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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

WASHINGTON WINE

*(And We Are
Not Talking
About the State)*

**Pairing Challenges
of the 'New Meats'**

**The 'Greenest' Wine
Region in the U.S.**

**Evening Land Winery:
Burgundy in America**

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

Washington's Wine Wisdom

By Robert Johnson

When you're the President of the United States of America, priorities are a big deal. You simply don't have the time to deal with minutiae.

Let's say, hypothetically, that you have American troops involved in two wars, that the U.S. economy has gone south, that unemployment is in double digits in many states, and that your party is facing the possibility of losing its majority in the Senate. If a President were to have all of those issues on his White House plate, he probably wouldn't have much time to work on his bowling game on the White House lanes.

Yet history shows that America's greatest leaders have been masters of juggling their political lives and their personal lives, and in finding time to assure that the things that really matter to them — apart from the issues that really matter to the country — are addressed.

Take America's first President, George Washington, as an example. When he was still a General, and

while he was preparing to defend New York against an imminent attack from the British a month after the Declaration of Independence was issued, Washington found time to place an order for supplies that he felt would be needed in the violent months ahead.

As a General, Washington was required not only to plot strategies and lead men into battle, but also to make sure that his top officers and guests weren't forced to eat table scraps.

So, on August 7, 1776, General Washington wrote out an order that included "2 cheeses — old, 1 box Ratafia, 1 basket Cordials, 1 box Muscat wine, 1 Cag. Brandy and 1 box Claret."

Ratafia was a cordial flavored with almonds or fruit kernels, and it's believed that a "Cag." was a keg. We don't need to tell you about Muscat, Brandy or Claret.

Looming bloody battle or not, General Washington had his priorities in order, and the message was clear: Man cannot survive without wine... and some old cheese.

No wonder he went on to become the first President of the United States, and still one of the most revered.





When Is a Zinfandel Not a Zinfandel?

Wine servers have been trained to ask the question when a customer who seems a little shaky on their wine knowledge asks for a glass of Zinfandel.



“Do you mean *White* Zinfandel?”

In most cases, they do. And that’s just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Zinfandel’s identity crisis.

As we’ve discussed in previous issues of *The Grapevine*, Zinfandel is among the world’s most versatile winegrapes. It can be made into a dry red wine, a sweet dessert-style wine, a Port-style wine or a blush wine (the ubiquitous *White*

Zinfandel). And depending on the alcohol level determined by the vintner, even an individual style of Zinfandel can vary widely in aroma, flavor and mouthfeel.

In recent years, as genetic “fingerprinting” has become more reliable and more widely used in nurseries and vineyards around the world, another layer has been

added to Zinfandel’s identity crisis.

In many of California’s “heritage” Zinfandel vineyards, particularly those whose planting pre-dated Prohibition, genetic science has proven what old-time farmers have always known: Some Zinfandel vineyards actually include a number of black grape varieties in addition to Zin.

This mix of vines is referred to as a “field blend,” and most vintners who work with the fruit from such vineyards believe that the resulting wines are more complex and interesting than 100-percent Zinfandel bottlings.

So what’s the problem? When genetic fingerprinting shows that less than 75 percent of the fruit used to make a “field blend” wine is Zinfandel, that wine cannot, by law, be labeled as Zinfandel.

The only answer for the wineries is to develop a “proprietary name” or simply use a phrase such as “Red Blend” on the label.

If you ever encounter such a wine, try it. It may not taste exactly like a Zinfandel you may have tasted in the past, but it most likely will be every bit as good — whatever “good” may mean to you.



