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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

Tasting the Natural
Wines of Paul Dolan

Wine Country Gardens:
Delights for the Senses

Umami: Pairing Wine
With the 'Fifth Taste'

Placer County: Where
Gold Comes in Bottles

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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.

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

Assessing the 100-Point Scale

By Robert Johnson

Every few years, a writer or a winemaker will publicly decry the 100-point grading scale used by a number of critics, including "Wine Advocate" Robert Parker and Wine Spectator magazine.

Such a declaration will spark a heated debate, typically unfolding online, that ultimately dies down after a few weeks... until another writer or vintner or blogger decides to reignite the flame.

As the argument goes, the perception of wine is very subjective — no two palates are exactly the same — which means bestowing a two-digit (or rare three-digit) score is virtually meaningless.

One of the more reasonable criticisms of the system was offered by Bill St. John, wine writer for the *Chicago Tribune*, who described the 100-point scale as "part of our informational DNA. If Sister Mary Frances gave you a 72 on your mid-term exam, you weren't going to brag to your mom.

"However, unlike scholastic achievement that receives grades, wine points don't bestow any inherent quality on the wine that they evaluate, nor do they actually reflect what quality is in the bottle," St. John continued. "They are one person's (or panel of judges' or website's) opinion or judgment about a beverage that certainly is open to many qualitative interpretations or evaluations. On school exams, for the most part, answers are either correct or incorrect.

You cannot say the same thing about wine."

As a member of one of the wine clubs of Vinesse, you know that we embrace the 100-point wine grading system, so I respectfully disagree with St. John's conclusion. I'd liken use of the 100-point scale to how a teacher grades a student's essay.

A teacher is looking for certain things in an essay, among them accuracy of facts, clarity of thought and logic of conclusion. A factual error would likely result in the deduction of a few points, as would poor presentation of the information. How many points? That's a subjective decision for the teacher.

And so it is with wine reviews. Some critics start a wine assessment at 100 points and deduct points for various perceived flaws or shortcomings. Others may start at an "average" score of 70 and add points for characteristics perceived to be positive (aroma, balance, finish, etc.).

At Vinesse, we include detailed tasting notes with each featured wine, intended to provide a comprehensive impression and assessment. But for those who'd prefer to simply glance at a number, I can't see where using a 100-point grading system does any harm.



Oak Barrels: A Vintner's Spice Rack

We've heard it many times: "All great wines begin in the vineyard."

It's impossible to debate that point because without grapes of good quality — meaning healthy and adequately ripened — a vintner is destined to make a wine that is little more than "acceptable" in quality. Or, to put it another way (if you read "Editor's Journal" on page 2), don't expect a wine made from inferior grapes to garner a big score.

That said, while having access to high-quality grapes is critical in the winemaking process, it's only the first step in that process. Also contributing to the ultimate quality of the finished wine is the fermentation procedure utilized, and the wine's aging regimen.

A vast majority of modern wines are aged in either stainless steel tanks or oak barrels.

Vintners who want the flavors imparted by the grapes to play a "starring role" often opt for stainless steel aging, because stainless steel is considered "neutral." In other words, it adds nothing to the flavor of the wine.

Vintners looking to enhance and/or expand a wine's aroma and flavor profile will opt for oak barrel aging. They

believe that nuances beyond those of fruit create finished wines that are more complex, more interesting and more enjoyable.

The two most common types of oak used for wine aging are French and American, and each contributes unique aromas and flavors.

If you smell and/or taste such things as toast, smoke, vanilla, caramel or butterscotch in a wine, it likely was aged in French oak barrels.



If you note such things as coconut or dill, American oak barrels probably were used.

The degree of "toasting" that individual barrels receive also is important, as certain nuances may become more or

less pronounced in the finished wine.

The use of oak barrels by a winemaker has been likened to the spice rack available to a chef. The choices made in the cellar — French oak, American oak, French *and* American oak, or no oak — are extremely important to the overall character of a finished wine.



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Tasting Paul Dolan's Natural Approach to Winemaking

***P**aul Dolan is a legend in the world of organic winegrowing, and today his influence can be felt throughout California's Mendocino County.*

The trend toward more Earth-friendly farming extends beyond Mendocino, of course, including Sonoma County.

