



# Musings on the Vine

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## What's New – Interesting Numbers

Wine has been a part of the human race since approximately 3,000 B.C. The earliest evidence of organized viticulture and vinification is in Georgia (the Eastern European, former Soviet satellite, not the Southern United State.) It's believed the Egyptians were tinkering with wine making at this point too and I bet, if you look hard enough, you will find evidence in many other far flung parts of the globe as well. Simply put, wine has been with us for a very long time. Wine is also big business. According to the Wine Institute's Trade Data and Analysis (TDA), the world consumes approximately 24 billion liters of wine every year. Interestingly, France had been on the top of the pile for many years, finally being displaced by the USA in 2010. I'm proud to say, we drank 2.967 billion liters of wine last year, with France only managing 2.885 billion liters. Another interesting statistic is wine production. Although steadily declining over the last 5 years, the Wine Institute puts total annual wine production at approximately 27 billion liters. France topped the chart in 2009 with 4.7 billion liters, followed closely by Italy at

4.65 billion liters – what's a half billion liters between friends, right? The US produced 2.77 billion liters in 2009, earning us a fourth place, and interestingly we consumed 2.75 billion liters, which was about 300 million liters more than Italy... The final statistic that I always find interesting is acreage under vines. Although France is tops in production, it is Spain that has the most acreage under vine with 2.72 million acres. France is number two at 1.96 million and Italy, at number three only managed 1.71 million acres. Fourth place was held by China at 1.2 million acres, followed by Turkey, also at 1.2 million. That leaves the US in sixth place at .944 million acres (by the way, California has approximately .79 million acres

under vine alone.) So, what does all this mean? Well, financially, if you were a grape farmer, with premium grapes, you would be sharing in a market of approximately \$72 billion (assuming \$1,000 per ton, with a yield of 4 tons per acre). As a wine maker selling premium table wines, you would be sharing in a market of approximately \$193 billion (assuming an average selling price of \$65 per case to wholesalers.) As a wine retailer you would be sharing in a market of approximately \$400 billion and this doesn't include spirits...

Wine is Big Business...

Cheers! Betsy & Paul



### Inside this issue:

Feature: Critics vs. Judges	2
Feature: Sonoma County	2
Notable Potables—Whites, Rosés, Reds	5
Regulatory Update	7
Upcoming Musings Events	8
Ask the Sommelier	9

### Upcoming Fall 2011 Wine Events

- Sept/Oct (TBD) —Smart Wine Shopping
- September 24—Napa/Bordeaux Shootout, Part IV
- October 8—Northern Rhone
- October 22—Older Wines, Part IV
- November 19—The Wines of North America
- December 10—Fortified Wines

# Feature: Critics vs. Judges

This past April, Team Musings judged in another WineMaker Magazine Annual Wine Contest up at the Equinox Inn in Manchester Center, VT. For 2011, we judged for 17 hours over a three day period, we tasted 113 flights or 633 individual wines. It was a great time and it spurred me to think about the difference between critics and judges.

According to Webster's, a Critic is: (a) one who expresses a reasoned opinion on any matter especially involving a judgment of its value, truth, righteousness, beauty, or technique; or (b) one who engages often professionally in the analysis, evaluation, or appreciation of works of art or artistic performances. A Judge is: (a) a public official authorized to decide questions brought before a court; or (b (often capitalized)) a tribal hero exercising leadership among the Hebrews after the death of Joshua; or (c) one appointed to decide in a contest or competition; or (d) one who gives an authoritative opinion; and lastly (e) a critic. Huh, so, according to Webster's, one could consider critics and judges the same. Well, as you might expect, I respectfully do not agree.

The best place to start is where the definitions of these two terms agree. Critics and judges are both individuals with the ability to offer reasoned opinion. Often times, a reasoned opinion comes from an intimate knowledge of a particular subject. In the case of theatre critics, a deep knowledge of stage and film productions with significant experience actually watching said productions is necessary. For courtroom judges it takes years of legal practice and studying case

law, combined with a long track record for impartial decisions that leads to a seat behind the bench. Both require keen minds.

It is at this point, though that I feel the similarities end. The word critique is an alteration of the word critic and inherent in the definition of the word critique is the term criticism. The primary definition of the word criticism is: (a) the act of criticizing usually unfavorably <seeking encouragement rather than criticism>; or (b) a critical observation or remark <an unfair criticism>; and lastly (c) critique. Judgment is the action of a judge and inherent in the definition of the judgment is the



term discernment. Discernment is the skill or ability to grasp and comprehend something that is obscure. Synonyms of the term discernment are: wisdom, insight, perception, perceptiveness, perceptivity, sagaciousness, sagacity, sagemess, sapience. What the heck am I driving at, you ask?

By implication, critics are folks who offer an opinion, often containing bias and often where the opinion is characterized by an

unfavorable view. Judges, on the other hand must remain free of bias when they render their opinions and those opinions are often characterized as perceptive, wise or sage. Why is this important?

I have spent decades judging wines. I purposely used the term judge, because every time I taste a wine, regardless of its origins, I free my mind of any encumbrance and concentrate only on what is before me. I open my mind to the infinite store house of memories, looking for markers by which to render an educated, reasoned opinion. I do not care whether I particularly like what I taste, only that I can offer unbiased insight into the wine. Bias comes into play when I ask myself if I want to purchase said wine for our cellar.

