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DINER JOURNAL



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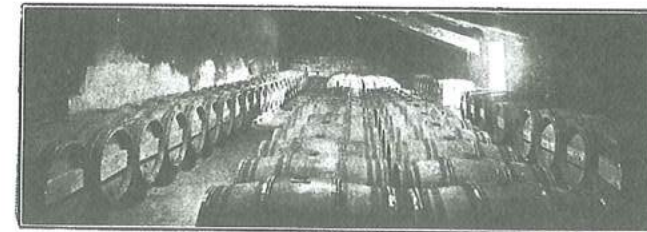
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COVER ILLUSTRATION BY MANDOLYN WILSON



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Thank you to Sean Rembold, Bella Foster, Dave Gould, Mercedes Singleton and Johnny Edlund for their work.

Introduction

A work of art is successful when a hint of perfection is present. At the slightest hint... the work is alive. -Agnes Martin

I admit I am not offended by a typo. The misplaced spring in the still life. The embers left on the floor after the fire has softened. These little traces of humanity are what I consider the brilliance in the fragile constellation of composition. It strikes me that is the nature of beauty. Like lost house keys, you'll never find beauty if you're frantically searching for it on the coffee table. Just a touch of wildness. This is the great triumph of natural wine.

Wine's innate mystery is perhaps its most compelling quality. Each bottle is about place and tradition, earth and science, a farmer and his land. When we talk about wine often place is the protagonist. We consider the juice an expression of the soil and while I find that an arresting concept I believe is it limiting. It will evolve and change and remain unpredictable until it is consumed. Perhaps spontaneity is the gift it gives us. Wine is about agriculture, mythology and drunkenness.

I find it difficult to write about wine because in some ways I prefer it languageless. Or perhaps it's that I'd rather have all the words used to describe wine sucked into a space vacuum or a black hole never to be heard again. I'd like to think we are all imaginative enough that we won't miss words like supple or transportive. Or maybe I am unhealthily preoccupied by what happens to us when the wine is in us. Later in her writings Martin says, "Happiness is being on the beam of life-to feel the pull of life." I'm quite certain wine is one of the wonders that leads us down the tunnel following that very beam.

Bacchus, the Roman god of wine was born twice. The titans ate everything but his heart. His father sewed the precious bulb into his thigh and let the baby grow. Known for his taste for madness, ecstasy, epiphany, agriculture, and theater, Bacchus also would famously turn threatening sailors into dolphins. Wine, its god and its effects can be soft and can be savage. But not supple. -AD

TRUE ROMANCE

Jean-Paul Brun's 1991 Beaujolais à l'Ancienne was one of the most beautiful wines of my lifetime. I drank it in February of 1992 while it was in the red concrete vat on the left side of Jean-Paul's subcellar room, all the way in the back.

I had tasted through God knows how many wines that day and this was the last wine the vigneron was going to pull out of a barrel, steel or concrete vat. What a sublime beauty it was. 1991 was a great year and I had in my hand a Gamay from limestone which could not be reproduced elsewhere. In the glass was a perfect convergence of soil, grape, field work, vigneron and vinification.

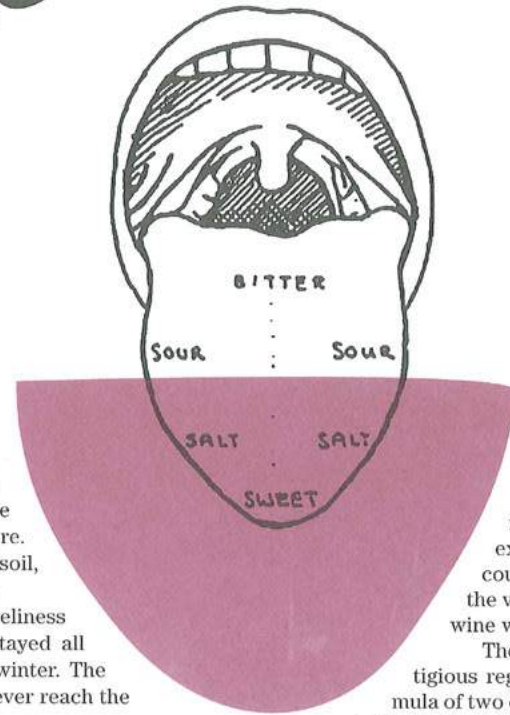
It had urgency, freshness and a liveliness that was almost hypnotic. I could have stayed all night sipping from the vat in the cold of winter. The wine was en masse and I feared it would never reach the same level when forced into a bottle.

