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It's impossible to avoid. When opening a remarkable bottle of wine, you can't help but dream back to its birth and think about how many lives have had an effect on the bottle in front of you. Though opening this wine will bring its lifeline to an end, it is fulfilling its ultimate purpose by telling its story to those in appreciation, willing to listen. This magazine was created with the intention of capturing and expressing the passion bottled up in our cellar, but more importantly, the pleasure that is poured, shared, and enjoyed every night in our restaurant.

Through the creativity of our team as well as the contributions of growers, wine makers, importers, restaurateurs, sommeliers, connoisseurs, and more, this issue will show, first hand, a few of the many steps along the way before a wine makes it into your glass. From a vineyard's inception to the picking of fruit, tireless tweaking in the cellar to importing an unknown gem,

it is our intention to spend a moment looking back, with admiration and appreciation, at all the passionate efforts in a bottle of wine.

As a sommelier, I feel incredibly fortunate to be one of the last links in this chain. I am in the enviable position of playing the matchmaker between the finest wines in the world and the exquisite cuisine which we are proud to serve each night. I also have the privilege of serving with an extraordinary group of colleagues, and I often feel we have the best seat in the house, watching the (wine) world go by and often getting a taste for ourselves. I hope you will enjoy!


John Ragan
Wine Director, Eleven Madison Park



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THE KING AND I



WHAT MAKES A GREAT RESTAURANT A GREAT *WINE* RESTAURANT?

Wilfred Van Gorp

A lasting experience in what makes a great restaurant a great wine restaurant is illustrated by a dinner I enjoyed decades ago at *Jamin*—Joel Robuchon’s Michelin 3 star restaurant in Paris. I remember the friendly, unrushed, painstaking attention the sommelier gave my dining companion and me as we—somewhat tentatively, being in our 20’s at the time and not knowing much about wine—perused the extensive wine list.

Later in the meal, when we had finished our wine and still had our dish of rabbit and morels remaining, he stepped in to suggest a half bottle of the perfect Burgundy. We were so impressed by the experience that we asked for the labels from the bottles at the end of the evening, which he removed and placed on card stock. Twenty plus years later, I still have those labels, and take them out from time to time and think about that nascent experience as awakening in me an excitement and curiosity of remarkable wines with remarkable dishes. Great wine restaurants excite the wine geek and novice alike.

Surprisingly, many great restaurants do not succeed in being great wine restaurants nor do many wine-centric restaurants with strong lists reach this pinnacle. A restaurant that is outstanding in both respects is very special and all too rare, as it requires an unending commitment from the owners, management, and staff at all levels.

Great wine restaurants come in all sizes and span all price ranges, though common to each experience is great food and service. From the guest perspective, discovering a wonderful wine list is the first hint of the potential for excellence. The personality of the composer (wine or beverage director) shines through, just as the listener can identify Vivaldi when listening to one of his compositions. An inspired wine list must include the “greats” (i.e. First Growths or cult wines) just as it must lesser known wines by artisanal producers, wines of great terroir and limited production or “under the radar”

wines that are more difficult to locate and acquire. Think a great, unheralded Chenin Blanc unknown to many but appreciated by a few, or that Burgundy from a small producer known for his magic with Meursault.

Another indicator of a great wine restaurant, in addition to the aforementioned qualifying wine list, is a well-trained staff. A wine director and service staff who manage to seamlessly impart knowledge and an infectious enthusiasm for the wine program is non-negotiable in my assessment. An example of a restaurant not delivering on service was when I recently ordered a 2002 Smith-Haut Lafitte at a reputable restaurant from a server who responded “*What is the wine? I need the number of the wine (i.e. bin number) from our list.*”

A great wine restaurant avoids the “up sell.” A well-versed wine director takes care to suggest a more suitable wine to pair with a meal that is either equivalent to, or less than, the initial price point considered. A sommelier capable of guiding a diner to wines that have hit their prime tasting windows is worth his or her weight in gold.

Another unmistakable mark is attention to how the wine is served—that it is served at the right temperature at the proper time. A wine that is too warm may show as too high in alcohol or ‘hot’; a wine that is too cold may not show much at all, the flavors dulled by the cold temperature. In great wine restaurants, the wine is always served before the food arrives. Serving a wine after the food has been served denies guests that “magical first impression” of



There's a certain magic that prevails in experiencing a combination of flavors which can only be achieved by a brilliant pairing of just the right wine with just the right ingredients prepared just the right way.



a great food/wine pairing and makes it feel as if the wine is an afterthought. The misstep in serving the wine after the food has arrived is one that is hard to overcome.

A natural synergy and dialogue must exist between the wine director and the kitchen. Menu flexibility in instances of catering to one or more special wines is something the staff should find pleasantly rewarding. Some wine enthusiast friends and I went to a “wine focused” restaurant recently and ordered several older Burgundies. The tasting menu included fewer Burgundy-friendly dishes than we might have hoped for, so we inquired to see if the chef was able to deviate from the established tasting format to create a menu that would pair better with our wines. Unfortunately, the kitchen's inflexibility hindered our wine experience. So, despite the wine focus, it did not fall within the category of a great wine restaurant.

Great wine restaurants actively seek to buy wines of assured provenance and do not risk a purchase just because the staff feels they have to have every cult wine on the list. A group of us once enjoyed a thrilling Chablis in a great wine restaurant—the wine was exceptional, less expensive than our first choice (this Chablis was recommended heartily by the sommelier), and a perfect pairing with our first course. It was so rewarding I eagerly ordered it again-- at a wine focused restaurant a few months later when I saw it on the list. To my disappointment, the wine was flat, uninspiring, insipid. The sommelier confided that with such demand for certain wines they sometimes were forced to acquire wines with less-than-optimal provenance

to avoid the perception of a “picked over” list. This practice has no place at a great wine restaurant; what's the point of having a “trophy list” if it is full of dead bottles?

Stemware is a major point of debate in the wine world. What is without dissent—glassware must be odor free and allow the wine to show its best. This may mean using a different size or style glass than one “anointed” by conventional wisdom for a given wine. Such thoughtfulness is the hallmark of a great wine restaurant.

A memorable wine experience will stay with you for years and draw you back (even if only in memory) to that meal in that restaurant time and again. There's a certain magic that prevails in experiencing a combination of flavors which can only be achieved by a brilliant pairing of just the right wine with just the right ingredients prepared just the right way. The result is much more than simply the sum of the wine plus the food (service, the intangibles of time and place and setting, and so on)—and once you've found it, you set off on a never-ending journey in search of the next great wine experience. You might even find yourself asking to take the labels home with you.

Wilfred Van Gorp, a wine lover and a longtime regular guest of Eleven Madison Park, is the Director of Neuropsychology in the Department of Psychiatry at Columbia University. He is a member of Grand Jury Européen, and a contributing author for *The World of Fine Wine*.

Reviving Viognier

Chris Murray, Sommelier, Eleven Madison Park

There is something intrinsically seductive about Viognier. People tend to wax poetic about this grape variety, forsaking the usual wine jargon for more whimsical descriptions. Manfred Krankl of Sine Qua Non Winery offers his perspective on Viognier: *"If a good German Riesling is like an ice skater and Chardonnay is like a heavyweight boxer, then Viognier would have to be described as a female gymnast—beautiful to look at, perfectly shaped, with muscle, superb agility, elegance and, of course, sensational balance."*

Mr. Krankl is not alone. Matt Garretson of Garretson Wine Company and founder of the Viognier Guild, calls his Viognier *"Saothar,"* a Gaelic term for 'classic.' The name does seem an ironic choice for a wine that came so near to total extinction just forty years ago, partially due to the difficulties of growing such an unreliable, disease-prone, low-yielding vine. The folks down under at dArenberg may have employed a more apt description by naming their single-varietal wine, *"The Last Ditch Viognier."*

The wine writer Jancis Robinson observed this conundrum in 1986, noting that *"quantitatively, the Viognier vine hardly deserves mention. Any qualitative assessment of the world's wines, however, tends to linger over the intriguing Viognier, even though little more than 80 acres of it are planted anywhere in the world."* The vine itself has been cultivated for over two millennia, thriving at the northern end of the Rhône Valley. The Condrieu appellation consists of steep terraced hills, where Viognier is the only variety of grape allowed by law. Within the geographical area of Condrieu is the monopole, Château Grillet, an Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée in and of itself. As at Condrieu, the sole permitted grape is the Viognier, but the soil, particularly rich in decomposed mica, sets Grillet apart from the appellation surrounding it. The site is magnificent, featuring a fine natural amphitheatre facing south and southeast.

Textbook Viognier should be perfumed, with a wealth of aromatics—white peach, apricot, lilies, and even herbal tones of thyme. All these aromas should follow through on the palate with a rich mouthful of exotic fruit - finishing long, clean and refreshing. It has an elusive appearance of sweetness, even when the wine is dry. Viognier is a willing and able blending partner, not just to other white varieties (Roussane, Marsanne, Grenache Blanc), but also with red varietals, such as Syrah.

