at Rancho El Jabali. The La Rinconada and La Encantada

vineyards followed and in the year 2000 all Sanford estate vineyards were the first in Santa Barbara County to certified organic by the California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOP).

As will often happen in business, differences in business philosophy led to a separation from their namesake winery in 2005. Richard and Thekla began anew, leaving behind Sanford Winery to found Alma Rosa Winery and Vineyards. Alma Rosa is an entirely new venture dedicated to organic farming and sustainable agriculture. The vineyards of Alma Rosa are located on an original Mexican land grant, Rancho Santa Rosa. In Spanish, the phrase Alma Rosa means "soul," intending to define the Sanford's view that their wines are a reflection of the soul of the rancho. Alma Rosa also expresses the soulful connection they enjoy with each other, their employees and the land where they first began their journey 35 years hence.

Alma Rosa has over 100 acres of certified organic vineyards all located in the Santa Rita Hills AVA. The winery focuses on high-quality production of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc. The first wines of Alma Rosa were released in 2006 to widespread critical acclaim.

(This piece was adapted from a presentation delivered by Richard Sanford at the SWE Annual Conference, Monterey, CA)

Richard and his wife Thekla presented the lovely wines of Alma Rosa winery, which I have provided my tasting notes below.

[2005 Alma Rosa Chardonnay "El Jabali Vineyard", Santa Rita Hills, California \(\\$30.00/bottle\) \(No ML\)](#)

Feature: Santa Rita Hills

Bright, fruity nose with lively lemon, green apple, floral and tropical hints – a touch of minerality – very pretty. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity – crisp and refreshing – good balance. Tropical fruit palate, bright with mouth-watering tartness. Moderate length with a soft, floral finish. Very nice. Drinking well now – not for aging.

[2005 Alma Rosa Pinot Noir Vin Gris, Santa Rita Hills, California \(\\$20.00/bottle\)](#)

Light cherry nose with loads of fresh berries, mineral and grass hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and soft, supple tannin. Good bal-

ance. Bright berry palate, clean with floral notes. Moderate length – refreshing and crisp. Light cinnamon and vanilla on the aftertaste. Drinking well – not for aging.

[2005 Alma Rosa Pinot Noir, Santa Rita Hills, California \(\\$36.00/bottle\)](#)

Ripe, jammy nose with eucalyptus, black cherry, black pepper, anise and mint aromas – quite complex. Medium-to-full-bodied with moderate acidity and moderate, supple tannin. Well balanced. Smooth, ripe berry palate with tarry and herb notes. Moderate length with a black pepper, nutmeg and Bing cherry on the after-

taste. Lovely. Drinking well now and should continue to improve with 3 to 5 years in bottle.

[2005 Alma Rosa Pinot Noir "La Encantada Vineyard", Santa Rita Hills, California \(\\$48.00/bottle\)](#)

Restrained nose with berry, floral, and fresh mint hints – soft and lightly tarry. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and moderate, supple tannin. Good balance. Sour cherry palate with raspberry and allspice notes. Long finish with dark fruit and hints of vanilla and black pepper on the aftertaste. A sleeper with 5 to 7 plus years of aging potential.

Notable Potables: Red

The next two wines are made by the same producer – Catena in Argentina. I was asked to taste the two wines and see if I could tell whether the more expensive bottle was worth the \$10 up-charge. Well, I have to say, while I thought the less expensive wine was quite a nice and a good value, the more expensive bottle was noticeably smoother, with more refined structure and aging potential. Both should be widely available, so you should try them both to see what you think...

[2006 Alamos Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina \(\\$9.99/bottle\)](#)

Ripe, jammy nose with black cherry, mint and vanilla hints. Full-bodied with moderate acidity and chewy tannin. Good balance. Dark fruit core with fresh cherry, tar and eucalyptus notes. Moderate length with black pepper and cocoa on the aftertaste. Drinking well now and should hold for another 2 to 3 years. Good value.