There is nothing more unnatural than trying to compress a vineyard and year's work into a 750 milliliter container. One of our first vignerons used to say that if you wanted to make a great pot au feu you didn't make it for one person. You got out an enormous pot and let it bubble and simmer for as many family members and friends you could gather around a table.

Brun's wine was not politically correct nor politically incorrect. It was simply delicious. The bottled form was good but could not match my experience in the cellar.

There has been great improvement in natural vineyard work since the early 1990s. Some vineyards will take years, if not decades, to come back to natural form after years of chemical soaking and abusive treatment. This is particularly true in richer and "prestigious" regions where potassium and pesticides were bought and spread extravagantly in the 60s and 70s. Poorer regions often did not have the budget to indulge.

In these poorer regions of "small appellations" the improvements starting in the early 1990s were enormous. The raw materials became more precise and more expressive as vignerons moved to low yields, organic work and hand harvesting. But the results were often lost when the finished wine was forced into bottle by mobile truckers and heavy-handed treatment. These results were disheartening for those of us who spent much of our time tasting and drinking raw wines that were still a blank slate in the their infancy only to discover they had become elderly and stingy after their bottling.



In many ways, the natural wine movement is a movement to bring that immediacy into the bottle. By reducing treatments in the cellar and in the vineyards, vignerons are able to bring a more vibrant wine into that bottle. The first technique to go was filtering and then many vignerons took risks making non-sulfured or low sulfured bottling.

There were many initial excesses, some of which were proudly imported and refunded by Louis/Dressner Selections. But like any movement which wants to change our lives, the excesses were essential in reaching a reasoned course which preserves the wine while not killing the very qualities that were so seductive before the wine was squeezed into a shippable form.

The problems were different in the more "prestigious regions." Wine-making too often followed a formula of two or more years in barrel. Combined with sloppy vineyard and cellar work, many wines were unapproachable in their youth and too dried-out as they aged. Old Barolo tasted like old Rioja tasted like old Burgundy because they all suffered from a lack of charm and a raspy dryness that critics found a complex and profound experience. White wines had wild doses of sulfur that remained potent 30 years later. Many of the red wines were not far behind.

The natural wine movement in these regions is trying to bring the fruit back into wines. Michel Rolland and other gurus also confronted this situation by looking for extraction that would be big, plentiful and potent for those who enjoy a knock across their head. But the more charming, truly hedonistic way forward is to keep a core purity of fruit that evolves and changes, making the wine beautiful when young and beautiful but different when old. Not an easy task.

Wine is complicated. What exactly is a natural wine? For me, it's a wine that tastes like it fell off the vine and into a bottle, fermented, packed its bags and arrived in America. Of course, no such thing can happen. But the closer we can get to that sensation, the happier we will all be with the wines we drink.

Until then, I will occasionally write silly, generalized articles based on no science and no clear rules about my love for natural wines. I'll also drink wines from Marcel Lapiere, Stefano Bellotti, Antoine Arena, Marcel Richaud, Dominique Hauvette, Marc Ollivier, Agnès & René Mosse, Jean Foillard, Christian Binner, Paolo Bea, Pierre-Marie Chermette, Philippe Pacalet, Dard & Ribo, the Puzelats, Roussel & Barrouillet and an occasional Clos-St-Hune to prove I'm not dogmatic.

by Joe Dressner, Badge Carrying Member of
the AVN (Association des Vins Naturels)

DEAR ANNA

* What defines
Real? Blah

Holding the bottle for the first time i want the wine to be real. It could be so special. I meditate on what was ~~had~~ happening at the domaine during that time, ^{and try to} i imagine the journey of that particular bottle. I get geeky on the details. The glass used, paper quality, typeface, cork ~~co~~ condition, capsule condition, dirt on the bottle. Evidence can be flimsy when determining the diagnosis. Doubts start to emerge, as small details look out of place.

what's in the capsule

How much is instinct AND how much do you let instinct play into the way you proceed?