If you want to sample wine over which Dolan has direct influence, options exist in both of the aforementioned counties — at Truett Hurst in Healdsburg (Sonoma), and Paul Dolan Vineyards in Ukiah (Mendocino).

While the formation of the Truett Hurst partnership began in November of 2007, the founding partners worked together at Fetzer Winery years before. At that time, Dolan was Director of Winemaking, where he'd hired Phil Hurst, a graduate of the acclaimed viticulture program at the University of California Davis, to work as one of the winemakers.

Years later, Phil would hire Paul's son, Heath, right out of college to work for him. And 30 years after that first meeting, Paul, Heath, Phil and Sylvia Hurst formed a partnership in the Dry Creek Valley. Their vision: create world-class wines using biodynamic farming principles. To complete that vision, Mark De Meulanaere and Virginia Lambrix were brought in.

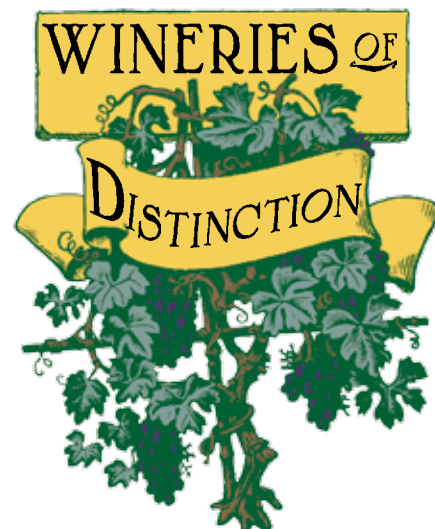
Nestled in the heart of the Dry Creek Valley, there are 26 very special acres that have been named Truett Hurst. Zinfandel and Petite Sirah vineyards, the Dry Creek waterway, five acres of gardens and a vibrant tasting room made of eco-friendly materials are just some of the things that make the place unique.

As the principals like to pose, where else can you take in Coho salmon,

Steelhead trout, otters, ducks, sheep, herbs, olives, beneficial insect habitat, and heirloom fruits and vegetables, all over a glass of delicious wine?

In the 1800s, Italian immigrants arrived in the Dry Creek Valley, and among their personal belongings were cuttings of Zinfandel. They knew that great winemaking begins in the vineyard, and mixed in Petite Sirah for color and structure, and some musque selections for floral notes.

"We took cuttings from two old-vine Zinfandel vineyards, St. Peter's Church



and Du Pratt, to plant two of our blocks," Dolan says. "In the spirit of our Italian predecessors, we selected a Primitivo clone for bright, vibrant fruit characters, and two selections of Petite Sirah to add color and structure to our wines."

The Truett Hurst story really begins in the vineyard, where fruit is sourced from the best hillside, old-vine vineyards in Dry Creek. The style of wine, be it spicy and bold, or fruit driven and elegant, is dictated by the vineyard. Understanding this, and allowing for the authentic translation of its terroir, is paramount for making unforgettable wines, Dolan adds.

"Small, open-top fermentations,

mixing the cap gently with punch-downs, and selection of only the best French and American oak are only part of the care that goes into handcrafting our wines.”

Among Truett Hurst’s bottlings are various (red) Zindandels, a Zinfandel Rosé, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and some amazing blends.

During June and July, the Truett Hurst tasting room comes alive with music on the weekends, adding to an already sublime experience for guests.

At Paul Dolan Vineyards, the selections include Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, a red blend and even a sparkling Brut.

Of course, both organic farming and Biodynamic agriculture are embraced.

Organic farming emphasizes the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water, while organic winegrowing recognizes that healthy soils grow balanced grapes that produce the best wines. Organic vineyards are often small, family-owned and operated properties.

Organic winemaking uses natural processes and rejects the use of synthetic chemicals. Winemakers use organic grapes and yeasts to create wines of great character and purity.

Biodynamic agriculture, a sustainable system of farming, recognizes that all life is interconnected. Based on the teachings of Rudolf Steiner (circa 1924), biodynamics includes the ideas of organic farming.

The foundation of Steiner’s approach to farming is the blending of prescriptive, holistic practices with the farmer’s experiences and observations. Steiner recognized the rhythms of the sun and moon, the benefit of applying biodynamic preparations such as horn manure, and the wisdom of organizing the farm as an independent unit.