[2005 Catena Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina \(\\$19.99/bottle\)](#)

Ripe, fruity nose with black cherry, vanilla and allspice hints. Full-bodied with moderate acidity and moderate tannin. Good balance. Dense, chewy palate with black cherry, chocolate and tar notes. Intense. Long finish with unfolding complexity – allspice, dried herbs and anise. Splendid. Drinking well now and should continue to improve over the next 5 to 7 years in bottle.

I've been tasting a number of wines from the Rhone Valley in France from the 2005 vintage and it looks like 1998 all over again. Unfortunately, the prices reflect the Rhone's string of successes since 1998, which makes selection more important. The following two wine represent great values in this superlative vintage.

[2005 Domaine Lafond Roc Epine, Côtes du Rhone, France \(\\$9.99/bottle\)](#)

Jammy, fruity nose with fresh cherry and light floral hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and moderate tannin. Good balance. Moderately chewy palate with black cherry, cassis, cocoa and black pepper. Classic CDR. Moderate length – a tad closed. Coffee, tar and black pepper on the aftertaste. Drinking well now and should improve for 3 to 5 years. Super value.

[2005 Clos du Mont Olivet, Chateau-neuf-du-Pape, France \(\\$25.99/bottle\)](#)

Jammy, juicy nose with bright cherry, vanilla and lavender hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin. Good balance. Peppery, spicy palate with rich chewy, cherry fruit and dried herb and anise notes. Moderate length with persistent spiciness on the aftertaste. Drinking well now and should improve for the next 7 to 10 years. Great value.

Notable Potables: White



2006 Cono Sur Riesling Limited Release, Bio Bío, Chile (\$7.99/bottle)

Lovely perfumed nose with wildflower, lemongrass and petrol hints. Light-bodied with moderate acidity. Good balance – crisp and refreshing. Soft palate, lightly floral with apple, pear and lemon notes. Very pretty. Moderate length – clean with a slightly tart finish. Drinking well now – not for aging. Super value.

2006 Bodegas Valdesil Monte Novo Godello, Valdeorras, Spain (\$9.99/bottle)

Lively, spicy nose with wet stone, melon and lime aromas. Pretty with floral essence. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity. Good balance. Full, lush palate with apricot, pear and hibiscus notes – lovely, seductive. Moderate length with just a touch of fruity sweetness on the finish. Drinking well now – not for aging. Super value. Will likely become my “house” white for a while!

2006 Clos Roche Blanche Sauvignon Blanc, Touraine, France (\$11.99/bottle)

Light, grassy nose with mineral and floral hints – pretty. Light-bodied with moderate acidity. Good balance. Fruity palate with peach, pear, lemon and grass notes. Moderate length with a simple, crisp finish with wet stone hints. Drinking well now – not for aging. Good value.

2006 Marc Ollivier Clos des Briords, Muscadet Sevre et Maine Sur Lie, France (\$11.99/bottle)

Yeasty, nutty nose with lemon and mineral hints. Light-bodied with firm acidity. Well balanced. Soft palate with citrus, lemon custard and mineral notes. Lovely. Moderate length – crisp and clean with a persistent toasted almond on the aftertaste. Really nice – drinking well now – not for aging. Great value.

Local Wineries—Redux

On our recent jaunt to the Jacob Hill Inn, we revisited a few of the wonderful wineries in Rhode Island and South-eastern Massachusetts. The following are a few of the wineries we stopped at and our favorite wines from each stop.

Greenvale Vineyards – 582 Wapping Road, Portsmouth, RI 02871 – (401) 847-3777; www.greenvale.com

Our second trip to Greenvale, which is becoming a really fun destination, yielded another group of impressive, estate grown wines. We had a lovely tour of the vineyards, which were just about ready for harvest. Staffed by a wonderful group of folks and situated on a picturesque piece of property, Greenvale Vineyards is a must visit for those wanting to support fine quality local wines.

