

# HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPE VINE

MARCH 2010

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## GREATER HOUSTON CHAPTER WINE SOCIETY OF TEXAS NOTES OF INTEREST FROM CHAPTER CHAIR

I hope everyone had a Happy and safe New Year. As we enter a new decade, I hope everyone will continue to prosper and have continued good health. One way to insure that is to drink good wine whether it is Texas wine or wines from other areas of the country.

2009 was a good year for the Greater Houston Chapter. I thought I would take this time to list our major accomplishments.

- Membership is now at 39. Included in the count are the owners of Messina Hof Winery, Haak Winery and Fall Creek Estate Winery.
- We hosted a food and wine event in conjunction with Liebman's Wine and Fine Foods in January 2009 featuring Enrique Toso of Pascual Toso Winery in Argentina.
- Sponsored an event at Fall Creek Winery Estates in Marble Falls, Texas in October. Supporting our event were members from the Dallas Fort Worth, Waco, and Permian Basin chapters.
- Supported the Cancer Counseling Fundraiser by supplying Texas wines and a one year membership to our chapter for their silent auction.
- Hosted the state's 13<sup>th</sup> annual anniversary event, at Haak Winery in Santa Fe, in May.
- Tenley and David have provided our chapter and other readers with a very professional newsletter each quarter. Russ Kane has indicated he will start posting it on his website. I've also used this to help in the recruitment of new members.

As you can see we've accomplished many meaningful things in the past year. Now it's time to match or exceed our efforts in 2010. We will formulate and discuss our 2010 calendar of events at a members only event on February 20<sup>th</sup>.

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## NOTES OF INTEREST FROM CHAPTER CHAIR—CONTINUED

### Welcome

We would like to welcome the following new members who joined in the fourth quarter

1. Pam and Chester Crawford – Conroe, Texas
2. J. Carlton and Anita Wallace – Missouri City, Texas
3. Siren Hake – Sugarland, Texas
4. Madelyn and Rick Naber, Fall Creek Winery, Marble Falls, Texas

### Did You Know

According to [www.WineBusiness.com](http://www.WineBusiness.com), the number of wineries in the United States increased by 122 over last year, to reach a total of 6,223 as of November 2009, according to the Wine Business Monthly proprietary database. This total is made up of 5,304 bonded wineries and 919 “virtual wineries.”

This year, California is still home to 49 percent of the total wineries in the U.S. While there are wineries in all 50 states, 10 states each now have over 100 wineries. California continues its lead with 3,047 total wineries, followed in descending order by: Washington with a total of 564 wineries, Oregon with 453, New York with 229, Virginia with 163, Texas with 157, Pennsylvania with 141, Ohio with 120, Michigan with 104 and North Carolina with 101.

In 2009, Virginia moved past Texas into fifth place.

Information taken from Vintage Texas wine blog

## HOUSTON CHAPTER CHANGES ITS NAME

Did you notice the name change on the first page of our Newsletter?

At the annual planning meeting, Ed Dent proposed that we change our name from “The Wine Society of Texas - Houston” to “The Wine Society of Texas - Greater Houston.” The change was approved by a majority of the members present by voice vote.

This change was proposed and accepted because it was felt that the name “Greater Houston” did a better job of describing the wide ter-

ritory that our chapter covers. With members from The Woodlands to Santa Fe and from League City to Brenham, we truly are the Greater Houston Chapter.



## TEXAS WINEMAKERS GATHER THEIR PLUCK: THE RACE FOR A PLACE ON RESTAURANT WINE LISTS



by Dr. Russell D. Kane

Ever go to your favorite restaurant and have a dark, inky East Texas Bordeaux blend with your Steak Au Poivre? How about a well-structured Texas High Plains Tempranillo with your garlicky ox tail tapa, a fragrant Texas Hill Country Viognier along with a wood-oven roasted rosemary chicken, or a Gulf-Coast Madeira-style wine with your chocolate bread pudding? I reckon that you likely haven't. Not because you can't, but frankly, they can be downright hard to find.

Some say that Texas wines are fighting a losing battle to gain slots on restaurant wine lists. However, I think that the quote from fellow Texan, Dan Rather, pretty well sums up the cup's-half-full mentality of many in the Texas wine industry when he said ... "Put on another pot of coffee, this race isn't going to be over for a while." Texas wineries are just starting to get serious in the race for a place on wine lists.

Frankly, I lament that despite the steady increase in quality, reputation and popularity of Texas wines over the past decade, it has been hard to find even a single Texas wine on many restaurant wine lists. This is most surprising in a state where people take great pride in our native sons, local accomplishments and most everything agricultural. To help understand where Texas wines actually fit on restaurant wine lists, I posed several questions to people in the know from around our great state.

Mark Hyman, President of Llano Estacado Winery ([www.llanowine.com](http://www.llanowine.com)) in Lubbock, described the competitive situation and summed it up this way. "The biggest impediment to getting Texas wines on restaurant wine lists is not due to anti-Texas sentiment at all. It is the incredible availability of good wine from this country and the rest of the world. There are great value wines from Chile and Australia with impeccable reputations that have earned the respect of restaurateurs."



Mark Hyman at Llano Estacado Winery – Lubbock, Texas

Having observed the Texas wine experience for the past ten years, the biggest impediment to getting Texas wines on wine lists that I have seen is that there has been no advocate for Texas wines despite increasing quality and major awards. However, the horsepower of the Texas Department of Agriculture is now firmly engaged behind Texas grape growers and winemakers and TDA is providing broad-based agricultural, wine quality and marketing support.

