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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS



MARTIN'S JOURNAL

Everytime I hear about the so-called "Me Generation," I think of a great old Bugs Bunny cartoon.

Yeah, my mind works in strange ways...

As I recall, Bugs and Daffy Duck stumbled upon a treasure somewhere, and Daffy declared it to be, "Mine! Mine! Mine!" I bring this up because we at Vinesse aren't like Daffy Duck. At Vinesse, everything we do is about you-you-you!

We love getting members involved, and that's why we're asking you to send us the title and artist of your favorite "wine song." We're going to develop a perpetual list for our website, and it's going to be *your* list. So please take a moment to jot down your favorite wine songs and send the info to Martin@vinesse.com.

And while you're at it, visit our website and submit a wine-related question. We answer all questions that are posted, and we'll feature questions of general interest in *The Grapevine's* new "Q&A" department. Go to Vinesse.com/ask.

Remember, it's all about you!

Still Time for a Wine-Focused Vacation & We're Here to Help

By Robert Johnson

Still wondering where you're going to take your vacation this year? Well, you've come to the right place, as this issue of *The Grapevine* is packed with ideas that may be off your vacation radar screen.

Of course, California's Napa Valley and Sonoma County are obvious choices. But on the pages that follow, you'll find some ideas from Vinesse wine finders and staffers that will satisfy your vinous tendencies in unique ways.

For instance, in her "Cellar Notes" column, Wine Steward Katie Montgomery takes you to Germany and the northern Nevada community of Reno — one obvious "wine area," one not so.

Since you already know Germany to be a haven for wine lovers, Katie offers some other reasons to go — things to do during those few moments each day when you're not enjoying a glass of Riesling. Meanwhile, in Reno, Katie uncovers some little-known destinations for folks in search of a good meal and

a good bottle of wine. Put on your copy of "Take Me to the River" when you read "Cellar Notes" this month.

The "Appellation Showcase" feature takes you to California's Delta, where a number of little-known wineries are open to the public. Find out what makes this region winegrape-friendly... if not famous.

Do you love chocolate? OK, that was a stupid question. Let me rephrase: Since you love chocolate, be sure to check out the "Vinesse Style" department for coast-to-coast recommendations on where you can find some amazing treats. We've included wine-pairing ideas.

In our "Wine Buzz" department, you'll learn about a new wine destination in the Finger Lakes region of New York. We think this new educational center will help put the fine wines of the Finger Lakes on the American wine map... at long last.

And let's not forget our travel-focused feature, "Wine Touring Tips." This month, in words and pictures, we explore the beautiful wine country of... Indiana?!? That's right, the Hoosier State is home to a number of very good wineries, and we'll take you on an armchair tour.

So pour a glass of Vinesse wine... sit back... relax... and enjoy the ride!

Robert Johnson can be reached at Robert@vinesse.com.



OUR MISSION:

To uncover and bring you wine gems from around the world, which you're not likely to discover on your own, and which enhance your wine enjoyment.

YOUR GRAPEVINE TEAM:

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-  Random giveaways of wine and accessories
-  Wine Finders Reward — identify a future wine selection and earn a reward
-  Perfectly matched recipes for featured wine selections



My cellar book would make a good "book-book" someday.

Not only do I keep notes on the various "wine finds" we search out for Vinesse club members, but I also jot down observations on some of the "winelands" I visit, including restaurants that offer exceptional or unusual wine service.

This month, I thought I'd open up my cellar book and share some of those notes with you. First stop: Germany, one vineyard of which is depicted in the accompanying photo.

I could easily spend a year in Germany and not see everything I'd like to see. In addition to being the home of some of the world's greatest wine estates, Germany is a true culture capital. The country is about the size of Texas, yet it boasts 6,000 museums and art galleries, as well as 400 opera houses and theaters.

And no matter what time of the year you go, there's bound to be some kind of special event or celebration taking place — from Oktoberfest to the world-famous Christmas markets. It's an amazing country, and I can't wait to go back.

