

The Wine Guy's *Wine Tasting Notes*

January, 2010



Greetings and Happy New Year!

It's January and time for me to announce my 2009 wines of the year - 6 of them. The new year started off well with a lovely wine dinner, and I've already managed to enjoy a few other good wines as well.

Santé

Bruce Heye
The Wine Guy

2009 Wines of the Year

2000 Chateau Rayas, Reserve Chateauneuf-du-Pape, Rhone Valley
(see my June *Tasting Notes*)

- 2004 Maison Louis Latour, Volnay "en Chevret", Burgundy (February *Tasting Notes*)
- NV Piper Heidsieck, Brut Champagne (January *Tasting Notes*)
- 1992 Dominus, Napa Valley (November *Tasting Notes*)
- 2004 Chateau Mont-Redon, Chateauneuf-du-Pape Blanc, Rhone Valley (June *Tasting Notes*)
- 1998 Stony Hill, Chardonnay (Magnum) Napa Valley (August *Tasting Notes*)

Special Note: Since 1990 I have been picking my five best wines of the year. This year, however, I have six because I could not decide which of the 2009 wines should be dropped. Further, my best wine of the year, Chateau Rayas, may well be one of the five best wines I've ever had. It was brilliant.

I got the idea of picking my top wines from the *Wine Spectator* which has been picking their top 100 wines since 1988. For the past several years *Wine Spectator* has had some strange selections; 2009 was no exception. Their number 2 wine was the 2005 Numanthia-Termes, Toro Region. I have had 3 bottles of that wine in the past 6 months and, while it is very good, to place it that high is strange. What is going on at this magazine?

I will also point out that Piper Heidsieck was Marilyn Monroe's favorite which makes it even more enjoyable.



Bruce & Judi enjoy a bottle of Chateau Rayas in France.

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Stevenson*Barrie, 2006 Pinot Noir Freedom Hill Vineyard, Willamette Valley

A friend who grew up in Oregon gave me this bottle of wine. What a great bottle it was! I had not heard of the wine but I will look for more. The Freedom Hill Vineyard is very familiar to me since I've had many wines from other producers using their fruit. The wine was decanted just before dinner, which is something I seldom do for Pinots. It had deep, rich flavors and will probably improve for at least 5 more years.

Ferrari Carano, 2007 Siena, Sonoma County \$22.

This bottle continues my desire to retry the old standard wines, and Ferrari Carano certainly belongs in that class. Across the board they make high quality wines at each price point. The Siena is an example of their heritage as an Italian-styled wine. While they don't tell us the blend, my best guess is Sangiovese with small amounts of either Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot. This is super Tucson at a great price. Smooth and elegant this wine can stand up to my rich spaghetti sauce.

Produttori del Barbaresco, 2007 Lange Nebbiolo, DOC \$22.

The greatly under-appreciated Nebbiolo grape is one of the world-class grapes

that doesn't travel well and is seldom planted outside of the Piedmont Region of Italy (try the Mt. Airy version from Round Peak). While this one isn't one of the blockbuster Piedmont wines, it has balance between fruit and a deep structure. It is a very pleasant wine from a great region.

Colome, 2007 Malbec, Calchaqui Valley, Argentina \$25.

The Colome winery is owned by the Hess family which always makes value wine at a wide variety of prices. This wine from Argentina comes from a property that dates back about 150 years. The wine was picked by the *Wine Spectator* as their #32 wine of the year. It is a unique blend of 85% Malbec, 8% Tannat, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon & 2% Syrah, and is a deep, heavy wine that will prove to be much better after at least 5 years in the bottle. Not for the timid.

**St. Innocent, 2007 Pinot Gris Vitae Springs Vineyard, Willamette Valley
Chateau Gruaud Larose, 2000 St. Julien, Bordeaux**

Christmas time is for family, friends and good thoughts; also some good wine to go with good food. These were our Christmas Eve wines and accompanied our Roast Beef. St. Innocent is new to me but proved to be outstanding. It was clean and crisp with subtle flavors and a lingering after taste. 2000 was yet another vintage of the decade/century in Bordeaux. However, this was in fact an outstanding vintage. Eight years of aging and the Bordeaux was just perfect. A quick decanting to eliminate the large amounts of sediment, and the wine was excellent with a balance we don't see nearly often enough.

**Louis Latour, 2001 Montagny 1er Cru, La Grande Roche, Burgundy
Chalone, 2007 Chardonnay, California \$25.
Flint Hill Winery, North Carolina**

2008 Viognier

2008 Synergy

2006 Synergy

2007 Chambourcin

2007 Cabernet Sauvignon

2008 Crushed Velvet

Gloria Ferrer, NV Brut, Sonoma \$20.

The Flint Hill wines were all tasted at the Century Kitchen with their New Year's Eve Wine Dinner. With three other couples we started the evening with the two Chardonnays. The Latour is one of the real value wines from Burgundy, since I paid in the low twenties about 5 years ago. It was smooth and elegant. The 2001 Kistler Chardonnay I had planned to serve was oxidized, but we had on hand the Chalone. This 2007 made the *Wine Spectator's* top 100 and bumped up the intensity level.

As with last year's Flint Hill Wine Dinner, it was sold out and offered a wonderful

and Tim Doub, the Proprietor, substituted the 2006 for our group. This is a blend of Syrah and Viognier and was served with a salad containing Synergy Vinaigrette. The Chambourcin is one of my favorite food wines, and it was brilliant with Gnocchi and Braised Lamb in a Marinara Sauce. And the wine kept coming with the Cab accompanying Roasted Black Angus Hanger Ragout. I thought the Cab, from 9-year-old vines, was their best wine of the evening. It was balanced and rich. The Crushed Velvet, a sweet blend of their red wines, was served chilled with a Chocolate & Cherry Tart that it matched very well. We concluded the evening at midnight with the California Sparkling wine which is also in the *Wine Spectator's* top 100. All this proves that good food, good wine and good friends make for a wonderful evening.

Cambria, 2007 Pinot Noir Julia's Vineyard, Sonoma Valley

Tasted at the Zevely House on the next to the last evening they were open. Margaret and Chef Alex have decided to retire after 34 years and are selling their interest in the restaurant. What a shame! We have had so many wonderful evenings there. The closing of this restaurant is a big loss to the Winston-Salem dining scene. The Cambria is Wine of the Year according to the *Wine Enthusiast* magazine (it is interesting that it didn't make the *Wine Spectator's* top 100). This is a soft Pinot with terrific balance that worked very well with the house special Potato Crusted Salmon and Deep Fried Spinach.