

From: The BrightWines Beacon <lighthouse@brightwines.com>
Subject: Carpe Vinum: C's the wine!
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To: The BrightWines Beacon

The BrightWines Beacon for 9/23 - 9/24 through 9/30/16: Carpe Vinum! C's the wine. (a long, but fun, late-night read)

Yep, the pun is intended on seize the day. This weekend, whether it's a Chianti Colli Senesi from Tuscany, or a **91-point rated** California Red Blend, or a classy Corbieres carignan dry rose, or a Cline "ancient vines" Carignane red from Contra Costa county - plus an impressive old-vines high-altitude Carignan from the Languedoc too, or the Creta robe 91-point Tempranillo, or just a re-stocked range of California Cabernet and Chardonnay, and more...

I encourage you to **seize the day, drink the wine, Carpe Vinum!** Read on to BRIGHT LIGHTS today to C what I'm talkin' bout...

THE LAMP IS LIT: Store Hours and Tasting Schedule this weekend and next week

**** SATURDAY September 24th: OPEN from 10am to 6:30pm** (regular hours) plus **RSVP Guided Tasting at 6:30pm**

-- tasting details --

Saturday evening, tomorrow September 24th, from 6:30pm until 7:30/8pm (with time for shopping favorites) will be a **Guided Tasting of new arrivals, recent newsletter favorites, and more.** If supplies allow we'll taste one of the new arrival Affordable Luxury reds - perhaps the Tuscan 2009 or other suitable "special treat" red, as well as a range of other recent favorites and new arrivals. Please **RSVP by email if you would like to attend this guided tasting - a free instore sampling** that will be fun yet informative too. Just reply to this newsletter and I will confirm space available later yet later this evening or by mid-afternoon on Saturday. Space is limited to approx 24 tasters.

**** NEXT WEEK:** Monday September 26th through Saturday October 1st, **OPEN REGULAR HOURS**

Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday OPEN 11am - 6:30pm daily, Thursday/Friday OPEN at 10:30am, Saturday OPEN at 10am.

WINE SEMINAR #5 (the 5th in an ongoing series) **WEDNESDAY September 28th at 7pm** - RSVP required)
(part of an ongoing series, new for 2016. This is Wine Seminar #5 and our first try at a Wednesday evening)

WHAT: educational, comparison sampling, a WINE SEMINAR on "**The Art of the Blend**" (top-rated red blends)

HOW: One \$25 admission covers 2 people for sampling and purchases a bottle of \$25 retail "red blend/meritage" from the tasting
RSVP by email if you would like to attend, space is limited to no more that 10 admissions (up to 20 people). Each \$25 admission covers 2 spots at the tasting bar AND also purchases one bottle of \$25 retail "red blend/meritage" from the tasting. The \$25 admission cost is payable in-store at the seminar and covers 2 people for tasting, but is limited to the one take-home bottle included per "admission". We'll sample top-rated wines and affordable luxury as well as some smart-buys for good value in side-by-side comparisons on "The Art of the Blend".

WHEN: this coming WEDNESDAY September 28th from 7pm until about 8pm/8:30pm.

FAQ: inquire with Dave (just reply to this email) with questions and/or to RSVP to attend.

(RSVP required, all-inclusive admission of \$25 covers 2 people plus a great bottle purchased from the tasting slate)

THE VIEW FROM THE TOP: casting aspersions at Carignan

So this week's "Dave's Top Pick" wine is an on-again/off-again (mostly on, frankly) favorite California red wine. Reps for Cline winery in Sonoma (and Contra Costa, and Sonoma Coast) were in town this past week on one of their semi-annual promo weeks and I had a chance to sample every single sub-\$20 Cline wine the local wholesaler handles, side-by-side-by-side for a total of a baker's dozen worth of current Cline offerings. Naturally I just picked my favorites two bargains and two nicer. The BEST wine in the entire Cline lineup under \$20 is once again the "Ancient Vines" CARIGNANE from Contra Costa County. Once I chose this wine and the "C" theme for my newsletter this week, I thought it would be fun to include a brief article on the subject of Carignan as a grape variety. We recently tasted several Carignan as part of the Languedoc feature here (I still have an impressive French example) and this Cline version is great too.

In my research on the Carignan variety, I found more criticism of the grape than praise. Even the best comments could easily be construed as damning with faint praise. So in fit of whimsy, I thought it would be fun to quote some of the better insults I found on Carignan. Why not try

a little reverse psychology to promote my current picks for this style of wine/? So with a lot of help from sources listed in my Oxford Companion to wine, here are some interesting - and rather humorously critical - tidbits on Carignan, the varietal.

(all of the following commentary taken from: Galet, Cépages et Vignobles de France & Robinson, Oxford Companion to Wine)

"Carignan, known as Carignane in the U.S. and Carignano (del Suisi) in Italy/Sardinia and Carinena in Spain (the region is also the namesake) is a late-ripening black grape variety which could fairly be called the bane of the European wine industry... distinguished only by its disadvantages."