How does one actually authenticate a bottle? In fact, what does it mean to be "authentic"? Most wines in the world have a history of being ~~adulterated~~ adulterated in some way, and there are tons of scandals about well-reputed producers, importers and collectors ~~knowing~~ faking wine in order to make more money. People tend to see wine as a food product, and the revolution in direct sourcing of food has likewise created a boom of natural, organic and biodynamic wines. But unlike agriculture or food, wine has ~~always~~ always been made to make money. From Egyptians, to Romans, to the Greek, to the Dukes of Burgundy. ~~There's~~ There's not a lofty tradition to ~~fall~~ fall back on, because the underpinning history of the wine business is pretty corrupt.

~~Wine~~ Wine is faked usually on the very cheap level. If you can sneak AC Cahors, (a lowly appellation with cheap land that allows lots of different grapes, ~~with~~ ^{AND HAS} lenient restrictions on aging and yield) into a bottle of AC Bordeaux (with a much more restrictive laws and much more

I hate parenthesis

How often is a fake obvious?



expensive real estate, you'll make more money. And it's easy. Buy a bunch of AC Bordeaux labels, then buy a bunch of AC Cahors wine, mix & match, sell 2 million bottles for \$2 more each, and you're rich. In Italy, a two year investigation just completed where the top 7 wine producers of Brunello, ~~XX~~ multi-million dollar companies that really are ~~thanos~~ the most well-known and respected in Italy, were found to have knowingly used grapes other than Sangiovese in their wine when the law strictly forbids it. They did it to make better tasting wine and to make more money. They thought they would never get caught. They did, and now everyone is trying to ask themselves what does it mean, if anything. Is it akin to using different ingredients in a ~~DEKX~~ recipe to make ~~XX~~ it taste better, or is it like packaging three day old factory farmed chicken and selling it as free-range?

I see wine faked ~~X~~ on the very top level. The bottles ^{I have to authenticate} that sell for \$10,000, ~~that I have to authenticate.~~ What I want to draw attention to is the grey area that these wines, and thus the people that lust after them, really live in. Also, the fear that surrounds this business of wine ^{is the fear drive by the amounts of money involved or is there something deeper... or I guess ethical?} taste is a palatable emotion that all wine collectors live with... it's a pretty fucked up bunch of people.

Sincerely,
Alicia Christian Foster

Disgruntled Wine Detective

EDIT ON
this copy
please dh



the Weed & the Vine

Dear Andrew,

I just popped a 2008 California Rose made with 40% Nebbiolo and 60% Mouvedre and natural yeast. Also joining me is what might be considered, "a pile of prime bud." The wine was made chemical free in stainless first of the ganga lee's than transferred to ancient barrel for the malo. It reeks, and it rocks. I like it better than the 2007 version.

Recently I drank the 1968 Ridge Monte Bello. It is one of the greatest American wines ever made. Rumor has it Uncle Bud is in the cuvee. If it is true it's only ceremonial, I believe, as it smells of pure Cabernet. But I have not had the chance to drink a whole bottle to get any extra effect.

Patrick Matthews, author of the fantastic book Real Wine: The rediscovery of Natural Winemaking, wrote an article called Hippy Chic in a 2001 Decanter Mag. In this article he quotes David Darlington, "On spectacular Monte Bello Ridge, psychoactive drugs proved quite popular; one Ridge acolyte, a full-bearded, red-haired individual named Jerry reportedly ate LSD 64 days in a row, and bottling was frequently performed by someone who held a 750ml glass vessel in one hand and a joint of primo sinsemilla in the other." If this is true than maybe they did throw buds in the 68 Monte Bello. Either way it's a natural, un-spoofalated wine and a legendary drink.

To me spoofalation is process over place, the creation of wine as a beverage. It can include things like enzymes to create flavors, massive new oak (one winemaker told me he had over 250% in the final product), spin cones, reverse osmosis or de-acidafacation. When you think about of Real and of Spooof, think about food with the acidity taken out, or enzymes added to make it taste a certain way. Flounder genes given to tomatoes so they can keep cold for long times. I also consider adding grapes that don't belong to the area a spooof. As you know they recently destroyed/declasseed millions of bottles of Brunello as they found Merlot and Syrah in them.

It's about the place, the vine stock and the farmer. And thank goodness this movement is growing. Natural wine is the Ying to the Spooof Yang. Call it Hippy Chic if you want but keep it coming.

