

December 1, 2009

The Sommelier Says....

Hello and welcome to the newsletter for <http://www.wine-sommelier.com/>

Some wineries are now SIP Certified!

No this isn't a new wine tasting term- but it is a new trend that I saw in the Paso Robles area this past trip. SIP stands for Sustainability In Practice.

The Sustainability in Practice (SIP) Certification program provides a way for vineyard's to verify their attention to integrated farming practices through a commitment to environmental stewardship, equitable treatment of employees, and economic viability. Developed by the Central Coast Vineyard Team, a non-profit dedicated to sustainable winegrowing since 1994, this program represents one extension of the group's many innovative programs.

Quality Commitment

SIP Certification speaks to the farmer's commitment to protecting both natural and human resources. Growers and winemakers recognize that the care in which the fruit is grown represents an important layer of a quality product.

Whole Farm System

The rules, otherwise known as the Standards, address many inter-related elements of the whole farm system. Habitat conservation, energy efficiency, pest management, water conservation, economic stability, and human resources are just a few themes covered in the program. The Standards provide a comprehensive look at the farm in its entirety.

Values & Trust

The farmers and wineries show their dedication by practicing sustainable farming methods every day in the vineyard and investing in certification. Wine lovers interested in showing their dedication to these shared values can do so by choosing SIP Certified wines. The SIP Certified seal assures that the farmer has completed a process verifying the way the fruit was grown and confirms the wine was made with SIP certified fruit.

SIP Certified wineries include these favorites: Ampelos Cellars, Halter Ranch, Pomar Junction, and Robert Hall.

For more details visit the SIP website:

www.sipthegoodlife.org

Wineries must adjust to new \$50 ceiling

The era of the \$100-plus bottle may be over as the US recession takes its toll on Baby Boomers' wealth, according to a new report.

In the preliminary findings for its 2010-11 Annual State of the Wine Industry Report, Silicon Valley Bank warned that wineries need to adjust to a 'new normal' of reduced spending power – among the very consumers who have driven recent growth in the market.

'For that segment of Baby Boomers who have seen their net worth drastically reduced and who have been the prime target of wine marketing for nearly 20 years, a \$50 bottle of wine is now permanently out of the question for a normal purchase,' said Rob McMillan, report author and founder of the bank's Wine Division.

'Our current research is showing that the wine businesses continue to be pushed in this economic environment, and there is no expectation that what was normal for the past decade will return in short order.

'Defining a new normal and acting on that is more prudent than waiting for the old normal to return.'

According to the report, sales of fine wine – defined as \$20-plus per bottle – were down by as much as 11% in the first half of 2009, although the market has recovered slightly since then.

Only modest sales growth is expected in 2010, leading the bank to forecast a 'price reset' with more sub-\$50 wines on the market.

It also advised wineries to focus more of their marketing on the under-40s, pointing out that those aged 45-54 has seen their net worth fall by 45% over the past five years.

On a related note... Spectator's top wine a good choice

I thought it was pretty clever for Wine Spectator to choose the Columbia Crest 2005 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, which retails for \$27, as their Wine of the Year.

The Spectator has gotten a heavy reputation over the years for being a snobby, rich man's (emphasis on *man's*) magazine that caters to collectors and puffed-up winemakers who want to sell to collectors at inflated prices. That reputation worked back in the old days (i.e. pre-Fourth Quarter 2008), when money was flowing and everybody wanted the latest cult wine. But it's a lousy rep to have today, being totally inconsistent with the new national trend of modesty and

inconspicuous consumption. I obviously have no way of knowing the internal workings at Wine Spectator, but it wouldn't surprise me if the word hadn't gone out to the effect that *"Let there be something inexpensive this year."* And, lo and behold, there was something inexpensive, not to mention relatively accessible, and from a major commercial producer.

What do White House Party Crashers and a Virginia Winery have in common?

Tareq and Michaela Salahy once owned and operated Oasis Winery in Virginia.

Tareq Salahy and his wife, Michaela, purchased the property in the mid-1970s and planted French hybrid grapes as a hobby. Salahy soon learned that the soil was well suited for grape growing and turned his hobby into a business.

According to the Fairfax Times.com it was back in 2007 that NBA superstar Shaquille O'Neal showed up out of the blue with an offer to buy Oasis. This was surprising to Tareq and Michaela. The winery was not for sale.

One day last June, [2007] Shaquille O'Neal, one of the world's best-known athletes, showed up at the vineyard unannounced. Michaela Salahy, a former model who'd known O'Neal through charity circles, said, "I just said to him 'What are you doing here? And he said, 'I've been talking to Mrs. Salahy and I'm thinking of buying Oasis.'"

Neither said they knew the vineyard was for sale, which Tareq said was a violation of their family partnership, naming the parents as 70 percent owners and Tareq and his brother Ishmael as 30 percent owners. His father, 80-year-old Durgham Salahy, has Parkinson's disease and suffers from dementia. "She listed the place without my authorization," Tareq said. "But we felt Shaq might make a good partner for our growth plans.

Those plans fell through along with many others...

Oasis Winery filed for Chapter 7.

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

What wine is this?

Last Issues answer: Chablis From France

Sight: Clear, day bright, medium-minus concentration, pale straw color with hints of green. Medium-minus viscosity.

Nose: Medium-plus intensity. Youthful aromas of grapefruit, lemon and crisp green apple. Strong herbaceous tones including grass and tarragon, as well as white flowers. Mineral laden, suggestive of chalk and flint. No oak.

Palate: Dry, medium body. Grapefruit, lemon, gooseberry and tart apple. Slight floral with herbal notes. Grassy. Chalk dust and wet stones. No oak. Medium alcohol, medium-plus acid, medium-plus length and finish.

If you think you know, drop me a note- the first correct response wins a bottle of wine from my personal wine cellar!

Upcoming Events:

March 6/7- 32nd annual Barrel Tasting along the Wine Road! 100+ Wineries! To taste at any of the participating wineries these weekends, you will need to purchase the Barrel Tasting ticket (\$20 available online on January 18). <http://www.wineroad.com/annualevents/3>

Cheers-

Tim

If you would like to be removed from this list, please reply to me at tim@wine-sommelier.com and request removal from this list.

If you know someone that wants this list, please have him or her send me an email requesting to be included too!