A lot closer to home, the northern

Nevada city of Reno is becoming more and more wine-friendly all the time. Could that have something to do with the fact that the downtown Eldorado hotel and casino is owned by the same family that owns Sonoma County's Ferrari-Carano Winery?

Yes, they serve Ferrari-Carano wines at the Eldorado, but that's only the beginning of the vinous adventures awaiting the wine-savvy Reno visitor.

On the third Saturday of each month from 2 to 5 p.m., the River Walk Merchants stage a "wine walk" through the river-side arts district. The journey begins with the purchase of a wine glass and map for \$15 at any of the participating businesses. Then at each stop, you can sample a different

wine, accompanied by an appropriate snack.

For further information, and to verify the date of the next "wine walk," call the Downtown Marketplace at 775-348-8862.

One of the businesses that participates in the "wine walk" is Jungle Vino, an off-shoot of the popular Java Jungle café next door. This intimate wine bar offers a \$15 special of

its own on Tuesday nights: a tasting of four wines, each matched with an appetizer. You can get Jungle Vino's hours of operation by calling 775-329-4484.

And finally, I want to tell you about a wonderful wine spot in the Sonoma County town of Sebastopol. It's called the Starlight Wine Bar, and it's situated in a old Pullman lounge car.

The gourmet pizza is great, the tapas are tasty, and the wine comes in 2-ounce or 5-ounce pours, or by the bottle. When I was there, Starlight Wine Bar was open until 11 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, and closed a little earlier on weekday evenings. Call 707-823-1943 for the current hours.





WINE A TO Z

Hard. A word sometimes used to describe a wine that is high in tannic acid. It's a negative in most cases, but not necessarily so in younger red wines.

Indiana Uplands Wine Trail.

A group of seven wineries in southern Indiana that offer tours as well as tastings of their latest releases. The wineries are Huber, Turtle Run, Winzerwald, French Lick, Carousel, Butler and Oliver. Visit IndianaUplands.com for further information. And check out "Wine Touring Tips" in this issue for an armchair tour of Indiana wine estates.

Justin. An acclaimed winery in the Paso Robles region of California's Central Coast. Known in particular for a Bordeaux-style red blend known as Isocolles, and for its on-site gourmet restaurant.

Kendall-Jackson. One of the largest wineries in California, noted for creating blends from various winegrowing regions in the state.

APPELLATION SHOWCASE

THE CALIFORNIA DELTA

When one speaks of "California Wine Country," thoughts immediately focus on the area north of San Francisco — namely, Napa and Sonoma counties.

But about 100 miles east of The City by the Bay, the California Delta area — where the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys meet — is home to some 83,000 acres of vineyards. While the region encompasses portions of Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano and Yolo counties, the winegrowing hub is the Lodi viticultural area.

Lodi has been a major vineyard district since the 1850s. In the late 19th century, grapes grew wild in the area, some dangling from the trees along the riverbanks. Early trappers called one stream "Wine Creek" because of the abundance of wild vines. (Today, Wine Creek is known as the Calaveras River.)

The Lodi area now is farmed by more than 750 grape growers — most

utilizing modern trellising systems, but some perpetuating head-trained grapevines that are some of the oldest in the state. About 60 wineries are located in and around Lodi, although much of the grape production finds its way to North Coast estates.

Lodi is defined by its proximity to the Pacific Ocean and the coastal gap where the northern and southern coastal ranges meet at San Francisco Bay. As temperatures rise in the vast interior valley, cool maritime breezes are pulled directly through the Delta area, creating a distinctive climate that has enabled premium wine grapes to thrive for a century-and-a-half.

Lodi has a Mediterranean climate with warm, dry summers and cool, moist winters. Deep, sandy clay loam soils predominate.

Also part of the Delta region is the Clarksburg district, where about 9,000 acres are devoted to vineyards and 10 wineries operate. While several varieties thrive in Clarksburg, the area is particularly known for its high-quality Chenin Blanc — much of which is purchased by North Coast wineries including, most famously, Sonoma County's Dry Creek Vineyard.



