

Subject: Wine at Orangewood Consulting 34, March 29th, 2003

Sent: Saturday, March 29, 2003 7:28 AM

To our Wine Aficionados,

Introduction

One of the goals for this month's newsletter is to be shorter than last month's. Stand by for brevity. Already March is looking like a good month for us. New stores, new outlets, potential new sales associates and a potential new delivery guy.

Summary (Box Score)

Event Notifications

Friday April 4th	6:00 - 7:30 Red Kangaroo - Scottsdale
Friday April 18th	3:00 - 6:00 Red Kangaroo - Chandler
Saturday April 19 th	3:00 - 6:00 Red Kangaroo - Chandler

New Outlets - The 3 Red Kangaroo stores

New Outlet - AJ's at Thompson Peak

New Restaurant - Basis - New American Cuisine

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Event - Friday April 4th 6:00 - 7:30 Red Kangaroo - Scottsdale

Address: 7609 East Pinnacle Peak Rd

What: I will be introducing the Marinda Park wines - Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and the newly arrived Sauvignon Blanc. Diane and Gary will also have 2 or 3 other wines from down under for you to try.

What else: Food will be served

Cost: \$10 per person

Event - Friday/Saturday April 18th/19th 3:00 - 7:30 Red Kangaroo - Chandler

Address: 3305 W. Chandler Boulevard

What: Each of the two afternoons - evenings Dick and/or I will be there to introduce the Marinda Park wines - Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and the newly arrived Sauvignon Blanc.

What else: Cheese and crackers will be served

Cost: Free

Event Feedback – Mario Day – Chateau Benoit introduction

We had a good turnout for this event - thank you to all attendees and also to all for letting us know that you were coming. Laurie was right - RSVP is the way to go. Everyone else, thank you for figuring out that regrets were unnecessary. The four wines from Chateau Benoit were tried. The Muller Thurgau was the most popular, followed by the White Riesling. Popularity was determined by quantity consumed! "Muller Thurgau" should have an umlaut (those two little dots) over the "u" of Muller - but it seems some people had trouble with their emails when I included it last time. Nonetheless, it is pronounced "Mew-ler Tur-gow" in true Germanic style.

This is a white wine made from a grape that is a hybrid Riesling and Swiss grape. The result is a light, refreshing wine with a floral nose and delicate taste. How did the food turn out? I think I'm better suited to unwrapping cheese, but we did manage to cook some egg rolls, Chinese dumplings and blue cheese/mushroom bruschetta. I think everyone enjoyed watching me have too much Chinese mustard on an egg roll! Perhaps that's why we drank so much of the Muller Thurgau – a perfect accompaniment to Asian cuisine.

White Zinfandel Detox

When I deliver to a restaurant I usually get to check out a delivery entrance. Typically it leads through the kitchen where the prep work is going on. At Nello's in Ahwatukee there is a sign directed at the wait staff that says "If someone orders a white Zinfandel please give them a sample of the Noceto Frivolo - it's so much better." For those of you despairing of some of your White Zinfandel drinking friends, this is a possible alternative to finding new friends.

New Restaurant - Basis - New American Cuisine

Looking at the Arizona Liquor Board website, and at the recently issued liquor licenses, I occasionally find something that looks appealing. Basis was one such place. It's at 410 East Thunderbird Road. I first showed up when the carpenters were there - not much sales potential. Next time I went it was after I saw an article in the Arizona Republic. I was heading for the door when the owner, Steve, waved me down and suggested that I avoid the freshly done sidewalk. The Republic had been premature with the announcement of opening. I went around to the back to find that they were opening in two days. Steve was relieved when I offered to come back the following week. Six weeks later, Basis now carries Vino Noceto Sangiovese. In the meantime I had an email conversation with Frank about Basis. He said: "We had dinner at Basis last night. Excellent!!! Staff was excellent, atmosphere new and well done, food EXCELLENT ... they have a big wine bar with maybe 24 bottles on tap. There were 6 of us there and we paid \$30 each for an entree and 2 glasses of wine. Recommend it." Frank, thanks for the input.

New Outlets - Red Kangaroo

I know that I reported having trouble at the Red Kangaroo when I went there last year. However, with Mark Rodman's help we now have the Marinda Park wines at all three locations of the store - Phoenix at Tatum and Shea and the Scottsdale and Chandler stores - addresses in the event notifications. Roger and Injy at the Chandler store had a great write-up in the AZ Republic this week. You can still see it at:

<http://www.azcentral.com/home/wine/articles/0326foodpeople26.html>

New Outlet - AJ's at Thompson Peak

I got a call from Jerry, formerly a wine steward at AJ's on Central Avenue, but now at this new AJ's. He had been the sole attendee at one of the wine tastings we held last year - he enjoyed it and appreciated it. So when a customer asked him for some Noceto Frivolo he knew whom to call. This AJ's is so new, its address isn't in the phone book yet, but I knew where Thompson Peak was - off to the east of Scottsdale Road as you head north. Problem is that piece of Thompson Peak Road does not connect to the piece with the new AJ's on it. It's actually best to reach it by heading north from Frank Lloyd Wright Boulevard. They also have the Sangiovese there now.