Yet, in 1968, only a paltry 35 acres of Viognier existed in the Rhône Valley and the grape was virtually unknown outside the Rhône's local restaurants. Even at this low point, Condrieu was considered one of the rarest, both in

quality and quantity, of all France's great white wines. It had the price tag to prove it. Condrieu had flourished at the end of the 19th century, but the two great wars felled demand and things were bleak until the 1970's and 1980's. Strangely, the renaissance for the wine did not generate in Condrieu itself, but from a younger generation of international vintners, tempted by a new kind of commercially-minded entrepreneurship.

Viognier's recent history turned when Bill Smith of La Jota Vineyard Co. imported some cuttings from Condrieu promoter and producer, George Vernay, into Napa Valley. Smith had been very impressed on a trip through the Northern Rhône by the unique beauty of the wines from the tiny Condrieu appellation. After returning to the U.S., he quickly was nicknamed the "Johnny Appleseed" of American Viognier. Since the 1980s, he has provided many American producers with budwood in a kind of ongoing experiment to see how Viognier performs under various soil and climate conditions. Nick Peay of Peay Vineyards is one such recipient. Peay describes his first encounter with the 1987 La Jota Viognier, *"that vintage was nicely brisk with its finishing acidity. I observed over the years, however, that Bill struggled to retain, or create, acidity in his Viognier. Eventually he gave up trying to duplicate on Howell Mountain what he had tasted from Condrieu, but not before inspiring and encouraging me to give the grape a try!"*

Josh Jensen of Calera Wine Company in California had a similar first impression of Viognier. *"It was back in 1969 when I was working the harvest in France. I had a bottle of Viognier from Chateau Grillet in Condrieu and fell in love with it. When I got back to the states, I started checking around to see if there was any Viognier in California. I was told that the University of California, Davis didn't recommend it for planting because it was too low yielding. They had said the same thing about Chardonnay. In 1973, I submitted a formal petition to the Foundation Plant Material Service. Fifteen years later, the first certified Viognier came forth. I got my first budwood from Geneva in New York and planted my first two acres in 1983."*

Jensen planted three more acres in 1989, but he did encounter many difficulties in the vineyard. *“My biggest problem was getting the vines established. We had many experiences of budding or grafting where the shoot would grow for a few months and then die. I was really getting discouraged when I talked to the people at Guigal in Condrieu. They said that if you just looked at it wrong, it died. But since we’ve started getting a commercial crop, we’ve had no particular problems. We want to pick it fully ripe.”* There is a very narrow window for picking Viognier—it must be fully ripe before it reveals its trademark heady aromas, yet the level of acidity drops drastically once it has reached phenolic ripeness.

While all of this excitement for Viognier was building in New World wine regions, winegrowers in the Rhône and further afield in France struggled to keep up with the mounting interest. Though Condrieu is no longer the only place where Viognier is grown, both Condrieu and Château Grillet still stand for the best wines made from the grape and have always commanded premium prices. Within these small appellations, vinification standards are extremely variable. Despite their reputations as being more traditional producers, Georges Vernay and E. Guigal have often found themselves surrounded in controversy. Vernay was the first winemaker to experiment with oak aging for Viognier. In 1994, Guigal launched the La Doraine cuvée using 50% new oak. By 1998 it was 100% new and highly prized by the critics. La Doraine was released shortly after Guigal attempted to buy Chateau Grillet. Rumor has it that when the Canet family, the current owners of Château Grillet, refused, Guigal bought up as much of the land surrounding the 3 hectare-amphitheatre as he could and this became the source of fruit for La Doraine. Relative newcomers Yves Cuilleron, André Perret and François Villard have further challenged traditions in Condrieu.

These variances in winemaking and the use of oak in particular have followed the fashions of the time. Peay looks at stylistic expressions having started in the 1940s, around the time of the creation of the appellation. *“Back then, the goal was to make a fizzy sweet wine to be sold in bulk at Christmas time.”* But in the 1960s and 70s new vigneronns were emerging from oenology programs throughout France. For the first time, winemakers were learning their trade not through the traditions of their fathers, but rather from professors at universities who provided them with scientific data. This led to the first experiments with malolactic fermentation and the use of new oak in Condrieu. For a period, Condrieu was like the American Wild West.

As often occurs when things reach an extreme, there was a swing back to tank-fermentations and restrictive use of malolactic fermentation in the 1980’s. Everything was filtered, with little lees aging and no new oak. Then,

gradually in the 1990s, more barrel treatment was reintroduced and the wines began to take on a more international style. In the mid-90’s there was a lot of media hype about Viognier. A flurry of articles in publications like *The New York Times* talked about Viognier as the next Chardonnay. There was also a rapid increase in Viognier plantings in California and Australia during this period that helped to push the wine onto the world stage. Many producers in California had already been looking to the Rhône Valley and were inspired by its unique grape varieties. Randall Grahm of Bonny Doon Vineyard, says that once his Rhone wines caught on, he never looked back. His first release was in 1986, and he quickly became the doyen of what would later be dubbed “The Rhône Rangers.” In 1991, Garretson founded The Viognier Guild, which over the years evolved into Hospice du Rhône, host of the world’s largest international celebration of Rhône wines. In 2002, the first Australian Viognier Symposium was held at Yalumba Winery and attracted delegates from Australia, South Africa, France and the USA. Viognier now seems to be quite firmly planted throughout Italy, Switzerland, Greece, South Africa, Austria and New Zealand.

In Peay’s mind, it is still all about the balance, *“Since those early years, I’ve tasted bigger Viogniers that can tolerate 10-20% lightly toasted new French oak and benefit. Most often, though, I’ve found that the new oak takes the flavors in a different direction, adding a graham cracker note at the expense of floral freshness. Today, sweet Condrieu has made a comeback as many are making late-harvest dessert wines with fruit from the new vineyard parcels.”* He is pointing out how trends come back around, of which Yves Cullieron’s *Ayguets* is an example.

In many ways, the rebirth of Viognier is just beginning. There is enthusiasm for it now and those vintners who had been experimenting with the vine are finally starting to see the fruits of their labor. Young Viognier vines rarely produce fruit worth drinking. Vanessa Wong, the winemaker at Peay Vineyards and former winemaker at Peter Michael, talks about Viognier as being *“a challenge to grow and to make. Both processes take a very long time! Growers often have too short an attention span for the varietal. They give up and want to move onto something else.”* So how do you sell Viognier? Wong sees this as the purpose of groups such as the Viognier Guild and the Rhône Rangers. *“Originally these symposiums were for the growers, to learn how to plant and cultivate the Viognier vine. At this point, most of the vintners who are interested in growing Viognier have the know-how. It’s now a matter of educating the public.”* As Wong observes, *“it has taken this long for people to learn how to pronounce Viognier. Now they are finally ready to order it.”*

HISTORY OF THE WORLD

Josh Jensen

Part MCCLXXVII: The Calera Story

Volume I: The First Years, 1974 & 1975

It all started in late March 1974, when I purchased three hundred acres of remote, steep terrain, with a large limestone deposit, high up in the Gavilan Mountains in western San Benito County. Though not very far from civilization—only 90 miles south of San Francisco, and 25 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean—the property was, and remains, extremely isolated. The principal vegetation is chaparral brush, a plant community made up of chamise, ceanothus (“wild lilac”), manzanita, and scrub oak.

Chaparral brush is a sign that an area gets very little rainfall, a fact confirmed by the farmers and ranchers in the area. Rainfall record for the town showed an annual average of only 13 inches; back up in the mountains on this remote parcel, we later learned, it’s a little more, perhaps 15 inches. And this property I wanted to buy didn’t appear to have any alternative supplies of water, or at least any developed water supply: no wells, no year-round springs. An apparent lack of water the first drawback, there was only one small intermittent creek that flowed two or three months in the wet years, and not at all in the dry years.

In addition to being pretty dry, there were other disadvantages: no electricity, telephone service, paved roads, cable tv., garbage service, newspaper or mail delivery and—devastatingly—no pizza delivery. (To this day, the property is still without all of those amenities.) Perhaps the biggest drawback was the fact that there was no legal access to the land. To get to it, I had to cross the land of an elderly woman, widow of the eccentric hard rock mining entrepreneur, Archie Hamilton. I dearly needed to stay on her good side for two reasons: she controlled access to my land and I eventually hoped to buy hers (which, in addition to limestone, had more plantable acreage and a lot more water). For many years I tried, unsuccessfully, to get her to sell that land. She never did.

Drawbacks aside, I had been looking for limestone all over California for more than two years by that point, and hadn’t come up with anything. My

mentors in Burgundy had told me limestone soil was the absolute key to producing world class Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, but as luck would have it, there isn’t much limestone in California. I also had a *feeling* this piece of ground could grow extraordinary pinot noir. There was something about it that just seemed right. Very high in elevation at 2,200 feet with a benevolent climate, the land looked promising if only it would rain more.

