

HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPE VINE

1 DECEMBER 2009

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

Membership – Chapter membership continues to increase. We now have 36 members and inquiries from at least eight other persons. I expect our total membership to be at 40 by the end of the year. Great revival of the chapter!

Cancer Counseling Fundraiser – Thanks to those who donated wine for the silent auction at the Cancer Counseling Gala held on Nov. 20, 2009. We were able to give 15 bottles plus a one year membership to WST Houston Chapter in 2010.

2010 Tentative Calendar of Events

January 23 – South African Food and Wine Event – Liebman

February 20 – Vinyl and Vines Planning Meeting. Kick off Gift it on activity – At the Dents

March 20 – New members Spring Fling – TBA

Mid Summer – Food and Wine event at Reef

October – Food and Wine Event for Texas Wine Month – Possible return to Flat Creek with Friday wine reception at Spicewood

Other activity to be considered – (1)Event at Messina Hofs, (2) Anything but Texas and California wine sharing

Member News – Congratulations to Lt. Colonel (U.S. Army Ret.) Melvin Myers, who on Oct. 2 was honored with the Cross of Military Service Award for his service during the Vietnam War.

2009 Wine Report – Doug Frost, MW, MS - one of three people in the world to hold the title of Master of Wine and Master Sommelier states the following about Texas wines in the Other US States section of the 2009 Wine Report

Listed among Fastest Improving Producers – Flat Creek Estates and Becker Vineyards

Listed among new and up and coming Vineyards – Spicewood Vineyards

Listed among best value producers – Sister Creek, Fall Creek, and Cap Rock

Best Bargain – 2005 Moscato Bianco – Flat Creek

HOUSTON CHAPTER ANNUAL FOOD AND WINE DINNER — FROM ED DENT



On Saturday, January 23, 2010, the Houston Chapter will hold its annual Food and Wine Dinner. We will again be returning to Leibman's Wine and Fine Foods 14529 Memorial Dr., Houston. The theme this year will be **"South Africa – Some Good Things are Happening There"**.

We will be treated to a three course South African dinner prepared by Mrs. Leibman, who emigrated from South Africa in 1979. Each course is done and served family style. Five different South African wines will be paired with the dinner.

Niki Newman, Wine Specialist at Leibman's will act as hostess and guide us through the different South African wines and talk about the wine industry in South Africa. She will provide us with maps and educational packets.

Information on pricing will be available by the last week in December. Seating will be limited so all reservations must be prepaid by credit card. All non wine society members will be assessed an additional charge of \$10 per person, payable by cash at the event.

So mark your calendars for January 23, 2010 for this great event at Leibman's. This will be a good way to start off our year.

**ZAGAT RATED
2009**

**"South Africa –
Some Good
Things are
Happening
There".**

14TH ANNUAL STATE MEMBERS MEETING



The Permian Basin Chapter is hosting the 14th Annual State Members Meeting in Midland, Texas from June 25th thru June 27th, 2010.

It will kick off Friday night with the 62nd edition of the world renowned "Summer Mummies" in the historic Yucca Theatre. This is a classic vaudeville melodrama where you cheer the hero and boo the villain. Please visit <http://www.summermummies.com> for further information.

Saturday continues the fun with tours of the Commemorative Air Force or Petroleum Museum followed by lunch and tastings. The day ends with a wonderful wine dinner.

The pricing and information about the host hotel will be available around the first of the year.

Mark it on your calendar and join the friendly members in West Texas for a wine filled weekend.

INCREASE YOUR WINE KNOWLEDGE: A TEN STEP PROGRAM



By Russ Kane

www.vintagetexas.com/blog

Increase Your Wine Knowledge: A Ten Step Program

I recently saw an article that addressed this issue, but for beer. It was on the website www.accidentalthedonist.com. I decided to compose the following list with the necessary modifications making it applicable to people who want to increase their wine knowledge, particularly those in Texas, a rapidly growing premium wine region that is now the fifth largest in America. Like many self-help activities, my recommendation is a ten step program.