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VINESSE STYLE

ARTISAN CHOCOLATE

***M**ilk may be the ultimate pairing partner for chocolate chip cookies, but there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy a chocolate treat with an equally yummy glass of wine.*

Following are a few classic chocolate-and-wine pairings, along with a handful of places from coast to coast where you can experience artisan chocolate-making at its best and most eclectic...

MAGNIFICENT MATCHES

• **Bonbons with Sparkling Wine** —

This pairing isn't so much about complementary flavors as it is about tradition. Almost any chocolate will overpower the delicate flavors of Champagne, but is there any more

romantic combination? It's a Valentine's Day favorite that can be experienced by romantics year-round.

• **Dark Chocolate with a Hearty Red Wine** — Sometimes we look for contrast in food-and-wine pairings, but when it comes to dark chocolate, it's better to match like-with-like. And



that means a rich, complex red wine is called for. Cabernet Sauvignon will work, as will a well-rounded Cotes du Rhone. There also are some Merlot bottlings that evoke their own chocolate impressions, and those are particularly sublime matches.

• **Milk Chocolate with Port.** Keep in mind that any beverage that's not as sweet as the chocolate will taste bitter. So here's a case of matching sweet with sweet... with truly sweet results.

ARTISAN CHOCOLATIERS

• **West** — Lillie Belle Farms in Jacksonville, Oregon, has come a long way since Jeff Shepherd sold his chocolate treats at local farmers' markets. Lillie Belle specializes in bonbons, and the raspberry ganache is

amazingly flavorful. Wine match: A fruit-forward Zinfandel, a variety that often includes a raspberry note on the palate.

• **Midwest** — Our favorite heart-shaped treat at Minneapolis' B.T. McElrath Chocolatier is the white and dark chocolate-covered passion fruit mousse. Try it

with Muscat Canelli

• **East** — Pour a glass of mildly minty Cabernet Sauvignon to savor with a square (or three) of minty dark chocolate from John & Kira's of Philadelphia. (You could even make a meal of it by starting with a Philly cheesesteak sandwich).

BEING GREEN

Fetzer Vineyards will place the wine industry's largest solar array atop its winery bottling facility in Hopland, California, generating 1.1 million kilowatt hours of clean electricity annually, enough to offset more than 960,000 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions. That's the equivalent of taking 80 cars off the road for a year, or planting 130 acres of trees.



The Great Cork Stare-Down, & a Tasty Surf-and-Turf Solution

You're out with a group of friends and you, as the wine expert in the group, select a bottle to enjoy before dinner.

The server brings the bottle to your table, removes the cork and places the cork in front of you. And then it begins: the stare-down. The server waits for you to pick up the cork and smell it, while you sit idly by, waiting for a splash of the wine to be poured in your glass. After a few uncomfortable (for the server) moments, you finally get the wine to assess before the entire group is served.

Smelling the cork from a just-opened bottle of wine is a time-honored tradition in restaurant circles. It also serves absolutely no purpose whatsoever. Some would have you believe that smelling the cork is the best way to detect a tainted (or "corked") wine — one that has been spoiled by over-exposure and premature exposure to air that found its way through an overly-dry cork. It's a nice theory, but

if there's one thing a cork is guaranteed to smell like — whether damaged or not — it's cork. It's much more effective to give the cork a quick visual inspection, and you can do that without picking it up.

The correct, not to mention much more accurate, way to assess the quality of a wine is to smell it. If you note a "corky" quality in the aroma, ask — don't demand — the server to give the wine their own assessment. Chances are they will agree with you and bring out a fresh bottle.

And what does this have to do with

the "surf and turf" plate you see here? Not a thing. How's that for a segue?

We'd simply like to address an oft-asked question from members: What wine does one serve with steak and lobster?