We enjoyed the following wines on our last visit:

Rosecliff Pinot Gris (\$16.99/bottle)

Spicy, floral nose with mineral, honey and citrus hints. Light bodied with crisp acidity – clean and refreshing. Good balance. Citrus palate with green apple notes. Short finish – crisp. Very pretty – not for aging.

2003 Chardonnay (\$19.99/bottle)

Oaky nose with apple, pear and vanilla hints. Medium-bodied with crisp acidity. Good balance. Apple and pear fruit on the palate with a touch of lemon. Short finish – smooth – less tart than the 2004. Not for aging.

2004 Chardonnay (\$15.99/bottle)

Creamy nose with a touch of wood and some apple and light citrus hints.

Medium-bodied with firm acidity. Good balance. Tart palate with green apple and quince notes. Short finish – clean. Not for aging.

2006 Vidal Blanc (\$12.99/bottle)

Fruity, floral nose with apricot, pear and heather hints. Medium-bodied with crisp acidity. Good balance. Apple, lemon, and grapefruit on the palate. Moderate length with a fruity finish that is clean and refreshing. Not for aging. Really liked this wine.

Skipping Stone White (\$11.99/bottle)

A blend of 90% Cayuga & 10% Vidal Blanc

Spicy, exotic nose with floral and ginger hints. Medium-bodied with crisp acidity. Good balance. Fruity palate with tart lemon and dried apricot notes. Moderate length with a clean, refresh-

Local Wineries Redux

ing finish. Not for aging. Really liked this wine.

The Elms Meritage (\$25.99/bottle)

A blend of 56% Cabernet Franc, 33% Merlot and 11% Malbec

Dense nose with black currant, mint, eucalyptus and tobacco aromas. Medium-bodied with moderate, firm acidity and moderate tannin. Good balance. Red berry fruit on the palate with smoky, gamey notes. Moderate length with a nicely complex finish and just a touch of oak. Drinking well now and should improve for another 2 to 3 years in bottle.

Sakonnet Vineyards - 162 West Main Rd., Little Compton, RI. 02837 - (800) 919-4637; www.sakonnetwine.com

Our third trip to Sakonnet, another really nice spot to visit. The grounds and facilities are lovely and the tasting area is ample, which is a good thing because they are always very busy when we stop by. The staff are very helpful and strive to make your visit memorable.

My one complaint with Sakonnet is that the wine list that you get at the tasting area is too small to accommodate note taking during tasting and I lacked a supplemental note book, so my observations on the wines we tasted are brief...

2006 Vidal Blanc (\$10.95/bottle)

Fruity but with crisp acidity – pleasant and quaffable.

2005 Gewurztraminer (\$18.95/bottle)

Spicy, classic Gewurztraminer nose – good fruit, acid balance – nice.

2004 Fume Vidal Reserve (\$15.95/bottle)

Creamy, oaky but with good fruit – nice.

2004 Chardonnay Reserve (\$18.95/bottle)

Good fruit – yeasty from sur lie aging balances oak. Not bad – saved by acidity.

Cock of the Walk (Red)

A blend of 44% Lemberger; 37% Cabernet Franc; 19% Chancellor

Very interesting – gutsy with good fruit – liked this wine.

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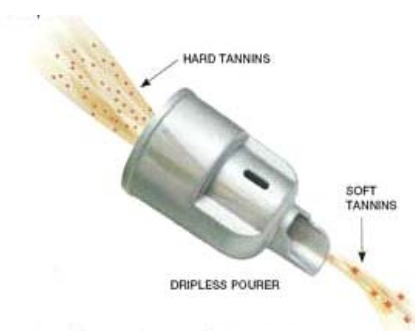
Gadgets

