

From: The BrightWines Beacon <lighthouse@brightwines.com>
Subject: **Father's Day wines, and "Dave and the City" part two of vol. 5**
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The BrightWines Beacon for June 19th - 23rd, 2009

So summer officially starts on Sunday, which happens to be Father's Day. Here's wishing everyone a fabulous weekend full of family and fun; and what is on tap here at BrightWines?

** Inspired by my trip/tasting in Chicago, a **92-point (Wine Spectator) rated New Zealand Sauv Blanc for \$12.99** (see Bright Lights)
** AFFORDABLE LUXURY: a **great/unique bottle for Father's Day, a 93-point rated (RP) Petit Verdot**, also in Bright Lights.

** **The View from the Top:** Dave and the City vol. 5 (actually part two of misnumbered vol. 4) highlights of Chicago W.S. tasting.
** STORE HOURS at BrightWines this weekend and beyond, see **The Lamp is Lit**.

** ONE SHOT DEALS: two very different, direct-from-the-supplier, hot deals are the smart buys today! See **Bright Lights** for an **88-point rated** (at \$17 retail, Wine Enthusiast) **Cabernet from Argentina for \$9.99 per bottle** -- and -- one-shot (pun intended) offer on a **92-point rated GIN: London Dry Gin called GREENALL'S at \$10.99** (yes, really a Gin)

The Lamp is Lit: BrightWines schedule and Store Hours this weekend and beyond

FRIDAY June 19: BrightWines is OPEN until 6:30pm tonight (summer hours)

This weekend I have dance recitals to attend for my kids tonight and tomorrow, so I will definitely be closing up shop at the 6:30pm "summer hours" both nights. Remember too that the Friday evening classic-car/street-festival is going on in downtown North St Paul, which usually seems to start around 6pm or so, but MARGARET STREET is ALWAYS OPEN all the way through to the snowman, and downtown, and the bridge across 36 etc. even if those couple of blocks of main street are blocked.

SATURDAY June 20: BrightWines is OPEN from 10:30am to 6:30pm (regular hours)

MONDAY June 22: BrightWines is OPEN from 10:30am to 6:30pm (regular hours)

TUESDAY June 23: BrightWines is OPEN from 10:30am to 5:30pm (closing an hour early)

note: this coming **Tuesday I will be closing up shop at 5:30pm** in order to catch up with some friends on a solstice twilight round of golf (happy father's day to us) so I apologize for any inconvenience but the course is calling. Naturally there will NOT be a "Tuesday night Tasting Club" this coming week, but I plan to schedule one of those soon perhaps before or after the Fourth of July.

and WEDNESDAY through SATURDAY (June 24 - 27): OPEN REGULAR SUMMER HOURS

The View from The Top: Dave and the City vol. 5 (Wine Spectator Grand Tour tasting in Chicago)

This is actually part two of the article I wrote last week, but looking at my newsletter history I have determined that I have actually logged five separate "Dave and the City" reports over the years (Las Vegas, Minneapolis, and 3 from Chicago) so instead of calling today's article volume 4 part 2, I will correct the numbering and call it volume 5. By the way, I have my tickets for a trip to wine-country in Washington State this September, so I will certainly be making reports about that trip in the newsletters this fall. If anyone has any clever ideas for a name for my wine-country reports, I am listening. For this weekend, with the unsettled weather forecast picture and the likely muggy even if sunny conditions I think it is best to let my article on the joys of wine in the outdoors (Wine al Fresco) wait another week in hopes of that perfect summer weekend. Besides, I am sure that there are many of you who simply cannot wait to hear what other exciting things took place at the Wine Spectator Grand Tasting in Chicago last month, right?

One of the highlights of this event that makes me glad I attend is the chance to **meet some of the most important people in the world of fine wines**. I mentioned last week how I had a brief chat with, and enjoyed the famous first-growth Bordeaux from, Jean-Philippe Delmas the proprietor at Chateau Haut-Brion. This week I have two great stories to tell about some other famous names in the world of wine. One of whom is about as famous a Napa Valley proprietor as they come, and the other is a bit of a "young turk" in the world of wine. Here are those stories:

One of the great California wines I tasted was the 2006 (new vintage) of the **Caymus Special Selection Cabernet Sauvignon**. **My ounce of this fabulous Cabernet (94 pts, \$160 retail) was served to me by none other than Chuck Wagner himself!** Certainly fans of Napa Cabernet know the name Chuck Wagner, as he is the owner and winemaker for what the Wine Spectator once called the best California Cabernet Sauvignon of the modern era. They judged it based on the track-record of ratings for both the regular and the Special Select and the consistent performance at or near the top of the scale vintage-after-vintage. For those who might be wondering, yes BrightWines has offered the Caymus Special Select every year that I have been in business; although lately it has been limited to just a couple of cases since the price per bottle is in that \$129 - \$159 range. Anyway, back to my story: since I got to the Caymus table in the third hour of this tasting event and he was located on the main floor which was no longer as crowded as it had been, **I actually had time to have a nice conversation with Chuck Wagner**. So I asked him, in a nutshell: **what is your secret to making such great wine, always top-rated Cabernet, year after year and in such relatively large quantities** compared to comparably rated cult wines/garagiste wines which seem to either come-and-go or are such tiny production. **"Good question" he responded**. He described how Caymus has Cabernet vineyards all over Napa, ranging from the valley floor to up on Atlas Peak, from up by Rutherford where the winery is and also further down the valley by Carneros. He said in fact that 25% of their Cabernet comes from Atlas Peak but in most years not much of that goes in to the Special Select. He said for great Napa Cabernet vineyards, the key is to "let the fruit hang" which is another way of saying to harvest later rather than sooner. **Their top priority every year when harvesting and blending the special select is to "go wherever the fruit can reach optimal ripeness" and take advantage of the various microclimates and vineyard sources** around Napa that are part of the Caymus family. A simple example, he said, would be in a cool year to go north into Rutherford and St Helena while and in a hot year focus on the south, closer to the city of Napa and the Carneros. You see, Napa is a funny place (climatically) in that the further north you go the hotter it gets, and the further south tends to be cooler (due to the proximity of the San Francisco bay). Anyway, am I ever glad I asked! I was very pleased to have such a thoughtful and diverse answer to what must be one of dozens of basic questions he got all night. This just the kind of guy that Chuck Wagner is, and the kind of guy that can make of the best and most famous of all the modern-era Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon; year-in and year-out!

From one extreme to another: from a famous name in big name California red wine, to the young turk/mad genius responsible for one of the most obscure wines of the whole tasting event, the **fabulous and mysterious dry white wine from Slovenia called MOVIA "Lunar"**. For those who might be unfamiliar with Slovenia, it is the former Yugoslavian region that borders Italy. Movia and the Kristancic family has been making wine near the Slovenia/Italy border since 1820, the current generation is led by one of Europe's most famous young winemakers, Ales Kristancic, who has been described by Food and Wine as a mad genius of wine and has also been featured in Wine Spectator. The wine I tasted was the LUNAR white made from Ribolla. Wow what an amazing white wine, with tone of bone dry apricot/peach and a deep golden color. **Lunar is so-called because it is aged in specially-designed barrels that are buried underground and are designed to utilize the tidal pull of the moon to stir up the lees and make the wine with the absolute bare-minimum of human contact** (a wine that makes itself?) and results in a very unique, unfiltered, and amazing dry white wine. Here is how the Wine Spectator described that wine: "Cloudy yellow in color, showing dried apple and hints of pineapple, with toffee. Full-bodied, with lots of dried almond, citrus fruit and honey flavors. Long and delicious. Really fun and interesting to taste. Vinified naturally, without any human intervention, in custom-made oak barrels. Needs to be decanted. Ribolla Gialla. Drink now. 230 cases made." Pretty darn cool, eh? Before you ask, the wines of Movia are NOT currently available to us here in the upper midwest. I took the business card of the importer, Domaine Select, and will see what I can do eventually. But that was only part of the fun, I also had a good long conversation with Ales Kristancic, and here is where you might see why I call him a young turk despite his not being that young. **Although English is his third language (his second would be Italian) I was able to have a good conversation with him about his wine**. He had even brought along a copy of his most recent European press, which happened to be a recent article on him and his wines in the Slovenian version of Playboy; who knew there even was such a thing?? He kept it under the table, although no censoring was needed for the article on his wines of course. Funnily enough, I have subsequently read that he has a penchant for describing his wines in a manner consistent with that. One article I read mentioned that Kristancic spoke about how his vineyard could sustain a wine with such minimal intervention. His answer: sex. How much sex there was going on in the vineyard, among the insects, among the vines at flowering etc. As you can see, this is an interesting fellow, and I am writing this much on him today in hopes that someday I will be able to offer his wines to my customers here. My conversation got cut a bit short though when **James Suckling (Wine Spectator editor and Bordeaux/Port wine critic) came up to the table with some VIP personage in tow and began speaking to Ales Kristancic in Italian** and introduced this unnamed VIP. This sort of monopolized the table, and I don't speak Italian so I could not eavesdrop. That was my cue to move away to my next taste of wine...