Late last year, I went to Austin to attend TEXSOM, a meeting of Texas sommeliers, and did one of my first field blogs from the meeting (See: <http://vintagetexas.com/blog/?s=Texsom>). I was particularly pleased to see Texas Department of Agriculture personnel doing their version of the Texas Two-Step called, The "Texas Two-Sip." No, they weren't dancing to delight the crowd. They were pouring Texas wines for Texas sommeliers and representatives from Texas wine distributors in attendance at the meeting. The pours were made side-by-side with well known wines commonly found in restaurants – One Texas wine with one

## TEXAS WINEMAKERS GATHER THEIR PLUCK: THE RACE FOR A PLACE ON RESTAURANT WINE LISTS—CONTINUED

“Foreign” wine; hence the name “Texas Two-Sip.” The responses from the attendees were quite impressive as the Texas wines held their own against a Viognier from France, a Sangiovese from Italy and a Tempranillo from Spain. Riding on these early successes, TDA is planning to take its Texas Two-Sip on the road and go to New York City – The Den of America’s Foremost Wine Gatekeepers.

I was delighted that Texas winemakers are now gathering the pluck to go toe-to-toe with well-known wines from around the world. The Texas Two-Sip shows that Texas has seriously arrived as a quality wine producing region. Hopefully, this effort will continue at other venues such as in restaurants and wine bars with consumers, and in Texas wine events around the state. This will give wine and restaurant industry representatives and consumers a chance to experience the quality of Texas wines for themselves.

Interestingly enough, one of the biggest fans of Texas wines has been Chef Joe Mannke owner of the decades-old, Houston mainstay but unfortunately now closed, Rotisserie for Beef and Bird. Chef Mannke’s restaurant career may have started over 50 years ago as an apprentice in Munich with deep European roots, but he was one of the first major chefs to identify that Texas wines are worthy of restaurant wine lists.

I interviewed Chef Mannke and he said, “Before I retired my Beef and Bird restaurant, we featured over fifty Texas wines on our award winning wine lists.” Actually, he was a bit understated; his wine lists [even with this number of Texas wines] were winners of the coveted Wine Spectator Grand Award for 14 years. However, Chef Mannke lamented, “Most restaurateurs just don’t want to bother to learn about Texas wines, they would rather just sell Kendall-Jackson or whatever the distributor has and be done with it. They just do not have the interest of Texans in mind.”

Most recently, Monica Pope’s Houston-based restaurant T’afia seems to be a pack leader when it comes to featuring Texas wines. Chef Pope is known for utilizing local fare on her menu. This includes a variety of Texas agricultural products including a host of meats, cheeses, fruits, vegetables and even wine. A search of her online wine list ([www.tafia.com/wine.html](http://www.tafia.com/wine.html)) shows a respectable total of ten Texas wines from Flat Creek, McPherson Cellars, Inwood Estates and Becker Vineyards, and varietals that include Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier, Cabernet Sauvignon and Tempranillo.

Even more interesting is the trend in the Texas Hill Country, which is rapidly becoming the Texas Wine Country. This region combines both wine country and lone star tourist attractions to travelers from Texas, the nation and around the world. Restaurants in the Hill Country, some located along what is rapidly becoming known as the “Route 290 Wine Corridor” between Johnson City to Fredericksburg, are breaking stride with other restaurants in Texas and have started wine lists dominated by Texas wines.



Chef Burtwell at Cabernet Grill – Fredericksburg, Texas

The Cabernet Grill ([www.cottonginlodging.com/restaurant.html](http://www.cottonginlodging.com/restaurant.html)) in Fredericksburg offers the granddaddy of all wine lists for Texas wines. Executive Chef Ross Burtwell has an “All Texas Wine List” composed of over fifty Texas wines and, if you include wines by the glass and featured wine flights, the number of selections increases to over seventy-five.

I have been told that when Chef Burtwell adds a new Texas wine, he invites a representative from the winery to talk to his wait staff. If the winery is close by, he will even get a busload of his staff together and visit the winery in person. This way the restaurant personnel can talk and de-

## TEXAS WINEMAKERS GATHER THEIR PLUCK: THE RACE FOR A PLACE ON RESTAURANT WINE LISTS—CONTINUED

scribe the Texas wines in an educated way. This makes good business sense for Chef Burtwell's restaurant. Many Texas wine consumers (Texans, naturalized Texans, recent immigrants and visiting foreigners) are still learning about what Texas wines offer and can utilize this information in their wine selection. Furthermore, based on my recent visit to the Cabernet Grill, Chef Burtwell offers another benefit to Texas wine consumers – Wine Flights. These are a selection of three or four featured Texas wines that are poured at the same time in separate glasses. This allows the restaurant-goers to taste and compare several wines while enjoying their dinner. This way the clientele can experience how various wines go with different food preparations and determine what they like best.

Chef Burtwell said, “The first reason that Texas wines have just not achieved the level of acceptance they deserve from people who put wine lists together is that many restaurateurs are too busy reading about what are the ‘must have wines’ listed in the Wine Spectator and Wine Enthusiast. Texas wines just do not get a lot of press there.” My information supports Chef Burtwell's understanding of the situation. It is a fact that the ‘M.I.A. status’ of Texas wines in these publications is not because they are not good wines. It boils down to sheer economics. Texas is a big wine consuming state and Texas wines are mostly consumed locally. They generate little or no ad revenue for these publications. Burtwell continued by saying, “Texas wines are just not that well represented in the portfolios of the major wine distributors such as Republic and Glazers. They carry some of the larger vineyards like Becker, Fall Creek, St Genevieve and Messina Hof, but the smaller properties are few and far between. Obviously the salesmen for these companies are going to promote what is easiest to sell, and that rarely is wine from Texas.” The bottom line is that Texas wines need an advocate. The Texas Department of Agriculture is a great promoter, but consumers also need to make an effort to ask for Texas wines.

I also asked Chef Burtwell if an all Texas wine list could work in major Texas cities like Houston, Dallas, Ft. Worth, Austin or San Antonio. He said, “I am fortunate to be in an area where we can drive ten minutes to pick up some wines directly from the Hill Country wineries or ask someone on the winemaker's staff to drop a case by when they are in for dinner on any given night. We get a lot of our wine directly from the wineries. It is not as easy to do it this way, particularly in a major city. However, I feel that the good things in life never are easy and must be pursued.”