It must be Christmas time because the volume of mail order catalogs has dramatically increased, adding almost 60 lbs. a week to our recycling pile. One thing that I have noticed this year though is that every company is getting into the wine cooler and accessories game. It's also around this time of year that I receive a lot more email asking about wine accessories and which ones are worth buying. Two that I have been playing with a lot and have found really interesting, if not down right useful are the VinTemp Infrared Wine Thermometer by Prologix and the BevWizard Beverage Smoother by Inventive Technologies. The VineTemp is a simple yet sophisticated tool for checking the temperature of your wine before you pour. The VinTemp uses infrared technology to read the temperature of the wine inside the bottle. You simply press the tip of the VinTemp against the bottle, press the button and read the results on the digital panel. I've been using one since June and it is great. Check it out at: www.vintemp.com/vintemp001.php.



The BevWizard is a remarkable piece of science that I would never have believed actually worked unless I had the chance to test a unit for real. The BevWizard Wine Smoother and Spirits Smoother are two pouring devices that actually improve a number of different beverages. The Wine Smoother works especially well on young, tannic red wines making them smoother and fruitier with much less bitterness on the palate. As wine is poured through the Wine Smoother it passes through high-intensity magnetic fields built into the pouring spout and combined with patented oxygenation (aeration) technology, the wine is transformed. The Spirit Smoother works on the same principles but has been designed to optimize results with wood-aged spirits like Scotch and Bourbon. Like I said, I never

would have believed this technology worked had it not been for actual experience. I tested both units when I was in Monterey in June and I was amazed at the results. The Spirit Smoother was used on Johnny Walker Red Label Scotch and I was astounded at the smoothness of the results. It was as if the Red Label had been transformed into a much older, more refined Scotch. I tested the Wine Smoother with similar, albeit less dramatic results. I have not seen the BevWizard products in the typical wine accessory venues, but both beverage smoothers can be purchased from the web site: www.bevwizard.com



Local Wineries Redux (continued from page 5)

2004 Rhode Island Red (\$13.95/bottle)

A blend of 53% Chancellor; 32% Lemberger; 15% Cabernet Franc

Full-bodied – well-balanced. Gutsy with a tight finish. Liked this wine.

2004 Cabernet Franc (\$18.95/bottle)

Spicy, peppery with good fruit – good balance. Very nice.

2002 Port (\$15.95/bottle)

100% Chancellor—Aged 2 years in oak

Wow! Full-bodied with great complexity – last forever – really nice!

2005 Winterwine (\$24.95/bottle)

100% Vidal Blanc

Another wow! Super lush palate. Creamy, sweet but with great balancing acidity. Superb!

Running Brook Vineyards & Winery – 335 Old Fall River Rd., North Dartmouth, MA 02747 – (508) 985-1998; www.runningbrookwine.com

Our first visit to Running Brook Vineyards & Winery was quite fun. No frills operation, or as the proprietor put it: “a work in progress.” Call it whatever you want, the wines, all made from estate grown grapes are quite nice. Make sure you call ahead, since the tasting room hours vary – the previously mentioned proprietor had just finished bringing in about 60 tons of grapes the morning we stopped by. If you like what you taste and show some interest, be prepared to taste some very interesting “experiments.” This was especially fun for the wine maker in me...

Here are a few wines we enjoyed:

2004 Chardonnay (\$10.00/bottle)

Creamy, oaky nose with green apple hints. Medium-bodied with crisp acidity. Good balance. Apple, pineapple and pear on the palate with a hint of

oak. Moderate length with a clean finish. Very nice – the best Chardonnay we tasted all day!

2005 Vidal Blanc (\$10.00/bottle)

Bright citrus nose with floral hints. Light-bodied with crisp acidity. Good balance. Citrus palate with pear notes. Short finish – clean and refreshing. Very nice.

2005 Pinot Gris (\$20.00/bottle)

Lemony nose. Light-bodied with crisp, racy acidity. Good balance. Tart, mouth watering palate – citrus and grapefruit notes. Short finish – quite refreshing. Very nice.