In our opinion, you have two choices: 1. a bottle of rich, buttery Chardonnay, which should pair nicely with both dishes; or 2. a bottle of Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc, and a second bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot.

Either way, you're in for a memorable meal.



Four Seasons



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Little Pink Houses & Wineries for You & Me

Indiana probably is best known for the Indianapolis 500, which takes place each Memorial Day weekend at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

A lesser-known tidbit: The home state of Orville Redenbacher produces more than 254 million pounds of popcorn per year.

Unless you've ever taken a very detail-oriented tour, you probably have no idea that New York's Empire State Building, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and the Lincoln Memorial all were built with Indiana limestone.

And here's a nugget of information you're even less likely to know: Indiana is wine country — in particular, the southern sector of the state.

If you're planning a trip to the Indy 500 next year, or if your travels take you anywhere near the Hoosier State, the wineries of Indiana are worth checking out.

In the southern Indiana town of Nashville, you won't find any shrines to country music, but you will find the

Cornerstone Inn, which makes a great home base for an Indy wine adventure. Nashville has an array of galleries and shops, and the Inn is within an easy stroll of many of them since it's located in the center of town.

In case you're hungry after a long day of driving or shopping, you'll find the Cornerstone's selection of chips, sweets, cider and hot chocolate just what the doctor ordered before turning in for the night. Be aware that each guest room includes

a journal, so you'll be able to document your delicious day or two of touring ahead.

For your first winery stop, head



TOURING TIPS

keep your eyes open for a possible John (Cougar) Mellencamp sighting at any moment along the way.

Oliver Winery opened to the public in 1972. It was founded by William Oliver, the man who wrote the Indiana Small Winery Act, and specializes in off-dry and semi-sweet wines, including a popular Mead. You may want to linger for a few hours, since the grounds include vineyards, a self-guided plant and flower tour, a waterfall, limestone sculptures and plenty of room to spread out for a wine, fruit and cheese picnic.

Next, stay in Bloomington and head to Butler Winery and Vineyards, where the owners have always embraced the use of Indiana-grown grapes in their winemaking. If it's adventure you seek, you're sure to encounter varieties, aromas and flavors you'd never see in California, Oregon or Washington. Art lovers will be impressed by the tasting room mural that reflects the seasons in a unique way.

Art also is center-stage at Carousel Winery in Bedford, where the work of a different local artist is featured in the tasting room each month. Furthermore, each of the winery's bottle labels features a different carousel animal. As for the wine, owners Marion and Sue Wilson also embrace the homegrown approach.



to Indiana's oldest and largest wine estate, Oliver Winery in Bloomington. And



Winery personnel always are happy to recommend local restaurants, and that's the best way to select your evening dining destinations in southern Indiana wine country.

Just make sure you save room for a late-evening snack once you get back to the Cornerstone Inn.



Great Wine & Great Olive Oil Share the Spotlight at Fanti

With apologies to breakfast, every wonderful meal begins with wine. And of all the wonderful meals we get to enjoy, some of the best involve the use of olive oil.

Whether it's in a salad dressing, a side dish or a main course, olive oil helps bring distinctiveness and character to a wide array of food preparations.

Interestingly, we know of some people (our *Grapevine* editor included) who don't care for olives, but love olive oil.

A number of California wine estates now include olive oil among their home-grown offerings. It's an artisan product that fits in nicely with a winery's vinous works of art.

But in Italy, the winery that does not make olive oil is the exception to the rule.

No winery does a better job of crafting wine and olive oil than Fanti, a

small Tuscan estate located in Castelnuovo dell'Abate, an iconic village surrounding Montalcino. It is owned by Filippo Fanti, who also serves as the President of the Consorzio di Brunello Montalcino, the watchdog of the region's wine quality.

The San Filippo-Fanti estate has belonged to the Fanti family since the early 19th century. It consists of 750 total acres of land, 35 of which are planted to vineyards.