So I bought it. I immediately went to work clearing the brush from one acre, putting up a deer fence, and planting 500 pinot noir vines. There is no exaggeration in “immediately.” In order to get the vines in the ground in 1974, I had to start on the land before we even closed escrow. These first few vines were essentially a test plot, to see if the land would grow grapevines. One can theorize all one wants about a given piece of land and its suitability for growing grapes, but the only way to know for sure is to go ahead and plant. Similarly, the only way to find out what quality of wine will be produced is to grow grapes and then make the wine.

I had never farmed before, so I imagined every conceivable disaster: killer frosts, grape diseases as yet unknown, and, of course, Acts of God. In addition to being new to farming I was also new (read: naïve) to entrepreneurship. Over the coming years I would learn, gradually and painfully, that farmers are far more fearful of bureaucrats than any frost or disease. As the saying goes, hell hath no fury like a bureaucrat whose forms you’ve filled out incorrectly.



The 500 vines in the test plot passed my rudimentary, admittedly unscientific, test with flying colors: they grew that first summer. Not a lot, but still they grew. I watered them by hand through 1974, with water from Mrs. Hamilton's spring. I bought a 200 gallon tank, and put it in the back of an old Jeep pickup truck. I'd fill the tank with 200 gallons from the spring, and then drive the heavy load of water a mile to the test plot, with about 100 gallons sloshing out along the way. I'd park the Jeep at the top of the plot, and siphon the remaining water out to each individual vine (roughly 5 gallons per vine). That first summer, when not watering those vines, I spent my time driving our new John Deere bulldozer clearing brush and the smaller trees from what would become, in the following year, the Selleck, Reed and Jensen Pinot Noir vineyards. I slept up on the mountain in my Volkswagen van, my days spent solely tending to the land. I loved it.

One of my new neighbors, Allan Lilly, helped me immeasurably in those early years. Allan, who has since passed away, was a Mormon who thought it terrific that a city slicker had come way back up in the mountains with a dream of turning steep, never-used hillsides into famous vineyards. He took me under his wing and taught me how to clear the brush: if your dozer blade is too low you pick up too much dirt; if the blade is too high you snap off the brush at ground level and don't get the roots out. It makes it a lot easier down the road if you can get the brush roots out, most of them at least, on the first pass with the bulldozer.

Allan was there to bail me out each time the tractor broke down. And he was there the two times I got the tractor stuck after I went up against an oak tree. You always approach these trees from the uphill side, and by the time you find out you can't push it over and continue down the hill it's too late. I'd find myself wedged between the tree on the downhill end, and the steep bank behind me on the uphill end. The tractor and I would end up high centered, having dug ourselves a hole. Allan Libby's ancient Caterpillar D-6 always came to the rescue. He eventually left it up on my property, retrieving it only when he needed it for a job elsewhere.

We spent 1974 and that following winter clearing the brush and trees and otherwise preparing the ground. And in the spring of 1975, we planted the 24 acres that make up the Selleck, Reed and Jensen vineyards, or rather the remaining 23 acres: our test plot became part of the Jensen Vineyard, and those 500 vines are still growing.

The John Deere bulldozer, however, died a few winters ago after 19 years of hard, steady use. In recent years it was temperamental, frequently needed repairs and finally just gave out. We purchased a new John Deere, and if this one lasts 19 years we'll be delighted. You can't ask much more from a piece of machinery. Or, for that matter, from a bottle of wine.

Josh Jensen is the owner and winemaker of the Calera Wine Company, which has been growing grapes on Mt. Harlan since 1975.

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Discovering a True Passion

Nathan Rawlinson, Manager, Eleven Madison Park

A wine epiphany is that first moment at which a person realizes there is much more to wine than red or white grape juice with alcohol. Before I experienced my own, my wine selections were based almost solely on price and the look of the label. I barely even realized Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon were types of grapes, never mind where in the world they were grown.

It was years ago, at a wine store in Hyde Park, where I was living while attending the Culinary Institute of America. I found myself at the CIA after years of living in London working as a project manager in the computer industry. It took me a long time to come to the realization that I did not love what I did for a living, even longer to find the confidence to make a change. So, I packed my bags, moved to America, and enrolled in the CIA—I was going to be a Chef.

During my introductory culinary courses, I was having fun and I was doing well. Then I enrolled in my first wine class, and things started to change. It was an intense, yet immensely enjoyable three week class that involved tasting a lot of wine. And I became obsessed. The house I shared with fellow students became a wine aficionado's refuge. We embraced all things wine. We bought books, used fancy wine glasses and trips to different wine stores for hard-to-get bottles became *de rigueur*.

By the end of my time at the CIA, I was certain I wanted to work with wine. I sought out and applied to restaurants in New York with the strongest wine programs. Only a few weeks later, I joined the team at Eleven Madison Park as a assistant server, quickly learning more than

I ever expected. I amassed pages of notes, enjoyed formal and informal tastings with my managers and peers, and spent all my extra money on new, exciting wines I wanted to try. For the first time, I loved what I was doing. Eventually, I ascended through the ranks from assistant server to server and, finally, Captain.

I continued to work at the restaurant and my passion for wine grew stronger. Then, an incredible opportunity arose: a management position had opened up. Initially hesitant this role would shift my focus away from wine, I soon learned this position would involve working in both the dining room and the wine department...I could not turn it down.

Since assuming this manager role, everything has continued on a breakneck pace. The restaurant earned a James Beard Award for Outstanding Wine Service in America and we received Five Stars from the *New York Daily News*. Now, I return to the CIA every three months to recruit new people for Eleven Madison Park. My knowledge of wine has increased dramatically (and continues to do so every day). To bring this full circle, when I first joined the company I was a student in Union Square Hospitality Group's Wine Class. This year, I taught one of those classes. I now truly love what I do.



Harvest Report

Jordan Salcito, Sommelier, Eleven Madison Park

Winter marks the quietest season in Burgundy—cool, barren vineyards, the vines skeletons in a seemingly lifeless field. In the spring, it bustles with tourists. Vines begin to flower and geraniums sprout their red heads in window boxes across the Côte d'Or.

In the summer, swaths of humid air circulate in the long, hot days that produce the lush green hillsides and stout, healthy vines home to juicy pinot noir, chardonnay and aligote clusters. Fall results in a colorful, bounteous culmination of the year's work. Tractors and *camions*, or harvest trucks, clog Burgundy's central thoroughway the N-74. Pickers spill out of roadside vineyards. Cuverie stagières and hired cooks flood the region, as do unknowing tourists who can't understand why wineries won't let them visit. An air of excitement permeates the entire region.

In 2007, I planned my second working-visit during the harvest. I had worked as a picker at Domaine de l'Arlot in Nuits-St-Georges in 2006, though my 2007 education would be in the conceptual process of making excellent white wines. My teacher would be Alix de Montille, a talented, pixie-like white winemaker based in Meursault. Alix's wines are as sprightly and complex as she is, and I gladly took her up on the offer to assist her in making wine.

Upon arrival, Alix and her husband, Jean-Marc Roulot (the esteemed winemaker at Domaine Guy Roulot), had put harvesting on sudden hold. The summer had seen an atypical deluge of rain, yet at the onset of picking the region was blessed with a week of sunshine. As I learned that first day, the best domaines usually gamble with Mother Nature in such times—they put harvesting on hold, wait for the precious sunlight to ripen the grapes and pray it doesn't rain. Sunshine increases the degree of sugar and potential alcohol, while rain could potentially destroy the whole crop. "The Degree," a seemingly small detail in wine production, can mean the difference between an acceptable wine and an exceptional one.

After lunch on our first day (delicious roasted pork tenderloin, a salad of shaved carrots, Epoisses, apple tart and a shot of espresso,) Alix brought me to the enormous rental lorrie that we would drive to the vineyards.

The truck had two seats, a radio that played only French techno music, and room in back for palettes of grapes.

Alix's family, the DeMontilles, have made wine in the Burgundian commune of Volnay since the 13th century. In 2003, she and her brother, Etienne, created their own négociant business—"DE(ux) Montille Soeur et Frere"—a play on their last name and the French word for 'two.' In this venture, Alix makes the white wines, Etienne the reds. The wines are made from grapes that come from both parcels of land they own, as well as fruit they purchase from a handful of other esteemed producers. I was anxious to learn the differences in making wine at a négociant compared to a domaine, as I'd done in '06.

I first met Alix in December 2005 at a party in New York for Burgundian winemakers. I had just finished a six-month cooking stint in New York and Alix shared that for years she had dreamt of being a chef, even having trained in some of Paris' best restaurants. When she became pregnant she switched careers because, as she explained, "*I can still be a mother and make wine.*"

Our day included collecting parcel grape samples in the communes of Meursault, Puligny-Montrachet, Saint-Aubin, Pernand-Vergelesses, and Aloxe-Corton. As we drove along the N-74 towards Aloxe-Corton, Alix pointed out important vineyards and explained the difference between well- and poorly-tended vines. Some vines, she noted with a scowl, have no growth between rows which usually indicates pesticides.