2002 Cabernet France (\$10.00/bottle)

Dense nose with tobacco, mineral and balsam hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin. Good balance. Black cherry palate with tar, black pepper and spice. Moderate length with hints of nutmeg and raisin on the finish. Nice.

2003 Cabernet Franc Merlot (\$14.00/bottle)

A blend of 60% Cabernet Franc; 40% Merlot

Dense nose with tobacco, tar and black cherry hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and moderate tannin. Good balance. Sour cherry palate, tart with black pepper and dried herb notes. Moderate length with persistent black pepper and herb finish.

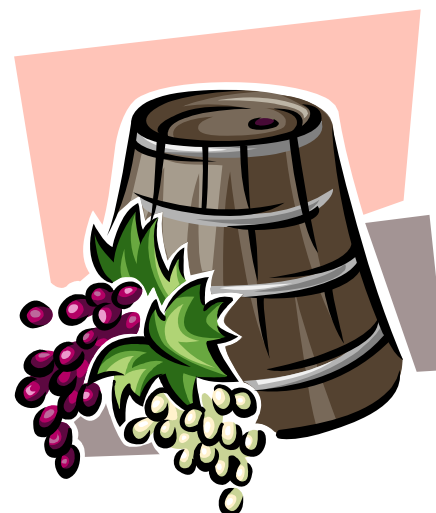
2006 Auslesen (\$20/bottle – 375ml)

Tropical fruit nose. Medium-bodied with high acidity and a touch of spritz. Good balance. Honeyed palate – pineapple and papaya fruit. Long finish – acidity keeps the wine from cloying.

2005 Frost Wine (\$25/bottle – 375ml)

100% Vidal Blanc – Vine Frozen

Sweet, floral nose with citrus and pear hints. Medium-bodied with high acidity. Good balance. Lush palate – sweet with citrus fruit. Long finish – lovely wine.



Glassware

I firmly believe that using the correct glassware can significantly improve the enjoyment of drinking wine. In my classes I use a 24% lead crystal INAO tasting stem that I believe to be the perfect glass for the critical assessment and appreciation of wine. The glass was designed and certified by the Institut National des Appellations d'Origine, the governing body in France that oversees French Wine Laws. What makes this glass perfect are a number of factors. One, the overall size at 7.25 ounces means that a 1 to 2 ounce pour affords ample room for vigorous swirling with little risk of spilling. Two, the tulip shape allows odor elements to gather in the chimney of the glass making smells and aromas more pronounced. Three, the glass material produces a glass that is thin and perfectly transparent making visual inspection easy and free of distortion. I have demonstrated on more than one occasion that wine tasters have an improved experience when using the INAO tasting stem versus other less ideal glasses. The realization is often astonishing to my students. Oh, and I forgot to mention that the glasses only cost \$25 for a boxed set of six stems. So, if the INAO glass is so good, Riedel stems must be nirvana, right? Well, I think that Riedel stemware is wonderful. We own several types of the Vinum series glassware and they really do make a difference. However, I find that most Riedel glasses just are not

practical for everyday and classroom tasting. The Riedel glass is not cheap and it is made of fairly delicate crystal, which means a steep investment that has a higher probability for breakage and loss. These are not really factors with the INAO tasting stem. Now that I've primed the pump and have my readers poised with car keys in hand to go out and buy these perfect glasses, the bad news is that the company that sold them (St. George Crystal) no longer carries the product. Alas, rumor has it that the Austrian company that was the producer of the glassware is out of business, no doubt the result of producing the perfect tasting glass and selling them for such a bargain price.



