

From: The BrightWines Beacon <lighthouse@brightwines.com>
Subject: June Calendar, plus "Dave and the City"
Date: June 19, 2009 4:27:21 PM CDT

The BrightWines Beacon for June 12th, 2009

Is summer really here? I presume so, and I have the "summer wines" selection to prove it! Everything from **fresh bottlings of Vinho Verde, to exotic and refreshing whites from around the world, to delicious grilling-style reds, great summer wines abound at BrightWines!**

** Wine Spectator **91-point rated Shiraz for only \$12.99** in Bright Lights.

** **Dave and the City, vol. 4:** part one of a report on a Grand Tasting in Chicago that I attended in May, in The View from the Top.

** NEW ARRIVALS galore, **a good handful of Dave's Top Picks (all nice summer wines)**. See Bright Lights.

Let's start the summer off with the June Calendar of events at BrightWines:

The Lamp is Lit: June Calendar of events and store hours at BrightWines

** Week of June 15th through June 20th **

Summer Hours are in effect, and BrightWines will be OPEN REGULAR "summer hours" ALL WEEK which means that the store is **OPEN daily Monday through Saturday from 10:30am to 6:30pm next week**. Themes for the week include Father's Day on Sunday June 21, and the annual newsletter edition of "Wine al Fresco" is planned for next Friday, presuming we have a stretch of good weather, or perhaps part two of my report on the Grand Tasting in Chicago (see below).

** Week of June 22nd through June 29th **

Summer officially begins this week, and BrightWines will have the right wines for it. **Mark your calendars for FRIDAY and SATURDAY evenings the weekend of June 27 and June 28 as those will be the next TASTING dates** here at BrightWines. Possible themes for the week would be the annual newsletter edition of "Wine al Fresco" presuming we have a stretch of good weather, or perhaps part two of my report on the Grand Tasting in Chicago (see below). Summer Hours are in effect, and BrightWines will be OPEN REGULAR "summer hours" ALL WEEK which means that the store is OPEN daily Monday through Saturday from 10:30am to 6:30pm next week.

The View from the Top: "Dave and the City" Wine Spectator Grand Tasting in Chicago

Every so often I get out-and-about and I like to write up my thoughts and adventures for my newsletter readers. Back in May, I flew down to Chicago on one of the new Southwest routes from Humphrey Terminal to Midway so that I could attend another edition of one of the truly great walkaround-format wine tastings that is available to us here in the midwest. The Wine Spectator Grand Tasting has come to Chicago a couple of times, and I always go if possible. It is truly a GRAND tasting. The wines are chosen from the tops-scoring wines from a very wide array of the world's top wineries. There are famous names, top 100 list wines, great vintages, and so much more open to taste in a casual walkaround format for a glorious 3-hour period all for a \$200 entry-fee for advance tickets. According to the tasting book (not a booklet, a book) there were 213 wines available to taste and those 213 wines were all the best of the best. I kept track of wines I tasted, and took notes when something stood out. By my count I tasted 45 wines in a 3 hour period, so that is 15 wines per hour, tasting on average **one fantastic and famous wine every four minutes**. Wow.

Time and space (and your patience) does not allow me to describe all the wines I tasted, and the ones I did not. But I know that at least a few of you will enjoy reading about my overall impression of the event and some of the highlights of the evening for me as well as a rundown of some of the wines I did taste. You know how long-winded I can be, so I am sure that it makes sense to break this into a 2 newsletter cycle. **Here is part 1 of my report:**

The Wine Spectator Grand Tasting in Chicago was held this year in early May in the grand ballroom at Navy Pier. It seemed a bit more crowded this year than last time, with a bit less room in the aisles and also probably more people in attendance. In general that was fine, when the main floor got too crowded I was able to find quieter spots to get at wines by heading to the balcony or to aisles featuring more off-the-beaten path wines. The best thing I did was find the stairway to the balcony, where there was **a virtual murderers-row of top Bordeaux being served side-by-side up in the balcony** area with Haut Brion, La Mission Haut Brion, Pichon Baron, Giscours, Lynch-Bages and Pontet-Canet serving wine side-by-side-by-side. Plus the balcony had better air than the main floor. **It was a warm and muggy and rainy night in Chicago**, and for the first hour of the event the air conditioning was either not turned on (or not able to keep up with the flow of people) which actually affected the tasting of the wines. **Many of the wines I tasted in that first hour were showing quite poorly, with muted aromatics (despite the fine stemware) that were having trouble keeping up with ambient smells of perfume/cologne and humidity in the air.** That was disappointing, and something that many of us in attendance noted. I had a couple of conversations with folks (only 2 people that I recognized from MN seemed

to attend) and we agreed that the wines were not showing well early in the evening. We blamed the warmth and humidity for that, so the organizers at Navy Pier (and/or Wine Spectator) were a bit off the mark with the atmosphere for that first hour. This story puts me in mind of my annual (and coming up later this month) newsletter article on "Wine al Fresco". Wine and fresh air are good partners. but when the air was heavy and warm in the ballroom it negatively affected the wines. Thankfully, by **midway through the event the air conditioning was on and circulating well and the wines seemed to perk right up!** I even took the chance to re-taste a couple of early disappointments (like 1999 Lafite Rothschild) and found the second taste much more gratifying!

