

Volume 2
Number 2
Summer Bonus Shipment

©Vinesse Wine Club 2007
SKU 10274

The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Event: Sonoma County Showcase Weekend of Wine & Food. Presented by the Sonoma County Vintners, with proceeds benefiting local charities, this multi-event extravaganza features the Sonoma Family Style Benefit and Gala (with live entertainment and dancing complementing the fabulous food and wine), Taste of Sonoma (at which more than 100 wineries pour their wares), In the Vineyard Experience (bring your boots), winery lunches and dinners, and more. Events are ticketed individually, and the 2007 dates are July 12-15. Info: sonomawine.com.

2 Hot Tour: Oregon Wine Tours. This tour company allows visitors to plan their own itinerary, based on favorite varieties, specific wineries they wish to visit or any other criterion. It's the ultimate in personalized wine touring. Info: orwinetours.com.

3 Hot Table: Tasca. This charming wine bar in Los Angeles will transport you to the Mediterranean, if you allow your mind to follow your tastebuds. The menu (think: large tapas), wine list and crowd all are eclectic. Info: 323-951-9890.



Outdoor Dining Is Better With a Good Glass of Wine

By Robert Johnson

On a hot summer day when my daughter was 10 (going on 22), we decided on the spur of the moment to go out for dinner.

She was really into reading at the time, and a new edition of the weekly local paper had just come out. So I handed it to her, and asked her to scan the restaurant ads for some ideas on where we might go.

She happily obliged. After about five minutes, she came into my home office with a quizzical look on her face. "Dad?" she began.

"Yes, Tawny?" I replied. "I have a question," she continued. "Who is this Al Fresco guy?"

In the mind of my bright 10-year-old, Al Fresco must have owned half of the restaurants in town since his name appeared in so many of the ads.

I think of that day every summer as good ol' "Al" returns to give diners an opportunity to eat a good meal outside the sometimes-crowded confines of a popular restaurant.

About the only way to improve upon an al fresco meal is to have a glass of wine with it. It's an experience I'm looking forward to — especially when my now-28-year-old daughter comes to town.

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:

Intrepid Wine Enthusiast, Chief Taster and Winehound:

Martin Stewart

Chief Operating Officer
(aka "The Buck Stops Here"):

Lawrence D. Dutra

Editor:

Robert Johnson

Wine Steward:

Katie Montgomery

The Grapevine is published by Vinesse, 822 Hampshire Road, Suite E, Westlake Village, CA 91361; 1-800-823-5527. Copyright by Vinesse, LLC. Printed in USA. No responsibility is assumed for loss or damage to unsolicited materials.

CHARTER MEMBER BENEFITS:

-  *The Grapevine* Newsletter
-  Premium wine selections at members-only prices
-  Wine tasting as a participant on VINESSE's Gold Medal Award Panel
-  Free subscription to VINESSE's Cyber Circle Community
-  Members-only savings, including *Food & Wine* subscriptions, dining out, gourmet food and tickets to the hottest events
-  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



TEXAS SUFFERS ANOTHER NON-VINTAGE YEAR

It will not be a vintage year for wines from Texas. A cold front that moved through the northern part of the state over the Easter weekend reportedly destroyed 75 percent of this year's grape crop. This follows on the heels of a year when drought did similar damage. It's devastating news for wineries that depend on



home-grown grapes for their survival; some could get by for one year by selling existing inventory, but few could withstand a two-year gap between vintages. The only good news in this scenario is that many Texas wineries purchase fruit from outside the state, rather than battle the obstacles that accompany Texas grape growing.

GLOBAL WARMING SHIFTS TEMECULA HARVEST SEASON

Everyone has their own take on global warming. Here is what Peter Poole, a vintner for nearly three decades in Temecula, Calif., had to say about it in a letter to the *Los Angeles Times*: "From 1973 until 1984, the harvest and crush here

began in the first three weeks of September. For the next 15 years, harvest began in August — often the first or second week. Since 1985, we've had only one harvest season begin in September. That's a huge change."

CHOCOLATE, CHEESE AND WINE... TOGETHER

The Hotel Intercontinental on Chicago's famed Michigan Avenue has seen major changes since it was built in 1929 as the Medinah Athletic Club. Now, in 2007, it has transformed its piano bar into a space called Eno — a chocolate, cheese and wine bar that is designed to wow guests. The wine stash tops 5,000 bottles and is available by the bottle, glass or flight. The chocolate truffles and bars are supplied by local chocolatiers, and the cheese menu consists of about 35 selections from small producers around the world, also served in flights. Small groups up to 10 can reserve a private tasting room that overlooks the wine cellar. Info: 312-944-4100.

DRINK UP AND BUILD A HOUSE

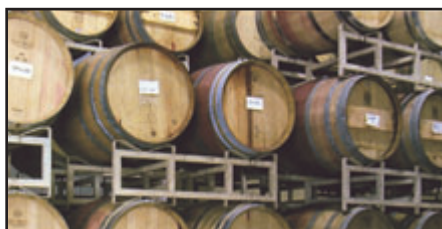
It takes a lot of wine to build a house... at least, if your name is Peter Little, and you're constructing your Western Australia home out of wine bottles. Little says he has spent 30 years developing environmentally-friendly building methods, and now has come up with a unique plan: He's using 13,500 wine bottles to form the walls of his new home. And by filling those bottles with water, the entire building will be insulated with fire-proof "material."



