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Subject: Under the Harvest Moon
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To: The BrightWines Beacon newsletter

The BrightWines Beacon for 4/22/16: Under the Harvest Moon... down under!

The full moon of **April is the "harvest moon" for the southern hemisphere**, sometimes also known as the hunter's or blood moon. Regardless, the autumn equinox for the southern hemisphere is in March and the full moon after the autumnal equinox is traditionally known as the "harvest moon" and last Friday (April 22nd) was a full moon. It's time for the annual celebration of wines from countries "down under" including Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina, and South Africa. **NOW through April 30th is the annual "down under" harvest celebration** at BrightWines, featuring **Dave's Top Picks from the major wine countries of the southern hemisphere!** Here are some of the highlights of this weeklong feature here at Brightwines:

**** 90 point rated Smart Buys** galore! Here is just a small list of the many 90 points (and higher) rated wines from various wine regions down-under: a 90-point \$12.99 Cabernet Sauvignon, a 90-point \$12.99 Malbec, a 91 point \$17.99 Shiraz blend, a 92-point \$24.99 Shiraz, and more! See Bright Lights for the complete list, including many great values rated in the always popular 88 - 89 point range too.

**** Bargain Alert:** "Rib Shack Red" from South Africa at \$5.99 per bottle! One shipment only. See Bright Lights.

THE LAMP IS LIT: Store Hours and Tasting schedule, now through April 30th

"If he poured his heart into a glass and offered it like wine, she could drink and be back in time for the morning papers." (Prince, 1992)

**** FRIDAY April 29th: OPEN 10:30m - 7pm plus RSVP Guided Tasting at 7:15pm**

**** SATURDAY April 30th: OPEN 10am to 6pm plus RSVP Guided Tasting at 6:15pm**

THE VIEW FROM THE TOP: under the harvest moon - some **anecdotal reports on vintage 2016** from "down under"

"It's only mountains and the sea, there's nothing greater, you and me." - Mountains, from Under the Cherry Moon (Prince, 1986)

It's harvest season down-under. The full moon after the autumnal equinox is traditionally known as a "harvest moon" since the seasons of the southern hemisphere run opposite of what we are used to. Our spring is their fall. The vintage of 2016 in the world of wine has been underway since January of 2016 and continues as we speak in some down under wine regions.

While it truly is "too soon to tell" about quality, thankfully many of our favorite wine regions of the southern hemisphere have remarkably consistent vintage/harvest conditions year after year. **The wine regions of New Zealand, Chile, Argentina, and South Africa are ALL influenced greatly by both mountains and the sea.** The same is true too of part of Australia. The influence of mountains and the on the climate is an important factor in the quality of the wines. This is especially true in Chile/Argentina with the help of the isolation and sheer influence of the Andes. It also seems quite true in New Zealand with its island climate surrounded by ocean and influenced by extreme latitude. Australia seems to be more volatile, sometimes contending with heat and drought for long stretches - and sometimes cool and wet too. Thankfully, the vintages from Australia that are in the bottle now for us to enjoy have been pretty good (notably 2012 and also 2013). Overall, thankfully it seems that the influence of the mountains and ocean help keep the vintages of New Zealand and Argentina and especially Chile, quite consistent from year to year.

We do know that 2016 will be a difficult vintage for South Africa though. In a word, it was hot - too hot in some cases. I recently got two first-hand reports on the 2016 harvest in South Africa, in fact. Two of my suppliers recently returned from visits there. One of them was simply on vacation, the other is an importer. Both agree that the word in South Africa is that it was a very hot year, a short harvest, and an early one too. One of them spent time in the region of Franschhoek and reported they began harvesting their Sauvignon Blanc there in January! By the way, he also said that Franschhoek is one of the most spectacularly beautiful wine regions he's ever been too (it's an isolated mountain valley). The other report is from one of my importers, who spent more time there and in more places. He said the 2016 growing season and vintage was hot. So hot that it lowered yields and made irrigation an issue too (hot and dry). It's a vintage that will be perhaps labeled as a difficult one, but the wines that will be made will likely be good wines but in shorter supply - at least that would be the best to hope for. Again, it is literally too soon to tell.