With respect to a strong Texas wine list in major cities, Chef Burtwell continued with a resonant “Yes, of course, why not? I think if the restaurateurs in these markets had any clue as to how many of their customers are choosing to visit the Texas Wine Country they may re-think their wine lists and feature Texas wines. Orbitz announced last year that the Texas Hill Country is the second most visited wine region in the nation after Napa Valley. This is huge! Furthermore, the visitor research information in Fredericksburg shows that wine tourism is the fastest growing segment of Fredericksburg visitor activities. All this must translate to a strong interest from consumers about Texas wines.” When will restaurateurs and sommeliers see what's going on with respect to Texas wine.

Now for some good news....The number of restaurants including Texas wines on their wine lists is growing albeit slowly, step-by-step, and this actually bodes well for the future of Texas wines as long as we can keep the trend heading upward. As production of Texas wines increase, this will translate into a successful fusion of Texas wines into more wine lists.

In this short article, it is not possible to mention all of the visionary restaurateurs and sommeliers that are starting to see the trends in consumer interest in Texas wines and are starting to hop onboard the Texas wine train. An honorable mention should go to restaurant chains like Salt Grass Steakhouse and Pappadeaux that from time-to-time offer Texas wines. I personally enjoyed a glass of Messina Hof Riesling at a Pappadeaux

## TEXAS WINEMAKERS GATHER THEIR PLUCK: THE RACE FOR A PLACE ON RESTAURANT WINE LISTS—CONTINUED

in Fort Worth last year and it was a great pairing with a bowl of their seafood gumbo and a shrimp Caesar salad. The Meritage Grill at The Hilton DFW Lakes Hotel (Grapevine), and fine dining establishments like The Mansion on Turtle Creek (Dallas), Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steak House (Fort Worth), The Four Seasons (Austin), and Cafe Annie (Houston) all have Texas wines to offer their clientele.

But, most importantly, we all need to keep in mind a very important fact that we should not forget: Consumers have the ultimate power. If they know about the quality of Texas wines and remember to request them from the restaurants they frequent, more and more premium Texas wines will be showing up on wine lists. So, as they say in Texas, take the bull by the horns and don't forget to ask your restaurateur or sommelier to include your favorite Texas wines on their wine list!

P.S. RESPONSE REQUESTED: If you know of restaurants or wine bars that offer Texas wines, please let me know by reply with your comments in the space provided at the bottom of this blog. Make sure to indicate the name of the establishment, city and wines featured (Web addresses are welcome). This will help spread the word to others who are also searching for a fulfilling meal with a good bottle of Texas' finest.

This article was contributed by Dr. Russell Kane, freelance wine writer, blogger and aficionado who is now working on a book, Texas Terroir - The New Texas Wine Country Experience. You can see his personal wine narrative including his rants and raves at: [www.vintagetexas.com/blog](http://www.vintagetexas.com/blog).

## POTATO SOUP

BY CHEF DAVID

This is the recipe for the potato soup that I brought to the 2010 planning meeting, and I make it in two batches. Batch 1 has the onion and half of the potato, and this gets pureed in the food processor. This will later be added to batch 2 to provide some body to the finished product.

2 lb potato, peeled and diced  
1 medium onion, chopped  
2 T olive oil  
1 bottle white wine  
2+ cans chicken broth  
1 lb Kielbasa sausage, diced  
1 cup cream  
2 T "Herbes de Provence"  
salt and pepper to taste

### Batch 1

In a medium pot, sauté the onion in the olive oil until it is translucent. Add half of the potato and the two cans of chicken broth. Bring to a boil and then simmer until the potatoes are soft (over cooked). Extra water or chicken broth can be added if necessary. Puree the cooked onion and potato mix in a blender or food processor.

### Batch 2

Put the wine, sausage, herbs and the other half of the potato in a large pot and bring to a boil over medium heat. Turn the heat down and simmer until the potatoes are cooked but still have some texture. Add batch 1, and salt and pepper to taste, and heat back to boiling. Turn off the heat and add the cream just before serving. This recipe makes about four dinner servings.

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## A BRIEF HISTORY OF PLEASANT HILL WINERY—BRENHAM, TEXAS



By Jeanne Cottle

Bob and Jeanne Cottle, proprietors of Pleasant Hill Winery, began as home wine-makers in the early 1970's. They made several different fruit wines in their respective states of Rhode Island and Wisconsin. The hobby got "out-of-control" after a move to Texas in 1979. A lovely piece of land with rolling hills was purchased in Brenham in 1992. Planting and building began, and in 1997, Pleasant Hill Winery opened its doors as Texas' 27<sup>th</sup> commercial winery. Both families' grandparents came from Italy and made wine. The Zaffiro wine-

press, once used for winemaking, is now proudly displayed in the Winery.

Pleasant Hill Winery will celebrate its 13<sup>th</sup> year in April. More than a dozen award-winning wines are produced. There is a wine to please every palate from dry reds and whites to sweet wines and ports. Grapes come from the Brenham vineyard, the Texas Davis Mountain vineyard – featuring Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc – and from vineyards all over the great state of Texas. You can visit the Winery on weekends year-round for a tour and tasting. Regular hours are Saturday 11:00 – 6:00 and Sunday noon – 5:00. Browse the well-stocked gift shop.

Pleasant Hill Winery is proud to be a part of the Texas Bluebonnet Wine Trail. Join them for the Wine and Chocolate trail in February and, of course, for the Bluebonnet Trail in April. Come and take your pictures in



their spectacular wildflower fields.

"WineDown" with wine and cheese on the deck on Fridays in March, April, and May. It starts at 3:00, with last call at sunset.

"Crush for Fun", with four consecutive weekends in July and August, has become their biggest event. You get to pick and stomp "Lucy-style" and put your footprints on a T-shirt. Bring the kids, and don't forget your camera for this annual event. Visit: [www.pleasanthillwinery.com](http://www.pleasanthillwinery.com) for a map, wine list, award list, and details on all of the above events.