Those vineyards extend across an amphitheater of south-facing hills at altitudes between 1,200 and 1,450 feet above sea level. The soil is rocky, with layers of calcium-rich marls, and the climate embodies hot, sunny days and notably cooler nights.

Wine and olive oil have always been produced on the San Filippo-Fanti estate, but the decision to begin bottling these products with the Fanti label was made barely 20 years ago. Quality-oriented winemaking is led by enologist Stefano Chioccioli, whose goal is the production of wines that

exhibit the character of this particular area of the Brunello di Montalcino production zone.

Fanti's top wine, which regularly garners ratings in the high 90s from *Wine Spectator* magazine, is

made from

Sangiovese grapes that are harvested toward the end of September and the first 10 days of October. Maturation takes place in barriques for 12 months, and then in large oak barrels for a year, followed by an additional six months in bottle prior to release.

Similar attention to detail goes into the making of Fanti's extra virgin olive oil. One can only imagine what a dinner at the Fanti family estate must be like.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Cornerstone Inn
888-383-0300

Oliver Winery
800-25-TASTE

Butler Winery
812-339-7233

Carousel Winery
877-294-6348

Quotes Du Jour

■ *Claude Terrail, owner of La Tour d'Argent in Paris, has died. During World War II, Terrail saved the restaurant's 300,000-bottle collection by secretly walling up part of the cellar to hide it from the occupying Germans. Of Terrail, chef Jean-Francois Sicallac said:*

"Whether it was a workman who broke his piggy bank to eat at La Tour d'Argent, a prince or a president, he treated everyone equally."

■ *Count newspaper columnist Mike Dunne among those who believe that sparkling wine and chocolate should not be consumed together — even when romance is in the air:*

"On Valentine's Day, they're virtually inseparable. Love's not only blind, it apparently can't taste, either. A better match with sparkling wine would be the petals of the long-stemmed roses that join in forming the classic tripod supporting romantic impulses. At least they'd be of the same approximate weight and dryness. Most sparkling wines are just too delicate to stand up to the fat of most chocolates."

Q AND A

I'm having a dinner party and need help on wines to serve with each course. We're having an appetizer of beef filet chunks wrapped in bacon; a pear salad with blue cheese, onion, walnut and mango vinaigrette; entrée of salmon with a sweet glaze and roasted asparagus; dessert of vanilla ice cream layered with Sherry-soaked almond cookies. Your assistance is greatly appreciated!

— Stanley Henderson

Sounds like a great meal. Have an extra chair at the table? As we've often stated, food-and-wine pairing is not an exact science, and the menu you've developed helps make the point. Let's go course by course, and you'll see what we mean.

Appetizer: Normally, beef is easy. If you're really "into" wine, go with a nice, big Cabernet Sauvignon. Merlot also would work nicely, and so would Syrah/Shiraz. It's actually kind of hard to go wrong with beef — just

go with your favorite big red. However, since you're wrapping the beef in bacon — a treatment we absolutely love, by the way — wine pairing becomes more of a challenge because of the saltiness of the bacon. Salt and wine mix like oil and water. To "fight off" that salty impression, we'd suggest going with a fruitful (red) Zinfandel. If Zinfandel is your favorite big red anyway, so much the better!

Salad: Go with a dry or off-dry Chenin Blanc. Second choice: Pinot Grigio.

Salmon entrée: In most cases, we'd recommend a nice Pinot Noir with salmon. But the asparagus you're including changes the equation. Because of the "green" quality of that vegetable, this course calls for Sauvignon Blanc.

Dessert: If you were serving the ice cream with "unsoaked" almond cookies, we'd go with a late harvest Riesling. But since you're soaking the cookies in Sherry, it's best to go with that very same Sherry.



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A VINOUS DIP

People come from all over Japan and beyond to Hakone, a well known spa mecca, to soak away their stress in natural spring water. However, water isn't the only soaking liquid available. At the Hakone Kowakien Yunessun Resort, they also can soak in wine or sake... as well as green tea or coffee. A dip in the wine tank purportedly provides "a rejuvenation treatment for the body."