- 1. Get out of your comfort zone:** Many highly visible wineries have common ownership and while having different names, may actually make wines that are similar. Also, if your idea of wine comes from the Wine Spectator or Wine Enthusiast you are missing about 80% of the known wine world that does not get mentioned in these publications. It's time to get a new perspective.
- 2. Avoid stereotypical wines:** For starters, eliminate Chardonnay and Cabernet from your lexicon for a while and seek out reds made from Tempranillo, Syrah, Grenache, and Barbera, and whites made from Viognier, Muscat, Riesling and Roussanne. Learn which qualities these wines express and you might find something really interesting.
- 3. Think countries, rather than companies:** There are several wine cultures out there that are strongly connected to the culture and history of the country. Some of them include France, Spain, and Italy with over 1000 years of wine history, and Argentina, America, and even locales like Texas that have 400 years of wine history. If you start to approach wines from the point of their histories, rather than from brand, your knowledge will become much broader.
- 4. Understand that the taste spectrum of wine is quite large:** Not all wines highlight the same characteristics. Some are floral, herbal, dry, semi-dry, and sweet, some are fruity and some are more austere, and finally some are simple and straightforward, and others are highly complex. In short, there are wines (actually many wines) out there for everyone. Hint: Don't forget to taste wine with food. They can sometimes take on new and different qualities when combined with food.

INCREASE YOUR WINE KNOWLEDGE: A TEN STEP PROGRAM—CONTINUED

5. Don't be afraid of tasting: Many wine bars and even restaurants offer wines by the glass and even flights of wines where they serve you a short pour of three to five wines that can be tasted and compared. Use these settings as an opportunity to try new wines and learn. Hint: Many of these establishments will also pour you an ounce of any of these wines for free before you order - another opportunity to see what you like or to simply learn the unique qualities of these wines.

6. Understand that there are wines that you won't like: Due to the number of wines available, there are bound to be some wines that are just "not you". Some may be poorly made, but with wine quality on a worldwide rise, it is more likely that you will find wines with aromas or flavors that are not to your liking. Regardless, don't let this discourage you. This is a time for exploration. There are so many wines and so little time.

7. Seek the knowledge of others: There is so much to learn. Don't let it intimidate you. However, there are resources that you can use. First, get on the Internet, search using words or a combination of words that are unclear to you (this includes pronunciation of foreign words, as well). Also, when you go to a wine bar, restaurant or festival, ask questions from people who can help you. Many times, I will ask the restaurant "wine guy" to tell me what wine he has that tastes like a particular wine or is within a particular price range. Other times, I will just give him the price point and ask him to select something for me that he believes will pair well with the food on the table.

8. Leave your wine snobbery behind. Good quality wine is now being produced in many new regions (countries, states, appellations and counties). Just because it is not from California or France it does not mean that it is necessarily inferior. Even within these well established countries, there are new regions that offer great values for your wine dollars.

9. Enjoy yourself: This cannot be emphasized enough. Enjoy the moment, the people, the place, then enjoy the wine - they all go together. There is also one cardinal rule of wine enjoyment. Drink what you like and like what you drink. But, unless you explore the fringes and hinterlands of the wine world, you are missing so many good experiences.

10. Last, but not least.....Drink Local (www.drinklocalwine.com): Many small artisanal, micro-wineries are operating in states around the USA. For example, in Texas, we now have over 170 wineries that include one huge (Gallo-type) volume wine producer and six to eight large premium wineries. That leaves about 160 other wineries here in Texas. Many of these wineries are micro/small wineries with case productions from 500 up to 10,000 cases. Many of these wineries are true ma-and-pa operations only one step up from someone's hobby, but others are growing boutique wineries that are making serious wines. It is easy to find a winery using winery locator websites in your area such as this Texas site:

<http://www.gotexanwine.org/findwinesandwineries/>. Don't overlook these wineries just because they are not well known household names.

This article was contributed by Dr. Russell Kane, freelance wine writer, blogger and aficionado. You can see his personal wine narrative including his rants and raves at: www.vintagetexas.com/blog.