So during that event, I tasted about 45 wines. What were my top 10 favorites, you ask? Here they are, **in no particular order except to say that my favorite wine of the night was the 2001 vintage Chateau Mouton-Rothschild**. If you own any great 2001 vintage Bordeaux, they are drinking beautifully and I say that due in part to the Mouton Rothschild but also due to several great 2001 "petite chateaux" I have had in the past several months too. Back to that Mouton Rothschild 2001 for a moment, that wine showed great even during the dumb-phase of that first hour where the wines on the floor of the event were muted by heat and humidity and ambient perfume (Mouton was in a middle aisle). It was even better an hour later, and then a third time when a cohort in the wine biz offered me a quick nose off their glass and I said, is that the Mouton? (wow, it was good; 94 point rated, \$150 release-price). This begs the question of course, were there any disappointments? Two in particular come to mind, **I was disappointed in the 2002 Chateau Margaux** for a couple of reasons. It was a let-down since the top wine of the previous version of this event I attended was the Chateau Margaux, it was a let-down to have just the 2002 offered (their weakest vintage of the past decade) and frankly the wine was just ok and was served by staffers. The other wine that I will say was a **disappointment was the Kosta Browne 2007 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir**. It was fine, just simpler and fruitier than I was hoping and did not live up to the hype that surrounds it

(95 pts, \$52 retail). Why dwell on the negative, lets hit the high points...

Here is my **Top 10 of the 2009 Wine Spectator Grand Tasting** in Chicago:

Chateau **Mouton Rothschild 2001** (Pauillac), the 2005 **Barbaresco "Bricco Asili"** by Ceretto which I mentioned last week, **1996 Chateau Palmer** (Margaux) which was the best mature wine of the night, **1999 Voerzio Brunello di Montalcino "Brunate"** (from magnum) also mentioned last week, the aforementioned today **Movia "Lunar"** Ribolla, **Chateau Pontet-Canet 2003** which is star of that vintage and a true vin de garde, the ultra-classy and balanced **Chateau d'Issan 2005** Margaux, the second-taste of **1999 Lafite Rothschild**, Fairview (South Africa) **"The Beacon" Shiraz 2005** whose name of course enchanted me but also was a wonderful Cote Rotie meets Barossa/Aussie Shiraz meets South Africa sort of wine, and last but not least the **Brancott "B"** Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand which was my last wine of the night, just to refresh my senses (but maybe skewed by that) which like the Wine Spectator said was "dramatic and vivid" (92 pts, \$26 retail, only 500 cases imported).

That about wraps it up, if you have read this far I thank you! If you have skipped down to this point looking for my picks for the weekend, read on to Bright Lights as one of my top picks for the weekend is inspired by one of the Top 10 wines I tasted.

Bright Lights: Dave's Top Picks for Father's Day Weekend

**** TOP PICK for a highly rated SUMMER WHITE wine for the first day of Summer on Sunday ****

(inspired by my articles on my adventures at the Wine Spectator Grand Tasting in Chicago)

In order to refresh my palate before I was picked up at the entrance to Navy Pier, I ended my night with a sip of a big-name New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. While that wine was a 500 case imported \$26 wine, it carries the same Wine Spectator score as a "Smart Buy" by that same winery which in fact was **singled out as one of the Top Wines/Top Values in the very recent Wine Spectator article** on NZ Sauv Blanc (June 15, 2009 issue). **92-point rated!!**

BRANCOTT 2008 Reserve SAUVIGNON BLANC (Marlborough, New Zealand) @ \$12.99 per bottle!

Wine Spectator notes: "This is crisp, offering a **lively mouthful of peach-accented grapefruit and mineral flavors**, all hanging on effortlessly through the long, graceful finish. **92 points**. \$18 retail." June 15, 2009 Wine Spectator Top Wines/Top Values.

Suggested Retail: \$18 (Wine Spectator)

BRIGHTWINES NEWSLETTER PRICE: \$12.99 per bottle

(May be limited to 14 cases on hand. Sorry, no further case discounts at this pricing.)