As we drew nearer to Aloxe-Corton Alix motioned to the Hill of Corton, an egg-shaped, tree-covered knoll that towered above the surrounding hills of Pernand-Vergelesses. Corton is the only Grand Cru appellation permitted to grow both red and white grapes, its roots traced to a legend involving King Charlemagne. Alix recounted the tale, which claims that Charlemagne loved reds, but as he aged his beard turned white and his wife made him



switch to white wine to prevent his beard from looking red-stained and ‘unruly’.

The De Montilles recently acquired land in both Corton, where Etienne grows Pinot Noir, and Corton Charlemagne, a part of the hill best known for white wines where Alix grows Chardonnay. When we arrived, she hopped onto the soft, clay soil and headed straight towards her vines, marked with a red wooden post. I followed her as she explained how to take grape samples: using a secateur (vine-clipping shears), snip a well-shaded grape cluster and place it in a plastic bag, walk ten paces down the row of vines and repeat until a majority of the parcel is represented in the bag.

As we combed the vines Alix constantly pointed out details like the slope’s pitch (grapes grown on steeper, southeast-facing slopes were riper than those on flat parcels) and the abundance of flora in between rows of vines on growers who were biodynamic. Alix’s teaching style—one part doing, four parts explaining—greatly helped me to understand Burgundy. I read about Corton-Charlemagne a hundred times, but to be there, picking and differentiating between healthy and suffering vines and ripe and unripe grapes, helped make sense of years of research. Geography became clear as well. Burgundy has a reputation for being a difficult region to get a handle on, but driving through the Côte d’Or helped cement the communes—and even some vineyards—in my mental roadmap.

Once we finished taking samples in Corton, we jumped back on the N-74, swerving around the Peripherique in Beaune, then on a smooth dirt road in a wide valley heading towards Puligny (the De Montilles own part of Caillerets, the prized Puligny 1er Cru vineyard adjacent to Montrachet). Alix eventually stopped in front of a limestone wall that separated Caillerets from the dirt road and we hopped into the vineyard to take samples.

Two minutes into our task, Alix stopped in her tracks. “*Oidium!*,” she yelled in horror, motioning me over and pointing to a chalky mildew I would have otherwise mistaken for dirt. Oidium, the vicious, fast-spreading fungus that prevents grapes from ripening (something I’d only read about), had started to infect her parcel. The vineyard would need to be checked again the next day. Alix observed, “*If the oidium spreads we will bring a small team to pick the contaminated vines.*”

Back at the winery I met Jane, a temporary employee for the harvest, who worked as the assistant winemaker at Felton Road in New Zealand’s Central Ottago region. Jane showed me how to press the grape samples we

collected, measure their temperature and density using a mustimetre, and establish our schedule for picking the vine parcels. I helped as Jane plunged a pointed test tube beneath the firm, raisin-like cap of red grapes in the open-topped wooden tank fermenters, drawing juice samples to evaluate their rate of fermentation. Some of Etienne's red wines had been macerating four and five days, and the cuverie smelled like one giant red wine spritzer.

Mornings across the Côte d'Or commenced with a daily ritual known as casse-crouste (a breakfast-like snack whose literal translation is 'break bread'), typically consisting of wine, beer, platters of cheeses, terrines, rillettes, and baskets of fresh baguettes. Casse-crouste also involves blind tastings, and everyone who joins brings bottles to share and evaluate with the team. One morning, Jean-Marc brought a dusty, label-less bottle of white wine from the cellar and poured a splash into each glass. Within seconds of pointing her nose into the goblet, Alix lifted her head and looked at her husband across the table, "I love this wine. Bouchères 2004." Jean-Marc revealed he had chosen the bottle because he was harvesting Bouchères that day.

Midweek, on a rare sunny day off (the domaines were again waiting for the sun to increase The Degree in the Chardonnay grapes), we stopped for lunch with winemakers Jeremy and Diana Seysses at Domaine Dujac. That morning, Domaine Dujac had finished all of its picking except Monts-Luisants (its single white wine). The reds were in open-tank fermenters and cuves, an accomplishment Diana likened to "*knowing your children are tucked safely into bed.*"

After lunch, I accompanied Diana to the winery where she, Jeremy and Jacques (Jeremy's father, founder of Domaine Dujac) drew samples of juice from the fermenting vats to gauge the readiness for pressing and barrel fermentation. As we were leaving, we saw Christophe Roumier of Domaine George Roumier and his picking team in the Clos de la Bussière, the walled vineyard adjacent to Domaine Dujac's winery. Christophe, a fit, friendly, and even-tempered winemaker, explained the importance of millerandage, clusters of especially small-berried grapes, which adds concentrated color and flavor to the finished wines. Intrigued, we made plans to meet Christophe for dinner at the new Bistro de l'Hotel de Beaune later that evening.

This impromptu dinner morphed into quite an evening, as is often the case during harvest. A handful of winemakers joined at Le Bistro to celebrate the near-end of picking season. Johan Bjorklund, l'Hotel's proprietor, chef

and sometimes wine-broker, planned a feast of local vegetable crudité, pan-roasted girolles, grilled duck breast and veal chops, and a spread of local cheeses (Epoisses, Comte and Charollais). Christophe brought an American wine collector friend and Dominique Lafon of Meursault brought his former cuverie stagièr Eric Polz (of Polz Winery in Austria). Jean-Pierre de Smet, formerly of Domaine de l'Arlet, joined, as did two newcomers to the Burgundy wine scene—Frederic Engerer and Florence Pinault of Chateau Latour in Pauillac, who recently acquired Domaine Engel in Vosnes-Romanée.

The Seysses had given me a magnum of 1980 Domaine Dujac Morey-Saint-Denis 1er Cru, which I brought to share. After a 1996 Meursault Perrières from Domaine Comtes Lafon, we uncorked the Dujac 1er Cru, a velvety wine redolent of Bing cherries and old saddle leather. After several excellent bottles of wine from across the Côte de Nuits, Christophe reached into a bag and pulled out another old, label-less bottle covered in a thick cloak of grey mold. It was, he modestly revealed, an epic 1945 Bonnes Mares that his grandfather, George Roumier, had made. Its tannins silky, and its aromas complex in history and fruit. The wine lingered in conversation the rest of the evening ... and in our memories, far longer.

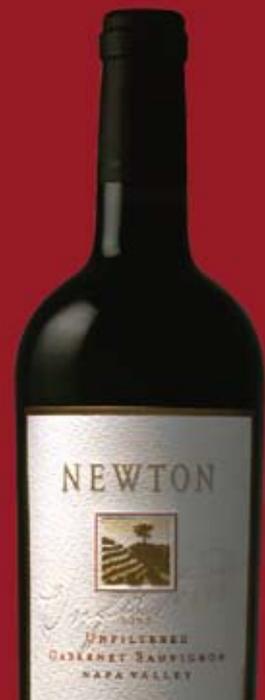
The next day, we drove to Puligny and stopped at Montrachet, following an invitation from Dominique Lafon at the Bistro dinner to harvest with him. Each year, Dominique harvests this vineyard with a small and trustworthy team. Standing among his emerald vines, Dominique issued strict instructions: "*Pick every single grape, do not miss even the tiniest berry!*" He paused. "*If you do, I will see that you never drink my Montrachet again!*" His smile clearly said 'I like you, but you better not miss a piece of fruit.' He harvests this prized parcel last, to get the ripest possible Degree. Picking right alongside us was Jasper Morris, the jovial British Master of Wine, sporting a floppy hat and hunched over his seaux (plastic picking bucket) in a row of vines. We combed the vines meticulously, with every picker seeking perfection on this hallowed plot.

With the vines triple-checked and every grape transferred to crates on the back of Dominique's camion, we retired to the Domaine Comte Lafon, a large rose-colored estate atop a hill in central Meursault. After a brief conversation with Jasper and several harvesters over some jambon persillé and a glass of Montrachet, I departed. As much as I wanted to linger, it was time to say goodbye.

If you think reading this sentence at a 30° angle is difficult, then imagine planting a vineyard on it.

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A Perfect Pair



It was during an exquisite meal years ago at San Francisco's Campton Place that John Ragan first experienced Chef Daniel Humm's cooking. That one meal inspired John, then Sommelier of Martini House in Napa Valley, to relocate to San Francisco to work with Chef Humm. John and Daniel spent four years together at Campton Place where they received numerous accolades, among them a coveted Four Stars from *The San Francisco Chronicle*. In 2006, Daniel accepted the position of Executive Chef of Eleven Madison Park, and he asked John to join him by moving to New York City to become the restaurant's Wine Director.

Since arriving at Eleven Madison Park, Daniel and John have strived to make the restaurant a destination dining experience showcasing exemplary food lovingly and thoughtfully paired with outstanding wines. The two share a deep-rooted passion for exploring the inextricable relationship between food and wine and a mutual respect for one another's palate and style. The exacting marriage between the restaurant's Gourmand tasting menu and accompanying wine pairing showcases the benefit of years working together.