HOLIDAY WINE AND CHEESE PARING

by: Merrill Bonarrigo of Messina Hof Winery and Resort

The most frequently asked questions that I get during the holiday season involve which cheeses to serve with which wines. Many people are entertaining. Wine and cheese pairings are easy, fun, and educational. The problem is that most people know less about cheeses than they know about wines. With the wonderful selections of cheeses that are now available from all parts of the world, the combinations are endless.

Here are some pairings to consider.

Liechester (English Cheddar) with Pinot Noir

It is one of the easiest of all cheeses to pair with

the greatest range of wines. The **Pinot Noir** is a Burgundian style red. (Americans cannot use the term Burgundy since the treaty with France.) Texas Pinot Noirs are usually darker in color than those grown in other areas due to the abundance of Texas sun.

Brie with Chardonnay

Brie comes in different textures and styles. Most brie available in the stores tends to be young acidic brie.

Chablis is usually recommended in France. And Chablis is made from the **Chardonnay** grape. The un-oaked and lightly oaked Chardonnay's are my favorites with Brie.

Stilton Blueberry with Port

Stilton is the classic dessert wine with Port and a

tradition at the holiday season. In today's world of cheese there are some very festive stiltons with different flavors such as the Blueberry Stilton.

For more details and serving suggestions, visit the Messina Hof blog at www.messinahof.com.

Messina Hof Winery and Resort was established in 1977 by Co-Founders Paul and Merrill Bonarrigo. Messina Hof was founded on family values, romance and tradition. Messina Hof is the leader in the establishment of the Texas wine industry and ranks as one of the fastest growing, most award-winning wineries in the state.

Messina Hof Winery and Resort was established in 1977 by Co-Founders Paul and Merrill Bonarrigo.



SPECIAL RECOGNITION FOR CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

This is the fourth edition of our WST—Houston newsletter and any success that we have had is due entirely to the great articles contributed by our members and friends. Several people went above and beyond the call of duty and contributed articles to ALL FOUR issues.

First and foremost I would like to thank our Chapter Chairman, Ed Dent. One of our issues had four articles that he put together and everyone has benefited from his efforts over the past year.

Russ Kane, "The Texas WineSlinger", was also very prolific this year. Please check out his blog at www.vintagetexas.com/blog.

Thank you to Merrill Bonarrigo for her efforts. Messina Hof has always been a friend of the Wine Society of Texas.

Last but not least, Meril Markley missed the first issue, but only because she didn't have enough notice. Her descriptions of France make me want to dust off my passport and do some traveling.

WINE TRENDS IN NEW YORK STATE'S FINGER LAKES

In late August, Tenley and I made a trip to New York's Finger Lakes wine region. In two days we visited 11 wineries, on two lakes, in nine different towns and purchased 26 bottles of wine. Many of the bottles that we purchased were dessert wines or other high alcohol content specialty wines, and I am going to be writing about the new trends that we noticed.

Ice Wine, and yes I know that this isn't really a new trend for New York wineries. On this trip we purchased six bottles of Vidal Blanc Ice, Riesling Ice and Cabernet Franc Ice. They ranged from 11.0% to 13.5% ABV and from 8.5% to 20.2% residual sugar and all of them were very good examples of the ice wine style, with a crisp taste and high acidity to balance the sweetness. At Sheldrake Point Vineyards, in Ovid, we purchased a bottle of Riesling ice wine which was twice the cost of the other ice wines and it was excellent but not twice as good as our other purchases. When I asked about this at the winery I learned that it was also the only REAL bottle of ice wine that we had purchased. It turns out that there is a lot of risk in letting ripe fruit sit on the vine hoping that it will freeze. Almost everyone picks their grapes at normal harvest time and sends them off to a cold storage facility to be frozen. The clue was there in the label (and price), with everyone using the term "Ice" but only the real thing was labeled Ice Wine.

The second trend we noticed was that there were a lot of high alcohol content apéritif and dessert wines; with more than half the wineries we visited offering some type of alcohol enhanced beverage. Not only did we pick up a 20% ABV port, very similar to those produced here in Texas, but also Cream Sherry and Vignoles dessert wines both at 18% ABV. A real find, though not a wine, was some 30% ABV Limoncello that we purchased at both Six Mile Creek Vineyard, in Ithaca, and Knapp Vineyards, in Romulus.

