

Tasting Monterey

A WINE ENTHUSIAST'S MONTHLY JOURNEY THROUGH MONTEREY'S WINE COUNTRY

COMING EVENTS

Friday, Dec 2, 2011
First Fridays Art Walk
 A Taste of Monterey
 Old Town Salinas
 5:00pm-8:00pm*
 Stop by A Taste of Monterey in Old Town Salinas on your journey through the First Fridays Art Walk. Enjoy art from a featured local artist, while we stay open later!

Saturday, Dec 3, 2011
Holiday Port Party
 A Taste of Monterey
 Cannery Row
 7:00pm-9:00pm*
 Enjoy Chocolate and Cheese tastings to complement some wonderful Monterey Ports! Check our Facebook or website for more details.

Friday, Dec 30, 2011
Last Fridays Wine Bar
 A Taste of Monterey
 Cannery Row
 6:00pm-9:00pm*
 Join us on the last Friday of every month from 6pm to 9pm. A Taste of Monterey, Cannery Row is keeping its doors open later and offering special wine by the glass prices. Start your weekend off with a relaxing view and a glass of Monterey's finest.

* No new tastings after 5:45pm

WINTER REFERRALS



Refer a friend to the Monterey Wine Club, and after they join, you get a \$20.00 Gift Card!



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The Late Grapes

Mentioning of late harvest wine typically conjures images of white dessert wine... while this is not inaccurate, there's much more to say. For starters, late harvest wines are produced in red form as well, and it's not just that they are left on the vine for an extended period.

Late harvest wines are also often mistakenly referred to as port wines (port-style wines are classified as "fortified wines;" the subject of a separate article entirely on its own!). Sweet wines produced with different Muscat grapes, such as Orange Muscat or July Muscat, are also occasionally confused with late harvest wines. While Muscat grapes can be used for late harvests, most of the time these wines are just highly concentrated, and the Muscat grape itself imparts the sweetness one encounters...maybe it's the similar small bottles used for Muscat wine as for late harvests that cause the confusion as well.

"Late harvest" refers to wines produced from grapes left in vineyards, normally one to two months after average normal wine grape harvest periods, that have been affected by a mold/fungus called Botrytis cinerea (AKA: "noble rot" or just as "botrytis"). The grapes themselves become naturally dehydrated as the mold takes hold on them, eventually appearing more like raisins than grapes. Although this may initially sound like there's not much to it – there is.

Conditions have to be perfect for botrytis to occur properly. Moist conditions must be present initially, but too wet for too long of a period can be ruinous as drier conditions are needed after an initial moist period. Even if this occurs, a sudden rise in humidity levels can ruin the process and end up spoiling entire harvests. Leaving the grapes on the vine for longer periods also always carries the risk that they will be ravaged by foraging critters.

To make the situation even more precarious, noble rot doesn't happen evenly on the vines, making harvesting late harvest grapes challenging. Pickers have to consistently monitor vines searching for grape bunches ready for the next step, and sometimes individual grapes are even picked.

In theory, the winemaking process for late harvest wines is not much different than with normal wines. However, the amount of juice produced from noble rot grapes is a lot less...thus there is definitely an added element of complexity. Grapes typically used for white late harvest wines include Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier, Semillion and Muscat. For red late harvest wines, Zinfandel, Merlot, Cabernet France, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon are likely the most usual suspects you will encounter.

Wines made from noble rot grapes are indeed normally quite sweet, as when the grapes dry out, the sugars inside them become more concentrated. These wines are also intensely concentrated in their different flavors, depending on the varietal(s) used, although a hint of "nuttness" does seem to prevail. They are indeed lovely with desserts - pumpkin pie, tarts, cheesecake, cheeses, even fresh peaches or pears...all some of our favorites!

Late harvest wines are popular in France (such as in the form of "Sauternes"), in Germany (where they actually produce some dry late harvest wines) and in Hungary's Tokaji region. Late harvest wine and ice wine are believed to have first been produced in Roman times, then forgotten, then later re-invented in Germany a few hundred years ago. This style of wine is relatively rare in the United States, but seems to be growing in popularity. In California, we're seeing winemakers perpetually experimenting with different varietals, blends and styles when crafting late harvest wines.



As for Monterey County, we do have some winemakers producing late harvest wines. The coastal influence of overnight fog followed by warmer afternoons provides for potentially ideal growing areas for late harvest grapes. An excellent and delicious example of one is the Chesebro Late Harvest Sauvignon Blanc...it's like drinking liquid gold!