More fun optimistic anecdotes also came my way recently directly from New Zealand. Several years ago a local newsletter reader of The BrightWines Beacon up and moved himself and his family to New Zealand. They live in the Marlborough region and live near the town of Blenheim. They still read my newsletter and we sometimes trade bottles of wine back-and-forth on their occasional visits back to Minnesota. He sent me a congratulatory note on my recent store anniversary that included two first-hand reports of the 2016 vintage in Marlborough, New Zealand. With permission, here is what he said:

"Driving on the highway near Blenheim (the largest town in the Marlborough Region) last weekend - the smell of the fermenting wine wafting through the car vents was unmistakable - particularly near the massive producers such as Brancott." (that would have been the weekend of 4/9 and/or 4/16)

-- and --

"The week prior I was again in Blenheim for work and the road through one of the roundabouts was totally covered by what appeared to be waste grape skins. Life in a wine producing region..."

Yes indeed, nothing like a daily-life reminder that it's harvest season - at least down under!

BRIGHT LIGHTS: Dave's Top Picks, bargains and smart-buys and affordable luxury, from the southern hemisphere

"Cool as the other side of the pillow / Smooth as another glass of wine." (Prince, 1998)

NOW through April 30th is the annual "down under" harvest celebration at BrightWines, featuring Dave's Top Picks from the major wine countries of the southern hemisphere. Next weekend I will endeavor to publish a complete listing of ALL of my wine selections, in-stock at feature pricing, from wine regions down under.

This weekend, I will be listing some of the HIGHLIGHTS and especially some of the several 90 - 92 point rated examples, as well as a bevy of 88-89 rated great values from all around the southern hemisphere. In particular, most of the focus this weekend is on Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa (with a couple of great new arrivals from Chile/Argentina too). **Next week there is more to come, with a featured winery** from Argentina (Piattelli) and South Africa (**Landskroon**) and more bargain-alert wines, and new vintages of perennial favorites too (like 2015 Huia Sauvignon Blanc, for example).

**** 90 point (and higher) Smart Buys and Affordable Luxury ****

Concha Y Toro "Serie Riberas" GRAN RESERVA 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon @ \$12.99 per bottle

Suggested Retail: \$17 (see Wine Spectator)

90 points Wine Spectator! Available in 6pk boxes at \$77.94 per 6pk.

Wine Spectator notes: "A taut, muscular red, with forest floor notes to the luscious dried berry and cherry tart flavors, accented by olive and tar notes. The juicy finish is filled with baker's chocolate and white pepper details. Lithe and pure. Drink now through 2020. \$17 retail. 90 rating." Sourced from vineyards of the "river series" in Marchigüe, Chile. Note: I have 10 cases in-stock now.

La Posta PIZZELLA 2014 MALBEC @ \$12.99 per bottle (sale price, \$155.88 per case)

Suggested Retail: \$17 (see RP)

Rated 90 points (multiple times) from Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, including this new vintage too! And another favorite wine expert, Natalie Maclean rated it 89 points too, saying "This dark, meaty and full-bodied Argentine wine sources its Malbec grapes from local growers, the Pizzella Family Vineyard. Lots of chocolate, espresso, coffee and mocha from oak aging. This La Posta is more robust than the winery's Angel Paulucci red wine."

Ventisquero 2012 "GREY" single vineyard - Trinidad CARMENERE @ \$17.99 per bottle (sale price, limited)

91 points Wine and Spirits magazine.

TAIT 2012 "The Ball Buster" Shiraz blend @ \$17.99 per bottle (sale price, \$215.88 per case)

91 point rated by Tanzer/Reynolds (see Wine Access) and 90 points by Natalie Maclean, who notes: "This full-bodied Australian red wine is a blend of mostly Shiraz, with some Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot grapes. It offers aromas of chocolate and mocha on the nose plus some fleshy black plums. Dive into it and you'll find incredibly great balance, a savoury quality and mouth-watering juiciness for a variety of dishes."

PIATTELLI Grand Reserve TRINITA Malbec blend @ \$24.99 per bottle (very limited)
\$27 retail, rated 90 points Wine Spectator. A "rich texture" Malbec, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon blend.

LONGRIDGE 2013 Stellenbosch PINOTAGE @ \$24.99 per bottle (\$135/6pk = \$22.50 each, limited)
90 points and "Best of South Africa" award

ELDERTON 2012 Barossa estate SHIRAZ @ \$24.99 per bottle (\$279.99/case, limited)
92+ points Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, who notes "just gorgeous on the nose, with intense floral and black fruit notes plus some menthol and dusty earth nuances, the full-bodied and rich 2012 Estate Shiraz offers concentrated flavors supported by a good backbone of medium to firm, rounded tannins and refreshing acid. It finishes long. Drink now to 2024."