## FINGER LAKE WINERIES—UNCORK NEW YORK

BY TENLEY FUKUI

As Dave mentioned in the last quarterly WST— Greater Houston chapter newsletter, I visited the Finger Lake Wineries again and this time Dave had a chance to join the fun.

Dr. Konstantin Frank was my favorite winery. Dr. Frank introduced *Vitis Vinifera* (European) grapes to the Finger Lakes in 1951. There had been 300 years of failure with European varieties in the East; however Dr. Frank believed from his years living in the Ukraine that the lack of proper rootstock, not the cold climate was the reason *Vitis Vinifera* did not thrive in the region. He learned from Charles Fournier, a French champagne maker and president of a nearby vineyard how to grow delicate European *vinifera* grapes in cold climates.

Konstantin Frank's 2007 Chardonnay was lightly oaked with a little butter and my tasting notes show that their 2207 Dry Riesling is very much like the Austrian wines we have tasted at the home of fellow wine enthusiasts. I also enjoyed their Fleur de Pinot Noir which had a potpourri bouquet with cherries and plum. In addition their 2007 Salmon Run Chardonnay was fruity, steely with less oak and their Cold Brook White was also a keeper. What was absolutely stunning were their champagnes, especially their 2002 Brut and Blanc de Blanc which were dry and crisp. They rival or at least are strong competitors to Napa Valley's sparkling wines.

Glenora Wine Cellars had a Golden Glen Chardonnay that won double gold medals tasting of melon, yet it was still dry. I also enjoyed their Sevyal Blanc which is similar to Pinot Grigio which had the aroma of pears. Their Iced Wine Block 4 was made with Vidal Blanc grapes and a definite purchase even though it had 10% residual sugar.

We visited Sheldrake where we were descended upon by students from Ithaca College. There was an entire coach load that belched forth from their limousine and rowdily took over the tasting room. It was interesting to see the underage and drinking age college crowd at several of these wineries. They would rent a limousine and do wine tastings. These coeds are getting clever; can you imagine how much wine tasting we could have experienced if Texas' wine industry was bigger when we were 18.

When I could only buy one bottle of wine on a previous trip I chose a bottle of Goose Watch Viognier. The return trip was just as memorable and tasty. Their 2007 Villard Blanc was dry, but slightly grassy reminiscent of a Sauvignon Blanc; the 2007 Traminette was dry and spicy like a Gewurztraminer which is a parent of this variety. Their 2007 Viognier won four gold medals with its tropical fruit and honeysuckle scent. We made sure we bought a bottle of their 2008 Cabernet Franc Ice wine and their classic cream sherry which had hints of amber.

Unfortunately, for red wine only lovers we discovered that red wines were not of note on Cayuga Lake and Seneca Lake. However, if you enjoy white wines, especially Anything But Chardonnay (ABC) wines and are adventurous, add the Finger Lakes as a future wine destination to your vacation plans.





**QUAFFING THE KING'S TIPPLE IN A PARIS COMFORT ZONE BY MERIL MARKLEY**

After a long, damp, chilly winter's day of trudging around Saint-Ouen, France's wholesale antiques market on the outskirts of Paris, my husband, Michael, and I were tired and hungry. Too pooped to dress up and stay up late for the obligatory couple of hours at a restaurant on a Saturday night, we hoped to find somewhere more casual and quick within a tight radius of our hotel off the Place de la Madeleine. This neighborhood, filled with corporate headquarters, law offices, embassies, designer boutiques, and grand department stores, offers a restaurant every few meters. Most seem geared to the expense account lunches of captains of industry and their investment banker cohorts. Some were even open on a Saturday, deserted but perhaps hopeful a tourist or two might wander in.

In the hierarchy of French eateries, the restaurant is top dog, including some of France's most famous temples of gastronomy in and near the Place de la Madeleine (Hédiard, Fauchon, Le Grand Véfou, Les Ambassadeurs, to name a few). Lower in the pecking order are: the bistro -- serving hearty offerings in an atmosphere more casual and cozy; the brasserie -- originally developed around Alsatian food and beer; the café -- with its simple fare such as the croque monsieur and the omelette. At each level, certain expectations are harbored on the part of proprietor and customer. For example, it is not considered appropriate to order only one course at a restaurant or to forego a bottle of wine. While portions are typically not so large that leftovers are an issue, asking for a doggie bag is definitely a faux pas.

After a half hour of reconnoitering, when we were about to give up and head for the Galeries Lafayette grocery store to procure the fixings for a "picnic" in our hotel room, we happened upon an eatery whose steamy windows were filled with newspaper reviews and testimonials from France's entertainment elite. The sounds of French people talking and laughing spilled into the street from the only place in the neighborhood that seemed to have any patrons. "Le Roi du Pot-au-Feu," the awning proclaimed. A life-size statue of a chef stood outside the door holding a blackboard menu with the words "pot-au-feu" and a price. This looked like just the thing -- casual, nourishing, not requiring any tough decisions or compromises.

Pot-au-feu, literally, "pot on the fire," is one of France's favorite wintertime dishes and beloved comfort foods -- right up there with such regional specialties as cassoulet and coq-au-vin. Its origins are obscure but it made its way into the annals of the French Revolution when Count Mirabeau declared pot-au-feu to be "the foundation of empires." The Count died before Napoleon crowned himself emperor (or his namesake, Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar became the second President of Texas). This stick-to-your ribs amalgam of less than tender cuts of beef, roasted marrow bone, potatoes, turnips, leeks, carrots, cabbage, and onions could have fueled Napoleon's army on its conquest of Europe, provided troops stayed in one place long enough for the requisite hours of simmering (never boiling) to achieve the optimal blending of flavors.