I have been a wino for a long time and the weed has been my pal the whole journey. When I started I worked retail in a small town in New England and the day I got the bug we were smoking a bowl of Afganistan hash and I was so high the bowl fell on me and I didn't notice till a permanent scare was made. We went to the wine cellar of the shop and my mentor said, "All these wines are alive and like great cheese's we hope we pop them at peak ripeness." This was 1977 and we were lucky to drink every wine we wanted because they were cheap. I was hooked.

Look, I am not a wine snob (something I can't stand in people now 30+ years in the bizz). In the late 70's it was "Riunite on ice so nice" and Lancers and that's fine 'cause back then we just wanted more wine drinkers. Today Riunite, tomorrow Ch Lafleur was our belief. When I moved to NYC to be a manager at a wine shop I had to help create a full page NYTimes ad for a private label White Zin. We did a stunning job and sold a container and I believe those 14,400 bottles brought people to more wines, and the wine minus artificial yeast was a real wine.

Has "the weed" been spoofalated? To me nothing rocks like the old Heritage genes like Afgani and Thai. I would take the old high's anyday over the Diesel Bubble Gum. The high from real wine differs from being Molly Dooker'd, just like the body feels the food it eats. Shit, the Rose is gone and I am feeling great. But what was I asked to write about, Andrew? I think it was where the great wine list were in NYC in the 80's? Mr. Tarlow all I can say is, "been there and drunk that UP." And wish you were there too.

Eat real, drink real and most importantly be real.....
Love, Real Wino



THIRST

If he would have had me die he should not have allowed me such an imagination. The drunkenness of my head, the bright circles that first spun us towards each other, now spins me on and on, ever-away from this grotesque yet entrepreneurial tomb. My friend! He called out to me. Then led me to such a place. But for weeks it had been coming.

God how the rumors of our flirtation flew. One in which I had put a codpiece on his best cow and led her mean-drunk to market. One in which I spat at his yard of pretty cocks as they stretched and preened (for me only) in the early Parisian sun. Or that I had riled his daughter. Another, more jealous of him, in which I had riled the head of his mangy son.

I protest nothing. All of this is true and more. A rich man, nonetheless, has his accumulations. Bluebeard had a cellar, scythed away from the land, to which he led all his dilly new wives and slaughtered them. And me? A pauper. My only fault is my great Thirst. A mere cask of Amontillado proffered and I mewed on behind him, deeper and deeper into his many-bottled vault.

The night before, while abreast, I out drank him as usual. The proud-belly. The buffoon. He said, "Fortunato, you drink as if weak. Do you do not have the taste for it?" To which I answered heartily, "Your wine is but grape-paste. Your wine is so flat my throat is salted."

And at the red in his face I knew we would have our little game. "But what think you of my latest acquisitions?" he asked, as he had many times before. And I willingly answered, "They are lead-colored and clammy. The nose is fleshy and pimples! Damasked! Unleavened. Membrous as a metropolitan cod."

He begged more.

"The palate is musket-proof and obstinate! The legs are pink and spot-powdered and the feet are ripe as onion sauce and spiced bread and large pasties of venison in which maggots, having already copulated, have had their day."

And on and on. We did it to nines. We did it until I was dancing around him shouting,

"Pour out all in the name of Lucifer! Bring me my funnel! A butler should have a hundred hands, wherewith to fill our wine indefatigably. Fill, boys, fill! Beast, enough! I sup, I wet, I humect, I moisten my gullet, I drink—and all for fear of dying. O you butlers, creators of new forms, make of me no drinker a drinker! Drink always and you shall never die! I drink no more than a sponge. I drink like a Templar Knight! Show me a bottle I cannot make vivid with my mouth! If I drink not, I am ground dry, graveled and spent. I am stark dead without drink, and my soul ready to fly into some marsh amongst frogs."

Then I slept. How was I to know that while on the tavern-boards, my words—that had made him so lithe-some and cheery, so ruddy and thick—turned against me like Catherine's great wheel. That when I woke he had become another beast altogether. No less beautiful albeit cunning, not kind.

"Rise Fortunato," he said. "I have yet a final bottle for you."

Rich man, tyrant that he was, his touch was gentle. And I knew there was still more game to play. We passed through his great cellars, indeed we sped by them. Bosomy, compelled. He made me entertain him as we ran on and on. I ascribed his endless shelves.