Under John's stewardship, the wine program has evolved from its previous, predominantly French accent to a cellar much more international in scope, amassing a dynamic, compelling list arranged by varietal. He grows his list with constant consideration of the kitchen's creations, and revels in the challenge of creating wine pairings to complement Daniel's exquisite Modern French fare.

Pairing wines for the Gourmand menu is a two-part process involving a joint collaboration between Daniel and John. Generally, it takes up to two months from inception for a new dish to debut on the tasting menu, with Daniel and

his team repeatedly testing, tweaking and re-thinking the composition. Once ready to present the dish internally, Daniel and John meet briefly to discuss the ingredients. From there, John will select a handful of wines as potential partners for the dish, based on the flavor profile Daniel has explained.

The actual tasting takes place in the kitchen on the pass. The dish is presented along with the wine, and each takes a bite, a sip and considers – silently – the selections. This is repeated until they've tasted every wine, though both admit it is often immediately clear when a match is ideal. They find this silent tasting method best as it allows them to experience the dish and the wine individually before talking it through together.

Though imbued with a classic mindset, Eleven Madison Park takes a modern, innovative approach to every aspect of its service—as such Daniel and John are constantly looking to challenge conventional wisdom on wine pairings. They seek out unusual combinations, such as Sherry with goat cheese or Riesling with chocolate, which guests may find surprising. Conversely, sometimes they find the best pairings are the most classic, matching a dish with a traditional wine from the same region. While at times difficult to achieve, a regional pairing transports a guest to a specific time and a specific place.

Most important as they pair is maintaining a balance between both the flavors presented and the menu progression. John must consider the flavors in the dish and the wine that will pair best, as well as how the pairing relates to the dishes that come before and after. The fluidity between the Gourmand menu and its wine pairing is reflective of their ability to achieve this desired balance and provide guests with a memorable sensory experience.



Shrimp Roulade With Avocado And Greek Yogurt

The dish for this particular pairing was composed of shrimp, crème fraîche, lime juice, tarragon, Greek yogurt, herbs and an oil made from shrimp roe. With the introduction of yogurt to the flavor combination of shrimp and avocado, Daniel succeeded in presenting a familiar taste in an unfamiliar way. Before sitting down for the tasting, John deconstructed the key elements of the dish and contemplated how the wine would best relate.

With the dish's clean presentation in mind, John was looking for a wine with a good amount of minerality (to showcase the natural sweetness of the shrimp) as well a decent amount of acidity (to counter the crème fraîche and to support the lime juice). A wine with too much oak would be undesirable, as it would overshadow the delicacy of the dish.

John set his sights on a Chablis, a Sancerre and two Rieslings (one from Alsace and one from Austria, the variation in terroir producing markedly different results). As John explains, he chose the Chablis and Sancerre “primarily because the soil (same type) should deliver just the right minerality to highlight the sweetness of the shrimp.” He supposed the profiles of each of these wines would nicely complement the acidity and tanginess of the dish.

CHABLIS

Domaine François Raveneau, Montée de Tonnerre, Premier Cru 2002
Although a benchmark Chablis, when tasting it with the dish the wine came up a bit flat. Chef Humm observed the Chablis “*was fine paired with the dish. Not necessarily bad, not necessarily good—just fine.*” The “wow” factor definitely missing, they moved on to the Sancerre.

SANCERRE

Pascal Cotat, Les Monts Damnes, Chavignol 2002
Its minerality the reason John brought it to the table, he and Daniel both immediately agreed this wine was “*dry and entirely too austere for this dish.*”

RIESLING, AUSTRIA

FX. Pichler, Loibner Berg Smaragd, Wächau 2001
As John explained, “*We were looking for a producer who can deliver the right grape in the right way, a wine that is in no way cloying and yet not so powerfully dry that it overshadows the delicate nature of the shrimp. Different producers can create very different wines—a Riesling can show itself as anything from bone dry to sticky sweet, for example—and therefore it is important to know the producer and the wine. Wine is also a very textural thing: if the flavor is on, but the texture is not exactly right for the dish, it can throw the pairing off.*” This Austrian Riesling proved to be great in both flavor and texture, but its power ended up overshadowing the dish.

RIESLING, ALSACE

Trimbach, Clos Ste. Hune, Alsace 1999
The Trimbach Riesling was by far the favorite of the bunch. It showed just the right fruit element, nicely complementing the avocado, perfectly dry with the desired mineral composition, and the texture and flavor was ideally suited to the avocado and the shrimp. “*It was no question that this was the wine for the dish. I noticed that Daniel had the same expression when tasting as I—a look of satisfaction and appreciation for how beautifully it paired, and of confidence in having struck the perfect balance.*”



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Shrimp Roulade With Avocado And Greek Yogurt

Serves 4

COURT BOUILLON FOR COOKING THE SHRIMP:

- 3/4 cup chopped fennel bulb
- 3/4 cup chopped celery
- 1/2 cup chopped leek whites
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled
- 1 cup white wine
- 1 cup orange juice
- 1 tablespoon grated orange zest
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds
- 1 teaspoon coriander seeds
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 whole star anise
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 3 cups water
- 1 1/2 pounds large shrimp (about 16)

SHRIMP SALAD:

- 1 1/2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 1/2 tablespoons Greek yogurt
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh tarragon
- 2 teaspoons lime juice
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Cayenne, to taste
- 2 1/2 pounds ripe avocados, chilled slightly
- 5 tablespoons lemon oil
- 1 cup shrimp cooking liquid
- 1 tablespoon white balsamic vinegar
- Fleur de del
- Piment d'Espelette

GARNISH:

- Sorrel leaves
- Borage blossoms or nasturtium flowers
- Tarragon
- 4 teaspoons Greek yogurt
- Lemon juice, to taste

PREPARATION:

To cook the shrimp, make a court bouillon in a saucepan with the chopped fennel, celery, leeks, garlic, white wine, orange juice, orange zest, fennel seeds, coriander seeds, black pepper, star anise, salt, and 3 cups of water. Bring to a boil and simmer for 20 minutes. Remove from heat and cool the liquid to 140° F. (This spiced bouillon gives a subtle, delicious taste to the shrimp that you will notice.)

Add shrimp to the liquid and poach for about 5 minutes, using the residual heat, until they start turning pink. Remove shrimp from liquid, let cool. Once liquid has cooled, return the shrimp to bouillon saucepan. Then peel, slicing in half lengthwise, and removing the thin black intestinal track. Reserve 1 cup cooking liquid for later use.

Cut the shrimp into a fine dice (you'll have about 2 cups). Combine with the mayonnaise, yogurt, tarragon, and lime juice. Season with salt, pepper, and just a pinch of cayenne.

Quarter the avocados and peel each quarter just before using. Discard any bruised or dark sections. With a steady hand, slice the quarters as thinly as possible using a mandolin or a very sharp knife. You won't get perfect slices every time. Dice the avocado leftovers and add to the shrimp salad. Lay the slices on parchment or plastic wrap in overlapping layers. Press down on the avocado slices with another sheet of parchment or plastic; the goal is to create a smooth layer of avocado. Once smooth, spread the shrimp salad down the center of the avocado slices and roll like a cigar. Brush the roulades with 1 tablespoon lemon oil and sprinkle with fleur de sel.

Reduce the shrimp poaching liquid to a syrup. Add 3 tablespoons lemon oil and the balsamic vinegar. Season with piment d'espelette and salt.

TO FINISH:

Spread 1 teaspoon yogurt on each plate. Place a roulade on top and garnish with borage or nasturtium flowers, sorrel, and tarragon. Drizzle with the vinaigrette and serve.

The Charitable Benefits of Wine

Jenny Dirksen, Director of Community Investment, Union Square Hospitality Group
Danny Meyer, Co-Owner, Eleven Madison Park

Wine has finally taken its place alongside art as one of the world's most prized collector's items. The privilege of owning something that provides such great pleasure to share and consume is only heightened by the possibility that it may appreciate in value while evolving in the cellar.

People with wine cellars of all scales seem to enjoy visiting their bottles regularly as if they were family members maturing and readying themselves for their 'coming out' parties. In recent years, many wines have skyrocketed in value thanks to a dramatic increase in global demand relative to finite authentic *cru* vineyard sites—as well as an explosion in wine auctions and internet availability. This surge has created a quandary, at times making it difficult for people to actually drink their own wines! If a wine cost, say, \$80 when it was released some twenty years ago, it's not so easy a decision to pull its cork today with the knowledge that its auction value has reached the \$2000 mark.

The majority of enthusiasts purchase wines more for their own pleasure than as investment vehicles, but the dramatic escalation in the value of fine wines has encouraged the philanthropically-minded to utilize their collections to raise millions of dollars globally for the public good. To learn more, we reached out to some friends of Eleven Madison Park who've been active for many years in connecting wine with causes. We're delighted to share their stories and giving philosophies.

