

November 5, 2009

The Sommelier Says....

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

The Family Kitchen and Wine Bar

In the immortal words of Manny Ramirez... "I am back". It might have a new name but the same location and a great menu, where you can come in and enjoy a nice steak dinner. John Farugia, the owner of the Family Kitchen called me a few weeks back and asked me to come in and give him a hand. Since then we have had some of the best nights he has ever had. The wine list will be growing in the coming weeks, along with some wine classes too! Drop on by and say hi!
2792 Cochran St., Simi Valley, CA 93065

How many points did this wine get?

Most of you know my opinion of wine ratings- I really don't care for them. But we all know that they are here to stay. I have found that there are two distinct groups of wine drinkers that buy their wines by using the ratings system. Number one- the new wine drinkers, who want to buy a wine that they have heard is good, and number two- the wine drinkers with too much money ☺. The middle of the road wine drinkers, those that understand that the most important thing in drinking wines, is in finding a wine that you like and drinking that.

There may be no more contentious a question to a sommelier's ears in a restaurant these days. When a customer inquires about how many points a wine has received from the usual critics, it opens a Pandora's box of pride, concern, humility, admiration, and disgust. The sommelier's reaction is likely to be downright Shakespearean in depth and breadth of passion.

At one end of the spectrum, the simple mention of the "p" word can turn a sage, well-gathered professional into a momentarily overcome-with-rage, well-lathered professional, replete with grand cru profanity. When will American diners start to listen to their own palates?

On the flip side, another sommelier might welcome the query wholeheartedly—perhaps with a full recitation of the exact scores from more than one source. Not so long ago, many wine and restaurant professionals looked to these (mostly) experienced, erudite, and eloquent wine critics for honest guidance, trusting their scoring systems as reliable gauges upon which to base wine-buying decisions.

Considering how much has been written about the merits of the now-ubiquitous 100-point scale—which is really a 20-point scale, since anything below 80 is hardly worth mentioning, the rating system works- if you look at where those ratings are coming from.

I recently checked out various wine ratings listed on Bev Mo's website.

2005 Lancaster Cabernet Sauvignon (\$70 a bottle)

ClubBev: 95

Willford Wong : 91

Wine Spectator : 88

Wine Enthusiast : 95

Altos Las Hormigas Malbec 2006 (\$13 a bottle)

Willford Wong : 85

Wine Spectator : 84

Stephen Tanzer: 88

Robert Parker: 90

2005 Beringer PR Cabernet (\$115 a bottle)

Willford Wong : 92

Wine Spectator : 93

Wine Enthusiast : 87

Stephen Tanzer: 94

Robert Parker: 92

2006 Ch Lafite Rothschild (\$600 a bottle)

Willford Wong : 95

Wine Spectator : 95

Wine Enthusiast : 99

Robert Parker: 97

Would you buy any of these wines over another based upon their ratings only? The prices range from \$13 to \$600 a bottle! A wine that Robert Parker rated a 90 is \$13, and the one he rated 97 is \$600. Is a seven-point difference worth that much in price?

One of the most respected wine rating systems is the one developed by Robert Parker in *The Wine Advocate*. The scale goes from 50 to 100 and awards color, appearance, aroma and bouquet, flavor and overall quality a set number of points. Wines over 80 are 'considered' very good and over 90 are regarded as excellent. Of course a 95 is a better score than a 90.

A week ago I put a wine rating on the wine list at The Family Kitchen, I had one old-timer, point it out to me and laugh, while 4 other patrons asked for a glass of the wine without a taste first. When I asked them why they wanted a glass of the wine they all responded that the wines rating was they deciding factor. In all but one case, that was the only glass of that wine they bought, and moved on to another, less expensive wine after that. But one individual bought three glasses of that wine.

Wine Ratings do matter, to some wine drinkers. Should I have the ratings on the wine lists? If I do, whose rating should I include? I do not have Robert Parker's palette...yet. Should I include my ratings of the wines? Willford Wong's ☺

Drop me a note and let me know your opinion on this.

What wine is this?

Sight: Opaque, bright, dark purple with high concentration and pink rim, high viscosity with a heavy purple stain to the tears.

Nose: Clean with high intensity, dried fig, blackberry and blueberry aromas. Secondary aromas of lilacs, rosemary, smoked meat, slight black pepper, mint, with bitter chocolate, dill and burnt toast suggesting some new American barrel.

Palate: Dry, with a sweet attack, full-bodied, jammy black and blue fruit flavors confirmed on the palate alongside dried date and fig, smoke and dried spices. Confirm sweet oak flavors, possibly American. Medium plus tannin, medium acid, and high alcohol lead into a medium plus finish.

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

How to open a wine bottle without a corkscrew

You will love this!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9s89FqNpXO4>

Upcoming Events:

November 20/21- Paso Robles Wine trip, I am going up Saturday morning and staying at the Holiday Inn Express. I am planning on going to about 7-8 wineries that weekend. If you want to join us, drop me a note!

March 6/7 2010- Sonoma Valley Barrel Tasting weekend. This will be my 5th year going, and it is a blast. Plan to join us this year! Details in upcoming issues.

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!