"Gluttonous."
"Yesterday's halitosis."
"Bushels of the finest oysters."
"Cabbage-like."
"Sterile. Beshitted. Merry as crickets and buttered buns."

Candles smeared the damp walls. My words poured out more thickly than they had in all my life and I could sense it was becoming hard for him to walk. Indeed, he slowed, panting, his mouth was wet. But it was I pushing him now. Ever on. The final bottle. I chafed, I ached for it. We became one creature, shuddering along the passageway.

At last we arrived. The tunnel pulled to a small stooped end. He surveyed me once, with inscrutable eyes. Iron manacles hung from the bony wall. Without prompt or pause I stepped into them.

He bowed his great head as if I had eased some tremendous pain.

"A rich man must have his accumulations."

Then he began to mortar and place bricks around me, speaking into the gloom, his words suddenly forming as if with the power of my own tongue.

"The nape of his neck, like a paper lantern. His breasts, like a game of nine pins."

He worked like a maniac glowed by fever.

"The loins, like a padlock.
The wind-pipe, like an oyster-knife.
The spermatic muscles, like a cully-mully-puff."

Large pools of tears came to his eyes. But he would not break to brush them.

"The hungry-gut like a button.
The muscles, like a pair of bellows.
The bones, like three-cornered cheese-cakes.
His beard, like a lantern.
His chin, like a mushroom.
His eyebrows, like a dripping pan.
His ears, like a pair of gloves."

Each sentence filled the cave entirely. Even as the bricks made my vision black.

"The glandules in his mouth, like a pruning knife. His toes were like a virginal on an organ. His memory he had like a scarf. His notions, like a snail crawling out of strawberries. His repentance, like the carriage of a double cannon. His desire like a bouquet of terrible suns."

I do not blame him. That I am to be cherished, I no longer doubt. The bricks are cold and smooth, pressing against me their solemn finality. I, like Gargantua, was carried 11 months in my mother's belly. This purse-like dark is no stranger. There is no sound now but his echo booming in my chest.

Thirst alone beggars me. Knowing this, fortnights, he pulls back a stone, its location placed perfectly at my parched mouth, and dribbles, through the gaping hole, a full flagon of wine. A blush rises to my lips.

Some text from author Francois Rabelais.

STORY BY Jess Arndt



DRAWING BY Mike Reddy

the fortified sea

written by Spencer Harrington

illustration by Laura Preston



Pirate's plunder established Sherry as one of Elizabethan England's most popular drinks. The pillager in question was Sir Francis Drake, whose métier was relieving galleons of their treasures during their long sail from South America to Spain. The 2,900 barrels were raided from a Spanish port preparing ships for the Armada and brought back to England to slake the Britons' thirst for Sack, as Sherry was then called.

The English had been importing wines from Andalusia in southern Spain since the Moorish occupation, which ended in the latter half of the thirteenth century. Geoffrey Chaucer, whose father was a wine merchant, mentions wines from the region in the "Pardoner's Tale," written in the mid-1380s. The Pardoner, inveighing against the sin of gluttony, warns against wine drinking:

*Now keep ye from the white and from the red,
And namely from the white wine of Lepe,
That is to sell in Fish Street or in Chepe.
This wine of Spain creepeth subtilly
In other wines, growing fast by,
Of which there riseth such fumositee,
That when a man hath drunken draughtes three,
And weneth that he be at home in Chepe,
He is in Spain, right at the town of Lepe,
Not at the Rochelle, nor at Bordeaux town.*

Lepe is a town just to the west of the Sherry region whose wines until recent history, were blended with Sherry. The vapors "fumositee" from this strong wine suggest that it was fortified, but there's no certainty here. Chaucer certainly does point out that the wines from Lepe were blended by unscrupulous English merchants with Gascon wines to bulk them up.

By the 1490s trade with England and France was well established, aided by the abolition of export taxes on Sherry. It was also during this period that Sherry bodegas codified their production methods, regulating the harvest of grapes and the aging of the wine. The discovery of the Americas helped business; the important port city of Cadiz is 15 miles from Jerez, and ships leaving the Sherry town of Sanlúcar de Barrameda for the New World are known to have carried sizeable quantities of the wine. Christopher Columbus recruited sailors and launched his ships from Andalusia. Later he set sail from Sanlúcar in 1498 to discover Trinidad, as did Pizarro a few decades later to conquer Peru. The historian of Sherry, Julian Jeffs, states unequivocally that "Sherry was the first wine to enter the USA."