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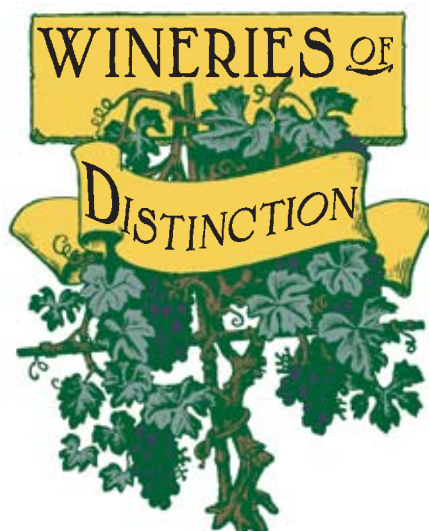
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Approximately Monthly

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A Taste of Burgundy in the American West

When Evening Land Vineyards first burst on the wine scene a few years ago, everyone was impressed by its silky-smooth, expressive bottlings of Pinot Noir.

Since then, however, the winery has gained just as much attention for its amazing renditions of Chardonnay.

Seemingly out of nowhere, it has established itself as one of the premier makers of Burgundian varieties in the United States. And it even has a few

authentic Burgundy bottlings in its portfolio.

“The Evening Land” has long been a symbol of the dream quest for the perfect garden. From ancient Greek myth to now, the search for The Evening Land is synonymous with adventure and romance that inevitably leads to the extremes of America’s West Coast.

Evening Land Vineyards has brought together a collection of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay vineyards in three great growing regions of the American West. From the Eola Hills in Oregon’s Willamette Valley, to the Sonoma Coast



Santa Rita Hills AVA

in the town of Occidental, Calif., and ending on the western lip of Santa Barbara County's Santa Rita Hills, Evening Land organically farms more than 120 acres of heritage vineyards that produce 13 estate wines imbued with a unique spirit of place.

An orchestrated mix of old-vine and own-rooted Oregon and California heritage clones, cuttings from the great established Pinot Noir and Chardonnay vineyards of Burgundy, and an experimental block of Pinot Noir grown from seed, the vineyards of Evening Land present a vivid view of Burgundy's legendary grapes raised in the amazing diversity of America's climate and soil.

The opportunity to acquire great vineyard sites in three diverse climates gave Evening Land a rare opportunity to explore the sensitivity of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay as it thrives in the red volcanic dirt of Oregon, the fog-wrapped ridges of Sonoma and the windswept mountains of decomposed sea shells of the Santa Rita Hills.

Soil and climate diversity make their mark on Evening Land wines, creating those delicious differences that are the hallmark of fine Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

Farming and winemaking techniques in each of the Evening Land Vineyards are deployed to align the wines closely with each of the individual and unique terroirs. In Oregon, consulting winemaker Dominique Lafon leads winemaker Isabelle Meunier and her winery and vineyard team, employing his unique vision springing from 25 years as the winemaker at one of Burgundy's legendary estates. Shaped by these Burgundian traditions, Sashi

Moorman leads his team in the winery and the vineyards to produce elegant and rich wines from both Sonoma and Santa Rita.

Evening Land uses a color-coded labeling system to differentiate its various bottlings of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

The Blue Label wines provide a window into the sensitivity of the varieties to the unique climates of Oregon, California and Burgundy, and carry those simple geographic designations.

Narrowing the focus, the Silver Label wines represent Evening Land's "village" wines. They retain the impact of their climate, coupled with the unique topography and soil characteristics of their specific villages. Designations include Seven Springs from Oregon, and Occidental Coast from California.

The Gold Label bottlings are Evening Land's signature monopole estate wines. These wines provide a singular capture of each vineyard's unique climate, topography, soil, plant material, farming practices and winemaking — terroir in its most complete expression. The designations include Seven Springs Vineyard La Source from Oregon, and Two Daughters Vineyard from the Sonoma Coast.

Finally, when a special and very specific place within the vineyard produces fruit of such spectacular character that it calls for its own cuvee, Evening Land gives it a White Label. These are the pinnacle examples of the vineyard's best self. Designations to date have included Seven Springs Vineyard Summit and Seven Springs Vineyard The Red Queen from Oregon, and Occidental Vineyard from the Sonoma Coast.

One word of warning: Evening Land wines can be expensive, particularly the Gold Label and White Label bottlings. But if you are a true fan of Burgundian wines, you owe it to yourself to seek out a bottle and open it when a very special occasion comes along.