High proof alcohol is the real big trend in the Finger Lakes wine area, and several of the Finger Lakes wineries have gone to the trouble of getting a distilling license from the BATFE. The wine maker at Six Mile Creek Vineyard complained about the difficulty of the licensing process and said that it didn't matter how small you were, you still got treated the same as any big distillery. And I loved the results! I have always thought that Grappa was a great idea. No matter how hard you press the pommace, it will always contain some residual alcohol, and the thrifty Italians have traditionally distilled this to produce Grappa. Grappa is not for everyone, but I am very fond of it and the Grappa being produced in New York is as good as any that I have had from Italy. Along with the Grappa, Six Mile Creek is also making Vodka and Brandy. The only difference between the Vodka and the Brandy is that the Brandy spends some time (not much) in wood and all the Vodka ever sees is stainless steel.



If you get a heavy rain, right before harvest, you are going to end up with grapes that have too much water. This produces a wine that tends to be watery and low in alcohol. Some places can get away with adding sugar to the fermentation, but this only fixes the alcohol problem and does nothing for the flavor. No one wants to admit it, but when this happens, the results usually end up getting blended and bottled and passed off as a bad year. At Rock Stream, Six Mile Creek and Knapp Vineyards, they are distilling the wine that they are not going to bottle and using the alcohol to produce other value added products. We purchased the Brandy at Knapp and the Grappa at Rock Stream and Six Mile Creek.

By David Cole

PASO ROBLES WINE TRIP

BY ELIZABETH LUTTON



It has been one month since we got back from Paso Robles California, and I still have a whirlwind of sights, smells and sounds in my head after 4 days of wine touring. With the assistance of Felix, our driver, and Grapeline, we managed to tour 21 wineries in 4 days from September 26 to September 30, 2009. “Paso” as it is called in California is every bit as laid back and friendly as we were told, but it has some very serious wineries producing some of the best wines that California has to offer. This “un-Napa” takes pride in its small town atmosphere.

Right across from our hotel, the Paso Robles Inn, we could see that small town America was alive and well despite the recession in an authentic town square. Everyone from joggers, wine tasters, families with children, artists and business persons could be seen near the square and several fabulous restaurants were also there with 3-4 tasting rooms. The main wine areas were only a few minutes from town, so we did not spend much time in a bus, which was nice. Some of the great wineries that we visited included Peachy Canyon, EOS, Anglim, Opolo, Adelaida, L’Adventure, Vina Robles, Norman and Four Vines. We had lunch on the patio at Justin and actually went into a grotto in the caves for lunch at Eberle. Beside these nationally known wineries, we also visited a few “mom-and-pop” wineries such as Halter Ranch, Chumea and Zin Alley. Of course, Paso is known for its Mediterranean grapes and it definitely lived up to its reputation. I have never had so many outstanding Syrahs in one place before. Of course, we had many other Mediterranean grapes such as Grenache and Mourvedre, plus some of the best Zinfandels on the planet. The white Rhone grapes were also fantastic, with nearly every winery making a great Viognier. Yet, the grape that most impressed me during the tour was Petite Sirah, which is nearly unknown. I truly believe that this will be one of the next popular big red wines, and Paso will lead the way. Petite Sirah has that “big fruit” flavor with lots of black cherry and spice, yet it is not monstrously tannic. Again, nearly all of these great wineries that we visited produced outstanding examples at reasonable prices. Watch for Petite Sirah at your local wine stores and restaurants.

Many thanks again to the staff at Grapeline and to the Wine Society’s own tour coordinator, Lori Parker, the DFW Chapter Events Chair, for an awesome and informative trip! What is not to like about a trip that started with a slight detour to Ridge Vineyards and ended up at Turley. Stay tuned for another great wine adventure next year! Cheers – Elizabeth Lutton, State President, Wine Society of Texas.