Too often, when tasting with others it is clear that their judgment is actually criticism. Their opinions may appear well-reasoned, but the use of the terms "like" and "dislike" in their notes belie the truth. This is one of the biggest reasons why I discount much of what I read about wine and spirits. Too many people writing about the subject allow their personal preferences to rule their pen (or keyboard, actually.) Is this entirely bad? No, but unless you have tested how your assessments of a particular wine stack-up with those of a particular critic, then you likely will be disappointed more frequently than not.

All in all, the point that I'm trying to make is that one should strive to judge wines, not critique them. Some folks see these activities as one in the same, but now you know that I do not.

# Feature: Sonoma County

It was a long time ago – October 2010 to be precise – that a small group of Musings folks gathered to taste some wines from an always underrated wine region – California's Sonoma County. Before I get to the wines, here is a little piece about Sonoma County.

Sonoma County, located on the northern coast of the U.S. state of California, is the largest (in area) and northernmost of the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties. Sonoma is the southwestern county of California's Wine Country region, which also includes Napa, Mendocino, and Lake Counties. It has 13

approved American Viticultural Areas and over 250 wineries. Sonoma County was once home to several Native American tribes. The Pomo, Coast Miwok and Wappo peoples were the earliest human settlers of Sonoma County, between 8000 and 5000 BC, effectively living within the natural carrying capacity of the land. Archaeological evidence of these First people includes a number of occurrences of rock carvings, especially in southern Sonoma County; these carvings often take the form of pecked curvilinear nucleated design. Spaniards, Russians, and other Europeans claimed and settled in the county from the late

16th to mid 19th century, seeking timber, fur, and farmland. By 1850, European settlement had set a new direction that would prove to radically alter the course of land use and resource management of this region.

The Russians were the first newcomers to establish a permanent foothold in Sonoma County, with the Russian-American Company establishing Fort Ross on the Sonoma Coast in 1812. This settlement and its outlying Russian settlements came to include a population of several hundred Russian and Aleut settlers and a fort with artillery. However, the Rus-

# Feature: Sonoma County, continued

sians abandoned it in 1841 and sold the fort to John Sutter, settler and Mexican land grantee of Sacramento.

The Mission San Francisco Solano, founded in 1823 as the last and northernmost of 21 California missions, is in the present City of Sonoma, at the northern end of El Camino Real. El Presidio de Sonoma, or Sonoma Barracks (part of Spain's Fourth Military District), was established in 1836 by Comandante General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo. His duties included keeping an eye on the Russian traders at Fort Ross, secularizing the Mission, maintaining cooperation with the Native Americans of the entire region, and doling out the lands for large estates and ranches. The City of Sonoma was the site of the Bear Flag Revolt in 1846.

Sonoma was one of the original counties formed when California became a state in 1850, with its county seat originally the town of Sonoma. However, by the early 1850s, the town of Sonoma had declined in importance in terms of both commerce and population, its county buildings were crumbling, and it was relatively remote. As a result, elements in the newer, rapidly growing towns of Petaluma, Santa Rosa, and Healdsburg began vying to move the county seat to their towns. The dispute ultimately was between the bigger, richer commercial town of Petaluma and the more centrally located, growing agricultural center of Santa Rosa. The fate was decided following an election for the state legislature in which James Bennett of Santa Rosa defeated Joseph Hooker of Sonoma and introduced a bill that ultimately resulted in Santa Rosa being confirmed as county seat in 1854.

Six nations have claimed Sonoma County from 1542 to the present: Spanish Empire in 1542 and then again in 1775; Kingdom of England, June 1579 until 1775; Russian Empire, from 1812 to 1821; First Mexican Empire, August 24, 1821; Mexican Republic, 1823 until June 1846; California Republic, June 14, 1846 until July 9, 1846; United States of America, July 9, 1846 to present.

Sonoma County lies in the North Coast Ranges of northwestern California. Its ranges include the Mayacamas and the Sonoma Mountains, the southern peak of the latter being the prominent landform, Sears Point. The highest peak in the Mayacamas within the county is Hood Mountain.

Sonoma County, as is often the case with coastal counties in California, has a great degree of climatic variation and numerous, often very different, microclimates. Key determining factors for local climate are proximity to the ocean, elevation, and the presence and elevation of hills or mountains to the east and west. This is in large part due to the fact that, as throughout California, the prevailing weather systems and wind come normally from the Pacific Ocean. Areas closer to the ocean and on the windward side of higher elevations tend to receive more rain during the winter and more wind and fog during the summer. Areas further inland and particularly in the shadow of significant elevations tend to receive less rain and less, in some cases no, fog in the summer. The coast itself is typically



cool and moist throughout summer; a weather pattern consisting of morning fog, burning off to sunny conditions by afternoon is the norm, producing highs that are typically in the mid to high 60s, warming to the low 70s further from the ocean. Certain inland areas, including the Petaluma area and the Santa Rosa Plain, are also prone to this normal fog pattern in general. However, they tend to receive the fog later in the evening, the fog tends to be more short-lived, and mid-day temperatures are significantly higher than they are on the coast, typically in the low 80s.

