

December 15, 2008

The Sommelier Says....

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

Has everyone got his or her Christmas shopping done? I didn't think so ✍

Where does a Sommelier Shop?

Here are a few links to some online wine supply stores when you are looking to buy something for the wine lover that has everything.

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

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

<http://www.vinearts.net/index.php>

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

Do you need wine insurance?

Your hand slips while decanting a bottle of Château Pétrus 1982, sending the bottle and its precious contents crashing to the floor. You return from vacation to find that your climate-controlled wine storage unit has malfunctioned and that the interior temperature reads 95° F. A fire ignites in your basement, engulfing your entire wine cellar in flames.

Hopefully, in any of these instances you have insurance. But does that mean you're actually insured?

Just because you have a homeowner's policy doesn't mean that your wine cellar is fully protected. Basic homeowner's coverage is usually limited to theft or fire. A policy that insures your house for \$1 million only covers your dwelling for that amount. It may also include an additional 50 percent of contents coverage, meaning a \$1 million policy reimburses the homeowner for closer to \$1.5 million. But because wine is included in the contents portion of your home, it is important to find out if your contents coverage is sufficient for covering not only your furnishings, clothing and other household goods, but also your wine collection. Most homeowner's policies are further subject to a deductible clause, which can range from hundreds to thousands of dollars. That means you might receive only a fraction of the value of your collection in the event that it is stolen or destroyed. Ideally, a wine collection, like other valuables such as silver, antiques, coins or fine jewelry, should be separately insured against fire, breakage and theft. If you have a collection worth several thousand dollars, there are two options worth considering: a blanket policy or a stand-alone wine insurance policy. Both cost about the same and give you considerably better coverage than a standard homeowner's policy.

A blanket policy insures your wine under one lump sum and is appropriate for bottles valued at less than \$1,000 each. All you have to do is total the value of the wine to be insured. While no documentation is required, hiring a professional appraiser to itemize your collection can help determine if a blanket policy is right for your entire collection.

A stand-alone policy insures your wines individually and is suitable for collections full of expensive items like older wines or rare large-format bottles. Individual appraisals are only required for bottles worth \$10,000 or more. Laura Clark, a vice president at insurance company Chubb, says that many collectors opt for a blended policy. "They schedule their more expensive bottles and blanket the less expensive ones," she relates.

Under most blanket policies, the maximum coverage per bottle is \$10,000. So if someone insures \$100,000 worth of wine under a blanket policy, yet happens to have a \$25,000 bottle stolen from his cellar, the payout for that bottle would be limited to \$10,000. If the same bottle were itemized in a stand-alone policy, it could be covered for up to 150 percent of its original cost, depending on the percentage set by the insurer at the time the policy is made. Thus the "deemed replacement cost" of a \$25,000 bottle could be as high as \$37,500. In addition, it's incumbent upon the policy holder to notify his insurance company of any significant increase in the value of his wine collection. A wine listed in the books for \$2,000 that has a current value of \$10,000 may end up being underinsured.

The premium you pay and the exact coverage you get is a function of your specific insurer. Wine insurance premiums are fairly standard. They cost between 42 and 50 cents per \$100 of coverage, which means the typical premium on a \$50,000 cellar will run about \$250. (Policy holders in California may pay an additional 20 percent for earthquake coverage.) However, unless the applicant already has a homeowner's or automobile policy with the company in question, few insurers will write a blanket or stand-alone policy for less than a \$500 premium; it's simply not cost-efficient.

All wine insurance policies protect against theft and fire. No deductibles apply against a covered claim. But what happens to the '82 Pétrus that is dropped instead of stolen? Chubb, AIG and AXA are among the few insurers that cover their policy holders against accidental breakage. Chubb will provide up to \$5,000 in spoilage coverage due to the failure of refrigeration equipment. AXA will completely cover wines housed in a storage facility that are damaged due to a mechanical breakdown caused by fire or lightning (but not poor maintenance). AIG provides full coverage due to equipment malfunction.

Charlines Urban Tapas and Wine Bar

Every time I drive down Main Street in Ventura, I see another new wine bar, so in my quest to find a new place to sample the wines of the world, I stopped into

Charlines Urban Tapas and Wine Bar a few weeks ago on a Saturday night. We got there rather early, about 8pm, and were quickly seated.

It is a cute little place, they do have live music during the weekends, but it had not started yet when we were there. Upon reviewing the wine list, I was taken back by the names of the wines, most had interesting or cute names, some familiar like Earthquake, 6th Sense, 7 Deadly Zins, and those were surrounded by Luscious Lips, Red Guitar and Layercake.

It was obvious that the wine list was selected by the wine names, and after having a couple of different wines; it was obvious that they were not selected on how they taste. The most expensive wine on the entire list was... come on what varietal do you think? Cabernet? Nope guess again.... Bordeaux... don't even go there in this place, Pinot Noir? You would think right? Nope it was a \$15 a glass Rombauer CHARDONNAY. Yes and there are 5 different Chardonnays on the list.

Charlines does have tapas available as well; we did have the sample plate, bring a napkin because you will need to wipe the grease from your fingers after eating these as well. The most interesting thing was a deep fried *mac and cheese* ball.

One more thing, don't get me started on their 12oz wine glasses! (*I am talking weight here*).

I would take a pass on Charlines unless they get better quality wines, it does have character, but, if I am going to pay \$10 a glass, I want it to be good wine.

Charlines is located at 546 Main Street, Ventura Ca.

Sonoma Barrel Tasting Weekend- Update

Mark March 7/8 on your calendars... it will be time for the annual Sonoma Barrel Tasting weekend! This will be the 31st year of Barrel Tasting! Over 100 wineries in the Alexander, Dry Creek and Russian River Valleys throw open their cellar doors for you to sample wine from the barrel, purchase futures, meet winemakers and sample current release wines. Must be 21 years of age or older to attend event; kindly leave pets and underage children at home. All details available at <http://www.wineroad.com/>

My plans are flying up to Oakland Saturday morning, driving to Sonoma and having a hotel in the area for the weekend. We come home on Sunday night.

Southwest Airlines has 'wanna get away' fares that I recently priced at about \$375 a couple round trip. Plus the hotel in [Courtyard Santa Rosa](#) 175 Railroad Street Santa Rosa, CA 95401 is \$150 a night. (***I have already booked mine***).

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.