Rest assured all is not lost. As a graduation present to my students that take all three of my Wine Appreciation classes, I like to give away a set of the INAO tasting

stems. In this way, my students go forth with the appropriate tools for continuing their assessment of fine wine. A recent set of three-class graduates were wrapping-up, so I set about finding an alternative to the St. George INAO tasting stem. After months of research and a lot of trial and error, a suitable replacement was found: Luigi Bormioli's DOC tasting stem. The Bormioli glass is almost the exact same dimensions as the INAO glass, with almost the exact same shape. The glass is not crystal, but the glass is thin enough and of a high enough quality to afford adequate visual inspection. The glass is a touch heavier in your hand, but not heavy enough to be a distraction. The rim is straight, not rolled, which was a fault of most of the replacement INAO glasses on the market today. I've been testing the Bormioli glass for a few months now and the results are excellent. Reports from my graduates who now have the Bormioli glass are very good. Cost on the glass varies, but a boxed set of six can be found for around \$30. I placed a large order with Marjorie Lumm's Wine Glasses (www.wineglassesltd.com) and had a wonderful experience – ask for Jessica when you call and tell her Paul from Musings sent you.

Time Away (continued from Page 1)

shocked and dismayed when we scanned the wine list at Agora (Westin Hotel, Providence), our original destination and found the wines were priced at five times retail. Inquiries about the pricing led nowhere, so we told our server and the host that we were giving up our table and dining elsewhere. Now on a Saturday night at 7:30pm we had low expectations, but we had enjoyed ourselves so much the night before at Pot Au Feu that we called,

spoke with the owner Bob Burke who gladly welcomed us back for a return visit. We realize that restaurants claim that the mark-up on wine is often barely adequate to cover amenities, but if a restaurant needs to charge five times retail to cover expenses, then something else is wrong with the business equation. We will not give our business to pretentious restaurants that charge usurious fees for wine. We hope you feel the same way.

Our anniversary weekend was simply the best and it was largely due to the hospitality extended by our friends at the Jacob Hill Inn and Pot Au Feu! Thanks!

Cheers!
Paul & Betsy

MUSINGS on the VINE

A Collection of Thoughts, Suggestions and Opinions about Wine.



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Musings on The Vine

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Musings on the Vine was conceived with a few very simple goals:

One, to share my passion and excitement of wine with anyone who cares to listen, and by doing so engender similar excitement in others. Two, to strip away the mysteries surrounding the appreciation of wine, making wine tasting, buying and collecting fun and unassuming. And three, to provide a resource for those people who don't necessarily want to become a Master Sommelier, but instead just want to be able to buy something decent to drink with dinner tonight. I hope that my readers find this newsletter to be informative and enjoyable!

Looking for more information about wine? Find it all at www.MusingsOnTheVine.com!

Register for a free account (all information will remain confidential; we take your privacy seriously) for access to newsletter archives, tasting, collecting and storage advice, Ask the Sommelier Q&A, varietal profiles, links to wineries, wine trails and recommended wine shops, a downloadable wine & food pairing chart, a complete database of tasting notes and wine prices, upcoming Musings courses and events, and much more!

Upcoming Musings Events

December 1—The Wines of the Pacific Northwest

When people think about the wines from the west coast of the US, most think California. If that's all you think about, then you're missing a lot of really good, high value wine. While Pinot Noir made a name for itself in Oregon, many other varieties have become stars. Washington State was home to some of the finest Merlot-based wines, there again, the number of killer varietals has grown dramatically. At this tasting we will taste several wonderful wines from Oregon and Washington State.

The cost: \$50

Location: Wrentham, Massachusetts

Time: 3:00 p.m.

December 15—Champagne

Holiday celebrations would somehow be diminished without the inclusion of fine Champagne. In the past, we've looked at the overall category of sparkling wines, all very nice. However, sometimes there is nothing like the real thing to set one's heart aflutter. At this tasting we will sample several wines from Champagne, including many vintage and tête du cuvee bottles.

The cost: \$100

Location: Wrentham, Massachusetts

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Your opinion counts!

Once again, we're soliciting feedback from our readers and event participants for our Spring 2008 Musings events.

If you have suggestions, thoughts or comments about what you'd like to see us offer, please drop us a line at Paul_Malagrifa@MusingsOnTheVine.com

We welcome your input!