Grapes were planted in Sonoma County at Fort Ross as early as 1812. Padre Jose Altimira planted several thousand grape vines at Mission San Francisco Solano in what is now the city of Sonoma, in southern Sonoma County. Cuttings from the Sonoma mission vineyards were carried throughout the northern California area to start new vineyards. By the time of the Bear Flag Revolt in Sonoma and the subsequent annexation of California by the United States in 1854, wine grapes

were an established part of agriculture in the region. The vineyards of General Mariano Vallejo, military Governor of Mexican California and based in Sonoma, were producing an annual income of \$20,000 at that time. The grape varieties planted at this time would not be considered premium varieties today. In 1855, a Hungarian named Agoston Haraszthy arrived and purchased the Salvador Vallejo vineyard in Sonoma Valley, renaming it Buena Vista. Commissioned in 1861 by the California legislature to study viticulture in Europe, he returned with more than 100,000 cuttings of premium grape varieties. Many of the immigrants to the area were Northern Italian or from other wine-growing regions of Europe. After the Civil War and before Prohibition, many wineries were established that still exist today, such as Bundschu, Foppiano, Korbel, Simi, Gundlach, Quitzow and Sebastiani. In the 1920s there were 256 wineries in Sonoma County, with more than 22,000 acres in production. During the Prohibition period, however, commercial winemaking declined. At the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, fewer than 50 wineries in Sonoma County survived. Even as late as the 1960s, only 12,000 acres were planted to vineyards. But wine consumption in America began to increase, and by 1999 Sonoma County had over 49,000 acres of vineyards owned by more than 750 growers and 180 bonded wineries. Of the more than 250 wineries now in Sonoma, over half are less than 20 years old.

In 2004, growers harvested 165,783 tons of wine grapes worth \$310 million. In 2006 the Sonoma County grape harvest amounted to 216,000 tons, worth \$430 million. About 73% of Sonoma County's agricultural production is growing wine grapes—60,302 acres of vineyards, with over 1100 growers. The most common varieties planted are Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Pinot Noir, though the area is also known for its Merlot and Zinfandel.

Sonoma County's large number of AVAs (13) reflect the wide variety of climate and soil conditions in the County, the large production in the County, and the prominence of Sonoma County in the wine market. The difference in climate and soil means that cooler climate grapes grow well in certain regions and in others warm climate grapes are more suitable.

# Feature: Sonoma County, continued

## *Sonoma County Appellations:*

**Alexander Valley** – The Alexander Valley AVA is one of the most densely planted of all of Sonoma County's AVAs. Located along the Russian River, the boundary of this appellation extends north of Healdsburg up to Mendocino County north of Cloverdale. Viticulture has existed in the area since the 1850s but the wine industry has only fairly recently experienced success beginning in the 1960s with Simi Winery. Significant purchases of vineyard land by E & J Gallo Winery in 1988 and Kendall-Jackson in 1996 also raised the profile of the Alexander Valley. The profile of Alexander Valley wines has historically centered on the approachability and richness of the wines with Cabernet Sauvignon being noted for characteristic chocolate notes and warm mouthfeel. After Cabernet, Chardonnay is one of the leading varietal plantings followed by Sauvignon Blanc and Zinfandel.

**Bennett Valley** – The Bennett Valley AVA is one of Sonoma County's newest AVAs and is a principal grape supplier to Kendall-Jackson. The AVA is surrounded to the south, east and west by the Sonoma Mountains and to the north by the city of Santa Rosa. The region receives a moderating effect on its climate from Pacific Ocean through the cool coastal fogs and breeze that creep into the area from the southwest through Crane Canyon between Sonoma Mountain and Taylor Mountain.

**Chalk Hill** – The Chalk Hill AVA is a sub-appellation of the Russian River Valley located near the town of Windsor along the foothills at the southern end of Alexander Valley and along the Santa Rosa plain.[9] The name Chalk Hill comes from the unique volcanic soil of chalky white ash which has shown itself to perform well with planting of white wine varietals like Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. The majority of the region's wineries are located on the western slopes of the Mayacamas Mountains.

**Dry Creek Valley** – The Dry Creek Valley AVA in the Russian River Valley centers on the Dry Creek, a tributary of the Russian River, and is approximately 16 miles long and 2 miles wide. The appellation is known particularly for its Sauvignon Blanc and Zinfandel production. Dry Creek Valley AVA is home to the majority of the Sonoma Gallo vineyards, who established winery facilities in the valley in the early 1990s.

**Green Valley of Russian River Valley** – Green Valley of Russian River Valley AVA was formerly known as the Sonoma County Green Valley AVA. Located at the southwestern corner of the Russian River Valley AVA, its close proximity to the Pacific Ocean makes it one of the coolest appellations within Sonoma County. The climate in the Green Valley is even cooler than other parts of the Russian River Valley, and favors the cultivation of cool climate grape varietals. Seeking to connect the region with the more commercially successful Russian River Valley name, the appellation formally changed its name on April 23, 2007.

**Knights Valley** – The Knights Valley AVA occupies the boundaries between the southern end of the Alexander Valley AVA and the northern end of Napa Valley. Some of the earliest vineyards in the area were owned by Beringer Vineyards. The area is known for its Cabernet Sauvignon.

**Los Carneros** – The Los Carneros AVA spans across the last, low hills of the Mayacamas Mountains dividing both Napa and Sonoma Valleys just north of San Pablo Bay. The larger portion of the appellation stretches into Sonoma County with grapes grown here also being allowed to use the Sonoma Valley AVA designation. The area's close proximity to the Bay make it an ideal location for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay production with producers from international Champagne houses such as Moët et Chandon (Domaine Chandon California), Taittinger (Domaine Carneros), and Cava producers planting vineyards and sourcing grapes from the area.