Biodynamic winegrowers create self-sustaining farms by using natural amendments, ideally from the farm itself, to encourage growth and health in the vineyard.

Natural systems such as wildlife corridors and cover crops — along with bees, birds, owls and free-range chickens — keep populations of harmful insects and weeds in control and provide a thriving environment for the vines. Winegrowers also use nature’s own processes to restore nutrients to the soil, regulate water usage and create biodiversity to keep balance in the vineyard.

By observing the unique needs of the farm, winegrowers find creative, natural approaches that enable the vines to attain their full flavor potential. The ultimate goal for a Biodynamic farm is balance and complete self-sufficiency, producing everything it needs on site, from fertilizer to pest control and water management.

Most importantly for wine quality, Biodynamic farming aims to produce a unique expression from each site and, therefore, in the grapes and wines produced from each vineyard. This expression, known as terroir, is a result of the combination of soil, sunlight hours, slope, alignment to the sun, temperature, and the essential ego of place that can be tasted in the personality of the grapes and, done correctly, the wine.

Many say that Biodynamic wines are the most authentic expressions of terroir, and Paul Dolan has been at the forefront of that movement for years.

Winery 4-1-1

Truett Hurst

610 Dry Creek Road
Healdsburg, CA 95448
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Open Daily, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Paul Dolan Vineyards

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Ukiah, CA 95482
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In Placer County Today, Most of the 'Gold' Comes in Bottles



California's Placer County was home to the peaceful Nisenan Native Americans for hundreds of years before the discovery of gold in 1848 brought hordes of miners from around the world.

Only three years after the discovery of gold, the fast-growing county was formed from portions of Sutter and Yuba counties on April 25, 1851, with Auburn as the county seat. Placer County took its name from the Spanish word for sand or gravel deposits containing gold. Miners washed away the gravel, leaving the heavier gold, in a process known as "placer mining."

Gold mining was a major industry through the 1880s, but gradually the new residents turned to farming the fertile foothill soil, harvesting timber and working for the Southern Pacific Railroad. Over time, a number of small towns were established.

Auburn was settled when Claude Chana discovered gold in Auburn Ravine in May 1848, and later became a shipping and supply center for the surrounding gold camps.

The cornerstone of Placer's beautiful and historic courthouse, which is clearly visible from Interstate 80 through Auburn, was laid on July 4, 1894. The building itself was renovated during the late 1980s and continues to serve the public today.

Roseville, once a small agricultural center, became a major railroad center and grew into the county's most populous city after Southern Pacific

moved its railroad switching yards there in 1908.

Loomis and Newcastle began as mining towns, but soon became centers of a booming fruit-growing industry, supporting many local packing houses.

Penryn was founded by a Welsh miner, Griffith Griffith, who turned from mining to establish a large granite quarry.

Rocklin began as a railroad town and became home to a number of granite quarries. It now vies with Roseville for the honor of being Placer's largest city.

Lincoln and Sheridan continue to support ranching and farming. Lincoln also is the home of one of the county's

oldest businesses, the Gladding McBean terra cotta clay manufacturing plant, established in 1875.

Foresthill was a lively gold mining town for many years, but gradually the timber industry grew and was, until recently, the major employer. Recreation now is the major industry in this area of sparkling reservoirs, pristine trails and ample camping facilities.

Colfax began life as railroad construction camp in 1865. The following year, gold was discovered. The Rising Sun, Montana and Meda mines were rich gold producers.

Weimar was established as the timbering center of New England Mills and later became the home of the Weimar Institute, a regional tuberculosis sanitarium. When a cure for TB was discovered, the medical center closed, and it's now a health and nutrition center.

South Placer communities, in particular, have had very strong ties to the land since they became centers of a booming fruit-growing industry during the late 1800s. The fertile valley provides residents and visitors with a plentiful bounty of locally grown, high-quality produce that is available year-round.

Many varieties of these fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts and livestock are certified organic, and can be purchased at local certified farmers' markets or at Denio's Farmers Market and Swap Meet.

In recent years, agriculture has become a pillar of South Placer's growth. As a means to support the county's agricultural heritage and agri-tourism, local schools often organize farm visits or tours to the fields, and many restaurants feature local produce in their menu selections. In addition, major agricultural festivals take place year-round in South Placer, attracting visitors from all over California.