Four Seasons



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Winery 4-1-1

Evening Land Vineyards

Lompoc, California

www.eveninglandvineyards.com

805-736-9656

Take a Walk on the SLO Side: San Luis Obispo Wine Country

Back country roads follow the slopes of gently rolling hills. Meticulously tended grapevines line the road. A feeling of peace sets in.

There is no question you are in wine country. But not just any wine country. You have arrived in one of the most laid-back locales on the face of the Earth — San Luis Obispo, Calif.

It's a coincidence that San Luis Obispo's initials spell out SLO, but you'll soon find that the initials make perfect sense because the wineries are uncrowded, the pace at the

tasting rooms is unhurried, and the attitude of those pouring the wine is unpretentious.

This isn't the tourist-overrun Napa Valley. This is wine country for those who love the countryside as much as they love the wine.

Situated about midway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, the SLO wine region is comprised of three pristine viticulture areas: the Edna Valley, Arroyo Grande Valley and Avila Valley. The small, mostly family-owned wineries are well known for their hand-crafted bottlings of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah, Grenache, Viognier, Zinfandel and other varieties.

The marine influence of the nearby Pacific Ocean provides a mild summer and warm fall, resulting in an unusually long growing season. Combined with the region's rocky volcanic soils, these growing conditions produce fruit with intense

varietal character and complex flavors that are typically found in the world's greatest wine regions.

To experience the SLO life, book a room at Petit Soleil, a 16-room B&B in the town of San Luis Obispo with a cobblestone courtyard and plenty of Provencal charm. Each morning, guests are treated to a full "gastronome" breakfast, and each evening, fine wines are paired with delicious bites.

Dining options abound, and our favorite remains the Big Sky Café — even though it has become a bit more crowded since the *Wall Street Journal* featured it in a story last year. The casual fresh market cuisine is quintessential SLO, and there usually are about 20 local wines by the glass from which to choose.

Another favorite among locals is the Corner View Restaurant and Bar, which has a delightful ambiance, delicious dishes (most made from



TOURING TIPS



Laetitia Vineyards

local ingredients) and an eclectic wine list.

Of course, there is no shortage of wineries in and around SLO, and no trip to the region is complete without a visit to Chamisal — where the first vineyard in Edna Valley was planted. Today, the 80-acre estate vineyard is planted to 25 different clonal varieties, giving the vintner a seemingly limitless array of blending options for Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah and other wines.

Love Chardonnay? Head to Edna Valley Vineyard, home to one of the best in all of California. Visitors can take a self-guided tour of a demonstration vineyard boasting 14

rows of various grape varieties and trellis designs.

If you're packing a picnic, a good place to chow down is Laetitia, where the estate vineyards overlook Pismo Beach and the Pacific Ocean. Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and sparkling wine are the specialties of the house, and the grounds include a picnic area and bocce ball courts.

Time on your hands? One could spend a lot

of it at Salisbury Vineyards, which is housed in a century-old restored schoolhouse in Avila Valley. In addition to the "usual suspects," the winery makes a wonderful bottling of Albarino. Beyond the tasting room, Salisbury offers an eclectic schedule of trolley tours through the vineyard, live music on the patio, jazz in the Cupola Room and various works of fine art.

Finally, if you prefer "wines of a place," Stephen Ross is a single-vineyard specialist, crafting an array of single-vineyard Pinot Noir and Chardonnay bottlings, in addition to appellation wines.