ANOTHER SUCCESS

The 2006 edition of Auction Napa Valley raised \$8.4 million for local health care, youth endeavors and housing programs. Some 400 bidders and guests were in attendance.

NOT SO GOODE

Another family-owned wine estate has been gobbled up by corporate giant Kendall-Jackson. The Murphy-Goode Estate Winery in Geyserville, California, becomes the 28th brand under the ever-expanding K-J umbrella. "We took the business as far as we could take it," said Murphy-Goode's Tim Murphy, "and we were looking for someone to take it to the next level."

MIND YOUR MANORS

Francis Ford Coppola also has expanded his portfolio of wine country properties in recent weeks. The filmmaker/winemaker is now an innkeeper as well, having purchased Sonoma County's famed and fabled Madrona Manor. The eight-acre property is located in Healdsburg, and includes a mansion built in 1881. Jay Shoemaker, chief executive of Francis

Ford Coppola Presents, promised that no changes would be made to the Manor. "We love every part of it — the hotel, restaurant and event side," he said. "We wouldn't change a thing."

A LEADER IN LODI

A Lodi area winegrape grower has become the first land owner to enroll in the first regional Safe Harbor Agreement, which is intended to enhance habitat for native species along more than 20 miles of the



lower Mokelumne River in San Joaquin County. Brad Lange, co-owner of Lange Twins Inc. Farms, will continue his work to restore the dense riparian forests of the Mokelumne River, habitat for the valley elderberry longhorn beetle, which is a federally-

listed threatened species. Other beneficiaries of the effort will include other native species, from migratory birds to salmon.

WINE CENTER OPENS

The long-anticipated New York Wine & Culinary Center has opened in Canandaigua. The center provides a centralized location and destination for wine tastings, cooking classes, and visits by top chefs and vintners. It's hoped that the center will boost awareness of Finger Lakes region wines, and boost tourism in the area. Plans call for apple trees and grapevines to be planted outside the center to add to the agricultural ambience.

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SOUTHERN BARBECUE PORK SANDWICHES

This tasty sandwich matches beautifully with big red wines that also have a touch of spice. The following recipe makes 8 to 10 sandwiches.

Ingredients

- 1 Boston butt or pork shoulder roast
- 1 large onion, quartered and sliced
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Garlic powder
- 1 cup barbecue sauce
- 1/2 cup vinegar
- A teaspoon or two of liquid smoke, if desired

Preparation

1. Place pork roast in crockpot. Add chopped onion, salt and pepper, and a generous sprinkling of garlic powder.
2. Cover and cook on low for about 9 to 11 hours, or until very tender

and shreddable. Drain all juices off and shred or chop the pork.

3. Add vinegar and barbecue sauce (and liquid smoke, if using).
4. Continue cooking on high for about 1 hour. Serve on buns.

LAMB STEW

This dish, which makes about 8 servings, matches well with Syrah/Shiraz or other hearty red wines.

Ingredients

- 1 lb. lamb
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 onions, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 cups beef broth
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon rosemary
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 lb. potatoes, peeled and diced

- 6 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 2 turnips, peeled and diced
- 16-oz. package frozen peas
- 8-oz. jar pearl onions

Preparation

1. Cut lamb into cubes.
2. Heat oil in a heavy saucepan, add the lamb, and cook until lightly browned. Remove meat from the pan and add onions and garlic clove. Cook for 3 minutes, then add flour and stir, heating until the mixture browns.
3. To the onion mixture, gradually add beef broth while stirring. Return meat to saucepan. Add salt, pepper, rosemary and bay leaf. Cover and simmer for 1 hour, or until the meat is almost tender.
4. Add potatoes, carrots and turnips. Cook for 30 minutes longer. Add frozen peas and pearl onions, and continue cooking until the peas are tender, about 10 to 15 minutes.



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WHITE WINES

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