Now, if the grapes are left on the vine even longer than late harvest grapes, until they literally freeze, then we're moving on to an entirely different category of wine: ice wine. Normally ice wine grapes are harvested roughly two months after regular wine grapes are picked (that would be about one month after late harvest grapes are picked).

Continued Inside

MONTHLY WINE SELECTIONS

VENTANA VINEYARDS - 2008 *Tempranillo*



Here is another winning effort from Miguel and his winemaking team at Ventana Vineyards. It seems Tempranillo is one of his favorite grapes to work with since it always enjoys a bright berry flavor with firm acids and light tannins. This is a delightful wine to sip with Tapas and chips or even a light-styled pizza such as a Margherita. And believe it or not, the light structure holds up well to a spicy bowl of chili too.

The vines were planted in 2000 with 2005 being the first wine vintage. This high altitude Tempranillo clone prefers cooler temperatures and rocky soil. De-stemmed grapes were fermented in a six ton open-top fermentor. Must was hand-punched three times daily. The wine was pressed until dry, then immediately placed in oak barrels for ML fermentation and 14 months of aging.

100% Tempranillo

14.3% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2014

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

CHRISTOPHER • PAUL WINES - 2008 *Chardonnay*



Christopher Paul Wines, based out of Monterey County's Santa Lucia Highlands AVA, is a small production (550 total cases) winery. Their vision is to stay small and develop a cult-like following of their wines. Their winemaking philosophy has two parts. First, source quality grapes and use quality ingredients. Great wine can only come from great vineyards and can only be made using the best barrels and yeasts. Second, they believe that moderation in the winemaking process is the best way to achieve integrated and complex wines. Their goal is to use the tools available to the winemaker in a manner that adds complexity to the finished wine without overpowering the quality fruit that is the centerpiece of their wines

The 2008 Chardonnay was 100% barrel fermented and aged sur lie in 1/3 new French oak. It went part way through malolactic fermentation. The resulting wine is well balanced with bright citrus flavors and a soft, buttery finish. It is wonderful when paired with a fresh mediterranean salad or savory chicken dish.

100% Chardonnay

14.2% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2012

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

VENTANA VINEYARDS - 2009 *Chardonnay* (Club Blanc)



Ventana's "Gold Stripe" Chardonnay has lively tropical fruit aromas of pineapple and mango. It is well balanced and tastes of Gala apple, pear and lemon zest. Aging in French Oak adds accents of vanilla and light honey tones. The perfect balance of fruit, oak and acidity makes this an exceptional sipping and food friendly Chardonnay. Enchanting with Dungeness Crab or Scallop Risotto; Golf Stripe Chardonnay will also pair nicely with an Apple Spiced Pork Roast.

The cool climate region of Arroyo Seco allows for a long hang time for the Chardonnay grapes and results in intense tropical flavored wine. After gentle pressing, the juice is chilled for 36-48 hours. Half is then racked into French barrels for fermentation, and the other half into stainless steel. The wine ferments cool to retain the intense tropical qualities of the fruit. Next, it is allowed to rest on its lees, using a battonage program.

100% Chardonnay

14.2% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2013

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

HAHN WINERY - 2010 *Pinot Noir* (Club Red)



The Hahn 2010 Pinot showcases all that is exceptional about Monterey County Pinot Noir. Fresh raspberry and black cherry scents are intense and concentrated followed in the mid-palate by decadent berry compote flavors with fragrant cardamom and clove undertones. This is a rich and vibrant wine whose purity of Pinot Noir flavors are given dimension by a light touch of toasty oak, supported by earthy tannins and classic cool-climate acidity. This versatile wine stands alone well, but would be a perfect partner to a variety of fish, poultry or pasta dishes. Try it with risotto with shellfish, wild mushrooms and pancetta, roast five-spice duck with mango chutney or a traditional pairing of grilled salmon with Pinot Noir pan sauce and garlic mashed potatoes.

100% Pinot Noir

14.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2015

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

Cover Article Continued

True ice wines require a hard freeze to occur. This doesn't just mean that the temperatures must reach the freezing level of 32° Fahrenheit; for ice wines we're talking well-below 20°. Now you know why you don't see any Monterey County ice wines.