We ventured inside but no maitre d' or podium with a book of reservations awaited us. A lone waiter gestured toward a tiny booth, the perfect size for two famished souls. Rustic, no-nonsense décor signaled this was a destination for serious devotees of pot-au-feu. As we settled in and unbundled our winter gear the waiter appeared at our table empty-handed -- no menu, no notepad. He looked at Michael. "Pot-au-feu?" he asked, eyebrows raised and nodding his head encouragingly. "Oui." Next, he turned to me. "Pot-au-feu?" "Absolument," I responded. What else? Looking around, it seemed everyone had made the same choice. A few minutes later, he returned with two plates piled high, along with a condiment tray of horseradish, pickles, and various types of mustards. "Du vin?" he asked. We nodded and he produced a bottle of wine with no label, only a few letters scrawled in white to say it was Le Roi du Pot-au-Feu's own red wine.

We dug in, savoring the aroma and warmth of this traditional stew and washing it down with the wine -- fruity and just hearty enough to stand up to the horseradish or mustard daubed onto forkfuls of beef. The

meat was tender and flavorful, the leeks and onions slightly piquant, the potatoes acting like little sponges soaking up and magnifying the flavor of the beef juices. Sensing from our American-accented French that we might not know all the ins and outs of pot-au-feu consumption, our waiter checked up on us and demonstrated the pièce de la resistance -- bone marrow slathered on a garlicky baguette and sprinkled with sea salt.

So much for all those nearby restaurants offering complex architectural creations, incorporating exotic ingredients and innovative pairings designed to delight the eyes and the palate. Instead, we had just filled ourselves to bursting with France's ultimate comfort food, served unpretentiously and unceremoniously to an adoring throng of mostly French urbanites longing for a taste of what their mothers had fed them and from a kitchen their rural forebears would have cherished. While we love the haute cuisine that the French create without peer, it is also possible to eat simply and exceedingly well at a popular price without having to leave the heart of the City of Light. By taking a step out of our restaurant comfort zone we had plunged headlong into a bistro celebrating the ultimate French comfort food...and loved it!

For more about our favorite eateries in Paris, or to download our Paris Guide, log onto [mmarkley.com](http://mmarkley.com) and choose "links." Le Roi du Pot-au-Feu is at 34 rue Vignon, 75009 Paris, 01 47 42 37 10 (no website).

Next time...a Hungarian Rhapsody of Duck and Tokay in Budapest.

## POTATO SOUP CONTINUED



I am getting lazy in my old age and have started buying pre-packaged spice mixes instead of the individual spices and herbs. I am fond of the Penzeys store in the Heights and their "Herbes de Provence" mix contains: rosemary, thyme, tarragon, basil, savory, fennel, lavender and marjoram. An Italian or German themed herb mix would also work.

A note on white wine – the wine that you use can have a pronounced effect on the final taste. A strong Chardonnay can overpower the garlic in the sausage and become the dominant flavor. I would recommend using a lighter, dry white the first time you make this soup.

A note on Kielbasa – This Polish sausage has a pronounced garlic accent. Any good quality sausage can be used to flavor this soup. However, you will need to add a few cloves of garlic in with the onion if the sausage you choose does not contain any.

A note on chicken broth – I find it very hard to find decent chicken broth these days. They all tend to taste like salty, oily water that has had a chicken waved over the top. I usually buy "SOUP GA" which you can get at the Hong Kong Market and other Asian grocery stores. But you still have to read the ingredients label to make sure that it contains chicken and not artificial flavors.

**“THE JUDGMENT OF BRYAN, TEXAS”  
MESSINA HOF CHALLENGES THE WORLD, AND WINS!**

On Sunday, January 10, 2010 Messina Hof Winery and Resort hosted several wine buyers, writers and experts to participate in a special blind wine tasting at the vineyard in Bryan, Texas, which included best-selling wines from California, France and other noted wine regions side-by-side with the wines from Messina Hof. The wines were rated using a U.C. Davis 20-point method and judges indicated which wines were the Texas and the non-Texas wine.

The tasting was moderated by Dr. Russell D. Kane, wine writer and blogger at [VintageTexas.com](http://VintageTexas.com) and participants chronicled their experiences during the event on the social networking site Twitter using the hashtag #Messina\_Hof. Several participants later blogged about the experience (see web sites listed below).

The result? Messina Hof wines showed very well, often surprising the judges, particularly in the category of ice wine and reds (up against Opus One and Silver Oak). The scores revealed narrow point spreads between the Texas and non-Texas wines. And, the price difference was often double or triple for the non-Texas wines compared to the Messina Hof counterparts. The majority of the judges could only determine which wine was the Texas wine during 50 percent of the flights on average.

Results of the blind wine tasting:

Flight 1 - Messina Hof Gewürztraminer 2008 (\$9) v. Darting Gewürztraminer 2007 (\$20) [5 votes for Messina Hof](#), [5 votes for Darting](#)

Flight 2 – Escher Riesling 2007 (\$13) v. Messina Hof Merrill’s Vineyard Riesling 2008 (\$10) [1 vote for Escher](#), [7 votes for Messina Hof](#), [2 tied votes](#)

Flight 3 – Sebeka Chenin Blanc 2008 (\$11) v. Messina Hof Chenin Blanc 2009 (\$6) [2 votes for Sebeka](#), [7 votes for Messina Hof](#), [1 Tied vote](#)

Flight 4 – Messina Hof Barrel Res. Cabernet Sauvignon 2006 (\$9) v. Robert Mondavi Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2006 (\$28) [Tie: 5 votes for Messina Hof](#), [5 votes for Mondavi](#)

Flight 5 - Messina Hof Private Reserve Zinfandel 2007 (\$17) v. Alexander Valley Vineyard Zinfandel “SinZin” (\$23) [3 votes for Messina Hof](#), [5 votes for SinZin](#), [2 Tied](#)

Flight 6 – Messina Hof Merrill’s Vineyard Angel Riesling 2008 (\$17) v. Schmitt Sohne Eiswein 2008 (\$23) [4 votes for Messina Hof](#), [6 votes for Schmidt Sohne](#)  
Break

Flight 7 - Messina Hof Reserve Pinot Noir 2003 (\$17) v. David Bruce Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 2006 (\$42) [2 votes for Messina Hof](#), [8 votes for David Bruce](#)