**Northern Sonoma** – The Northern Sonoma AVA is an all encompassing appellation that covers all of Sonoma County with the exception of the Sonoma Valley and some areas of the Petaluma River watershed. The AVA was proposed by E & J Gallo to accommodate wines made from a blend of grapes from scattered vineyards in Sonoma County.

**Rockpile** – The Rockpile AVA is situated at the northwest point of the Dry Creek Valley AVA, past Healdsburg. The area was first planted by Italian immigrants at the turn of the 20th century. Many of today's vineyards were formerly occupied by a reservoir created by the Warm Springs Dam on the Russian River. The area is known for its fruity, ripe Zinfandels.

**Russian River Valley** – The Russian River Valley AVA is adjacent to the city of Santa Rosa and the Russian River, where it bends and cuts through the Coast Range to the coast. The AVA is characterized by the regular intrusion of cooling fog from the Pacific Ocean. The fog flows through the Petaluma Wind Gap and the channel cut by the river. The fog generally arrives in the evening or early morning and retreats before noon in the day. The appellation was granted AVA status in 1983 and accounts for about one-sixth of the total planted vineyard acreage in Sonoma County. In 2005 the AVA was expanded by 30,200 acres to 126,600 by recognizing previously overlooked portions of the fog regions. Presently the Russian River AVA includes more than 15,000 acres planted to wine grapes. At last count, 79 wineries were listed in the Russian River Valley Winegrowers website. The area is known for its success with cool climate varietals, notably Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

**Sonoma Coast** – The Sonoma Coast AVA contains more than 500,000 acres, mostly along the coastline of the Pacific Ocean. It extends from San Pablo Bay to the border with Mendocino County. The appellation is known for its cool climate and high rainfall relative to other parts of Sonoma County.

**Sonoma Valley** – The Sonoma Valley AVA is known for its unique *terroir* with Sonoma Mountain protecting the area from the wet and cool influence of the nearby Pacific Ocean. The Sonoma Mountains to the west help protect the valley from excessive rainfall. The cool air that does affect the region comes northward from San Pablo Bay through the Carneros region and southward from the Santa Rosa plain. Sonoma Valley has played a significant role in the history of California wine.

**Sonoma Mountain** – The Sonoma Mountain AVA, in the Sonoma Mountains, includes the town of Glen Ellen and is bordered on the west by the Sonoma Valley AVA. The area is known for the diverse micro-climates that occur within the crevices and folds of the hillside terrain and as such is home to production for a wide range of varietals including Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon, and Zinfandel.

## *Sonoma County Wines:*

J Brut *Cuvee 20*, Russian River Valley

# Feature: Sonoma County, continued

(\$23.99/bottle)

Yeasty, lemony nose with a hint of sweet cream. Medium-bodied with firm acidity – good balance. Tart palate with green apple notes. Moderate length, clean with some pretty floral notes on the finish.

2005 Iron Horse *Wedding Cuvee*, Green Valley of Russian River Valley (\$43.99/bottle)

Yeasty, leesy nose with apple and caramel hints – pretty. Medium-bodied with firm acidity – good balance. Toasty, oaky and vanilla notes layered over green apple and pear fruit. Creamy, persistent mousse and a smooth, refreshing finish. A very credible sparkler.

2008 Dry Creek Chenin Blanc *Wilson Ranch*, Sonoma County (\$12.99/bottle)

Pretty nose with honeysuckle and citrus hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity – good balance. Fruity palate with lemon and apple notes. Moderate length with a smooth, refreshing finish. Deemed the value of the tasting!

2008 Ferrari Carano Chardonnay, Sonoma County (\$21.99/bottle)

Strong oak on the nose (no doubt from over ten months French Oak) but lacks fruit. Medium-bodied with firm acidity – good balance. Too much wood... lacked fruitiness. Moderate length with some pretty vanilla and butterscotch.

2008 Patz & Hall Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$34.99/bottle)

Bright nose with apple and pineapple hints – lovely. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity – good balance. Tropical fruit with light citrus and pear notes. Long finish with layers of creamy caramel, butterscotch and vanilla. Nice.

2008 George Pinot Noir *Leras Family Vineyard*, Russian River Valley (\$109.99/bottle)

Gamey nose with mineral, berry, anise and rosemary hints – super intense. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and soft, supple tannin – well balanced. Raspberry palate with white pepper, cloves and all-spice notes. Long finish, smoky with traces of cranberry and mint. Really beautiful wine...

2008 Ridge *Three Valley*, Sonoma County (\$25.99/bottle)  
(74% Zinfandel; 11% Petite Sirah; 5% Carignan; 4% Mataro; 3% Syrah; 3% Grenache)

Spicy nose with dried fruit, cedar and vanilla hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and moderate tannin – good balance. Dark fruit core with black cherry and blackberry jam notes. Long finish with smooth, spicy finish – classic Sonoma Zin...

2007 Louis Martini Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County (\$19.99/bottle)

Jammy, cherry nose with cedar and briar-

wood hints. Medium-to-full-bodied with moderate acidity and moderate tannin – good balance. Black cherry palate with vanilla notes. Long finish, smooth with allspice on the aftertaste. Good value.

2005 Silver Oak Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (\$79.99/bottle)

Menthol and olive aromas, rustic but majestic. Medium-to-full-bodied with moderate acidity and firm, dry tannins – well balanced. Deep, dark cherry palate with layers of complexity – mint, menthol, floral, tar, pepper – highly expressive. Long finish – highly complex – just a stunning bottle of wine!