Mixed amongst the agricultural bounty is a bustling wine industry. Rancho Roble Vineyards in Lincoln, Ophir Wines and Pescatore Vineyard



TOURING TIPS

For Further Information

Denio's Farmers Market and Swap Meet

<http://www.denios.org/>

Rancho Roble Vineyards

<http://www.ranchoroble.com/>

Ophir Wines

<http://www.ophirwines.com/>

Pescatore Vineyard

<http://www.pescatorewines.com/>

Secret Ravine Vineyard & Winery

<http://www.secretravine.com/>

Placer County Wine Trail

<http://www.placerwine.com/>

Grape Days of Summer

<http://www.placerwine.com/events.htm>

Latitudes

<http://www.latitudesrestaurant.com/>

High Hand Café & Conservatory

<http://www.highhand.com/conservatory>

Paul Martin's American Bistro

<http://paulmartinsamericanbistro.com/>

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<http://placertourism.com/winepackage>

in Newcastle, and Secret Ravine Vineyard & Winery in Loomis are established small-production wineries that are at the forefront of Placer Valley's wine movement, dubbed the "Gold Crush" by local writers.

Almost 100 wineries were operating in the Mother Lode area back in 1895 — more than Napa and Sonoma combined. Prohibition brought the thriving industry to a halt in 1920, and most vineyard land was converted to pear, apple and citrus trees.

Today, there is a juicy renaissance going on in the hills of Placer County, with vineyards and wineries returning to the foothill slopes. The granite soil and Mediterranean-like climate are ideal for the cultivation of winegrapes, and the new, small wineries are producing a wide range of offerings that blend New World winemaking techniques with Old World varieties.

The Placer County Wine Trail is a series of small family-run boutique wineries, each dedicated to preserving the historic winemaking legacy of the Sierra Foothills with passion and craftsmanship. A short 30-minute drive from Sacramento, the trail runs from Lincoln to Newcastle and Auburn, and is easily accessible from I-80 and Highway 49.

Varietals include floral Viognier, dark-berried Tempranillo, lush Barbera, smoky and spicy Syrah and

Petite Sirah, flavor-intense Zinfandel, adventurous blends and sweet dessert wines — in short, something for every occasion.

Located midway between San Francisco and Lake Tahoe, many flock to Placer County for a pleasure not found in other nearby winegrowing areas: the opportunity to meet the winemakers, who gladly share their enthusiasm with samples of their latest vintages.

Need an excuse to make the trek? Here's one: an event dubbed "Grape Days of Summer," set for Aug. 4-5.

It's an open house weekend during which visitors can enjoy wine tasting and small plates of food at more than 15 wineries.

In addition to each general wine-tasting lineup, wineries will provide educational experiences that take guests "from vine to wine."

Tickets cost \$30 in advance, \$40 at the door, and \$10 for designated drivers, and are good for both days. A souvenir wine glass is included.

Although the area is quite rural, it's home to a number of fine-dining destinations, including Latitudes in Auburn, High Hand Café & Conservatory in Loomis, and Paul Martin's American Bistro in Roseville.

Placer County is still known as "Gold Country," but today most of the gold comes in delicious liquid form.

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot East Coast Wine Festival. The Finger Lakes Wine Festival, presented by Yancey's Fancy New York Artisan Cheese, is the largest showcase of New York state wines, and will be held July 13-15 at Watkins Glen International.

Attendees will be able to sample 600 wines from 90 wineries, visit with arts and crafts vendors, nosh on gourmet food, soak in live music and even ride in pace cars around the historic racetrack.

<http://www.flwinefest.com>

2 Hot Winery Concert Series (Part 1). Rodney Strong Vineyards in Healdsburg, Calif., is hosting big-name concerts for the 22nd consecutive year. Al Green will be performing on July 15, followed by Dave Koz and BeBe Winans on July 28, Al Jarreau and George Duke on Aug. 11, and Huey Lewis and The News on Sept. 1.