An eagerly anticipated (and highly lucrative) wine event is the **Rusty Staub Foundation's** annual Sunday luncheon held at **Restaurant Daniel**. The Foundation's first fundraiser in 1992 brought in \$35,000; in 2007, the auction raised over \$1.7M, landing at #4 on *Wine Spectator's* charity auction list. The Rusty Staub Foundation works with Catholic Charities to run eight emergency food pantries, which together distribute over 650,000 meals

each year. This year, the Foundation will help to fund the opening of POTS (Part of The Solution), a new community kitchen in the Bronx, committing \$500,000 to the kitchen's dining room. Additional funds raised support Citymeals-on-Wheels, City Harvest, and the Food Bank for NYC.

Rusty considers his philanthropic work "*a friendship thing*." He credits "*friends who make wine, who want to buy wine, and who believe in you and what you're trying to do*" as the basis of the event. "*We make sure we give people a great show and offer them the greatest wines in the world to put in their cellars,*" says Rusty. The true benefit is that the purchase of wines "*helps all these people who really need it.*"

A passion for wine is the first step for many donors. **Dr. Orrin Devinsky** is chair of the steering committee for the nonprofit **f.a.c.e.s.** (Finding a Cure for Epilepsy and Seizures). At their 2007 gala, f.a.c.e.s. netted \$4M, over \$50,000 of which was raised in the wine auction. "*My introduction and development of a passion for wine came through one of my best friends and one of the most charitable humans on the planet, Marc Mayer,*" says Orrin. "*When I was first getting my interests whetted, Marc would often just give me a mixed case of incredible bottles, seemingly oblivious to their [high] value. His generosity taught me to look at wine as something to enjoy with the people you care about, and also linked wine with giving.*" Orrin also singles out **Dick Grace**, famed wine producer from Napa, as influential. "*He has used proceeds from Grace Family Vineyards to support a children's hospital in Nepal, among many other causes.*"

Contributing to a charitable event permits the donor the prestige of showing

his or her taste in wines, and often delivers richer returns than those found at a commercial auction: the bidding for a valued bottle might net far more money for an organization than a collector might be able or willing to give from his own pocket.

In September 2007, Sotheby's held a single cellar sale featuring 7000 bottles from **Thomas Ryder**, former CEO of The Reader's Digest Association who now writes about food and wine. Press reports indicated the sale brought in about \$2M. *"Some of these wines had grown so valuable it seemed almost a shame to drink them, although we had certainly been guilty of joyously shameful behavior over the years. Using them as the basis of a series of contributions just seemed like the right thing to do,"* says Tom, who indicated that he and his wife, Darlene, planned to give the proceeds to charities and educational institutions in their home state of Louisiana. *"We didn't set out to build a wine cellar to make a lot of money,"* notes Tom. *"The act of creating the collection and sharing a lot of it with friends and family has brought us enormous pleasure over the years, and I suspect the act of giving away the proceeds to causes in our beloved home state will bring us even more."*

Peter Meltzer, who pioneered auction coverage in *Wine Spectator*, shares a memory from the Pasteur Institute's New York Fundraiser honoring President Clinton in 2005, when he served on the fundraising committee. *"[I] donated a bottle of Chateau d'Yquem from the celebrated 1967 vintage, which fetched \$4,000 against a market value of \$1,000. By chance, in my cellar I also found a magnum of Korbel Champagne housed in a cedar box bearing the Presidential seal, which was identical to the Korbel served at a Congressional luncheon in 1993 in honor of the newly elected president."* Peter knew that if the President autographed the bottle, the auction value would increase greatly. Clinton's team at first denied the request, Peter recalls, *"but eventually, he did consent to signing the cedar box. Without his signature the bottle would have been virtually worthless. Instead it brought \$2,200!"*

Wineries, too, play an integral role in fundraising. **John Shafer** left a successful publishing career in Chicago in the early 1970s to pursue a dream of growing grapes and making wine; today, **Shafer Vineyards** cultivates 200 acres of vineyards and produces 34,000 cases of premium wine each year. John, chairman of the winery and one of the industry's most philanthropic citizens, shares that in 2007 Shafer Vineyards contributed to 140 distinct auctions. The retail value of those donations totaled \$87,000. Shafer

Vineyards supports local nonprofits within the Napa Valley, concentrating in health, children and the environment.

John explains the indirect marketing benefits to donations: *"We believe the exposure to consumers and auction attendees is valuable in developing further awareness of the Shafer brand. Giving to our community and supporting worthwhile charities is one of the core values we have identified for our winery,"* says John. *"It also is a signal to our employees of one of the winery's priorities."*

Orrin Devinsky is a giver, too, estimating that he has contributed wine to 30 charitable auctions. *"As a collector, once you have a lot, it seems like a very good idea to give to good causes,"* says Orrin. Plus, *"it can help justify further acquisitions to your spouse."*

Eleven Madison Park is proud to host the annual Autumn Harvest Dinner benefitting Share Our Strength.

Since its inception, the Dinner has raised over \$1M to support hunger relief organizations in New York City and across the country. All of the fine wines auctioned at the event are donated by wineries and our guests. To purchase tickets for this year's dinner, or if you think you have an auction-worthy bottle with a minimum value of \$250, please call 646-747-0616.



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Nature vs. Nurture

Sam Lipp, Assistant General Manager, Eleven Madison Park

A current, increasingly pervasive, attitude exists that contends *terroir* and viticulture are the only requisites for creating profound wine. And that vinification, or the work done post-harvest in the winery, is simply perfunctory. It's as if all it takes is a magical plot of land, say, mid-way up the hill of Corton in the Cote d'Or in Burgundy with Southeast exposure, and even a novice can create a transcendental wine.

On a recent trip to Napa, I received a hands-on education that showed *terroir* to be only one piece of the equation. After spending a week with winemaker Mike Trujillo, I was reminded that while soil, climate, exposure, location (dare I say *terroir*), are essential base ingredients in building a great wine, it is equally important that one knows just how to manipulate these great raw materials in order to coax the most balanced, nuanced flavors out of the grape and soil and into the wine. In short, great viticulture + great vinification = great wine.

Sequoia Grove Cabernet Sauvignon, the flagship bottling of Sequoia Grove Winery, is sourced from some 10 different vineyards throughout Rutherford, Oakville, and the greater Napa Valley. Mike builds relationships with grape-growers whom he believes sit on the very best plots of soil throughout the Valley, and he buys their fruit and blends it into the best Cabernet he can make. Mike is involved in every step of the growing process: touring all his sourced vineyards weekly, if not daily, to ensure the farming practices adhere to his principles of non-interventionist farming (producing the most *terroir* driven grapes).

Although more consistent than the climate in many other parts of the world, Napa Valley too experiences considerable variation in its growing season. Come harvest, Mike must make numerous crucial decisions concerning when to pick what—decisions that shape and mold the final quality of his grapes.

I was fortunate enough to sit down and taste barrel samples from the 2007 vintage of five different vineyards: Morisoli, Stagecoach, Beckstoffer, Lamoureux, and the Sequoia Grove Estate Vineyard. Despite a geographic difference of less than 15 miles among them, the resulting young wines could not have been more different. Alas, the concept of *terroir*—incarnate—right before my palate! I could not have been more thrilled. Morisoli was soft and plush, full of fruit, whereas Stagecoach was reserved, tight, brooding. Beckstoffer was planted to Clone 6, a monster of a strand of Cabernet, exuding opulence and depth, whereas Lamoureux was something altogether different. Spicy and full of the *garrigue* quality often associated with Rhône wines.

Mike could have chosen simply to create a *cuvée* based on these blends, bottle it, and be done. Our next exercise, however, demonstrated that *terroir* only goes so far ... careful, creative vinification techniques can enhance complexity and quality of the finished wine as well. But how is this so? How does one *see* the fruits of vinification and their effect on the finished wine? Mike sat me down in front of another set of 4 glasses, the new variable: fermentation technique. Using the Sequoia Grove Estate fruit as the constant, he presented me with the following: cold soak maceration, extended maceration, press juice maceration, and sorted berry maceration.

Cold soak is used, as Mike described, to extract more color and finer, balanced tannins. This method brings the temperature down inside the fermentation



...I was reminded that while soil, climate, exposure, location, are essential base ingredients in building a great wine, it is equally important that one knows just how to manipulate these great raw materials in order to coax the most balanced, nuanced flavors out of the grape and soil and into the wine.