The balcony, with its strong lineup of top Bordeaux as well as many of the Aussie Shiraz and California Zins and some off-the-beaten-path wines, was my friend for that first hour. The crowd was thinner, the air was better, and the wines were fantastic. Two of the highlights of the evening were up in the balcony. One of the most exciting things for a wine-lover (and a retailer) about this event is not just the wines themselves, but the person who is pouring the wines. Often it is an owner or winemaker of significance who is the person standing behind the table pouring your wine. That was true again this year, with **the 2004 Chateau Haut Brion (95 pts WS, \$180 retail) being served by none other than Jean-Philippe Delmas** who, since taking over for his father in 2003, is the proprietor at this first-growth Bordeaux chateau and one of the best-known names in Bordeaux. His English was good, and he was very gracious with the repeated praise he received from tasters who wanted to chat of course (who wouldn't). I had the brief chance to ask if the suburbs of Bordeaux have continued to expand around his Chateau (it is quite close in to the city actually) and he said that yes they had a bit, which I figured was true since my trip to Haut Brion was over a decade ago and it was already happening, but not too bad. Just around the curve (pardon the pun, which you will soon "get") was another great wine being served by its famous proprietor, the **Southern Sisters Barossa Shiraz 2004 was being poured by Alan Heath, the former Aussie racecar driver turned winemaker**. I also had chance to chat with Alan, and mentioned that I had carried this very wine in my shop last summer/fall. To my surprise, he said that as far as he knew there was still stock at the midwest importer so I took note of that, to be sure! (note: see Bright Lights section today for more details on this great value in top-quality Shiraz)

Probably the **two highlights of my brief discussions with famous winemakers and proprietors** come from opposite ends of the wines spectrum. **I had the chance to taste and talk wine with a very famous Napa Valley wine maker** and ALSO got to **meet and learn about one of the most obscure wines (but a great wine) of the entire Grand Tasting from the "mad genius" responsible** for that extremely unique wine. Is that enough of a tease? If time permits today **I will tell those stories**, otherwise I might have to save them for a part 2 of this article. We'll see.

In general, this tasting lived up to my expectations. The sheer number of wines and the greatness of the wines and the personalities behind the tasting tables were everything I expected. In fact, the whole event would have been a Twitter heaven with all kinds of great things overheard and great wines tasted. Of course plenty of humorous twitterable things were heard too, like "100% new french oak in this" Napa Valley Cabernet, who would think it? Here are some of my general impressions of the wines I tasted. There were quite a few wines that had BrightWines connections. For example, I recently feature the 2007 Hall Sauvignon Blanc from Napa in my Easter newsletter and at the tasting I was able to taste the **Hall "Bergfeld" 2005 Cabernet (93 pts, \$100 retail) as poured by Kathryn Hall**. I also made a point to seek out some of my favorites like Carmenere from Chile. While there were no pure Carmenere at the tasting, there were several Chilean wines that had Carmenere in the blend including the **2006 Clos Apalta by Casa Lapostolle (94 pts, \$80 retail)**. The most significant thing about that wine is that the 2005 vintage was the Wine Spectator Top 100 #1 wine last year and is Bordeaux blend made mostly from Carmenere! That was gratifying, even though a wine I have not carried here, since **I have been driving the MN version of the Carmenere bandwagon for a few years** now. In fact, come to think of it, I neglected to crow about that when the Top 100 came out so I guess I am making up for that now.

Another general impression from this year is the same as the last time, Italy was very well-represented in the aisles. In general, **France and Italy and California seemed to be the most-represented wine regions**, which is probably predictable. But there was Washington, Oregon, Australia, New Zealand, Spain of course, plus south America too. You can cover a lot of based in 213 wines, to be sure. But yes, like list time it sure seemed like there were a lot of Italian wines in the room. It seemed like **many wines in the middle aisles of the main floor were great Italian reds**. However, I have said it before and I will say it again: I have trouble tasting top Italian reds (namely Brunello di Montalcino and Barolo/Barbaresco) in a walkaround format. The wines are so powerful and often so food-oriented that it can be quite the challenge to one's palate to taste a lot of them in a row. The same was certainly true this year, with the teeth-stripping and laserlike style of the great **2004 Brunello vintage and 2004 Barolo wines**. Taste a few of those in a row and your tongue goes a bit numb. They are going to be great wines with some cellaring or the right meal, to be sure. But as if to prove the point, what were the highlights for me of the Italian aisles? Why the mature, 10 year old red and the baby brother to Barolo a Barbaresco. **The 1999 Roberto Voerzio Brunello di Montalcino "Brunate" (95 pts, \$215 retail) was being poured out of magnum** and made my top-ten list of wines of the night! The other star of those aisles, for me at least, was a 2005 from Piedmont. Maybe it had been open longer, maybe my tongue was dazed, but my palate was dazzled by the **Bricco Asili 2005 (Ceretto) Barbaresco (95 pts \$135 retail)** which also makes my top 10 of the tasting. All of the 2004 wines were very, very impressive so don't get me wrong. In fact, I ran across a producer that **I used to be able to offer at a value (comparatively) price for Barolo called Damilano**. I took his business card and will see what the prospects might be for getting their 2004 at an affordable luxury sort of price.