<http://www.omegaevents.com/rodneystrong>

3 Hot Winery Concert Series (Part 2). Another well-known Sonoma County winery, Sonoma-Cutrer Vineyards in Windsor, is presenting the Jazzy Summer Nights concert series. Two performances remain in the 2012 series: the Al Molina Latin Jazz Sextet on July 21, and Deborah Winters on Aug. 18. Seating is limited, and Yucatan food will be provided by Mateo Granados from his legendary food truck.

<http://discover.winecountry.com/travel/2012/06/jazzy-summer-nights-at-sonoma.html>



Yield. The productivity of a vineyard. Often measured in tons of grapes harvested per acre.

Zahtila Vineyards. A Napa Valley winery specializing in Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon. Owned by Laura Zahtila Swanton, who also is the winemaker.

Aeration. Allowing wine to be exposed to oxygen, generally to soften the wine after opening. Accomplished through decanting or swirling in the glass.

Barrique. A 225-liter oak barrel, generally used for storing and aging Bordeaux varietals such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Claret. The English term for a red Bordeaux wine, typically a blend of several varieties.

Doux. French word for sweet. Usually a reference to the sweetest wines.

VINESSE STYLE



Do you sometimes have trouble identifying all the aromas and flavors listed in the tasting notes that accompany your featured wine selections from Vinesse?

You are not alone. They represent a summary of all the notes jotted down by all the members of our tasting panel. And because no two palates are exactly the same, it's rare for any two people to experience a given wine in exactly the same way.

To help wine drinkers get more attuned with what they're smelling and tasting, a number of California wineries have created sensory gardens. The most extensive one can be found at the Kendall-Jackson Wine Center in Fulton, Calif., just north of Santa Rosa in Sonoma County.

There are seven distinct garden spaces at Kendall-Jackson, including a Red Wine Sensory Garden and a White Wine Sensory Garden. Each corner of each garden represents a specific varietal or group of varietals.

For instance, in the Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot area, planted "descriptors" include eggplant, black beans, broccoli, beets, radicchio, carrots, olives, green beans, sage, rosemary and basil. "Affinities" include oregano, blackberry, black cherry, bell pepper, black currant, mint and dill.

The plantings vary by season, and garden tours are available. For further information, call 866-287-9818.

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APPELLATION SHOWCASE



The Veneto region of Italy is a fascinating section of the country, packed tight with “wine country,” gorgeous cities and hamlets, and some stunning natural scenery.

The area is considered an ideal destination for wine lovers, foodies and honeymooners as the region is romantic, picturesque and produces some fabulous wines. The Veneto is a huge area bordered by Lake Garda in the west, Venice and the Adriatic Sea to the east, and the ski resort of Cortina d’Ampezzo in the far north.

There are seven provinces in greater Veneto: Belluno, Treviso, Venezia, Verona, Vicenza, Padova and Rovigo. Key rivers include the Adige and the Po, and there are smaller rivers such as the Brenta with its villa-studded banks.

The Veneto is jam-packed with vineyards, and is home to a multitude of appellations, including:

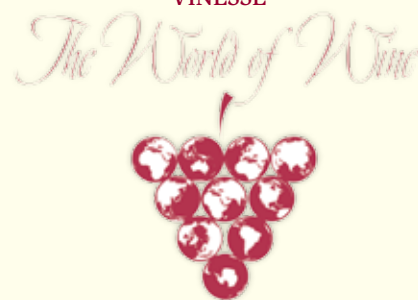
- (DOCG) Bardolino Superiore, Recioto di Soave and Soave Superiore (using the Garganega grape primarily).
- (DOC) Colli Euganei (making great Cabernet Franc and Merlot-based wines), Bianco di Custoza (refreshing white wine made with the Riviera del Garda), Bardolino (on the eastern shore of Lake Garda, producing mainly light reds and strong rosés made with the Valpolicella trio of grapes), Lugana (aromatic whites by such flagship cellars as Ca dei Frati, near the shores of Garda’s

Sirmione), Prosecco di Conegliano-Valdobbiadene (glamorous bubbles made at some beautiful estates such as Villa Sandi), and Valpolicella (known for its superb Amarone and Recioto wines).