GETTING AN EAR-FULL IN VAN GOGH'S TOWN BY MERIL MARKLEY



Chateau-neuf-du-pape Rhone

As a region of France, Provence gets lots of attention. Its sunshine and warmth, stoked by the relentless mistral wind, are a welcome contrast to cold, gray, damp and drizzly Paris and the North. With its culture dating back to the Greeks, it has been a center of agriculture, and especially wine making, since ancient times. Provence remains an agricultural powerhouse, including sunflowers, citrus, apricots, olives, truffles, and lavender, echoed everywhere in decor and on menus.

For a buying trip centered on the antique furniture markets at Isle-sur-la Sorgue, we decided to stay a few miles away in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, a town known for many things: for the Glanum archeological site from Roman times; as the birthplace of Nostradamus; but most of all for the psychiatric clinic where Vincent Van Gogh committed himself in 1889 after cutting off part of his ear in nearby Arles. During the time he was being treated at Saint Paul de Mausole, Van Gogh experienced a period of exceptional productivity, including some of his most famous works among the 142 painted there: *Starry Night*, *Wheat Field with Cypresses*, *Irises*, along with numerous portraits and scenes of the buildings and gardens at the former monastery comprising the clinic as well as the nearby town and the surrounding countryside.*

So it was that we arrived late one October day after an over-night flight from Houston to Paris, a high-speed train ride to Avignon and the short drive in our rental car to Saint-Rémy. Exhausted and jet-lagged, we opted to book dinner at the award-winning restaurant of our hotel on the outskirts of town. Expecting something not merely great but exceptional, I chose a main course that struck me as unusual – a veal chop in a sauce with bean sprouts and peanuts. And it proved exceptional – one of the few truly awful concoctions I have ever had in France. The combination of flavors just did not work. So convinced was I about this that I mentioned my concerns to the waiter, suggesting that the chef might want to reconsider this dish. I wasn't demanding my money back or expecting an apology. We just wanted the chef to know that diners had found the dish unsatisfactory. "Non, Madame, je vous prie," responded the waiter. In conspiratorial tones he pleaded with me not to make him tell the chef. "He will take it out on me. He does not appreciate any criticism, regardless of how sincere or well-meaning. He is very proud of this dish, his tribute to "fusion" cuisine. It is more than my job's worth to say anything." Enough said. We would look elsewhere for dinner during the balance of our sojourn.

The next night we decided to walk into the heart of Saint-Rémy, about a mile away, in search of more traditional Provençal fare. We strolled by the Restaurant La Source on the main drag, just before the center of town. It was early and all twelve tables were still empty. But the menu of classic "gastronomique" items looked intriguing. No trace of bean sprouts or peanuts. Thanks to French law, all restaurants must post their menus and prices outside, so you have an idea of what you're getting into and how much it will cost.

We circled the town, considered other menus and returned to La Source about 30 minutes later, by that time only one table remained unoccupied – a promising sign of good, traditional food on offer. Over the next three nights, we had memorable meals consisting of items such as: flan de foie gras, zucchini stuffed with ricotta, lamb with apricots, duck with a fig sauce, lobster salad, lavender ice cream, and a delight called a "chocolate pocket," all accompanied by wines from small producers around Provence and Languedoc, including a remarkable Côtes du Ventoux.

Our meanderings back from La Source each evening, after the mistral had died down, were memorable for the gentler breezes and the nighttime sky alight with the same dazzling stars that had inspired Van Gogh. Just breathing in great gobs of Provençal air revealed why centuries of inhabitants have been captivated by this place. We could appreciate why some pleasure-seeking Romans had abandoned the

empire’s capital and built their villas here to inhale the natural perfume of citrus, lavender and olives while feasting on local produce and wines.