"Its wine is high in everything - acidity, tannins, color, bitterness - except finesse and charm. Which gives it the double inconvenience of being unsuitable for early consumption yet unworthy of maturation."

"The vine is not even particularly easy to grow, it's extremely sensitive to mildews, prone to rot, and prey to infestation. Its bunches keep such a tenacious hold on the vine that it does not adapt well to mechanical harvesting (and) grows in gnarled old bushes that do not share the stability of grenache."

"There must have been some attribute to have Carignan disseminated so exclusively throughout the south of France in the 1950's/60's and there was: yield. The vine can quite easily be persuaded to produce eleven tons per acre, ideal for a thirsty but not discriminating market. In the 1960's it infiltrated the Midi, then rapidly trying to fill the void left in the national blending vat by the independence of Algeria."

"Only the most carefully farmed old vines on well-placed, low-yielding sites, can produce Carignan with real character."

"Because of its late ripening habits, Carignan can thrive only in hot climates. Although the vine originates in Spain, it is not widely planted there today - and is often known as Mazuelo - and Carignan is not even the principle grape variety in the wine that carries its Spanish synonym Carinena. The vine, gaining a vowel as Carignane, has been important in the Americas (especially) in California's hotter regions. 70% of France's Carignan is in the two major Languedoc départements of Aude and Hérault, it is also the dominant variety in Gard and Pyrénées-Orientales and is planted all over southeastern France too. The south west has been saved from Carignan by its cooler, wetter autumns. (And while) the regulations of the Languedoc-Roussillon AOC's have been forced to embrace the ubiquitous Carignan, it is hard to argue that Minervois and Corbières are somehow improved by their required Carignan component."

"The Carignan era is surely long past."

That is... except at BrightWines! Read on to Bright Lights for Dave's Top Pick.

BRIGHT LIGHTS: C's the day, seize the wine, Carpe Vinum!

My top picks this week are not just your average C grade wines - NEW ARRIVALS galore, come C for yourself!

** Dave's Top Picks: CARIGNANE, and CARIGNAN, and Carignan/Corbières ROSE **

CLINE Ancient Vines 2014 Contra Costa county CARIGNANE @ \$12.99 per bottle (\$150 per case = \$12.50 each)
suggested retail: \$

An on-again/off-again (mostly on, frankly) favorite California red wine. Reps for Cline winery in Sonoma (and Contra Costa, and Sonoma Coast) were in town this past week on one of their semi-annual promo weeks and I had a chance to sample every single sub-\$20 Cline wine the local wholesaler handles, side-by-side-by-side for a total of a baker's dozen worth of current Cline offerings. Naturally I just picked my favorites two bargains and two nicer. The BEST wine in the entire Cline lineup under \$20 is once again the "Ancient Vines" CARIGNANE from Contra Costa County. Side by side with their 89-point rated Ancient Vines Zinfandel 2014, this Carignane was definitely a fuller and more interesting wine. Mocha, roast coffee and blueberry/blackberry fruit richness.

FORTANT 2012 high mountain vines CARIGNAN (France) @ \$15.99 per bottle (\$191.88/case)
earthy, stoney, garrigue - all the bells and whistles of serious old vines Carignan from L'Hérault

Chateau la Boutignane 2015 CORBIÈRES dry Rose @ \$9.99 per bottle (\$107.88/case = \$8.99 each)
Corbières is Carignan country, this wine tastes like a Provence rose but for half the cost, end-of-season importer discount price.

****BARGAIN ALERTS: Cline Sonoma Syrah, Cline Viognier, and Cotes de Tarn Sauvignon Blanc ****

CLINE 2014 Sonoma SYRAH @ \$8.99 per bottle (\$107.88/case)

For two consecutive years, and for 3 of the past 4 vintages, by FAR the best red wine Cline makes under \$12. This has Sonoma depth and character and class at grocery-store pricing, mocha and pepper over blackberry fruits.

CLINE 2015 North Coast VIOGNIER @ \$8.99 per bottle (\$107.88/case)

Fresh new vintage, screwcapped, juicy and unoaked. Another perennial favorite and their most consistent white wine winner.

Cave de Labastide 2014 Cotes du Tarn SAUVIGNON BLANC @ \$6.99 per bottle (\$79.99/case = \$6.67 each)

could easily pass for Cotes de Gascogne or even for Bordeaux Blanc, and at \$10 - \$12 or more

**** Recent and re-stocked Customer favorites that start with C ****

Fans, take note - or if it's new to you, maybe you'll become a fan!

(California Cabernet) **Montoya 2014 Monterey Cabernet Sauvignon @ \$12.99 per bottle** (\$150 per case = \$12.50 each)

(California Chardonnay and Cab/Merlot red blends)

Peirano Estate Chardonnay, Peirano Estate "**The Other**" Cabernet/Merlot, and **Ca' Momi "rosso"** of California, are all **back in stock at their summerlong feature prices**, extended into the fall with support from the suppliers! \$7.99 - \$9.99 per bottle, and I have 4 - 5 cases of each in-stock now.