**“THE JUDGMENT OF BRYAN, TEXAS”  
MESSINA HOF CHALLENGES THE WORLD, AND WINS!**

Flight 8 - Messina Hof Barrel Res. Merlot 2006 (\$9) v. Rodney Strong Sonoma County Merlot 2005 (\$19) 4 votes for Messina Hof, 3 votes for Rodney Strong, 3 Tied Votes

Flight 9 – Ironstone Reserve Cabernet Franc 2006 (\$28) v. Messina Hof Barrel Res. Cabernet Franc 2005 (\$9) 4 votes for Ironstone, 5 votes for Messina Hof, 1 Tied Vote

Flight 10 – Opus One 2003 (\$167) v. Messina Hof Paulo (Bordeaux Blend) 2002 (\$40) 4 votes for Opus One, 5 votes for Messina Hof, 1 Tied Vote

Flight 11 - Messina Hof Paul Cabernet Sauvignon 2002 (\$40) v. Silver Oak Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2002 (\$105) 5 votes for Messina Hof, 2 votes for Silver Oak, 3 Tied Votes

Flight 12 - Messina Hof Private Res. Port 2005 (\$24) v. Fonseca Quinta do Panascal 2005 (\$50) 3 votes for Messina Hof, 6 votes for Fonseca, 1 Tied Vote

A similar and very successful event was conducted earlier this year in Dallas at the Le Cordon Bleu Institute of Culinary Arts as part of the GoTexan DrinkLocalWine.com Conference and Texas Twitter Taste-Off (See: <http://vintagetexas.com/blog/?p=1083>). The main difference in this event was that the tasting was blind with the wines from Messina Hof going one-on-one against best selling wines from around the world.

Twitter Report: [http://hashtags.org/Messina\\_Hof](http://hashtags.org/Messina_Hof)

Messina Hof's Paul Bonarrigo's Blog: <http://blog.messinahof.com/>

Russ Kane's Blog: <http://vintagetexas.com/blog/?p=1355>

Central Market's Martin Korson's Blog: <http://moreplease.centralmarket.com/cm-news/messina-hof-blind-tasting/>

The Wine Curmudgeon Jeff Siegle's Blog: [http://www.winecurmudgeon.com/my\\_weblog/2010/01/messina-hof-twitter-tasting.html](http://www.winecurmudgeon.com/my_weblog/2010/01/messina-hof-twitter-tasting.html)

By Merrill Bonarrigo



**WASHINGTON WINE COUNTRY****BY SIREN HAKE**

When my husband and I moved to Seattle from Washington DC I had no idea that Washington State was such a wine Mecca. I knew about their delicious apples, but who knew that the only other state that produces more grapes is California? Living in Seattle for 3 years gave me an opportunity to explore the local wineries and hundreds of tasting rooms.

So how is it that soggy Washington State can produce so many great wines? The tall Cascade Mountains produce a warm lush climate to the west of the mountains and a fairly dry cold climate on the east side of the mountains, where 99% of the wine production happens. The dry climate, combined with long daylight hours of the growing season, make the lands of eastern Washington prime for wine grapes. The result is complex fruit flavors, good acid levels and pleasing aromatics.

Washington State has ten official appellations, one of them being Walla Walla Valley. What makes this valley great for producing grapes is the dry climate and the soil content. The soil contains varying combinations of loam, silt, loess, and cobbles delivered by a series of tremendous floods thousands of years ago, and it offers perfect drainage. Walla Walla did not really get into commercial wine making until the 1950's, even though grapes have been grown there since the 1850's by Italian immigrants. Now the valley has nearly 40 wineries with great producers such as Waterbrook, Dunham Cellars and Novelty Hill just to mention a few.

One of my favorites is L'Ecole No. 41. It is a family owned winery located in a building that used to be a school house in historic Frenchtown. The unusual name is French for school and the number 41 is the district the school was located in. They have won numerous awards over the years and the latest was the Regional Wine of the Year 2009-award issued by Wine & Spirits. If you want to try any of their wines, try the 2005 L'Ecole No. 41 Perigee (Seven Hills Vineyard – Walla Walla Valley). It is smoky, full of spice and concentrated. It is made up of 56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot and 8% Cabernet Franc.

Walla Walla is about four hours from Seattle, so if you do not have the time for a road trip you can hop in the car and head to Woodinville. This is a quaint little town, offering more than 60 wineries ranging from Château Ste. Michelle to little mom and pop wineries.

I used to pick up my monthly wine selections on Fridays after work and I always looked forward to my trips to Woodinville. It is a quick 20 minute drive from Seattle and as you approach Woodinville the landscape changes from concrete buildings and heavy traffic to rolling hills, fresh clean air and just a relaxed atmosphere.

Chateau Ste. Michelle is one of the anchor wineries in the area, and given its close proximity to my home, this winery quickly became my favorite. It got its name from Ste. Michelle Vintners who in 1976 built a French style building and renamed it Chateau Ste. Michelle. As you drive through the heavy wrought iron gates and pass the grape vines, with a little imagination it almost feels like you are in France and not Seattle. As with most of the bigger wineries, this winery has their wine production on the east side of the Cascade Mountains, and their tasting rooms in Woodinville. The exception is the white wines which are made at the Woodinville location. Their tasting room is amazing and is in the same location as their gift shop, so you can sip and shop at the same time. If you get a chance to visit, grab some artisanal crackers and cheese from their shop, a nice bottle of wine and find a sunny spot on their lawn (try to avoid the peacock it really loves crackers and has absolutely no fear of people). In the summer they have concerts pretty much every weekend.

I have several favorites from this winery one of them being the 2007 Eroica Riesling, in which you

**WASHINGTON WINE COUNTRY- CONTINUED**

can sense the honeysuckle and peaches. Great value and it scored a 95 (!) on the Wine Connoisseurs Guide. Another wine worth trying is the Canon Ridge Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Horse Heaven Hills). I think this wine has so much big flavor. I would use this wine with game meat or even steak with a generous amount of fresh herbs.