In between meals at our refuge, La Source, we managed day-trips to Avignon and the surrounding areas. More than its bridge from the famous nursery rhyme, Avignon was a boomtown of sorts in the 14th century when the Papacy decamped from Rome and Avignon’s reputation for food and wine was at its zenith. The Popes, it seems, had nothing on Texans when it came to slow-roasted meats and a big party, leading some scholars to credit the French with creating the method of cooking known as barbecue (from the French term “de la barbe à la queue” or “from the beard to the tail,” meaning the whole animal was cooked on a spit). Records from the coronation of Pope Clement VI in 1342 describe the mother-of-all-cook-outs in which guests feasted on 1118 oxen, 1023 sheep, 101 calves, 914 kids, 60 pigs, 1500 capons, 7428 chickens and 1195 geese, all washed down with red wine from nearby vineyards. No mention of what they used for barbecue sauce!



Chateau-neuf-du-pape – town



Chateau-neuf-du-pape – ruin

To learn more about the most famous wines associated with the Papacy’s 70-year residence in Avignon, we headed to nearby Château-Neuf-du-Pape where we climbed up to the ruins of the Popes’ summer retreat or “new castle of the Pope” – a windy hilltop overlooking the vineyards and the small town of the same name. We took the opportunity to phone Bill and Nancy Pape, long-time members of the Wine Society of Texas, to let them know we were at the epicenter of the wine with which their family name is connected and to describe the beautiful landscape of vineyards, farm houses, and the silvery ribbon of the Rhone River in the distance.

From our perch we spied a nearby hilltop surrounded by vineyards where a large stone structure with crenellations stood. Intrigued, we decided to take a drive there and find out what it was. It turned out to be the Hostellerie du Château des Fines Roches, a luxury hotel with less than a dozen guest rooms and a gourmet restaurant. The manager showed us around, including a lovely library and reception area reflecting the passion for Gothic decoration that motivated a 19th century Count to create this Gothic Revival castle as his personal retreat. “No,” the manager assured us, “no bean sprouts or peanuts in anything here!” And so we resolved to

return again to this wonderful corner of France and enjoy its prized wines while staying in the castle nestled amongst the Popes’ famous vineyards.



hostellerie chateau des roches fines

Next time...tasting a king’s special wine at one of our favorite Parisian haunts.

*For a complete list see http://www.vggallery.com/painting/by_period/st_remy.htm.

HOUSTON CHAPTER CELEBRATES FALL IN THE FALLS

Our October 10, 2009 event in Marble Falls was truly a fabulous event, especially for those of us who had never been to Marble Falls or Flat Creek Estate Vineyards. The weekend started off with us visiting Pillar Bluff Vineyard in Lampasas, Texas with the Wickmans and Papes. The Wickmans had purchased a barrel and we enjoyed tasting their Bordeaux type wine out of the barrel. There we met some DFW Chapter members who were in town for our wine event.

Next we travelled to Texas Legato which was half a mile away. There we tasted some excellent Malbec, Petite Syrah, and Port wines. This was another worthwhile stop.

That evening, we were treated to a fabulous reception, tour and wine paired dinner at Flatcreek. We started the event with caprese bruschetta, curried egg salad crisp, goat cheese & tapenade, prawn cucumber, prosciutto wrapped asparagus, liver pâté on toast points paired with four of their wines. Next we were served some excellent butternut squash soup paired with Pinot Grigio followed by mixed baby greens, pecans, and Pinot Blanc.

The main course was Slowed Roast Pork with peppers, Polenta and Green Beans paired with their Super Texan 2008, Dessert was a Lemon Chiffon pie and Flat Creek's Mistella Wine a dessert wine made from unfermented Muscat Canelli and grape brandy. What a treat.

Naturally we had to end the night with a glass of Estate Port since Flat Creek has a Port room.

During the course of the event everyone participated in the silent auction which had donations from various Houston Chapter members, Thanks to all who donated.

Also thanks to the Central Texas Waco Temple Killen, Dallas Fort Worth, and Permian Basin Midland Odessa Chapters for coming and making our event a huge success. It's always good when you can join in fellowship with other state chapter members.

Madelyn and Rick were very gracious hosts and I would like to give a shout out to them and their winery. Their winery and the wines were loved by all.

On our way back to Houston the Wickmans, Jones, and Dents enjoyed Sunday Brunch and then stopped at Spice-wood Vineyards. We tasted several of their wines but unfortunately they were sold out of their Sauvignon Blanc which had received a number of prestigious awards in the past.