** some "not" Sauvignon Blanc, from New Zealand (plus one good NZ SB too) **

"The Ned" 2014 Marlborough, New Zealand PINOT GRIS @ \$12.99 per bottle (\$155.88 per case)
From the winemaker that put Wither Hills on the map comes this map-inspired label from New Zealand named for a mountain peak called The Ned. The Ned 2014 Pinot Gris is an exciting dry Pinot Gris made in a "vin gris" or nearly (not quite) pink style. Just enough skin contact with the dusky grey/pink Pinot Gris varietal to bring out extra flavor and complexity in this dry and fun white.

Sea Pearl 2014 Marlborough, New Zealand PINOT NOIR @ \$12.99 per bottle (\$149.99 per case)
New vintage of a favorite here, both for me and for customers - just as good as always, and my favorite Pinot Noir under \$15 right now.

Walnut Block 2014 Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc @ \$14.99 per bottle (\$159.99/case = **\$13.33 each**, mix/match)
The best NZ Sauv Blanc from the Como event this winter is back for one last time. Wine Spectator notes: "Lemon, lime and grapefruit flavors create a chorus of crisp and refreshing flavors."

** BARGAIN ALERT: \$5.99 Rib Shack Red, one shipment only **

RIB SHACK RED (Douglas Green) 2015 Pinotage/Shiraz @ \$5.99 per bottle (\$71.88 per case, limited)
Fun red blend with the smoky pinotage and the tangy raspberry/blackberry of shiraz. One shot deal at 33 % off retail!

** great values with good ratings priced \$8.99 to \$15.99 each **

This is just a handful of the great values with good ratings from the southern hemisphere that are in-stock now, I will list them in price order:

MILTON PARK 2013 SHIRAZ @ \$8.99 per bottle (\$99.99/case = **\$8.33 each**, mix/match)

GIESEN 2014 Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc @ \$8.99 per bottle (\$99.99/case = **\$8.33 each**, mix/match)
89 points Wine Spectator!

GIESEN 2014 Marlborough PINOT GRIS @ \$8.99 per bottle (107.88 per case)

YALUMBA "Y Series" VIOGNIER @ \$9.99 per bottle (107.88 per case = \$8.99 each)
also available: Yalumba "Y Series" 2014 Vermentino

Casas del Bosque 2014 Colchagua CARMENERE @ \$10.79 per bottle (\$119.88 per case = \$9.99 each)
New label, new vintage, still the best \$10 Carmenere in the market!

ALTO ROUGE 2010 South Africa red blend @ \$10.79 per bottle (\$119.88 per case = \$9.99 each)
Bordeaux style blend from Stellenbosch

"Pintupi 9" The Red 2013 Cabernet/Shiraz @ \$12.99 per bottle (\$155.88/case)
new to MN from Australia's McLaren Vale region

"Pintupi 9" The White 2014 @ \$12.99 per bottle (\$155.88/case)
unoaked Chardonnay with some Sauv Blanc and Arneis

Yalumba 2013 Barossa "Patchwork" Shiraz @ \$15.99 per bottle (\$191.88 per case)

Rated 89 points Wine Enthusiast and 88 points Wine Spectator (at \$19 retail). Wine Enthusiast notes: "a reliable bottling for lovers of Barossa Shiraz who don't want to drop more than a Jackson. It's full bodied and plush, with layers of blackberry fruit and vanilla oak, yet remains vibrant on the mocha-tinged finish. Drink now-2020."

And MORE to come!!!

Next week look for MORE listings from South Africa (including a Winery Feature on LANDSKROON - instock now, btw) as well as more great wines from Chile/Argentina, new fresh 2015 vintage whites from New Zealand, and of course more from Australia too!

Have a great weekend, and remember to RSVP by email if you would like to join us in one of the tastings!

**** POSTSCRIPT ****

In case you were wondering - yes the title of this newsletter "Under the Harvest Moon" is an homage to our hometown music icon. "Under the Cherry Moon" was the followup movie for Prince to Purple Rain, and that soundtrack contained the #1 single, Kiss. In fact, did you know that Cream, from Diamonds and Pearls, was the only #1 hit for Prince that was not associated with a movie?

Prince was as "cool as the other side of the pillow, smooth as another glass of wine" as he wrote on his album "The Truth." I am sure many of you are fans, as am I. So to borrow from another song lyric by Prince:

Paisley Park is in MY heart. --Dave

The Right Wines are BrightWines!

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