## Notable Potables: Whites, Rosés, Reds...

Wines marked with an asterisk (\*) are available only through the distributor:

**Guido & Son** (<http://site.quidoandson.com/Home.html>)

2009 Cline Viognier, North Coast, California (\$9.99/bottle)

Perfumed nose with floral, nutty hints. Medium-bodied with crisp acidity – good balance. Fruity palate with tropical fruit notes and some citrus. Moderate length, smooth with a refreshing finish. Drinking well now – not for aging. Very pretty and a great value.

2010 Saint-Peyre Syrah *Rosé*, Vin de Pays d'Oc, France (\$9.99/bottle)

Fresh, berry fruit nose – spicy. Medium-bodied with crisp acidity – good balance. Fruity palate with cherry, strawberry and light citrus notes – refreshing. Moderate length with a smooth, clean finish. Drinking well now – not for aging. Great value.

2010 Henri Bourgeois *Petit Bourgeois Rosé de Pinot Noir*, Vin de Pays du Val de Loire, France (\$12.99/bottle)

Fruity nose with strawberry and floral hints. Medium-bodied with racy acidity – good balance. Citrus palate with a tart bite and berry fruit notes. Moderate length – refreshing with a hint of spice on the aftertaste. Drinking well now – not for aging.

2008 Lemelson Vineyards *Thea's Selection* Pinot Noir, Willamette, Oregon (\$35.99/bottle)

Ripe, spicy nose with red berry and floral hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and moderate tannin – good balance. Youthful, fruity palate with good raspberry and strawberry notes. Long finish with lingering violets, rose petals and lilacs on the aftertaste. Drinking well and should improve for another 5 to 7 years.

2007 Bodega Benegas *Don Tiburno*, Mendoza, Argentina (\$11.99)

*Composition: 50% Malbec; 20% Cabernet Sauvignon; 20% Cabernet Franc; 5% Merlot; 5% Petit Verdot*

# Notable Potables: Whites, Rosés, Reds, cont.

Dark, brooding nose with black cherry, currant, menthol and cedar hints. Full-bodied with moderate acidity and firm, dry tannin – good balance. Dark fruit core – jammy, tarry with cherry and lilac notes. Moderate length, smooth with stewed fruit on the finish. Drinking well and should improve for the next 3 to 5 years.

2008 Bodegas Martin Codax *Cuatro Pasos* Mencia, DO Bierzo, Spain (\$11.99/bottle)

Ripe, cherry nose with tar, wildflower and dried herb hints. Medium-bodied with firm acidity and dry tannin – good balance. Sour cherry palate with black pepper, sage and violet notes. Moderate length, smooth, but tight on the finish. Needs time – try again in 2 to 3 years. Good value.

2009 Bodegas Borsao Garnacha, DO Campo de Borja, Spain (\$6.99/bottle)

Ripe, fresh cherry nose with tar and fresh herb hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin – good balance. Juicy, cherry palate with anise and violet notes. Moderate length, smooth, youthful. Drinking well now – not for aging. Good value.

2009 Cortijo Tinto, DOCa Rioja, Spain (\$9.99/bottle)

Vibrant, chalky nose with fresh cherry and floral hints. Medium-bodied with firm acidity and polished tannins – good balance. Juicy palate with sour cherry, saddle leather and violet notes. Moderate length, smooth, youthful. Drinking well – not for aging. Great value.

2008 Gran Familia, DOCa Rioja, Spain (\$12.99/bottle)

Youthful, berry nose with lilac and vanilla hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and moderate tannin – good balance. Dark cherry palate with tart rose petal notes. Moderate length, smooth with a touch of oak. Drinking well now and should improve for another 2 to 3 years. Great value.

2009 Bodegas La Cartuja, DOCa Priorato, Spain (\$14.99/bottle)

Fresh cherry nose with dried herb and slate hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin – good balance. Fresh, fruity palate with cherry, raspberry and lavender floral notes. Moderate length, smooth, youthful and spicy finish. Drinking

well now and should improve for another 2 to 3 years. Good value considering the region.

2008 Villa Almadi Cabernet del Veneto IGT, Italy (\$15.00/bottle)\*

Perfumed, complex nose with dried herb and floral hints. Medium-to-full-bodied with moderate acidity and firm tannin – good balance. Fruity palate with black cherry and dried currant notes. Long finish with floral and spice on the aftertaste. Very nice. Drinking well and should improve with 2 to 3 years aging. Good value.

2006 Santa Lucia Cabernet Sauvignon, Capalbio DOC, Italy (\$47.00/bottle)\*

Lively, peppery nose with dried fruit and cedar hints. Full-bodied with moderate acidity and firm tannin – good balance. Jammy, fruity palate with cherry, black currant and tar notes. Long finish with a smooth aftertaste – spicy with a hint of vanilla. Drinking well and should improve with another 3 to 5 years in bottle.

2006 Santa Lucia *Tore del Mora*, Morellino di Scansano DOC, Italy (\$18.00/bottle)\*

Ripe, youthful nose with fresh cherry and dried herb hints. Medium-bodied with firm acidity and tight tannin. Rough palate with tarry, dark cherry fruit and light floral notes – puckering. Moderate length with an edgy finish – tight. May improve with time.