See the below listed link to enjoy some of the pictures from the event. Copy and paste to your browser if you can not open.



<http://www.photoworks.com/slideshow/album/A6042C1384EE?source=pw980>

By Ed Dent

Special Note: Flat Creek Estates Estella was selected as BEST Texas Wine at the Houston Rodeo Uncorked 2010 competition held Nov. 14-15 at Reliant Center. This wine was served at our Food and Wine event at Flat Creek in October with lemon tart with citrus Chantilly cream.

GREAT HOLIDAY WINE DEALS UNDER \$25

KELLY MESSENGER

It's that time of year again, the holidays are quickly approaching, company's coming, you're hosting holiday events and the need for great wines that fit an entertaining budget is here. You've probably been told you don't have to spend a fortune to find great wine; well here are some holiday suggestions that just may fit that bill...

If you are looking for a semi-dry Riesling – meaning not overly sweet but enough sweetness to hold up to spicy dishes, strong cheeses or for sipping before your meal, try the **King Estate's Next Riesling**. Next is a project of the “next” generation of the King Estate Family in Oregon who have really made a name for themselves in the Oregon Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris world, future King family generations have hit the mark with this quality Riesling steal.

Viognier is a favorite on the holiday white wine spectrum, but is often hard to come by at a price that is reasonable enough for entertaining. Out of southern France's Languedoc region, comes the play on words “Long Duck” label, but don't let the play fool you, **Long Duck Viognier** is a great choice for salads, starters or even turkey this holiday and at this price it will keep you coming back all year long.

If a drier white is desired for the evening but still something light enough for salads, appetizers or shellfish, give the **Carabella Pinot Gris** a try. This Chehelam Mountains, Oregon wine really delights with lots of pear and citrus characteristic, stainless steel fermentation produces a crisp dry aromatic white that will truly delight your palate and change the way your view Pinot Gris.

A real crowd pleasing white comes in the form of **Pellegrini Sauvignon Blanc** from California's Lake County AVA. Don't turn your nose up at the thought of Sauvignon Blanc; this wine is just soft enough to make those who don't care for the typical grape fruity or grassy aspect of Sauvignon Blanc appreciate its softened character. A great alternative to Chardonnay and a better pairing than Chardonnay with most holiday appetizers.

With the weather turning cooler, red wine consumption jumps up a notch, if you are looking for something a little off the beaten path but pairs well with just about any food that the holidays can serve up, try the **Twisted Oak Grenache** out of Calabasas County, CA. Grenache is often overlooked but can be a great alternative to Pinot Noir for something light, yet spicy and full of character. Twisted Oak Grenache has all the berry fruit you would ever want, but don't be fooled by the fruit, this wine has just the right amount of tannin and minerality to please every part of your senses and pair perfectly with lighter meats, grilled dishes and hard cheeses.

Blends are always crowd pleasers and the **Tamarack Firehouse Red** out of Columbia Valley of Washington State fits the “crowd-pleasing” ideal perfectly. A blend of all 5 Bordeaux varietals with splashes of the Rhone and Tuscany, this wine with its ample fruit, chocolate and spice characteristics can go together with appetizers, roasted duck or by the fire pit just like an old friend.

If something a little drier and earthy is on your menu, try the **Ventisquero Yali Cabernet/Carmenere** from Chile's Colchagua Valley. Cabernet Sauvignon blended with Chile's signature Carmenere creates a rich wine with soft spice and hints of dark chocolate. This is great paired with grilled meats or stronger cheeses.

Well-balanced, overloaded with chocolate, cassis and ripe red fruits, the **Three Saints Cabernet Sauvignon** from the Santa Ynez Valley of California is a great change up for super-heavy, dry, highly tannic cabernets from warmer climates in California. Though it pairs well with most anything off the grill, or roasted beef, this Cabernet is pure delight from first sip, a pleasant surprise for both non-Cabernet and Cabernet-only drinkers.

For more holiday entertaining and pairing ideas or to purchase these wines, please visit VINO 100 in the Woodlands. Have a safe and happy holiday season.