**Columbia Winery, Woodinville, WA**

(even if it is just through the wine aisle at the store) try their 2005 Syrah. It is dry with flavors of blackberry and blueberry. I have just had it as a sipping wine but it would complement a pasta dish very well.

Woodinville is not only known for their wines. They also have some great 5-star restaurants that specialize in northwestern cuisine. The most prominent is the Herb Farm, which has received numerous awards over the years. If this is for a special occasion call them early. They require a 1-2 month reservation and get booked up very quickly. You are served a 9-course meal with wines from all over the world. The culinary experience takes about 3 hours and with taxes and tips will set you back about \$250-300. It is an expensive, but amazing once-in-a-lifetime experience and is highly recommended.

The Barking Frog is located at the Willows Lodge close to Columbia Winery. It is a casual bistro with a huge fire pit in the center. They are known in Seattle for their very extensive 16-page wine list with a majority from WA State. The name comes from Native American story tellers who used a frog as a symbol of wealth. When the frogs bark it is a sign of peace and harmony. The prices are reasonable and the food is outstanding. This restaurant is a great way to end your visit in Woodinville.

For a fun activity try the Wine Warehouse district in Woodinville. It is only open on the weekend and pretty crowded, but a fun way to try new wines or new releases. The wine producers rent what can best be described as connected storage units, and they are all lined up row after row. Though this is mostly made up of smaller independent wine producers trying to market their wines, you can also find some better known local wine producers such as Mark Ryan winery, Guardian Cellars, Edmonds winery and Ross Andrew winery. You will likely meet the wine makers one-on-one and they are more than happy to tell you about wine making and their new releases. The tasting is usually free so take your time as there are plenty of wines to try.

Seattle has a growing wine culture and constantly come up with new ways to market their local wines. Be sure to check it out next time you are in Seattle.

## MCKITTRICK CANYON WINE HIKE

BY GLADYS HAAK

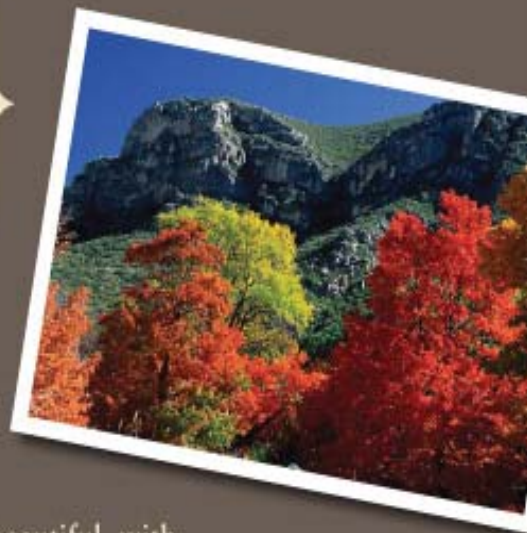
## McKITTRICK CANYON WINE HIKE

AN EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME.

On October 31, Raymond and Gladys Haak boarded the winery's company plane (a.k.a. Southwest Airlines) for an exciting hiking trip in McKittrick Canyon in Midland, Texas. The trip had been won at the Wine Society of Texas' annual silent auction by the winemaker and his wife.

The 2.25-mile hike up the canyon was breathtakingly beautiful, with fall foliage and canyon walls standing straight up on each side of the hiking trail. At the top, Raymond, Gladys and company enjoyed a gourmet lunch paired with wonderful wines. With more food and wine than the small party could possibly devour on their own, they began offering the leftovers to total strangers as they hiked up the trail. Imagine the look of surprise in their eyes when they saw this gourmet lunch with wine all the way up in the wilderness!

As it turns out, Jim Evans, winemaker for Lone Oak Winery, started this tradition years ago and continues to hold it on the first Sunday in November each year. The Haak's so enjoyed the event that they wanted to share their experience with all of you and encourage you take advantage of this unique adventure. If anyone is interested in doing this next year, please e-mail Gladys at [gladys@haakwine.com](mailto:gladys@haakwine.com). We are certain you will have a great time and a great experience!



## WINE BAR REVIEW

BY DAVID COLE

Wine bars have been springing up everywhere, like weeds after a good rain. We have several of them in the Clear Lake area and a quick Google search pulled up a list of over 30 establishments in Houston that were advertising themselves as wine bars. But what makes a bar – a wine bar? Is it a great by the glass wine list, the unpredictable or nonexistent menu, or possibly the atmosphere? It seems that some places that advertize themselves as wine bars are really just bad restaurants, but the good places all have some things in common.

To me, the most important of these is a good selection of wines by the glass. Many places are now charging \$10 or more for this good wine, but it will usually be a generous pour in quality stem wear. The next thing I look for is the atmosphere. I'm at a bar and I want a drink, of wine. And there should be a nice crowd of people that are there for the same reason. I have had good experiences in empty wine bars but I prefer to be able to people watch. And then there is the food. I don't like places with no food or just a cheese plate. When you get to your second or third glass of wine, you really need a little buffering in the stomach. I don't like places that serve, and push, a full menu. They tend to want to treat you like a restaurant, serve you a meal and then get rid of you so they can seat the next couple. I prefer the middle ground of a tapas style menu. Appetizer sized portions with lots of choice. The attitude should be that if you are hungry we can take care of you, but this is a bar, you can stay as long as you want as long as you're drinking.

The purpose for all of this background is to lead up to a recent wine bar visit. A few weeks ago we went to the Oporto wine bar on Richmond just east of Wesleyan. They have about ten tables and room for at least a dozen people at the bar. We got there before 6 P.M. but it was already starting to get a little crowded and the only space available was at the bar. Tenley had a glass of Verget Chardonnay which she liked. Verget is a négociant, and I believe that the wine was one of his Chablis but I don't remember which one. I had the Bodegas Atteca Old Vines Grenache, which was a good choice for our food. Our average price per glass was \$10.