I thought as much, I was way too long-winded. I will have to do a part 2. So what is all yet to tell of my "Dave and the City" for the Wine Spectator Grand Tasting in Chicago? That would be **my TOP 10 LIST of the best wines I tasted**, plus the **stories of the two great and famous**

winemaker/proprietors I met and had good longer conversations with while tasting their wines. (two good stories, worth waiting for). The **famed Napa Valley proprietor for one, and also the so-called mad genius behind one of the most obscure wines of the whole tasting.** So stay tuned for part two, coming soon in a newsletter later in June!

Bright Lights: Dave's Top Picks of the many new arrivals

As many of you know, the past couple of weeks there have been MANY new wines coming into stock here at BrightWines. I will try to put out a longer list of wines for perusal sometime soon, perhaps we'll call it the Summer Bargains list of maybe Top Picks for Summer (bargains and values and luxury too). But whatever I call it, the longer list is not ready for prime time even though my stocks of wine here are wide and varied. Here are just a few top picks to highlight:

**** Dave's Top Pick, related to the Grand Tasting in Chicago ****

I mentioned that **I tasted and chatted with Alan Heath, of Heath wines and the Wine Spectator 91-point rated Shiraz the 2004 Southern Sisters reserve Shiraz when I was in Chicago,** and that he said there was still stock of that at the midwest suppliers. Well, I ordered 10 cases and 10 cases came in!

HEATH WINES Shiraz Barossa Valley Southern Sisters Reserve 2004

"Aromatic, fleshy and seductive. Not a big wine, but plays out its coffee- and cinnamon-scented black plum, blackberry and cherry fruit with surprising restraint, finishing ripe, supple and long. Drink now through 2016. 91 points. Smart Buys, \$19 retail." Wine Spectator

Suggested Retail \$19, local retail \$15 - \$18

BRIGHTWINES NEWSLETTER PRICE: \$12.99 per bottle

(Limited to 10 cases on hand. Sorry, no further case discounts)

**** Dave's Tip Pick, new arrival related to the SPAIN class/tasting on Saturday ****

EVODIA 2007 old vine Garnacha (Calatayud, Spain)

You might recall an Eric Solomon import old vine Grenache from Calatayud called Las Rocas? Well, that brand was bought by Gallo believe it or not. But that did not stop Eric Solomon from creating a new and fabulous juicy/peppery Garnacha for a value price! **NEW to Minnesota, and BrightWines is helping to introduce this to our market.** Another great find from Spain, and a great wine for the grill.

From **Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, rated 88 points!** "The vineyards for this new project are between 850 and 1000 meters of elevation and the Garnacha vines are up to 100 years of age, planted on pure slate. Purple-colored, this 100% Garnacha offers a **lovely perfume of spice box, mineral, and wild cherry.** This leads to an intensely fruity wine with loads of flavor, a smooth texture, and a pure, fruit-filled finish. 88 points."

BRIGHTWINES PRICE: \$8.99 per bottle

Case Price: \$99.99 (net per bottle of just \$8.33 each)

**** BACK IN STOCK, some favorite whites that have been re-stocked ****

BABICH 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (Marlborough, New Zealand) @ \$11.99 per bottle; only \$10.99 on mix/match

Listed as a TOP VALUE in New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc by the June 15, 2009 Wine Spectator

DARBY and JOAN 2008 unoaked Chardonnay (Australia) @ \$9.99 per bottle; only \$8.99 on mix/match

New and fun and gaining lots of fans. Totally unoaked, nice and juicy and summery style.

The CROSSINGS 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (Marlborough, New Zealand) @ \$12.99 per bottle; only \$11.99 mix/match

89 point rated by Wine Spectator (at \$16 retail) with nice pink grapefruit and mineral tones.

GAZELA Vinho Verde (2009 bottling) @ \$59.88 per case (just \$4.99 each)

As good as ever, it reminds me of the first time I ever had it and still one of the best bargain whites around.

ERATH 2006 Pinot Blanc (Willamette, Oregon) @ \$8.99 per bottle (sale price)

During my spring sale I did not take the whole stack, but this week I did. WINE SPECTATOR notes: "Lean and lively, a mouthwatering wine with restrained lime and honeydew melon flavors, persisting on the well-formed finish. Drink now through 2009. 88 points. \$14 retail."

The Right Wines are BrightWines!