The grapes for ice wines have to be pressed while still at least mostly frozen, so picking takes place at night or early mornings and is done as quickly as possible (night picking is also popular for late harvests). Unlike late harvest wine though, botrytis-affected grapes are not normally used and the winemaking process for ice wines is quite different from normal wine production. Having such high sugar levels (even higher than with late harvest wines) from the fruit results in a slow fermentation period. The fermentation period can extend up to a matter of months, compared to weeks or even days for normal wines.

Additionally, special yeast strains have to be used for ice wine production and, eventual yields will be even lower than with late harvest wines. Varietals typically used to produce ice wines include Riesling, Vidal, Seyval Blanc, Chardonnay, Gewurztraminer, Chenin Blanc, Pinot Blanc, Merlot (yes, there are red ice wines as well), Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc.

Canada and Germany are the world's frontrunners in ice wine production; however, it was the Canadians who perfected and commercialized the practice in the mid-1980s, and they continue to be the world's largest producer of this specialized form of wine. Ice wines are produced in other wine regions of the world, but not to a great extent. U.S. production of quality ice wine is largely limited to select growing regions that have the appropriate climate, such as the states of New York and Michigan.

The need for a unique location, difficulty and risks in growing and harvesting, extreme challenges in winemaking, and low yields - no wonder these late harvest wines tend to be pricey!

-Bryce Ternet

(Bryce Ternet is a contributing editor and is the author of three books.

"Like" him at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/M-Bryce-Ternet/124070024286223>)



A YEAR *In the Vineyard*



Once again, back to the vineyards. Last month we described expectations for the 2011 Monterey County harvest and provided a grower's prediction on the coming 2012 season. But let's return to what's been occurring in the vineyards themselves over the last couple of months.

Following the harvest, the vines continue to experience a degree of photosynthesis. During this time, carbohydrate reserves are created throughout the process and stored in the roots and trunks of the vines. This storing of carbs will go on until the vine can retain no more, after which time the chlorophyll in the leaves begins breaking down (we see this through the changing color of the leaves). From the time of the first frost, the leaves begin falling as the vine enters its winter dormancy period.

As the leaves have fallen, we have come to the conclusion of our discussion. It's been a pleasure being with you on our journey into the seasonal lifecycle of the vineyards over the past year. Just as the vines are now going dormant for their winter nap, we sign-off as well and look forward to the cycle beginning again in the spring. *Cheers!*

RECIPE

GLÜHWEIN - *for the Holidays*

Serves: 4

Mulled wine, called "Glühwein" in German, is a traditional and tasty Christmas drink in Germany and the perfect treat for cold winter days. It is most often found and consumed at the Weihnachtsmärkten (Christmas Markets), that are found all over the country and throughout Europe. Making Glühwein at home too, is perfect for the holidays. It's a great drink to have after a bracing walk or yet another shopping trip. Another good reason to make it is that it makes the house smell so wonderfully festive.

Ingredients:

1 bottle	robust dry red wine (a good inexpensive Merlot would work well)
1	lemon, sliced
3	oranges, sliced
6 sticks	cinnamon
8-10	cloves
3 tablespoons	sugar
3-5	anis (whole)
	optional ingredients: cardamom, nutmeg, 1 cup of brandy

Method:

1. Pour the red wine into a large pot and begin heating over low heat (don't boil).
2. Add cinnamon, cloves, sugar and anis (and optional ingredients to taste).
3. Heat thoroughly, then add the sliced oranges and lemon.
4. Simmer the mixture about 45 minutes over low heat (make sure not to boil the wine).
5. Have a try and add more sugar if you want to; then strain and serve the drink hot in mugs.
6. Garnish with orange slices or a cinnamon stick.





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PLEASE SEND QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS TO:

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CLUB SAVINGS

Remember, as a Club Member, you receive a 15% discount on all purchases (20% for Quattro and Cellar members) and a weekly complimentary tasting.

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 Christopher - Paul Wines 2008 Chardonnay		\$23.00	\$17.25	\$18.40
 Ventana Vineyards 2009 Chardonnay		\$19.00	\$14.25	\$15.20
 Hahn Winery 2010 Pinot Noir		\$12.00	\$9.00	\$9.60
NOVEMBER SELECTIONS	PRICES EXPIRE 01/31/2012			
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 Pelerin Wines 2010 Sierra Mar Chardonnay		\$42.00	\$31.50	\$33.60
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