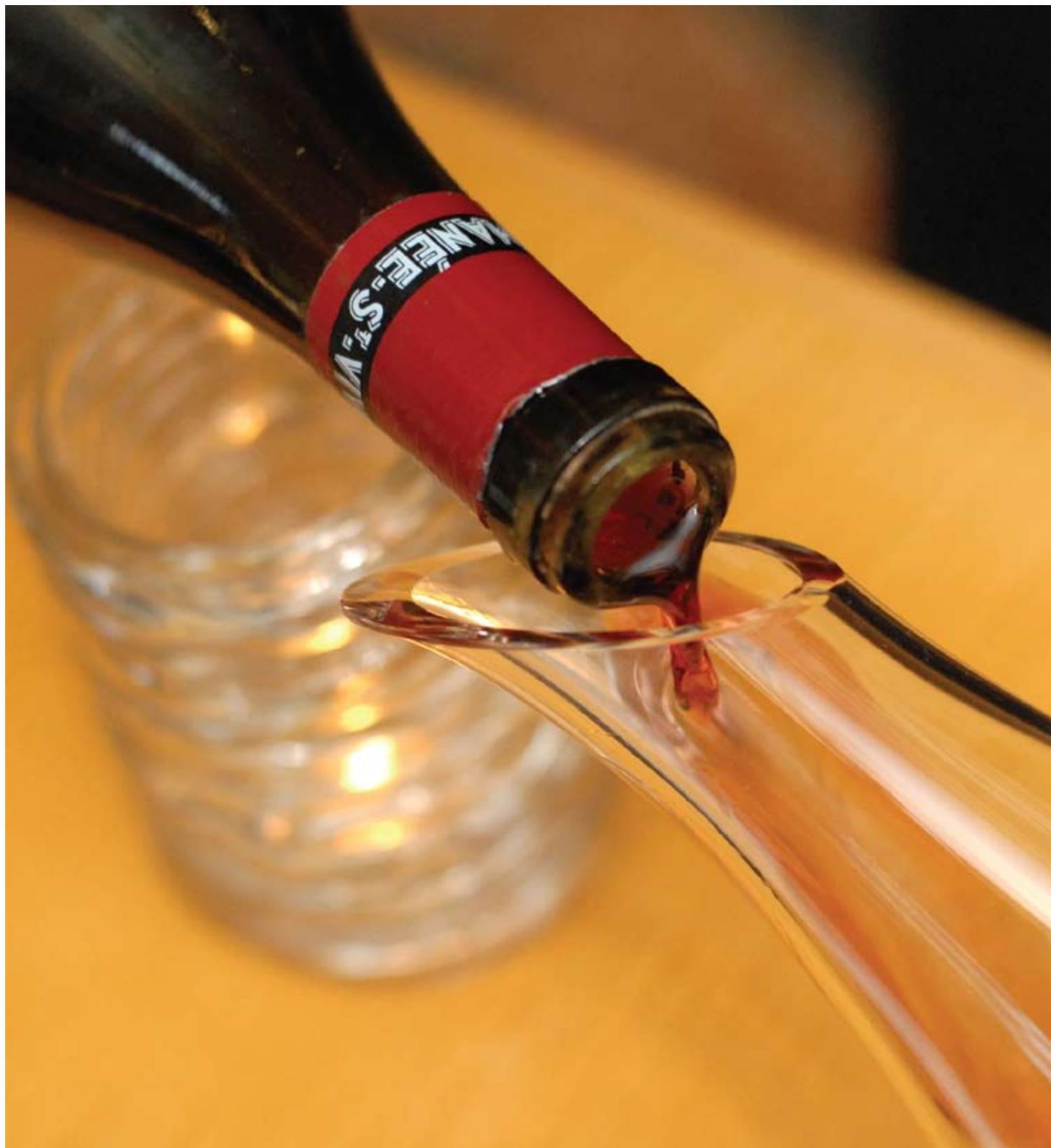
tank, slowing the reaction of the yeasts eating the natural sugars from the grapes, allowing for more nuanced flavors, more color and a taming of the tannins.

Extended maceration allows skins to be in contact with the juice for a longer period of time, creating a richer, denser quality of color and fruit, with bigger, more pronounced tannins. This can be particularly useful in cooler vintages, where color might be initially weak without and tannins too light to support the oak regiment that a winemaker desires to use. In this particular case, however, the vintage was quite “normal” for Napa (think hot and dry). The wine showed a more vivid, lively version of the cold soak sample, with a bigger backbone and more grip and tannin on the finish.

Press juice occurs after the initial “free run” juice bleeds off the grapes. A pneumatic press (think giant bladder) gently pushes down on the grapes, further extracting juice that did not already naturally release by gravity. Its wine yielded something entirely different from the first two examples, distinctly higher in alcohol with heady, macerated fruit. A juggernaut of a glass, Mike referred to this one as “the big point scoring style” of wine: not his personal preference, nor a style he denies having a part in. After all, we are talking about Napa Valley, where at 4:30 p.m. on April 28th the thermometer read 96 degrees when I wiped my brow underneath a tree next to his cellar.

The last fermentation sample we tasted was the *sorted berry* juice. After harvest at Sequoia grove, each cluster of berries are examined on a sorting line and those individual grapes that have shriveled, burned, or turned to “raisins”, usually due to excessive sun exposure or in some cases blight, are discarded. In 2007 Mike decided to ferment these outcasts to see what, if any, potential contribution they might make in his final blend. The result was fascinating: sappy, super-ripe, and almost Zinfandel-like in its roasted quality. A “seasoner” as Mike called it, there was a potential, in minute quantities, to bolster the blend and ultimately create a better Cabernet.

My brief stint with Mike Trujillo was incredibly eye-opening, supremely educational and rewarding. It enabled me to see that just as terroir is essential in providing the raw materials from which all great wine is made, so too is what you do in the winery *with* those materials that ultimately determines the excellence of one’s wine. So the next time you find yourself sitting around the dinner table with friends and loved ones, dueling wits on your favorite bottles of wine, be sure you share that the plot of soil, that terroir, only takes the wine so far...



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The Service of Wine

Maximilian Josef Riedel

Over the course of the seven years I've lived in the U.S., I have witnessed the quality of wine service in restaurants here vastly improve. A fortunate trend, as I've always found it disheartening to see a restaurant create an amazing, diverse, palate-pleasing wine list, only to serve it in clumsy, unattractive, poorly-balanced wine glasses.

In the last two years, I have developed an incredible relationship with the team at Eleven Madison Park, a restaurant committed to ensuring every element of its wine program is perfectly executed.

At Riedel, our goal is to develop cutting-edge glassware designs that enhance the wine experience. Claus Riedel (9th generation) was the first designer to recognize that the form of a glass, the volume and the diameter of the rim each affect how a wine reaches the tongue. Likewise, the design of a glass determines how far back one must tilt his head in order to sip, which also affects how the wine makes contact with the palate. In creating glassware, much consideration is given to the key components of the wine experience—bouquet, taste, balance and finish. Our ongoing collaborations with winemakers and sommeliers help Riedel to successfully produce finely-tuned glasses that accurately convey the message of each wine.

Oftentimes, people overlook the idea of the right glass for the right wine. Different glass forms, however, express the taste intensities of fruit, acid and tannin completely differently. Serve the same wine in a range of glass shapes and this becomes immediately clear, even the finish is affected. The right glass should leave you eagerly anticipating the next sip; the wrong glass may

make the wine seem sour, the finish short and tannins coarse. By designing towards the signature traits of a grape variety, glasses can present wines as their producers intended.

Another element of the wine experience is decanting. There is a widespread belief that decanting is a technique practiced primarily with older wines, to separate the wine from the sediment. It is our understanding that decanting is just as important, perhaps more so, for a young, robust wine whose aroma profile might be muted or tight. Young wines benefit most from a broad decanter, as this allows for oxygen to have a strong effect on the young tannins and aromas—liberating the aromas, intensifying the fruit on the mid-palate and rounding out the texture.

Fifty years ago, Claus Riedel was the first person in the long history of the glass to design its shape according to the character of the wine. It makes our family proud that this technical approach has yielded so much pleasure around the table.

Maximilian Josef Riedel (11th Generation) is the CEO of Riedel Glassworks, one of the world's leading glassware companies for the last 250 years.

WE'RE WINE GUYS

Doug Polaner

My line of work often takes me out at night and on the road for long periods of time. And my 7-year old son often asks, "Daddy, will you be home tonight?" On some nights I tell him, "Yes Mason, but we are having the Wine Guys over." "Wine Guys" is my euphemism for friends, customers, winemakers and others bitten by the bug, or rather the Grape. But to my son it just means lots of crazy, loud grown-ups, eating and drinking and carrying on into the night. He is not yet old enough to understand.

I am a *Wine Guy*. A wine importer and wholesaler to the trade, to be exact. It is a profession most people don't fully understand, and one that can be a lot less romantic than one might think. Thought, it includes travelling to places like France and Italy, and "sampling the wares" from morning to night, it takes me away from my wife and partner in the business Tina, and my two sons, Mason and Tucker, for about a week a month. It leads me to freezing cold cellars in Burgundy in January, often tasting wine at 8 AM where the dampness permeates the bones, and where the wine is often so cold and in such an ungraceful state that its positive qualities are buried deep under the fierce grip of youthful acid and tannin. Tasting 50 wines before lunch may sound like a dream tour, but it's taxing on the body, mind and palate in unimaginable ways, particularly against a backdrop of sleep deprivation and jet lag.

That said, I love what I do. As a Wine Guy, through and through, I am a chaser of an *elusive truth*, motivated by the search for vinous enlightenment. Sound a little philosophical or existential? Well, that is the underlying motivation for what I do. Sure, to most people, wine is just fermented grape juice to be sipped innocuously at a cocktail party. Even in its most vapid and bland form, wine serves to enliven the tongue and warm the spirit, but to us Wine Guys, it is far more than a simple beverage.