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Remote Winery. It has been said that Pelee Island, 10,000 acres in the middle of Lake Erie, is "a place that forces you to do nothing." While there isn't a lot to do at Canada's southernmost inhabited point, accessible by ferry from Sandusky, Ohio, one could spend a lot of time at Pelee Island Winery's Pavilion with its interactive tours, wine tasting, gift shop and garden barbecue. The winery makes both vinifera and hybrid wines.

www.peleeisland.com

2 Hot Wine Country Bike Tour. Napa Valley Bike Tours rents bicycles and helmets, and has a van follow groups of bikers so they can bring along extra gear and a change of clothes, and make purchases at the wineries they visit. Tours begin at 9:30 a.m. and finish either between 1 and 2 p.m. or between 3 and 5 p.m. It's a way to experience California's most famous wine region at a slower pace.

www.napavalleybiketours.com

3 Hot East Bay (California) Restaurant. Camino roasts pristine heirloom vegetables, small-farm pork and other tasty ingredients over a wood-burning hearth oven. The flavors are amazing and the menu is ever changing, so you'll never be bored on a return visit. The wine list is well selected, with a handful available by the glass.

www.caminorestaurant.com

For Further Information

Petit Soleil
1473 Monterey St.
San Luis Obispo
805-549-0321

Big Sky Café
1121 Broad St.
San Luis Obispo
805-545-5401

Corner View Restaurant and Bar
1141 Chorro St.
San Luis Obispo
805-546-8444

Chamisal Vineyards
7525 Orcutt Rd.
San Luis Obispo
805-541-9463

Edna Valley Vineyard
2585 Biddle Ranch Rd.
San Luis Obispo
805-544-5855

Laetitia
453 Laetitia Vineyard Dr.
Arroyo Grande
805-481-1772

Salisbury Vineyards
6985 Ontario Rd.
San Luis Obispo
805-595-9463

Stephen Ross
178 Suburban Rd.
San Luis Obispo
805-594-1318



Domaine Lafond. Wine estate located in the heart of France’s Cotes du Rhone. Some of its estate grapevines were planted in 1880.

En Primeur. French term for a wine that is offered for purchase before it’s bottled. In the U.S., this is called buying futures.

Fattoria. Term for a farm or wine estate in Tuscany, Italy.

Grange. Signature wine of Australia’s Penfolds, made from Syrah or, as it’s known Down Under, Shiraz. In 2004, a single bottle of the 1951 vintage sold for \$50,200.

Hangovers. Morning-after headaches that largely can be avoided by drinking an equal amount of water as wine (or other alcoholic beverage).

Iron Horse. Acclaimed Sonoma County winery that specializes in sparkling wines.

VINESSE STYLE

WINE BOTTLE STOPPERS

You name a topic or special interest, and chances are there is a cork stopper that depicts it.

The cork stopper was invented to re-seal wine bottles — either temporarily, as in while a meal is being consumed, or overnight, if a bottle hasn’t been finished off.

The cork portion of the stopper is tapered so that it can fit easily, but still snugly, in the bottle top.



Is there a golfer in the family? Beaucoup offers a stopper topped by a beautifully cut acrylic golf ball; it looks much like a ball sitting on a tee.

www.beau-coup.com

Is bowling more up your alley? Etsy stocks bottle stoppers that are topped with figurines from vintage bowling trophies. www.etsy.com

For the animal lover, Amazon.com lists bottle stoppers topped with specific breeds of dogs (boxer, fox

terrier, Chihuahua, cocker spaniel, etc.). There’s even a Holstein cow stopper — appropriate for sealing those unfinished bottles of creamy Chardonnay.



Grape clusters and other vinous visions are popular topper topics, and are offered by companies such as Netique (www.netique.com) and Artfire (www.artfire.com).

But if you’re not looking to “make a statement,” and simply seek a utilitarian bottle stopper, Crate & Barrel can fill your need for less than \$3.

www.crateandbarrel.com



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APPELLATION SHOWCASE

Mendocino County



One of America's most spectacularly diverse wine areas, Mendocino County is truly the nation's "greenest" wine region.

It's as famous for its untamed beauty, wide open spaces and earth-friendly farming and ranching as it is for the wines produced in its diverse soils and microclimates.

Aficionados pursue limited-production Mendocino heritage vine Zinfandels and small-lot Cabernets and Merlots from the warmer interior Coast Range valleys and mountain vineyards.