Wine Glut - Part 2

How does this affect our wineries and wines? They are, of course, wineries and are not really trying to sell grapes, nor do they sell wine in bulk as their primary revenue generator. They make their wine primarily from grapes that they grow themselves, which has always been an attraction to me because it allows them to provide a consistent product year after year. All our wineries supply consistency and high quality wines at reasonable prices. With practice - and believe me Laurie and I are practicing hard at this - it is possible to recognize the distinctive colors, aromas and tastes of our wines. Separately, some of those same people who started wineries based on their winnings from the dot.com boom are now owners of unprofitable wineries. This moves them out of the buyers market for high-end wines.

Similarly, investment bankers are no longer buying cases upon cases of Opus One to celebrate a merger or acquisition. This is why you see quite a bit of Opus One for sale - even at Costco. This is causing some price reduction at the high end (Opus One was \$150 a bottle a year ago), which in turn puts pressure on the wines priced at \$90 and so on. Our wines are priced retail from \$11 to \$50 with most in \$20 - \$25 range. This seems to be out of the Two Buck Chuck battles at the low end and below the Opus One/Dot.com reductions.

Feedback from RustRidge is that Napa Valley is the only place where grape prices have gone up. Good news. Guess where RustRidge is located? They also warned me that their 1999 Cabernet Sauvignon is coming soon. I can't wait; I should dash over for a preview. (Mike, when are you available?)

Three-Buck Chuck tasting

While we had Mark Rodman, owner of the Marinda Park winery, here last month we bought all 4 varietals that Trader Joe's offers under the Charles Shaw label. In California these wines are \$2, but with all the shipping, etc., they are \$3 in Arizona. The four varietals are Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. As I was buying the wines I talked to someone who had already bought and tried the Chardonnay. She said it was acceptable. Laurie, Mark and I did not linger very long over these wines. We tasted some, sniffed some but decided not to taste, and poured the rest down the sink. We had some thoughts about a scientific assessment, but it wasn't worth it. The color of the wines was fine in all cases, the nose however was offensive for two of the wines and the taste and finish was unacceptable for all of them. So, OK, they were only \$3, but in order to be called wine, I do think that it should at least be drinkable. Amongst all the rumors of these being expensive wines being dumped, I heard one that suggested these were box wines packaged in bottles. That is much closer to my opinion. I have tried box wines that are superior to these (courtesy of Bill, thanks Bill). Feel free to try these wines, although we won't try them again. Maybe they are inconsistent and we were just unlucky.

Noceto Frivolo Recipe

Last month I mentioned that Kay had a recipe that paired well with the Frivolo. Here's the recipe. Thanks, Kay.

Apple Tart with Almonds

Pastry Crust

1½ c. flour
Pinch of salt
2 tbsp. sugar
½ c. cold butter, cut into small pieces
¼ c. ice water

Pastry Cream

¾ c. plus 2 tbsp. milk
Pinch of salt
½ c. sugar
1/3 c. flour
2 egg yolks
1 whole egg
1 tbsp. dark rum
1 tsp vanilla extract

Topping

3 golden delicious apples
¼ c. sugar
1 egg
3 ½ tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
1/3 c. raw almonds chopped

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Pastry crust: Place the flour, salt sugar and butter in a bowl, and mix to a fine-crumbed texture. Gradually mix in the ice water. The dough should hold together, but not be sticky. Wrap in plastic; refrigerate for a least a half- hour. (Note: this will make more crust than you need)

Pastry Cream: Bring the milk and salt to a boil in a medium sauce pan. Meanwhile, in a bowl whisk together the sugar, flour, egg yolks and whole egg, and gradually add the hot milk. Return the mixture to the sauce pan and heat to boiling, stirring constantly. When 2 or 3 bubbles appear remove from the heat. Add the rum and vanilla, and pour into a bowl to cool.

Preheat oven to 450 F. On a floured board, roll dough into a circle. Line a 9- inch pan with the dough and prick the bottom with a fork.

Topping: Pare and core the apples. Cut them into thin slices. Spread the pastry cream over the crust and top with the apples. Bake for 10 minutes. Lower the oven temperature to 400 F. and bake for 30 minutes. Mix together the sugar, egg and butter. Pour over the apples and sprinkle with the almonds and bake for 10 to 15 minutes, or until the tart is well browned. Serves 8.

Feedback

Uptown 713

Howard Seftel, restaurant critic for the Arizona Republic, gave an excellent review of this restaurant. You can read it at:

<http://www.azcentral.com/ent/dining/articles/0319uptown19a.html>

Cin-cin, alla salute!

Richard and Laurie

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