The English connection to the Sherry trade intensified following the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. Foreigners, many of them English, saw new business opportunities there and became wine merchants in Jerez and Sanlúcar. By 1517 Spanish authorities were treating

English merchants preferentially, conferring on them the right to bear arms, ample storage facilities, and legal provisions ensuring speedy payment of debts due them. This good will was shortlived. Relations between England and France soured following Henry VIII's infamous divorce from the Spanish Princess Catherine of Aragon, which precipitated England's break from the Catholic Church in 1534. Suddenly English merchants in Spain found themselves suspect. Many left and some of those who remained were jailed for refusing to denounce the Crown. By 1585 the remaining English merchants in the Sherry region were arrested and their possessions seized.

In the early 1580s King Philip of Spain began planning to invade England by ordering construction of a large fleet of warships. Many of the ships and provisions intended for the Armada were moored at the Cadiz harbor. Sir Francis Drake had long lobbied Queen Elizabeth, Henry VII's second daughter, for men and ships for an attack on Spain, but she had balked at the expense, among other concerns. In the Spring of 1587, however, the Queen put Drake in charge of a fleet meant to harass Spanish shipping and attack ports where the Spanish fleet was being assembled. Drake headed straight for Cadiz. He arrived ahead of his fleet and sailed into the harbor, sinking and setting fire to between 39 ships (Drake's estimate) and 25 ships (Spanish estimate). Thrilled by the success of his bold attack, Drake wrote that he "singed the King of Spain's beard." To this day, Drake is still regarded as a bogey man in Cadiz...parents warn children that "El Draque" will get them if they don't behave.

And so the fleet, pregnant with thousands of barrels of Sherry, possibly meant to have provisioned ships in the Armada, sailed home. A year later Drake would become vice-admiral of the fleet defending England against the Armada. Many of the Armada's mariners came from the Sherry towns, and the Duke of Medina Sidonia, the fleet's commander, was based in Sanlúcar. We can only guess at how much Sherry sank with the Armada.

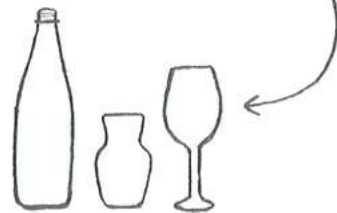
The English must have welcomed this sudden infusion of Sherry as imports had fallen off because of the hostilities. Sack was consumed by royalty and had enthusiastic advocates among English poets, among them Ben Jonson and Robert Herrick. But the English fondness for Sack found its greatest expression in Shakespeare's Henry IV, Part 2, when Sir John Falstaff says "If I had a thousand sons, the first humane principle I would teach them should be, to forswear thin potations and to addict themselves to sack." After Elizabeth's death the English merchant colony at Sanlúcar was slowly reestablished all thanks to a pirate and a known in Latin as Franciscus Draco: Francis the Dragon. ☼



HOW TO DRINK 10 LITERS OF WINE

10 LITERS

OF WINE



WE FILL GREEN BOTTLES, QUARTINOS AND GLASSES FROM THE 10L BOX (OLD FERRIERS)



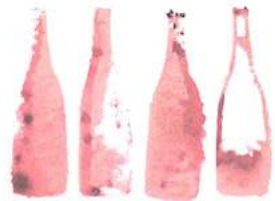
IDEALLY WE WOULD PUMP WINE FROM A GAS TANK

Erin Diebold

1 BOX (10L)



3 1/3 JEROBOAMS (3000 mL)



6 2/3 MAGNUMS (1500 mL)



10 GREEN BOTTLE (1000 mL)



13 1/3 STANDARDS (750 mL)



20 RADIKONS (500 mL)



26 2/3 QUARTINOS (375 mL)



53 1/3 GLASSES (give or take)



BACK IN THE DAY - WHEN BOTTLES WERE HAND BLOWN AND WITHOUT STANDARD VOLUME - HONEST MERCHANTS SOLD WINE FROM THE BARREL AND BUYERS BROUGHT THEIR OWN BOTTLES TO FILL.