The Oak Influence

Here are 10 fascinating facts about oak barrels...

1. Through the ages, many different types of wood were used for making barrels. Via lots of experimentation, it was learned that only barrels made from oak impart positive aromas and flavors to certain varieties of wine.



2. Barrels accommodate very slow oxidation of wine, a chemical process that enables all of the wine's various compounds to meld harmoniously. When this happens, a wine is said to have good structure.

3. Oak itself can lend some rather unpleasant notes to wine. This is why the insides of barrels are "toasted" to various levels, ranging from light to heavy. Toasted barrels can add aroma and flavor impressions that include brown sugar, chocolate, butterscotch, toffee, vanilla, baked bread, cookie dough, an array of nuts, graham cracker, toasted bread, bacon, sweet smoke, nutmeg, cinnamon, clove, licorice, anise and dozens more.

4. "Toasting" involves placing a partially assembled barrel over a small wood fire, which chars the inside of the barrel. Light toasting is achieved when the wood's temperature reaches

between 248 and 356 degrees. After about 10 minutes, a temperature of 390 degrees may be achieved, which qualifies as medium toasting. Five more minutes and a temperature of 437 degrees defines heavy toasting.

5. The level of toasting is important because the heavier the toast, the greater the barrel's impact on the flavor of the wine it houses. Also, various species of oak respond to toasting differently, another factor for vintners to consider.

6. Oak barrels can be compared to cars. They offer peak performance when they're new, then gradually lessen in value as they're reused. After about five years, even heavily toasted barrels cease to contribute aromas and flavors to wine; they function strictly as holding vessels.

7. The standard-sized barrel used by wineries holds 59 gallons of liquid. Larger oak containers often are referred to as casks or uprights; smaller barrels typically are called barriques.

8. Although prices can vary widely, the average price for a standard-sized French oak barrel is \$600. An American oak barrel costs about half as much.

9. The main difference between French and American oak is the width of the grain. American oak is wider, which means it imparts more pronounced oak-related nuances, most notably vanilla. French oak, with its tighter grain and thinner staves, lends more subtle aroma and flavor notes.

10. It has become so rare for wine to not see at least some time in oak that such bottlings often are labeled as "Unoaked" or "Unwooded."

Quotes Du Jour

■ *Joseph Bastianich, co-author of *Vino Italiano: The Regional Wines of Italy*, on the growing popularity of sweet blush wines:*

"It's a northeast phenomenon. Pink is in on all fronts."

■ *King Edward VII (1841-1910) of England, on the wine experience:*

"Not only does one drink wine, but one inhales it, one looks at it, one tastes it, one swallows it... and one talks about it."

■ *Belinda Chang, director of wine and spirits at *Tramato's Steak & Seafood in Wheeling, Ill.*, on the expanding wine savvy possessed by members of *Generation X*:*

"They are the first generation who grew up with their parents choosing wine over any other beverage. The kids in their 20s ask a lot more questions than anyone else. They're never afraid to say that they don't know something."

■ *Author Robert Louis Stevenson on wine:*

"A bottle of good wine, like a good act, shines ever in retrospect."



VEGETABLE LASAGNA

This recipe, which serves 6, matches beautifully with Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot.

Ingredients

- Cooking spray
- 8 cups torn Swiss chard (about 3/4-lb.)
- 2 cups chopped yellow squash
- 1 1/2 cups chopped onion
- 1 cup chopped red bell pepper
- 1 cup shredded carrot
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 cups fat-free milk
- 6 tablespoons (1 1/2-oz.) grated fresh Parmesan cheese, divided
- 1 cup fat-free ricotta cheese
- 1 cup fat-free cottage cheese
- 1 cup (4-oz.) grated Asiago cheese, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 6 no-boil lasagna noodles (such as Barilla or Vigo)

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Heat a Dutch oven coated with cooking spray over medium-high heat. Add chard, squash, onion, bell pepper, carrot, and salt; saute 10 minutes or until tender.
2. Melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add garlic; saute 30 seconds. Add flour, and cook 1 minute. Stir constantly with a whisk. Gradually add milk, stirring with a whisk until blended. Cook until thick (for about 4 minutes). Remove from heat; add 1/4 cup Parmesan. Stir until cheese melts.
3. Combine ricotta, cottage cheese, 1/2 cup Asiago, and oregano in a bowl.

4. Spread 2 tablespoons milk mixture in the bottom of an 8-inch square baking dish coated with cooking spray. Arrange 2 noodles over milk mixture; top with half of ricotta mixture, half of vegetable mixture, and 1/2 cup milk mixture. Repeat layers, ending with noodles. Spread remaining milk mixture over noodles. Sprinkle with 1/2 cup Asiago cheese and 2 tablespoons Parmesan.

5. Bake at 375 degrees for 45 minutes. Let stand 15 minutes.

SIMPLE SUMMER SALAD

This easy-to-prepare recipe makes 4 servings, and can be enjoyed with almost any chilled white wine.

Ingredients

- 2 cups fresh green peas, uncooked
- 2 green peppers, chopped
- 2 carrots, slivered
- 2 young cucumbers, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup minced parsley
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- Lettuce leaves

Preparation

1. Place the peas, green pepper, carrots, cucumbers and parsley in a bowl.
2. Toss well with the olive oil and lemon juice until the vegetables are well-coated.
3. Serve on a bed of lettuce leaves.