The cool coastal valleys are justifiably renowned for Alsatian varieties, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and sparkling wines.

Syrah and Pinot Gris are among the many additional varieties that are delicious discoveries for those visiting Mendocino's family-owned wineries and vineyards.

And just north of Fort Bragg, poised above the Pacific, the nation's westernmost winery is at home at the edge of the continent.

Mendocino's grape growers and winemakers live and work beside farmers and ranchers dedicated to

producing fruit, vegetables, meats and cheeses in harmony with the land.

Some 20 percent of Mendocino's vineyards — nearly five times the number from any other wine region — are certified organic and biodynamic. Many of the rest are sustainably farmed, and working toward higher earth-friendly designations.

The nation's first carbon-neutral winery calls Mendocino County home, and at least one of the region's wineries is run 100 percent on solar power.

No other appellation in the world has such a diverse blend of eco-systems — from seaside on the Pacific Coast to Russian River and Eel River watersheds to majestic redwood forests.

And no other appellation is populated by farmers and winemakers who are as focused on maintaining those eco-systems for future generations to enjoy.

For a brochure on "America's Greenest Wine Region," including a comprehensive winery guide, write to: Mendocino Winegrape and Wine Commission, 525 S. Main St., Suite C, Ukiah, CA 95482.

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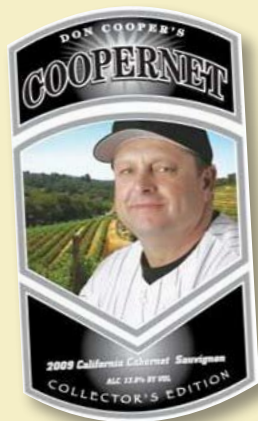
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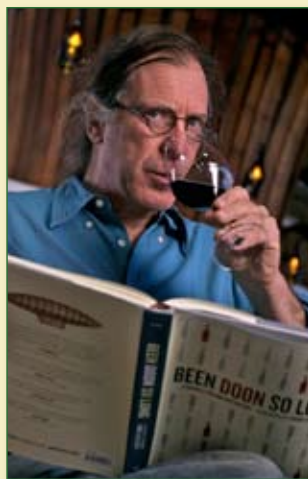


Q We had two bottles of Champagne recently — a Blanc de Blancs and a Rosé, both from the same vintage and the same Champagne house. The Blanc de Blancs had noticeably more bubbles. Why would that be?

A The quantity of bubbles in a bottle of Champagne is directly tied to the amount of protein in the grape variety or varieties used to make the wine. A Blanc de Blancs is made entirely of Chardonnay, while a Rosé is made from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Since Chardonnay is higher in proteins than Pinot Noir, a Blanc de Blancs should have more bubbles than a Rosé.



Don Cooper may not equal Alex Rodriguez in name recognition among those who are fans of Major League Baseball, but Cooper deserves a tip of the cap for his work to raise funds for St. Baldrick's Child Cancer Research Center and the Journey Church in Tennessee. Journey Church is involved in a number of humanitarian efforts locally and internationally. Working with Kameryn Vineyards, Cooper (the pitching coach for the Chicago White Sox) is producing Coopernet Cabernet Sauvignon, and \$20 from each case sold will be split by the two charities. That kind of work is a home run in our book — or, since Cooper is a pitching coach, perhaps we should call it a no-hitter.



Over the years, the wine clubs of Vinesse have proudly featured a number of bottlings from Bonny Doon Vineyards. The genius behind Bonny Doon is Randall Grahm, a vintner who ferments to the beat of his own drummer. Tidbits from Grahm's winemaking philosophy:

- "Wine should be as much fun as government regulations allow."
- "Great wine starts in the vineyard."
- "We should champion the strange, esoteric, ugly-duckling grape varieties of the world."

5,000

Estimated number of truly unique winegrape varieties. Only about 150 of those are planted in amounts significant enough for commercial use.



“Winemaking must consume you, or your wines may not be worth consuming.”