NEBUHADNEZZAR
BALTHAZAR
METHUSELAH
REHOBOAM
JEROBOAM



10E

THE JEROBOAM IS EQUIVALENT TO FOUR STANDARD WINE BOTTLES. HE'S NOT THE BIGGEST IN THE BUNCH. NEBUHADNEZZAR HOLDS TWENTY BOTTLES.



HERE ARE THREE TYPICAL SHAPES AS OF 1979 A STANDARD BOTTLE HOLDS 750 mL WINE



RADIKON THE ALTERNATIVE COMES IN 500 OR 1000 ML

THIS GUY DESIGNED HIS OWN BOTTLES CUZ HE FIGURED THE STANDARD BOTTLE WAS TOO MUCH FOR ONE PERSON TO DRINK AND TOO LITTLE FOR TWO.



FESS UP

written by Leah Campbell

It is 4:45 in the afternoon, fifteen minutes before tastings will end for the day at Fess Parker Winery, and inside an able group of seven pilgrims are nearly drunk. We lean on the high, oak bar, switching elbows with sulfurous exhalations, and drained glasses land on the wood with thick clinks.

Driving up the 101, I had seen the Pacific for the first time that afternoon. The edge of America broke on our left side, and I drove Shayna's mom's car onward out of LA, five minutes off Route 154, and down Foxen Canyon Road. The tanned hills of the Santa Ynez valley yielded a trail of fifteen tasting rooms. This is the California wine country just north of Santa Barbara, where most tasting rooms offer a sampling of wines and a complimentary souvenir glass for ten dollars. One advertises its cultural affinities with a giant chessboard out front; another describes its first wine as a "poolside" white. Another is owned by the Firestone family, who built their empire engineering the synthetic rubber tires on the cars that careen between wineries.

Fess Parker is a dark horse Texan boy who became famous playing Disney's Davy Crockett on the first mini-series of all time. As the renowned nineteenth century American frontiersman and senator, Parker scouted virgin land, fought off disagreeable river pirates, went to Congress and defended the Alamo. He so inhabited that storied role that he went on to play another American man of

pioneer myth, Daniel Boone. When Parker retired from acting, he remained in California as an entrepreneur in real estate, hotels and wine. Since 1989 Fess Parker wines have won more than 30 medals in national competitions.