Cheers,

Kelly Messenger

Proprietor and Sommelier

VINO 100 The Woodlands

281-419-3383

BERNHARDT WINERY, PLANTERSVILLE, TEXAS

Bernhardt Winery is a small, boutique winery producing classic varietals and unique blends. Producing approximately 8,000 gallons of wine each year, this winery with a Tuscan style tasting room sits on top of a beautiful hill overlooking endless hills and valleys reminiscent of Tuscany. It carries traditional wine merchandise, along with fine jellies, jams and sauces. Located just 8 miles west of the historical town of Montgomery, home of the Texas flag, and 17 miles east of Navasota, the jazz capital of Texas, this winery has become a favorite destination for many because of their great wines, warm environment, a beautiful B&B, and Sunday music lawn concerts. Bernhardt Winery is open Friday and Saturday noon to 6:00pm and Sunday 1:00 to 6:00 and other days by appointment. During concert season, mid-April to mid-

November, Sunday hours are 1:00pm to 8:00pm.

Jerry and Jerri Bernhardt opened Bernhardt Winery in July 2005. Both being retired educators, building a new business in the fast growing wine industry came from their desire for learning something new together. Their passion for learning about wine and winemaking has been transformed into a great destination for wine lovers.

Jerry and Jerri's travels to the Hill Country wineries introduced them to several wine makers whose expertise became a vital part of Jerry's knowledge of winemaking. One of the first wineries visited was Spicewood where the owners were both retired school teachers and had begun their second career. Then they traveled to Woodrose Winery where they met Brian Wilgus, owner, and realized the commonalities that he and Jerry had in their love for growing things and building. Jerry began a 3 year internship on weekends at Woodrose and assisted Brian in each area with his goal being to learn everything about growing grapes and the winemaking process. The Bernhardts said that they found the Texas wine industry to be a very fraternal industry and each winery so willing to share their knowledge and skills. In 2001, they made the decision to buy property in Plantersville, and in February 2002, the first vineyard was planted with help from many friends and family. This past October, the Bernhardts proudly released their first estate wine, Blanc du Bois, made from these vines. With a career in teaching architectural design, Jerry designed and built the winery which opened to the public in July 2005. After four years, the winery has grown in wine production as well as opening a new bed and breakfast, an events room, and has become a unique place for weddings.

Bernhardt Winery is also an active member of the Texas Bluebonnet Wine Trail and participates in numerous yearly activities. The first two weeks in December, the trail will be conducting the Holiday Wine Trail which allows participants to travel to each winery for a special holiday wine tasting paired with food. Other events are coordinated throughout the year.

The mission statement for the winery "To produce quality wines and provide a fun wine tasting experience in a warm environment" has never been taken lightly by Jerry or Jerri. They believe this has truly been a large part of their success in this fast growing wine industry.

For more information, go to www.bernhardtwinery.com or www.texasbluebonnetwinetrail.com.



**THE WINE SOCIETY OF
TEXAS - HOUSTON**

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EDITOR'S CORNER

As the air turns crisp and smoke wafts from chimneys it's time to dust off Cabernet Sauvignons and Ports to quaff while reading our newsletter. The Houston Chapter of the WST has emerged from a hiatus and offered four wonderful wine events this year with dinner at Liebman's Fine Foods, Haak winery, La Vista, and Flat Creek winery. Please join us next year for more wine tasting, fine dining, and fun.

Thank you for donating wine to Cancer Counseling's Silent Auction. They reported the Silent Auction grossed \$12,985 which was \$4,000 over last year.

The articles in this newsletter were created by members, winery owners and friends of the Wine Society of Texas. Thank you for your support and we are always looking for additional wine-related articles.

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.

We wish you a Merry Christmas, lots of Port to warm your spirits and a Happy New Year!

Cheers-Tenley Fukui

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Raymond and Glayds Haak from Haak Winery who will be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary on December 26th at their winery from 2-5 p.m. We wish them the best.

WINE AND FOOD PAIRING FOR EVERY DAY



This section intentionally left blank because no one sent in a food and wine pairing suggestion—Hint Hint.