2009 Cinquepassi Rosso, Veneto IGT, Italy (\$22.00/bottle)\*

*Composition: 40% Merlot; 30% Cabernet Sauvignon; 10% Syrah; 10% Ancilotta; 10% Teroldego*

Youthful, spicy nose with cherry, raisin and dried fruit hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin – good balance. Fruity palate with juicy, red berry and tar notes. Moderate length, smooth and easy-drinking – not for long aging.

2006 Tralcio d'Oro *Rosso*, Colli Euganei DOC, Italy (\$20.00/bottle)\*

*Composition: 60% Merlot; 40% Cabernet Sauvignon*

Dark fruit nose with chocolate, cedar and dried herb hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and firm tannin – good balance. Sour cherry palate with tar, violets and saddle leather notes. Moderate length – a little rustic. Some spice and vanilla on

the finish. Drinking well – should smooth out with time – 3 to 5 years.

2008 Cantina Cincinnato *Polluce*, Lazio Rosso DOC, Italy (\$9.99/bottle)

Juicy, fruity nose with cherry, herb and black pepper hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and soft tannin – good balance. Youthful, fruity palate with fresh cherry, anise and floral notes. Moderate length, smooth, drinking well – not for aging. Good value.

2006 Morgante Nero d'Avola, Sicilia IGT, Italy (\$15.99/bottle)

Bright, cherry fruit aromas with dried herb, anise and cedar hints. Full-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin – well balanced. Lush, fruity palate with dark fruit core, dried fruit and bittersweet chocolate – earthy. Long finish, smooth and seductive – spicy. Drinking well and should improve with another 2 to 3 years in bottle. Good value.

2008 Tenuta Cocci Grifoni *Tellus*, Marche Rosso IGT, Italy (\$14.99/bottle)

*Composition: 50% Montepulciano; 25% Merlot; 25% Cabernet Sauvignon*

Earthy nose with dark cherry, dried herb and briar hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin – good balance. Youthful with a dark fruit core and tarry notes – yummy. Moderate length, smooth and a bit spicy. Drinking well now and should improve with 2 to 3 years in bottle.

2008 Cesari *La Mara*, Valpolicella Superiore Ripasso, Italy (\$15.99/bottle)

Black cherry nose with fig, dried fruit and allspice hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin – good balance. Soft, fruity palate with red berry notes. Moderate length with a smooth finish and hints of black pepper and vanilla on the aftertaste. Drinking well now and should improve with 2 to 3 years in bottle.

2009 Avignonesi, Rosso di Montepulciano, Italy (\$12.99/bottle)

Youthful, cherry nose with tar and floral hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin – good balance. Smooth, black cherry fruit palate – earthy with floral notes. Long finish – lightly spicy with cedar and vanilla. Drinking well and should im-

# Regulatory Update—Massachusetts

## House Bill 1029

House Bill 1029 was heard on May 10, 2011 in the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure. No vote was taken, although wine industry representatives provided verbal testimony. HB 1029, introduced in February, is similar to the bill



that stalled in 2010 (House Bill 317.) Among other provisions, HB 1029 requires wineries to purchase a \$100 shipping license, limits shipments to 24 cases per year, and resolves the common carrier issue.

## Notable Potables: Whites, Rosés, Reds, cont.

prove for another 3 to 5 years in bottle. Great value!

2006 Cantina del Taburno *Fidelis*, Aglianico del Taburno, Italy (\$14.99/bottle)

Ripe, red berry nose with mineral, anise and floral hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and moderate tannin – good balance. Spicy palate with briarwood and layered with cherry and lavender. Moderate length – smooth with a stony finish. Drinking well now and should improve for another 2 to 3 years in bottle. Good value.

2009 San Polo *Rubio*, Toscana IGT, Italy (\$14.99/bottle)

Earthy, rustic nose with black cherry, herbs and saddle hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin – good balance. Fruity with sweet cherry fruit – ripe – lilac notes – really pretty. Moderate length – smooth with a spicy finish. Drinking well now – not for aging.

2009 Domaine Brazilier *Tradition*, Coteaux du Vendômois, France (\$12.99/bottle)  
*Composition: A blend of Pineau d'Aunis, Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir*

Fresh cherry nose with wet stone and floral hints. Medium-bodied with firm acidity and light tannin – good balance. Sour cherry palate – a bit tart – tarry with floral notes. Moderate length with a youthful finish. Drinking well now and should hold for another 2 to 3 years. Great value.

2009 Domaine de La Pépière *La Pépière* Cot, Vin de Pays du Val de Loire, France (\$11.99/bottle)

Black currant and black cherry nose with violets and black pepper. Medium-to-full-bodied with firm acidity and firm, dry tannin – good balance. Tart cherry palate with menthol, mint and floral notes. Tight. Moderate length – closed with tarry, tobacco

and cedar on the aftertaste – need time – try again in 3 to 5 years. Great value!

2008 Les Cave de Saumur *Les Pouches*, Saumur, France (\$9.99/bottle)

Bright, fresh cherry nose with floral and herbaceous hints – minerality. Medium-bodied with firm acidity and firm dry tannin – good balance. Tart, almost sour palate – good complexity – a little light. Moderate length with mineral and black pepper on the aftertaste. Drinking well now – not for aging. Good value.

2009 Les Cave de Saumur *Les Villaises*, Saumur Champigny, France (\$14.99/bottle)

Fruity nose with floral, fresh cherry and wet stone hints. Medium-bodied with firm acidity and moderate tannin – good balance. Dark fruit core with tar, jam and lilac notes. Moderate length with an edgy finish – crisp, yet some nice residual complexity. Drinking well now – not for aging.