— Saxon Browne Wines winemaker Jeff Gaffner, quoted in Karen MacNeil's annual desk calendar



The new Research and Teaching Winery at the University of California at Davis is scheduled to open this month, with a goal of becoming the first winery on Earth to achieve LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum status. Even during peak capacity times — which occur often in California's Central Valley — the building will use solar power for all of its energy needs. In what could lead to breakthrough technologies in the future, all carbon dioxide emitted during the fermentation process will be removed from the building, captured, and tested for possible uses.

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS

THE NEW MEATS

SStill opting for a nice, thick, juicy steak... or perhaps some divine preparation of lamb... or maybe an herb-infused chicken breast... when dining out? That is so yesterday!

(Okay, it's still very much today for a lot of us, but we needed to draw you into the story. And now that you're here...)

There's no question that beef and chicken are getting a run for their money from a category of food being referred to as "the new meats." Some of these meats are "real" and some are "faux," but all are tasty.

And all are candidates for pairing with wine. But given the new flavors and textures with which to contend, the question becomes: Which wine?

Sunset magazine tackled that very question earlier this year, so we'll begin with a few of wine writer Sara Schneider's recommendations.

- **Handcrafted Salumi** — "Sweet pork laced with spices calls for a white. Pour a dry Alsatian-style variety." Specifically, Pinot Gris.
- **Gourmet Paté** — "You need a light-bodied red wine that shares the paté's earthy character and spice." That wine: Pinot Noir.



- **Exotic Cured Ham** — "From Spanish Iberico and serrano to Italian prosciutto, air-cured hams need a juicy red to cut through their sweet marbling." Try: Grenache or a Grenache-based blend.

- **Garden Veggie Burgers** — "A burger made of nutty grains mixed with sweet and savory produce needs a rich gardenful of flavors in a

wine partner." Schneider suggests Viognier, and we also like Sauvignon Blanc.

More of Schneider's recommendations may be found in the March 2010 issue of *Sunset*.

And what about the more established "new meats" such as ostrich, bison or emu? Because these meats are quite lean when compared to beef, one should avoid wines that are high in tannin, which would tend to overpower the meat flavors. Instead, opt for more fruit-forward wines such as Zinfandel, Pinot Noir or Cotes-du-Rhone.

Light & Sweet

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WINE COLOR MIX:

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SALMON BURGERS

Here's a great way to enjoy salmon, and this recipe yields 4 servings. Try it with either Pinot Noir or Zinfandel.

Ingredients

- 1½ lbs. salmon, boned, skinned and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 tablespoon drained capers, chopped
- 2/3 cup Japanese panko bread crumbs
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 4 hamburger buns, toasted
- Tartar sauce
- Coleslaw

Preparation

1. In the bowl of a food processor, pulse salmon cubes several times until coarsely ground. Remove ground salmon to a large bowl, and stir in capers, bread crumbs, lemon juice, pepper, salt and egg until the mixture is uniform and fully combined.
2. Divide mixture into 4 patties of equal size.
3. In a large sauté pan, melt butter over medium-high heat. Add the patties (do not crowd) and sauté, adjusting the heat as needed, until the burgers are golden on the outside and cooked throughout (2 to 2½ minutes per side).
4. To prepare the burgers, brush the insides of each toasted bun with tartar sauce, and spoon a little coleslaw on the base of the bun. Place a burger on the slaw, then add the bun top and serve immediately.

BLACK BEAN AND AVOCADO SALAD

This salad is very tasty, easy to make, and perfect for warm weather alfresco dining. This recipe makes 2 entrée-size servings. Try it with chilled Chardonnay or Chenin Blanc.

Ingredients

- 1 can (16-oz.) of black beans
- 2 ripe tomatoes
- 1 red onion
- 1 avocado
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation

1. Using a colander, rinse and drain black beans.
2. Cut tomatoes, onion and avocado into small pieces.
3. Combine all ingredients and drizzle with olive oil.
4. Add salt and pepper to taste.



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