

Notes From The Cellar (NFTC); Winepairings e-letter Mar. 27, 2008

Albarino and 2004 Barolo

With a mediocre vintage in 2002 and a good, but not exceptional one in 2003, the buzz has been building for the 2004 vintage for Piedmonte. Barbaresco and Barolo the region's most praised and age worthy wines are going to be heavily hyped by the wine trade. Here is just a sampling of some of the praise bestowed on the vintage by Antonio Galloni in the December 2007 Wine Advocate: *"From a purely viticultural perspective, 2004 offered near -perfect conditions throughout the entire growing season & harvested grapes I tasted at various estates offered an explosion of aromas & flavors..While I am not naturally inclined to make "vintage of the century" -type prognostications there can be little doubt that 2004 is a vintage of exceptional quality..."*

With producers importers and distributors unable to hold prices, I am seeing increases of up to 60 % in some wines. We recently got a pre -arrival offering from a major distributor for the wines of Scavino, Molino, Revello and Grimaldi, at decent prices -I also got a few e-mail offers from some area stores based on this offering. If you have an interest in those wines please contact me. We can offer them to you at the lowest prices in town, but can't print our prices (they are too low and I don't need my knuckles wrapped) Please do so before month end as pre-arrival orders are due now.

Stock up now for Summer:

In some of the upcoming newsletters I will feature some of the more exciting and unusual wines on the scene today -especially those suitable to summer drinking. Because these are not household names they remain under the radar, the benefit on the other hand, is that they represent superb value. Today we start with a white wine from Galicia in North West Spain.

My wife Susan is a big Vinho Verde fan -it is an inexpensive, effervescent wine made in massive quantities in the Minho valley in Northern Portugal. This is quaffing wine, made mostly by the region's many Co-Ops, enjoyed fresh on a hot summer day, it is great with many Mediterranean dishes, especially sea food. You can buy a decent bottle in Portugal for a few dollars even in today's exchange rates. But these are wines to drink as they are released and young. Unfortunately they don't travel well. As such they are seldom imported into the US. And even when they get here can be un-inspiring.

During a bicycle trip of NW Spain & Portugal about 8 years ago we discovered that there are some high end Vinho Verde -almost an Oxi-Moron term for such a commoner's wine. What sets those apart is the grape variety used. While most VV is produced from the native Loureiro and Trajadura grapes, the better ones also contain Alvarinho a more expensive grape maturing later and requiring more care. The best VV are made from 100% Alvarinho.

In Spain Alvarinho is called **Albariño** (pronounced Al-Ba -Rin -Yo) It is supposedly a clone of Alsacian Riesling imported to Iberia by monks somewhere between the 12-15 century. This grape found the perfect growing environment in a place called **Rías Baixas** (Ri-As Bash- Ias) located in the SW corner of Spain, just above Portugal facing the Atlantic.

With typical aromatics of apricot peach and white flowers similar to Viognier it also has a nice structure and a hint of spice. With good acidity, it is naturally a great food wine. (One of my favorites for BBQ sea food like Shrimp or Squid as well as grilled ocean fish). In order for it to

ripen properly it needs to be thinned out in the vineyard. Proper handling during wine making is also critical; as this grape has many pips (seeds) which can bring out bitter flavors if pressed too hard. The good news is that the Albarino's from Rias Baixas can travel . They will actually improve with 6-12 months of bottle age but I would still recommend drinking them within 1-2 years to enjoy the wonderful freshness.

Until recently it was hard to find many of these wines on a restaurant wine list unless you were fortunate to be having dinner in a sea food restaurant in Madrid or Barcelona. Slowly these wines have worked themselves into the US wine scene. There are a few dozen in the market place with most selling in the mid teens to mid 20's with the top ones offering mind boggling quality for the price. Unfortunately the real good ones can be counted on one hand. Imported in relatively small quantity they disappear quickly into the cellars of those in the know, and the better restaurants around the country. Today we offer one of the finest:

\$\$\$ Special wine deals \$\$\$

Palacio De Fefinanes Rias Baixas Albarino 2006 \$24-

From an estate founded in 1904, which is currently owned by Juan Gil Careaga. Palacio de Fefiñanes was the first producer to bottle wine under the D.O. Rías Baixas denomination. The label design dates from 1928 and shows an engraving of the Fefiñanes Palace where the winery is located and dates back to the 15th century. The 2006 was voted the number one Albarino by a recent tasting conducted by El Mudovino -a leading Spanish wine review. Converted to the 100 point rating scale It received a 93 point rating.

Tasting noted from the Importer:

Fresh fruit aromas of apricot and peach slices with notes of lemon and green apple. Pretty notes of honey and wet nutmeg, and the mouth is round, clean, and pleasant with baked apple, honey, and lemon. This is a classic Albariño which is good young, but improves over two to three years and remains wonderfully enjoyable for up to five years. Owner Juan Gil comments that the wine really starts to come into its own in June/July, and he actually prefers it 18 or more months after it's made.

By the time summer arrives and this wine will be at optimal drinking form , it would unfortunately be all sold out , so I would recommend you stock up on a few bottles that will not disappoint.

Events:

Denver Auto show at the convention center this weekend:

<http://www.paragonexpo.com/399.html?flash=1>

After that the wine will look cheap.

The Denver art museum has it's annual wine tasting on April 11 and the wine dinner on the April 12 details at [Denver art Museum's DAM Uncorked](#)

Did you know :

Today: We do not list wines with a silly 99 cents price at the end. Old school marketing has got some drawbacks .

Cell phones “do not call list “ all cell phone numbers are now released to telemarketing

companies. You will start to receive sales calls and be charged airtime for them. To prevent this, call the following number from your cell phone: 888-382-1222. or contact the National DO NOT CALL list. www.donotcall.gov

Thanks again for all your support and referrals, tell your friends, Cheers & Happy Easter!
Paul David, Chief Fermented Grape Taster.

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The buyer is solely responsible for the shipment of wine. We make no representations concerning your legal right to ship or receive wine into any state outside Colorado or any country outside the United States. By placing any wine order with us, you authorize Winepairings to act on your behalf to engage a common carrier to deliver your order to your selected destination.

Please note that **you must be at least 21 years old** to order or receive alcohol from this newsletter. All orders require the signature of a person at least 21 years of age.