Other DOCs include Gambellara (an historic region south of Vicenza, making Garganega-based Reciotos and Vin Santos, along with dry whites); Arcole (known for its sandy soils); Montello e Colli Asolani, Lison-Pramaggiore and Monti Lessini (whites, reds and bubbly); Breganze (north of Vicenza); Merlara; Colli Berici (Tocai Rosso is an interesting local grape); Corti Benedettine del Padovano, Valdadige (confusingly, this appellation is used by different regions and provinces: Verona in Veneto and Bolzano and Trento in Trentino-Alto Adige); Bagnoli di Sopra; Riviera del Brenta; San Martino della Battaglia; Colli di Conegliano; Garda; Vicenza, and Vini del Piave (named after the Piave River).

Adding to the allure of the Veneto is the collective attitude of the winemakers — mostly men, and most for families who have been making wine from generations. These are proud vintners who love nothing more than seeing a customer enjoy the product of their labors.

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Q We live in Chicago, and understand that a place called City Winery is going to be opening soon. Do you know anything about it?

A Not specifically, but if it's anything like the City Winery in New York, you can expect lots of good food, lots of good wine and lots of good music. At the original New York outpost, wine is made on the premises, and has such playful names as "Sohovignon Blanc" and "New York City Cab-ernet Sauvignon." The concert bookings are eclectic, and among those who have performed is wine lover Al Stewart (of "Year of the Cat" fame), who once released a wine-themed album called "Down in the Cellar." We understand that the Chicago City Winery will open sometime in August.



If this issue's "Vinesse Style" feature on the Kendall-Jackson sensory garden caught your eye, you may be interested to know that gardens also can be found at Frey Vineyards in Redwood Valley, Calif., and at Round Pond Estate in Rutherford, Calif. To learn more, call Frey at 800-760-3739, or Round Pond at 888-302-2575.

“ I’m a fatalist. ”



— Banker-turned-winemaker Alberto Graci, asked why he would buy vineyards on the slopes of Mount Etna, an active volcano in Sicily. (Source: Food and Wine magazine)

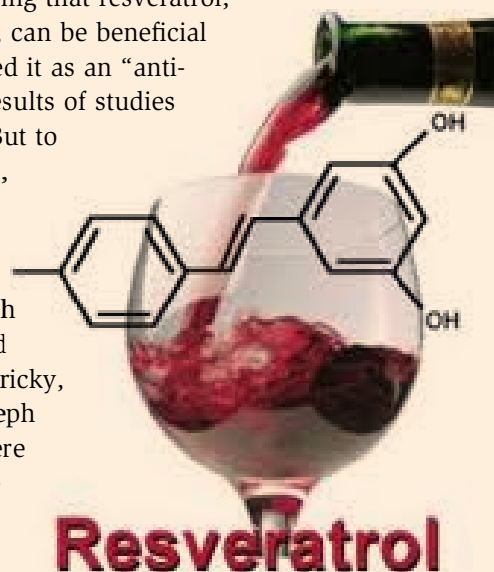
Environmentally sound farming practices are embraced by Coturri Winery in Glen Ellen, part of the Sonoma County wine region. Only the best agricultural practices are employed at the Estate vineyard, and it receives special handling to ensure that something is growing in the soils throughout the year. Tony Coturri personally attends to the vines. Weeds are controlled by disking, and the resulting mulch captures important moisture for the dry-farmed vines. The open head-pruned vines or “monkey claw” controls mildew problems. Like all of the vineyards planted and maintained by the Coturris, no pesticides, fungicides or herbicides are ever used on the Estate vineyard, and it is certified by the California Certified Organic Farmers organization. In 1996, Tony and Phil Coturri earned top honors from the Sonoma Valley Ecology Center for environmentally friendly business practices with their farming and winemaking practices.



110

Percentage increase in the consumption of Bordeaux wine in China last year. (Source: Bordeaux Industry and Commerce Chamber)

More and more studies are showing that resveratrol, a substance found in red wine, can be beneficial for one's health. Some have described it as an “anti-aging powerhouse.” Certainly, the results of studies involving lab rats are encouraging. But to duplicate those studies with humans, one would have to drink between two and 100 bottles of wine per day — something no doctor would recommend. While pinpointing which elements deserve the most credit and produce the greatest benefit can be tricky, the University of Pennsylvania's Joseph Baur told Tribune Newspapers: “There are many things in red wine that are beneficial to health.”



FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS

UMAMI

“Those who pay careful attention to their tastebuds will discover in the complex flavor of asparagus, tomatoes, cheese and meat a common and yet absolutely singular taste which cannot be called sweet or sour or salty or bitter.”