When people find out my profession, they want to tap me for answers to all their wine questions. What is the *best* wine? Where can I find it? Do I really have to spend all that money to get something truly spectacular? My response is as anything for which the appreciation is largely subjective—music, art, food, restaurants, people, etc.—there is no one simple answer (more importantly, no one *right* answer). Is Beethoven better than Mozart? How would you even begin to measure?

Wine is a journey, not a destination. As much as you can know—and there are some seriously knowledgeable wine "geeks" out there—there is always more to discover; new wine to taste, an unknown region or appellation, an obscure varietal, a "rising star" producer, or a new pairing with food. You can be a serious Bordeaux expert, but not know the first thing about the intricacies of Burgundy, or Mosel Riesling. In the words of Robert Earl Keen, when it comes to wine "the road goes on forever, and the party never ends."

My role in this industry is to keep the "party" going, while protecting diversity and encouraging discovery in a world of often monochromatic, factory-made wines. Our mission is both to entice and challenge the wine drinking public—to open their palates and their minds to the indelible qualities that fine wine has to offer. I derive the same amount of pleasure discovering something totally new as I do tasting a great, pedigreed wine from an esteemed producer.

One of the most interesting aspects of my job is that I get to experience the continuum of wine, from vine to glass. I also get to meet the winemakers themselves, not the guys who run the mechanical harvesters at some huge winery, but the guys (and gals) with the purple feet and dirt under their nails. An interesting and diverse lot where one is part chef, horticulturist, artist, and sorcerer. Winemaking at this artisanal level is physical, technical, creative, and even spiritual. There are literally hundreds if not thousands of different variables that influence the final product—everything from soil, climate, exposition, grape varietal, clones, pruning, harvest date, fermentation technique, yeasts and so on. A great winemaker can interpret all of these factors, and then overlay feeling that gives a wine its unique character and soul. His job is really to allow what nature has provided in the vineyard to express itself through the wine.

Opposite: Eleven Madison Parks's wine board, inspired by Danny Meyer's affections for wine and Scrabble.

WHITE

CHAMPAGNE DE BLANC S 18

CHAMPAGNE PERIGNON 98 44

CHAMPAGNE ROSE 29

CHAMPAGNE 26

CHAMPAGNE SLING SEC 14

CHAMPAGNE SLING MOSEL 17

CHAMPAGNE PINER VELTLINER 9

CHAMPAGNE RURZTRAMINER 12

CHAMPAGNE UCERRE 13

CHAMPAGNE IVRAY 16

CHAMPAGNE SAJI SEC 14

CHAMPAGNE AUCASTEL 34

CHAMPAGNE ANCON SEC 12

CHAMPAGNE TRSAULT 24

CHAMPAGNE TRY BLANC 9

RED

MOREY-ST-DENIS

GEVREY-CHAMB

PINOT NOIR ORE

CRU BEAUJOLAIS

CHATNEUF DU PAPE

SYRAH CA

SAINT-JOSEPH

RIOJA ALTA

BRUNELLO

BARBERA

BAROLO

CHINON

SAINT-EMILION

GRAVES

NAPA CABERNET



In combing the wine world, my goal is to build a portfolio featuring these like minded artisans and to tell each of their stories. By communicating the subjective factors that make their wine unique and special, the more resonant the wine is for the taster. One could argue that every wine, region, grape, vintage, and even bottle holds something unique and impossible to fully recreate. In the end, there is nothing more rewarding than discovering and importing a wine made in the tiniest quantities, from a nearly extinct grape, grown in some improbable place, on some ridiculously steep vineyard, and vinified to show its purest and most unique traits. This is our “holy grail” quest!

These days, a wine enthusiast has the world to choose from, which though daunting at times, is an enormous gift. Never before have so many great wines been so readily available. The key to success on this quest is finding a great guide, someone who can translate all of the wine speak into what you are searching for. Often, you’ll find the best guide is a wine guy (or gal), whose palate has sopped up whatever there is to learn in each bottle and each taste of wine.

Just remember, whatever is said, when it comes to wine there is no one truth! The world’s greatest wine is the one that you are drinking (and enjoying) at any given moment. You must be open to discovery. For every great wine that you have already experienced, there are hundreds of others. So, just pop the cork, sit back, open your mind and taste.

Doug Polaner and his wife Tina are the owners of Polaner Selections—one of New York’s leading wine importing companies. www.polanerselections.com



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Printed and bound in the U.S.A.

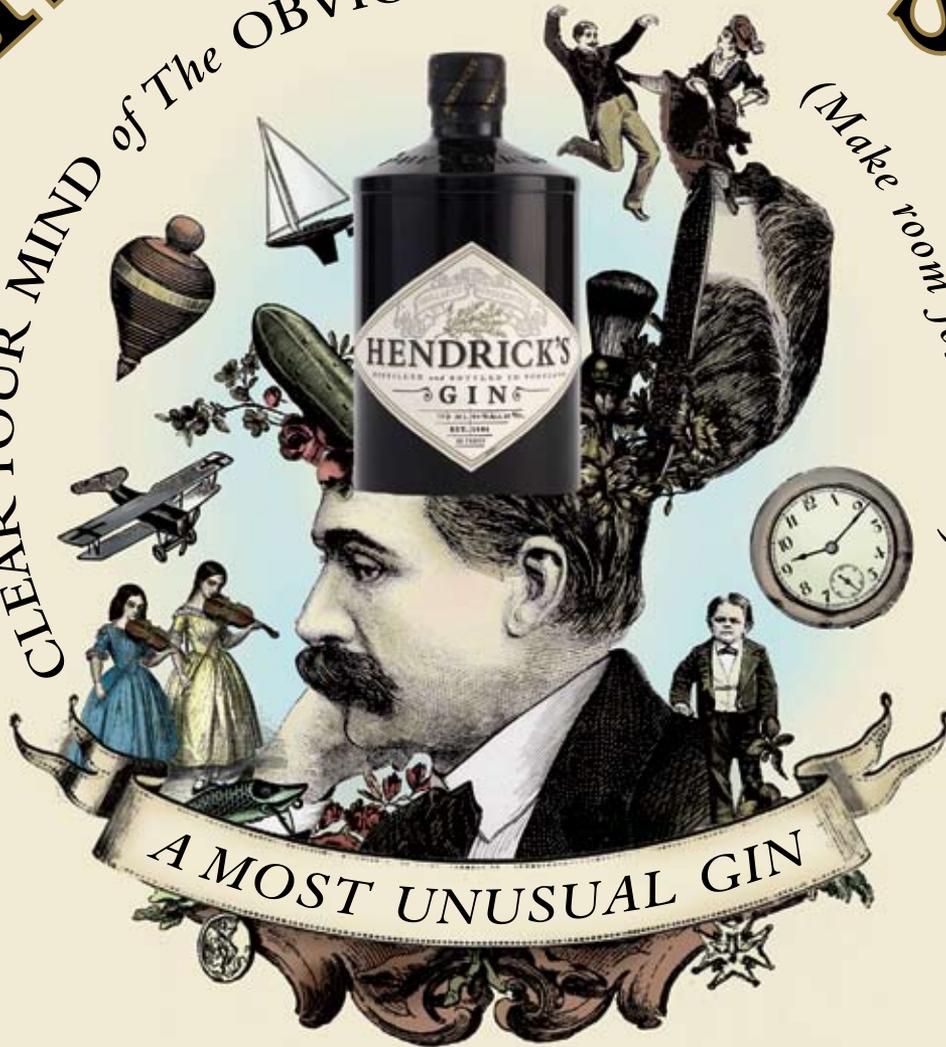
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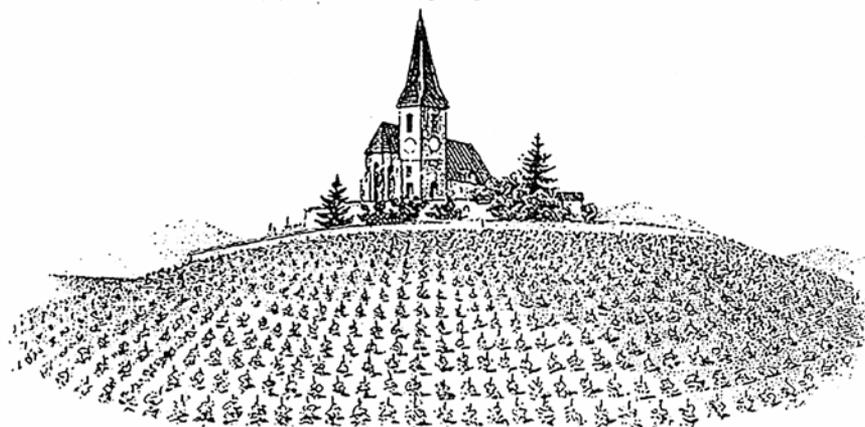


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