2005 Lamé Delisle Bougard – Domaine des Chesnaies *Cuvee Prestige*, Bourgueil, France (\$14.99/bottle)

Ripe, jammy nose with black cherry, herb and floral hints. Medium-to-full-bodied with moderate acidity and firm tannin – good balance. Fresh cherry palate with mint, currant and lilac notes. Moderate length – smooth and a little tight. Drinking well now and should improve with another 3 to 5 years in bottle. Great value!

2009 Jean Francois Delorme, Rully, France (\$19.99/bottle)

Ripe, raspberry aromas with dried herbs and floral hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin – good balance. Fruit forward palate with raspberry, lavender and rose petal notes. Moderate length with smooth, youthful finish. Drinking well now and should hold for an-

other 2 to 3 years in bottle.

2009 Potel-Aviron, Beaujolais-Village, France (\$11.99/bottle)

Fruity nose with lilac, fresh cherry and mineral hints. Medium-bodied with firm acidity and light, supple tannin – good balance. Fresh fruity palate with cherry, tarry notes – a bit rough and clumsy. Moderate length with rose petals on the aftertaste. Drinking well now – not for aging. Good value.

2009 Jean-Marc Burgaud *Chateau de Thulon*, Beaujolais-Village, France (\$10.99/bottle)

Fruity nose with banana chip, lavender and rose petal hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and firm tannin – good balance. Ripe, fresh cherry palate with earthy notes – gutsy. Moderate length, spicy with black cherry on the aftertaste. Drinking well now and should hold for another 2 to 3 years in bottle. Great value.

2009 Jean-Marc Burgaud *Les Charmes*, Morgon, France (\$14.99/bottle)

Fruity nose with floral and wet stone hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and firm tannin – good balance. Dark fruit core with earthy, tarry notes. Moderate length – tight with some herbaceous notes. Drinking well now and should hold for another 2 to 3 years.

2009 Jean-Marc Burgaud *Côte du Py – Vieilles Vignes*, Morgon, France (\$17.99/bottle)

Tight nose with black cherry and dried herb hints. Full-bodied with moderate acidity and firm tannin – good balance. Jammy, dark fruit core with mineral, lavender and cedar notes. Moderate length – tight but smooth finish – needs time – try again in 3 years – good value.

2009 Chateau Guillou, Montagne Saint-

# Notable Potables: Whites, Rosés, Reds, cont.

Émilion, France (\$17.99/bottle)

Earthy, mineral nose with black cherry and black currant hints. Full-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin – well balanced. Dark fruit core with plum, mint and chocolate notes – pretty. Long finish, smooth with cedar hints on the aftertaste. Drinking well now and should improve with another 3 to 5 years in the bottle.

2007 Chateau Fontaynes *Cuvée Dorian*, Cahors, France (\$9.99/bottle)

Spicy, fruity nose with black cherry, currant and fresh herb hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and dry tannin – good balance. Sour cherry palate – tart and tannic – tight with floral notes. Moderate length with some allspice and black pepper on the aftertaste. Needs time to open up – try again in 3 years. Good value.

2007 Chateau de Flaugergues *Cuvée Sommeliere*, Coteaux du Languedoc, France (\$15.99/bottle)

Ripe, jammy nose with black cherry, currant and rose attar hints. Full-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin – good balance. Fruity, lively palate with fresh cherry, floral and fresh herb notes. Moderate length, smooth with black pepper on the aftertaste. Drinking well now and should improve with another 2 to 3 years in bottle. Great value!

2008 Chateau Saint Martin de la Garrigue

*Bronzine*, Coteaux du Languedoc, France (\$15.99/bottle)

Lively, spicy nose with black cherry, allspice and dried herb hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin – good balance. Sour cherry palate with black pepper, violet and tar notes. Moderate length with a smooth finish – very nice. Drinking well now and should improve with another 3 to 5 years in bottle. Great value!

2007 Domaine Chaume-Arnaud, Côtes du Rhone, France (\$13.99/bottle)

Earthy nose with spice, lilac and black cherry hints. Full-bodied with moderate acidity and moderate tannin – good balance. Cherry palate with anise, leather and mint notes. Moderate length with vanilla and sour cherry on the aftertaste. Drinking well now and should hold for another 2 to 3 years.

2009 Saint Cosme, Côtes du Rhone, France (\$14.99/bottle)

Ripe, bright cherry nose with floral and dried herb hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin – well balanced. Youthful and a bit rustic. Black cherry palate with jammy, tar and spicy notes. Moderate length with cedar and vanilla on the aftertaste. Drinking well now and should improve with another 3 to 5 years in bottle. Good value.

2009 Domaine La Garrigue *Cuvée Romaine*,

Côtes du Rhone, France (\$14.99/bottle)

Ripe nose with jammy, cherry aromas – lilac and fresh herb hints. Full-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin – good balance. Juicy palate with black cherry, vanilla and allspice notes – lovely. Moderate length with a smooth finish – young and quaffable – Drinking well now – not for aging.

2009 Montirus, Côtes du Rhone, France (\$13.99/bottle)

*Composition: 73% Grenache; 20% Syrah; 7% Mourvèdre*

Lively, fresh fruit nose with strawberry, lilac and fresh herb hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and supple tannin – good balance. Fresh fruity palate with bright cherry, black pepper, anise and mint notes. Moderate length, smooth and easy drinking. Drinking well now – not for aging. Great value!