So said Dr. Kikunae Ikeda at the 8th International Congress of Applied Chemistry, held in Washington, D.C., in 1912.

Dashi stock made from kombu (kelp) had long been an indispensable part of Japanese cuisine. And it didn't take a scientist to know that the active ingredients contained within kombu held the key to its delicious flavor.

Dr. Ikeda, of Tokyo Imperial University (now the University of Tokyo), undertook research to ascertain the true nature of this “deliciousness.” In 1908, he succeeded in extracting glutamate

from kombu. He discovered that glutamate (or glutamic acid) was the main active ingredient in kombu and coined the term “umami” to describe its flavor.

When humans eat, we use all of our available senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste) to form general judgments about our food, but it is taste that is the most influential in determining how delicious a food is.

Conventionally, it has been thought that our sense of taste is comprised of four basic or “primary” tastes which cannot be replicated by mixing together any of the other primaries (sweet, sour, salt and bitter). However, it is now known that there

is a fifth primary taste: umami.

Taking its name from the Japanese language, umami is a pleasant savory flavor imparted by glutamate, a type of amino acid, and ribonucleotides, including inosinate and guanylate, which occur naturally in many foods including meat, fish, vegetables and dairy products. Think of that savory flavor we experience in aged cheeses or cooked mushrooms.

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mushrooms.***

As the flavor of umami itself is subtle and blends well with other flavors to expand and round out flavors, most people don't recognize umami when they encounter it — but it plays an

important role in making food taste delicious.

Umami is used in various forms all over the world. In Asia, it's mainly found in beans and grain, fermented seafood-based products, shiitake mushrooms, kombu and dried seafood. In Western cuisine, there also are fermented or cured products derived from meat and dairy products, mainly ham and cheese. The best-known ingredient is the tomato.

What kind of wine should one drink with umami-influenced dishes? The same type one pairs with salty fare: one with low alcohol and crisp acidity, such as Riesling and some bottlings of Pinot Noir.

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UMAMI SHRIMP

Here's a dish that may enable you to experience and better understand the flavor of umami, the "fifth taste" examined in this edition's "Food & Wine Pairings" feature (see page 11). This recipe yields 2 servings, and pairs nicely with a well-chilled Riesling.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 8 ounces sliced mushrooms
- 3 green onions, sliced
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons tamari (reduced sodium soy sauce)
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- Dash of pepper
- 1/2 pound cooked shrimp
- 1 small head broccoli florets
- Cooked noodles

Preparation

1. Bring a large pot of water to boil. Salt lightly and add raw broccoli. Cook broccoli florets to crisp-tender and remove with a skimmer to a plate.
2. Use the same water and cook noodles as package directs.
3. While broccoli and pasta are cooking, heat 2 tablespoons vegetable oil in a wok or large shallow skillet, over high heat. Add the mushrooms and cook until lightly browned (about 3 minutes).
4. Transfer mushrooms to a plate. Add more oil to pan, if needed. Add the onions, and cook for 1 minute.
5. Add the chicken broth, tamari, sesame oil and pepper to taste. Heat to boil. Stir in cooked shrimp, cooked broccoli and the reserved mushrooms. Heat until hot.

6. Drain noodles, and serve with shrimp and vegetable mixture over the top.

PINE NUT-CRUSTED SALMON BURGERS

This recipe is easy to make, yields 2 to 4 servings (depending on your appetite), and pairs nicely with Pinot Noir.

Ingredients

- 1 cup pine nuts
- 1 lb. salmon
- 1 egg
- 1/2 small onion, chopped
- 1/2 bell pepper, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon dried parsley
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Preparation

1. Heat a dry skillet over high heat and toast the pine nuts, tossing occasionally until they are light brown all over.
2. Let cool, then toss into a food processor and pulse into a coarse meal. Set aside.
3. Cut the salmon into chunks, and place in the food processor. Pulse until finely ground, then transfer to a bowl with 1/3 cup of the ground pine nuts, egg, onion, pepper and seasoning. Mix well.
4. Form the mixture into 4 balls, then flatten into patties. Coat each side with the remaining ground pine nuts.
5. Arrange on a baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes, or until lightly browned.

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