

Notes From The Cellar (NFTC); Winepairings e-letter October 29,2008

Wine of the Year?

Never mind the election, I know you have voted already so it's time to concentrate on the important stuff: Wine! In a few weeks Wine Spectator's web site will start its annual countdown, declaring it's top 100 wines of 2008. (a full feature top100 issue comes out in the print magazine around December and is always one of the most popular issues of the year).

There is a draw back to this list -in order to be considered a top wine: in addition to a good score, it must be available in decent quantities as well as be reasonably priced for it's genre. (under \$100 on release has been the norm). There is also the X factor -something that makes the WOTY extra special -more on that later...

The size criteria eliminates many small production wines that offer exceptional quality -exactly those kinds of wine that I like to feature here on NFTC. In a way this is a blessing, as more hype would increase demand for those highly praised wines, making them only harder to obtain a factor which also leads to higher prices.

Often, I hear wine aficionados criticize the list for that very reason-"it didn't feature the truly best wines." Yet everyone acknowledges that the WS top 100: being as popular as it is - draws attention to wines that are good quality, provide good value and over the years have proven to be very consistent in offering a great drinking wine and in most cases aging potential.

Being on the top 100 also establishes a wine stature and firms up it's price. If production is massive this price effect can be minimal. Yet the lower the production and the higher the place the wine finishes on the list, the higher the wine prices become. This is especially the case in wines that finish at the top 10, top 5 and of course The Wine of The Year (WOTY).

Which brings us to today's main point. If there are wines that you would like to acquire that may be in the top 100, especially if they have a good shot at being in the very top, you are much better purchasing them before the winners are declared. In previous years I have taken extra efforts to try & predict the top wines. I never regretted purchasing the wines that interested me in advance. Wines that finished in the top 10 have always appreciated rapidly, and in a handful of cases where I stocked up on wines which ended up being WOTY, I felt very lucky -as in last years winner (the 2005 Clos Des Papes) where prices have quickly doubled and also resulted in older vintages of this wine to appreciate in value dramatically. This year's selection of WOTY will be especially difficult. Amongst the wines that were released into the market in 2008 were the finest selection of the fabulous Bordeaux 2005. A monumental vintage that Parker has declared the finest in his 30 + year career. This could be the X factor. If you are only now looking at potential Bordeaux 05 you are a little late to the party as some prices have already increased 40% or more. But rest assured I we will keep looking out for deals on good 05 Bordeaux in the months to come. Sure if WOTY is one of those, it will appreciate even more, but since there are quite a few candidates, those that may not make the top spot may even see a bit of a price pull back early in the year especially if the economy remains weak.

Taking the Wine Spectator's criteria into account, here are my top Bordeaux selections by order: **Maescot** or **Pontet-Canet**, followed by **Clerc Milon** and **Leoville Barton**.

But what if the the WOTY is not from Bordeaux ?-you may say Burgundy as that region has also had a fantastic run as I have written about before. This will be unlikely as most Burgundy is not produced in large enough quantities. (a problem that has also eliminated many Barolos in the past). My educated guess will be a Cabernet Sauvignon from Chile. As I have

experienced first hand in my visit there several years ago -they have all the ingredients to make world class wine that often competes favorably in the world arena even against the top guns from NAPA as well as first growth Bordeaux that can cost 10 to 15 times the price! The combination of old vineyards that produce intense juice, good soil & climatic conditions, and an incredible infusion of capital and wine making know-how from some of the big players in the global wine industry have put these wines on the hot list of all serious and knowledgeable wine collectors. The top 2 Chilean wines released in 2008 have been **2005 Concha Y Toro Don Melchor** and the **Casa Lapostolle Clos Apalta**.

I will give the **Don Melchor** the x factor -it has been the most consistent high rated Chilean Wine in the Wine Spectator, starting with the 2000 vintage, which scored 94 points. This wine has had a fantastic run of consistent quality that is unmatched by any other wine I know of in the world. As a matter of fact it has been knocking on the door twice lately; In 2005 with a 95 point rating it finished at #4 and in 2006 it archived the same finish with the 2003 vintage that rated 96 points. Could the third time (-the 2005 at 96 points) be the charm? Winning the ultimate recognition?

Even if it doesn't get WOTY consider this: In both previous years when it finished #4 the wine price increased. The worse case scenario: you will end up with one of the world's finest Cabernets at a fantastic price. That my friends makes it **Collector's corner** as well as

Today's Wine Deal \$\$\$

Concha Y Toro Cabernet Sauvignon Puente Alto Don Melchor 2005 \$58-

Wine Spectator: Jun 15, 2008 **96 points** Release price \$69: "Still very tight, but the tannins that lead the way now are sleek and refined, and should easily meld into the huge core of roasted chestnut, black currant paste, warm fig and tar. Has a long, coffee- and loam-tinged finish. Best from 2009 through 2019."

This is one of the best prices on this wine anywhere. limited quantities, for all the reasons mentioned above get yours before the top 100 comes out.

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EVENTS:

Special discount! Purchase tickets for Saturday's grand tasting of the **Denver Int'l Wine Festival** before Friday morning at

<http://www.denverwinefest.com/order.html>

use promotion code **LWE** and save \$25

The French American Chamber of Commerce presents their annual **Beaujolais & Beyond**

party on Thursday November 20,2008 6-10pm at a new location The mile High Station
-details and advanced discount tickets at 303-695-7818 or www.rmface.org.

Thanks again for all your support and referrals, tell your friends, Cheers

Paul David, Chief Fermented Grape Taster.

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