**** Would Dad (or anyone?) prefer a Gin and Tonic, or an ice-cold Martini this weekend? ****

GREENALL'S London Dry Gin, 92 point rated by Tastings.com (the Beverage Testing Institute)

What the heck, you ask? I do not to much in the way of spirits, but one of my wine suppliers had a **one-shot deal** (pun intended) **due to a packaging-change** for one of the finer Gins that they purvey, and offered me the last 10 cases in the warehouse for a hefty discount. How could I say no, especially when I found out that this is the same distillery as makes Bombay and that this particular Gin was rated 92 points. Here is the scoop:

GREENALL'S London dry GIN @ \$10.99 per 750ml bottle (nearly 40% off retail)

As **tasted twice with consistent ratings, by Tastings.com** (Beverage Testing Institute) in both 2008 and 2007:

"A soft, gentle entry leads to a dry, oily medium bodied palate of cream, lemon curd, gentle juniper, and peppery spice flavors. Finishes with a peppery, wet stone and lemon custard fade with lingering herbaceousness. A **very smooth gin that will appeal to vodka drinkers**. (tasted on Jun-20-2007) -- and --

"Dried flowers and herbs, tapioca, date, and mineral dust aromas. A silky entry leads to a dryish medium body of bread flour, tapioca, mineral, mild dried juniper, and dried citrus peel flavors. Finishes with a honeyed herb, pink peppercorn, cream and allspice fade. **Very interesting flavors and texture; great for gin and tonics. 92 points.**"

(tasted in January 2008 as a \$17.99 retail-priced spirit by TASTINGS.com)

Suggested Retail: \$18

BRIGHTWINES NEWSLETTER PRICE: \$10.99 per bottle (750ml)

(Limited to 10 cases on hand, one-shot deal. Sorry, no further case discounts at this pricing.)

**** A dozen cases of an 88-point Argentinean Cabernet Sauvignon at 40% off suggested retail ****

FINCA SOPHENIA 2004 CABERNET SAUVIGNON (Tupungato, Argentina) @ \$9.99 per bottle

From Wine Enthusiast: "**Interesting Argentine Cabernet**, with rooty, baked aromas that settle in and impress if given time. The palate is balanced by subtle red-fruit and earthy flavors, while the feel is stocky and grabby courtesy of strong tannins. **A good wine with a lot of positives. 88 points.** \$17 retail."

Suggested Retail: \$17 (Wine Enthusiast)

BRIGHTWINES NEWSLETTER PRICE: \$9.99 per bottle

(Limited to 12 cases on hand, one shot deal. Sorry, no further case discounts at this pricing.)

**** AFFORDABLE LUXURY: a unique and great red, for a Father's Day gift perhaps? ****

FINCA DECERO 2006 "Remolinos Vineyard" PETIT VERDOT (Mendoza, Argentina) @ \$29.99 per bottle

93-point rated by Robert Parker's Wine Advocate: Finca Decero (meaning from scratch, in Spanish) makes only **single vineyard wines** from the Agrelo region of Mendoza with consultation from (famed Napa winemaker and lover of Argentina) **Paul Hobbs**. 2006 is the first vintage with 6000 cases produced.

And what, you might ask, is Petit Verdot? One of the allowed varieties in Bordeaux, and one that is usually blended in using small percentages due to the fact that even when fully ripe it packs a powerful punch of inky color and big tannins to a wine. It is rather uncommon to see 100% Petit Verdot, even in the new world, so this wine is a lot of fun for fans of the style. At 93 points, this is a great wine to be sure!

From ROBERT PARKER'S WINE ADVOCATE:

"The **2006 Petit Verdot Remolinos Vineyard** was aged for 16 months in new French oak. Purple/black in color, it has an **expressive nose of pain grille, pencil lead, pepper, blackberry, plum, and licorice. Mouth-coating and powerful on the palate, this large-scaled effort** demands 5-7 years of further cellaring. Its prime drinking should be from 2014 to 2030 but its impeccable balance may carry it even further. **93 points.**"

BRIGHTWINES NEWSLETTER PRICE: \$29.99 per bottle

EXTREMELY LIMITED, I pre-ordered 5 six-packs but **I was able to get a total of 7 six-packs at \$29.99 per bottle, best-price.** Put a bottle in the cellar, and then decant another one for some steak on the grill on Father's Day; that is what I plan to do!

Well that is all folks, we have come to the end of another long newsletter. Have a great first official weekend of summer and also happy Father's Day. ---Dave

The Right Wines are BrightWines!

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