

October 10, 2009

The Sommelier Says....

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

Wine Clubs- should you join one... or two... or five...

In this current economy, many people are looking ways to cut their expenses, the ones they can afford to live without. Many people are cutting their back on wine club memberships. While this might seem like a good solution, while saving the \$100 every other month, but many of you will be losing the benefits that joining a wine club can bring you, and wine as we all know, wine has many benefits.

I want you to rethink that logic and consider joining wine clubs in this economy. Why? Because you do get discounts, and you will always have wine to enjoy from your favorite vintner, and if you are reading this newsletter, you are a wine lover.

If you are considering joining a wine club, there are a few things to keep in mind. Find one that doesn't tie you into a long-term contract. Many wine tasting clubs operate by letting you choose how many months you'd like to continue for, and allow you to discontinue at any time without penalty or cost. You typically just get billed for the wines as they arrive, or one at a time beforehand.

You should also consider joining a wine club if you buy wine and enjoy them every time you visit that particular winery. If you do, then this is one way you can guarantee that you always know when the latest releases that are available, and you get a decent discount- usually between 20-30 % per bottle and free wine tasting when you do visit the winery.

A few of the wine clubs that I belong to are not local, but they are in Oregon and Sonoma County. Locations that I can't get to in a day, but wineries that have wines that I consider consistent on a year after year basis, and I want to stay in touch with what they are producing. Plus again, the discounts are worth it.

Many wineries depend upon wine club sales as a part of their survival, and if you have favorite wineries, to support them, I would suggest joining their clubs.

The cost of these wine clubs varies as well, it depends upon the number of bottles and the frequency of shipments. No two clubs I belong to, have the same package – they range from every other month, to quarterly, and bi-annually. I even have one that has one shipment a year. The costs range from \$45 a shipment for 2 bottles to over \$400 for 6 reserve wines annually. Find one in your price range, with a winery that you enjoy, and a history of being constant.

Many of our local wineries have wine clubs; here are some of their details.

Rancho Ventavo Cellars, Oxnard-

Four times a year you have the opportunity to select two bottles of wine your choice,
Up to 25% off regular retail prices on the winemaker's selection.
Complimentary wine tasting for four whenever you visit the tasting room
Priority reservations and access to our front porch seating during summer concerts.
Members will enjoy discounts on winemaker dinners and other selected special events, and an invitation to the annual Release Day BBQ.

Cantara Cellars, Oxnard-

20% off wine and all retail
Free tastings for members and 4 guests.
You choose the 4 bottles for your shipment.
4 bottles 3 times/year
1 year commitment
Pick-up parties during the months of March, July, and November.

Herzog Cellars- Oxnard-

Herzog has 4 different wine clubs, for different tastes, and costs. Some of the various benefits are:

Up to 20% off regular retail prices on the wine selection.
Complimentary wine tasting whenever you visit the tasting room
Priority reservations and discounts at Tierra Sur Restaurant
Invitations to member-only events at the winery, including winemaker dinners, music events, and guest speakers.

Other local wineries with Wine Clubs include, Old Creek Ranch in Ojai, Casa Barranca, in Ojai, Malibu Family Wines, and Rosenthal Estates.

And on a related note...

Quick, what pairs well with feminism, guns and The New York Times?

Apparently, wine. The California National Organization for Women, the National Rifle Association and the Times are just a few of a growing cadre of unlikely groups launching wine clubs as a way to raise cash and strengthen ties with supporters.

Feminist Wine Club: www.bottlenotes.com/feminist-wine-club

New York Times Wine Club: www.nytwineclub.com/

NRA wine club: www.nrawineclub.com

Paring Wines with Foods- The Basics

Ask any servers what wine question they hear most on the floor, and the answer will likely be the same: “What should I drink with my meal?” Wine professionals know that it’s not just about “fish or meat,” that preparations and seasonings are frequently more important than core proteins in choosing wines.

It’s not uncommon for wines that may be preferred on first sip to fall flat once the appetizers arrive, while others that seem less pleasant on their own turn out to shine when food enters the picture. Food components clearly alter our perception of wine, just as wine alters our perception of food.

Some wine/food components have their own unique effects—like the acid-blocking power of salt, the mildly painful burn of spicy heat, and the tannin-softening action of animal fats and protein—and some combinations have unexpected results—like the shockingly brittle sourness of a dry wine after a sugary sauce, not unlike orange juice after toothpaste.

Most effects of food on wine perception follow one unifying principle: similar sensations seem weaker together, not stronger. Sweet wine combined with sweet food will taste less sweet, not more sweet. Rich foods and full-bodied wines will feel lighter together, not heavier. The same is true for all our senses: when a movie starts, they don’t turn up the lights so we can see the screen better. Sensory perceptions are most vivid in isolation. The effect of pairing wines and foods with similar dominant features—tangy with tangy, smoky with oaky, dark red meat with dark red wine—is generally harmonious, which helps explain why so many great matches involve pairing “like with like.”

I want you to try these little experiments on your own and let me know what you think-

Salt

Taste a high-acid wine like a Sauvignon Blanc or Chianti before and after a pinch of kosher salt.

Sugar

Taste a high-sugar wine like a white Zinfandel or an off-dry Riesling before and after a dollop of honey.

Fat

Taste two full-bodied wines, such as a California Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, before and after a dollop of butter.

Acidity

Taste a high-acid wine and a low-acid wine, like a dry Riesling and a buttery Chardonnay. Compare them before and after tasting two acidic foods, one mild and one strong, such as a cherry tomato and a lemon wedge.

Drop me a note at tim@wine-sommelier.com with your observations.

What wine is this?

Sight: Opaque, bright, moderate ruby with medium plus concentration fading to slight orange on the rim, high viscosity with a moderate stain in the legs.

Nose: Clean with moderate plus aromatic intensity. On the nose the wine shows sweet maraschino cherry, prune, and stewed strawberry. Mint and eucalyptus, turned earth and slight black tea leaf, but the wine is dominated by raisinated fruit notes. Vanilla and coconut indicates mixed use barrel, possibly American oak.

Palate: Dry but with ripe, sappy texture, full bodied, stewed fruit flavors confirmed on the palate and the mint resonates, medium tannin, medium acidity, possibly acidified, high alcohol and a moderate finish.

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

Check out these Wine Spectator wine videos!

The winner is "Paso Rap." Second place goes to "Worth the Wait." Third place to "Hot Bottle Issue." Watch all nine finalists, with themes ranging from Bollywood to film noir and a righteous terroir rap.

<http://www.winespectator.com/videovoting>

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!