2009 Seigneur de Fontimble, Vacqueryas, France (\$14.99/bottle)

*Composition: 70% Grenache; 20% Syrah; 10% Mourvèdre*

Tight nose with faint lavender, mint and black cherry hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and firm tannin – good balance. Fresh cherry palate with spice, vanilla and earthy notes. Moderate length with a smooth finish. Drinking well now and should improve with another 2 to 3 years in bottle.

## Upcoming Musings Events—Fall 2011

Smart Wine Shopping  
Saturday in September/October (TBD)  
\$50

One of the biggest questions that I get at my wine classes is: How do you shop for wine? Wine shopping is really about relationship building. While you can spend a lot of time scurrying around town looking for the best wine at the best price, your time will be better spent cultivating a rapport at a few local wine shops. Getting to know the owners, or knowledgeable sales staff at a local wine shop, or more importantly getting them to know more about your own tastes and interests will ultimately lead to a more enriching shopping experience. At this event, hosted in the back

room of Martignetti's Fine Wine in Brighton, Wine Director George Bardis will help me lead the group through a selection of fun, high-value wines, culminating in a guided shopping tour of the store.

Napa/Bordeaux Shootout – Part IV  
Saturday, September 24, 2011  
\$100

Back in 2004, we conducted a simulation of the famous 1976 tasting that pitted Cabernet-based wines from Napa Valley against the some of the best that Bordeaux had to offer. In 2007 and 2009 we again reprised the famous standoff. Popular demand has brought this event back to Musings, so once again we

will put these two regions to the test. At this event we will taste at least six wines in a reenactment of the historic 1976 tasting. Of course, the wines will be from more recent vintages, but the experience should be quite similar.

Northern Rhone  
Saturday, October 8, 2011  
\$50

The Rhone Valley is one of the oldest viticultural areas in France, with many vineyards being originally cultivated by the conquering Romans. Most folks are most familiar with the sun-soaked regions in the Southern Rhone: Côtes du Rhone, Chateauneuf-du-Pape,

# MUSINGS on the VINE

A Collection of Thoughts, Suggestions and Opinions about Wine.



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## *Musings on The Vine*

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

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

## Upcoming Musings Events—Fall 2011, cont.

Gigondas, etc. where Grenache, Mourvèdre and Cinsault are the likely suspects. Few are as familiar with the less showy, more refined wines of the Northern Rhone: Côte Rotie, Hermitage, Saint-Joseph, Cornas, Crozes-Hermitage and the whites Condrieu and Châteauneuf Grillet. In the North, the reds are all Syrah-based, most 100%, so the wines often more structure than their cousins in the south.

**Older Wines – Part IV**  
Saturday, October 22, 2011  
\$100

Back by popular demand! Most wine today is meant to be consumed the moment it is bought. Ripe, fruity wines that are “ready to drink” are the order of the day. Given this fact, many wine drinkers today have not had a chance to taste older, well aged wines. At this event we will taste several wines that have at least 15 years of bottle age on them. The

wines will be from varieties and regions where aging wine is a requirement (like Bordeaux).

**The Wines of North America**  
Saturday, November 19, 2011  
\$50

The history of wine making in North America began with European exploration and colonization, much the way it began in other regions outside of Europe. Early experiments with what are known as “non-vinifera” native varieties were not successful and attempts to grow the noble, “vinifera” varieties from Europe failed also. Hostile climates, hungry indigenous pests and other nasty diseases proved too much for the vine. Fortunately, settlers were a persistent and thirsty lot who could only drink so much rum, maderia, sherry and port, and over time improved technology, the settling into better growing areas and just plain better luck prevailed. From about the

late 19<sup>th</sup> Century through today, the wines of North America have been an evolving and improving lot, many offering a serious challenge to their European forefathers. At this event we will taste a number of wines from many important regions across North America.

**Fortified Wines**  
Saturday, December 10, 2011  
\$100

Much fortified wine was born out of a need to preserve fragile wines on long voyages over land and sea. The presence of alcohol in excess of 15% by volume has a preservative effect on wine. Often sweet, but not always so, fortified wine is usually reserved for after dinner, where it is the accompaniment to dessert or cheese. At this event we will taste several fortified wines from a variety of regions and styles, both sweet and dry.

## Ask the Sommelier—Featured Question!

**Question:** What do you think would be a good, reliable choice for situations where you are invited to a friend's house for dinner and are asked to pick up wine when all you know is chicken is the entree with no other details?! Something that would be a good choice, without breaking the bank, but versatile - your “go-to” kind of wine. Thanks for your help!

**Answer:** Good question! I hate to fall back on the old adage, “red with beef, white with chicken or fish,” but that seems to make sense here. My “go-to” whites in these situations are: French: Sancerre, Bordeaux Blanc (Sauvignon Blanc); Italy: Soave, Vernaccia, Orvieto; Spain: Rueda, Rias Baixas. I'm a little leery on New World offerings in this situation, largely because the fruit forward nature of most New World wines tends to clash more with food. I might look for Viognier from either South Africa or the US, Riesling from Chile or Australia and possibly Chardonnay from New Zealand. Good luck and thanks for the question!

*Have a wine question? Go to [www.MusingsOnTheVine.com](http://www.MusingsOnTheVine.com), and click on Ask the Sommelier!*