(91-point rated Tempranillo, recent event favorite) **CRETA Roble 2013 Ribera del Duero @ \$14.99 per bottle** (\$155.88/case = \$12.99 ea) purple with pepper and grip, this 91 rated (RP) Tempranillo was a favorite at a recent offsite consumer tasting I coordinated. Last few cases.

**** Smart Buys, and Affordable Luxury, from California to Chianti Classico ****

(Chianti Colli Senesi) **FONTALEONI 2012 CHIANTI Colli Senesi @ \$12.99 per bottle** (\$140/case = \$11.67 each)

Suggested Retail: \$17 (see Wine Spectator)

From the hillsides of Siena in Tuscany (colli senesi) this smooth and delicious Chianti is at the very end of the classy 2012 vintage. **Wine Spectator recommends** at \$17 retail by saying: "**Cherry, earth and smoke notes highlight this fresh, elegant red**, remaining focused through the moderately long finish. Drink now through 2016."

(Chenin Blanc whites by Vinum Cellars from Clarksburg, California)

VINUM Cellars 2014 Clarksburg CHENIN BLANC @ \$12.99 ea. (\$140 per case = **\$11.67 per btl**, mix/match)

Dry Vouvray meets California Chardonnay. I'm not kidding, and Vinum is famous for this white!

Vinum Cellars "White Elephant" white @ \$12.99 per bottle (very limited)

Suggested Retail of \$20, a Chenin Blanc, Roussanne, Viognier "white rhone" blend.

(California Red Blend - rated 91 points in the October Wine Spectator, hot off the press)

Murrieta's Well 2013 Livermore, Calif "The SPUR" red blend @ \$15.99 per bottle (sale price, \$95.94/6pk)

Suggested Retail: \$24 (see Wine Spectator) = 33% savings at BrightWines!

Wine Spectator notes: "91 points. The licorice-scented blackberry and plum flavors have dense but refined tannins, with chai tea, black walnut and espresso notes on the expressive finish." October 31st, 2016 Wine Spectator. A blend of Petite Sirah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Malbec. Note: **BrightWines was one of the first to ever offer "The Spur" red by Murrieta's Well** (a few years ago now) and this new vintage is the best one ever. **Rated 91 points by Wine Spectator in the current October 2016 issue**, so get it while it's hot off the press - new label too.

Also Available: Murrieta's Well 2014 "The Whip" white blend - Conundrum fans take note!

(last but not least, an Affordable Luxury from a Chianti Classico winery from Radda in Chianti)

Vignavecchia 2009 RADDESE Toscana SANGIOVESE @ \$29.99 per bottle (very limited)

Suggested Retail: \$50 per bottle (see Wine Spectator and WineAccess) = 40% savings off retail at BrightWines

100% Sangiovese, styled like a SuperTuscan or Brunello via a Chianti Classico winery in Radda. Powerful style that is just now starting to come around, originally rated 88 points (at \$50 retail) by both WS (Wine Spectator) and also ST (Tanzer/WineAccess) but I'd love to see it re-rated now that it's hit the 7 - 10 year peak range!

That's all for today, remember that several of these wines are slated (while supplies allow) to be sample on Saturday evening at the free in-store Guided Tasting, so RSVP by email (just reply to this newsletter) if you would like to attend. e-mail orders ARE accepted for wines listed in The BrightWines Beacon, subject to confirmation. If you are reading this newsletter late here on a dreary Friday evening, or perhaps on Saturday morning as you plan your weekend, I hope you find the timing of this sending to be useful and timely. For those of you who find it more useful when I get these sent earlier, I agree with you (and I thank you for your patience).

**** POSTSCRIPT: an update on stocks of **Silk & Spice** red blend from Portugal ****

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuCSM5mRV10>

In last weekend's newsletter, **BrightWines proudly introduced the first-ever shipment of a new red blend called Silk & Spice**. This red blend from Portugal is designed to appeal to fans of "red blends" from California, and really competes with recent BrightWines picks like Aphaea and Ca' Momi and even things like Essential Red too. BrightWines newsletter readers and **customers have LOVED it so far**, I sold 30 cases in one week and plenty of that was repeat/recommended business. Alas, those 30 cases was fully half of what came to the MN market in the first shipment - and the second shipment does not arrive until the week of October 3rd. I moved the delivery dates on MY second shipments up a week, so I now have 20 cases available and in-stock now. But those 20 cases will have to last me until at least October 6th! Fear not, if you have a confirmed e-mail order for Silk & Spice I have your case(s) saved for you. But if you have not yet tried it and want to get some off the very first go-round, you will want to email me or stop in before the end of September. Just word to the wise...
-- dave

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