They have a very nice tapas style menu at Oporto, with prices ranging in the \$6 to \$16 range. We had the Caldo Verde (spinach and potato soup), an Oportobella which was a grilled portabella with sauce, clams Alentejo and a meat and cheese plate. All of it was well prepared and very tasty, and needless to say, we didn't need to go someplace else for dinner after we left the wine bar. To finish our meal Tenley had a Port Orange Crème Brûlée with a glass of Barros 20 year old port and I had a glass of Glenmorangie. The brûlée was the weakest part of the meal. Tenley couldn't taste the alleged orange and there wasn't even a soupçon of Port.

When we got up to leave the wine bar, I was surprised. The place was packed, with two rows of people standing behind us. The acoustics must be pretty good because it didn't seem that loud and we had not had too much trouble talking to each other. All in all it was a nice evening out and we will be back.



**SOUTH AFRICAN WINE DINNER****BY ED DENT****Co-Hosted by the Houston Chapter of the Wine Society of Texas**

On Saturday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Houston Chapter of the Wine Society of Texas along with Leibmans Food and Fine Wine co-hosted a South African Wine Dinner at Leibmans. The event was attended by 35 people and was very well received by all. The food was excellent and it was great to experience something from a different part of the world and culture. The menu was as follows:

**Aperitif**

Chutney Cheese Hors D'oeuvres  
- 2008 Mulderbosch Sauvignon Blanc

**1st Course**

Beef Boerewors (South African Farmers Pork Sausage - made in house)  
- 2004 Rust en Verde Shiraz

**2nd Course**

Bobotie and Turmeric Rice accompanied by Spicy Chutney, Bananas, and Chopped Tomato Salad  
- 2008 Beyerskloof Pinotage  
- 2004 Neil Ellis Cabernet Sauvignon

**3rd Course**

Tipsy Tart (Traditional South African Specialty)  
- 2009 Jam Jar Sweet Shiraz

Everyone enjoyed the pairings, especially the 2004 Rust en Verde Shiraz. If you like Shiraz, you must try this. Also a big hit was the Bobotie accompanied with the spicy chutney, bananas and tomato salad, better known here in the USA as Pico de Gallo.

Niki and Mrs. Leibman took the time to talk about the different wine regions in South Africa.

We also had an opportunity to talk to non Wine Society members about our chapter and some of our activities. Ten people signed up to receive our newsletter and hopefully some will become members.

See the below listed link for more photos of the event.

<http://www.photoworks.com/slideshow/album/A02B80339342?source=pw980>



## GIFT IT FORWARD

BY ED DENT

1. Gift a bottle of wine in the bag and write your comments/opinion on the wine in an enclosed journal -- gift it to someone you would like to know better. That person/member would write their comments/experiences with the wine that you sent them, gift another bottle forward to another couple/person with their comments on the bottle they are gifting forward, etc. This keeps it going like a chain.
  2. The plan is that you start with someone outside the chapter first. They would consume the wine and write their comments. If they know you well enough you could ask them to gift a bottle of wine back to you. If you are not comfortable in asking them to gift you a return bottle; then make sure you have them return the gift bag. Therefore you keep control of the bag and it doesn't go outside our chapter circle.
  3. Afterwards, you can gift a different bottle of wine to another non-member or member. Make sure you gift to no more than two non-members.
  4. Once your bag with a bottle of wine is gifted to a member, then they must gift a bottle to another member so we keep full control of the bag's location. We want to be assured the bags along with the journals come back to a member at all times.
  5. At an agreed upon date, we will have a Wine Journal Homecoming Event or Gift it Forward Homecoming Event, preferably in the fourth quarter. At this time we could share all the comments/stories from the journals and taste the bottle(s) of wine that come home with the journals. This will be very educational.
  6. The price point guideline is that the wines are no more than \$20 and no less than \$5. All wines should be of good quality.
  7. All bags are numbered so we know where they began their journey.
  8. The process should start in March 2010.
  9. Ideally the bag is gifted on at least once per quarter.
- Any questions should be addressed to Gracelyn Jones or Jan Frisby.

## EDITOR'S CORNER

As spring approaches after a colder than usual Houston winter there is still time to quaff some Cabernet Sauvignons and Ports while perusing our newsletter. The Greater Houston Chapter of the WST blossomed like a butterfly last year and offered four wonderful wine events with dinner at Liebmanns Fine Foods, Haak winery, La Vista, and Flat Creek winery. Please join us this year for more great wine tasting, fine dining, and fun with old friends and new wine enthusiasts. Take advantage of the Gift it Forward opportunity to meet new wine lovers.

The articles in this newsletter were created by members, winery owners and friends of the Wine Society of Texas. Thank you for your continued support. We are always looking for additional wine-related articles. Even one of our newest members contributed an article to this newsletter. What can you share? Perhaps you found a fantastic food and wine pairing or a favorite recipe with wine. Or maybe there is a bargain wine for under \$15 that you want to let the WST's members know about. Or share your story behind a trophy wine you are just waiting to open on a very special occasion. Or tell us about your recent wine adventures both local and while you were on vacation.

I wish you a warm spring with great wine.

Cheers-Tenley Fukui

### THE WINE SOCIETY OF TEXAS - GREATER HOUSTON

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[winesoctxhoustonnewsltr@live.com](mailto:winesoctxhoustonnewsltr@live.com)

## CONGRATULATIONS

Flat Creek Estate's Mistella was selected as BEST Texas Wine at the Houston Rodeo Uncorked 2010 competition held November 14th and 15th at the Reliant Center. This dessert wine was served at our Food and Wine event at Flat Creek in October with a lemon tart with citrus Chantilly cream. Other Texas wines which were Champion class winners were as follows:

Alamosa Torrentes 2008

Becker Vineyards Chenin Blanc 2008

Becker Vineyards Fume Blanc 2008

Becker Vineyards Viognier 2008

Bruno and George Orchard Pear

McPherson Red 2007

Messina Hof Private Reserve Port 2005

Messina Hof Sangria