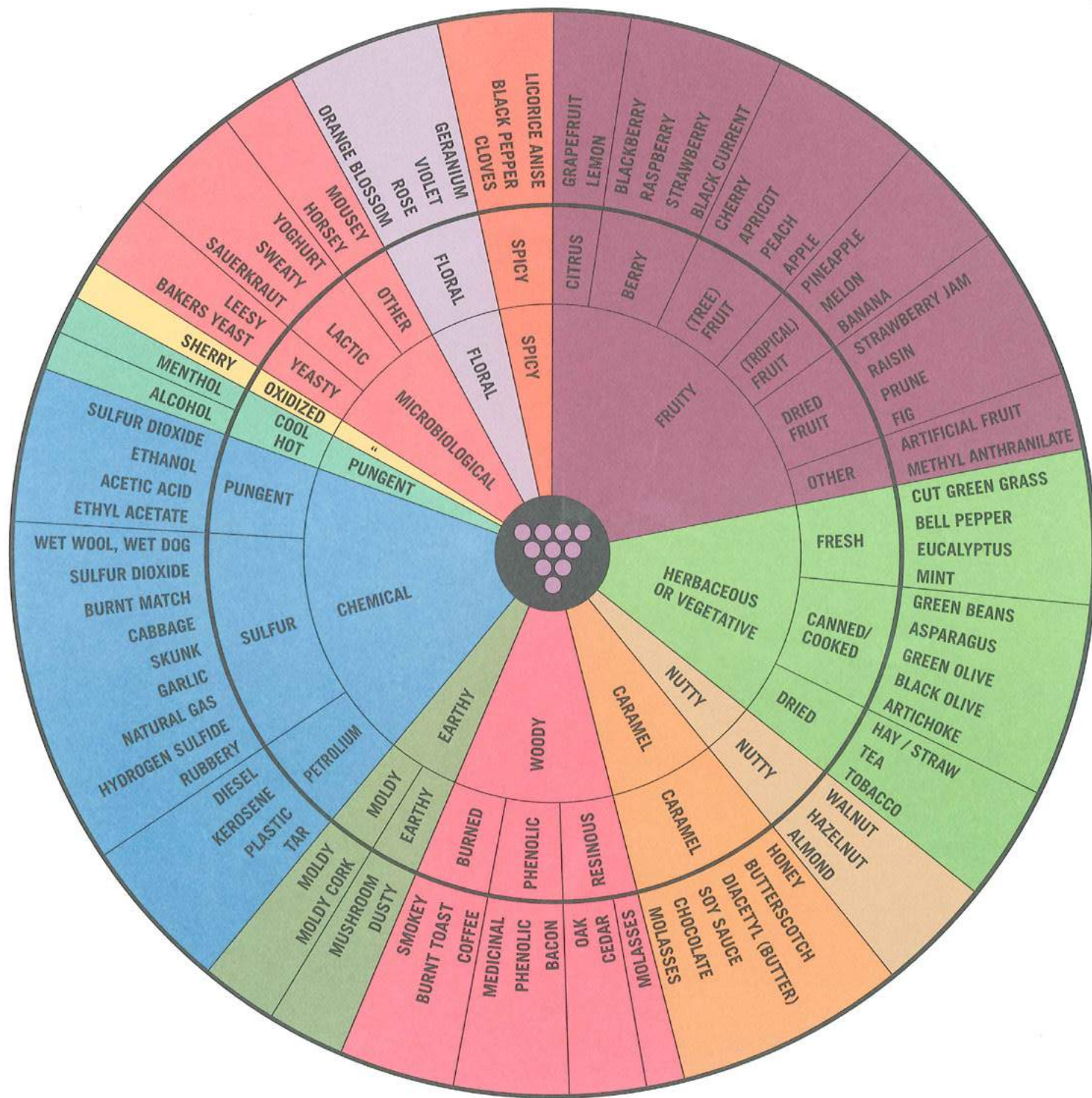
Parker's crown, of course, is made of coonskin. And for only \$13.95 you can buy one of the ubiquitous caps to fit over the top of your bottle of Ashley's Pinot Noir. I thought it would be funny, and it was. Around us in the tasting room two couples try on caps for humans (not pinot noir) and pose as if they were taking pictures of each other—hillbilly czars in June. The walls are as oddly adorned: a framed black poodle, a giant corkscrew. Mary Claire sips a 2008 Riesling she's just named Sugar Tits.

An enormous picture of Parker's face barely fits in the small upstairs hallway to the office, out of which a hardened woman bellows precipitate threats when another wayward soul attempts the roped-off stairs. I am reminded of the drunk-on-power, government-developed M-388 Davy Crockett, the tactical nuclear recoilless rifle that could carry conventional explosives or a W-54 atomic fission warhead. If the wines were good, it was lost on us. I imagine all of the curious, lush intrepids returned to the base of the stairs wondering where they have gone wrong. Suddenly full with newly discovered meaning the Crockett motto rings, "Be sure you're right, then go ahead."



Portugal, September 1997

Supple



Brawny. Lively. Flabby. Voluptuous. Aggressive. Fleshy. Gutsy. Sassy. Edgy. Nervy. Charming. Mean. Ponderous. Zippy. Luscious. Most of the time we use words like this to describe people. When was the last time you used the word luscious in a sentence? These boundaries, if words can be considered such, are all abstract concepts, and they describe a state of being. At least, that's what any dictionary will tell you. But there are plenty of oenophiles out there who will read those words and think of taste. Austere wine is one that's overly acidic, and probably young, whereas a luscious wine is sweet, without a lot of acid. For those who like to talk about wine, there's a whole dictionary full of words that try to describe how it tastes.

Many words compare wine to other flavors and smells: fruity, smoky, and so on. But there are also a good number of more abstract words like "gutsy" and "ponderous" in the wine tasting vocabulary. Not exactly the first thing to come to mind for most of us when we're trying to talk about taste. And yet wine tasters and wine connoisseurs use words like "supple" all the time, apparently quite comfortably. Meanwhile I am left wondering what suppleness actually tastes like.

Wine more than anything else is described with particular gusto, and the adjectives used might be a little more extravagant. Sassy? It's actually pretty common to treat food like something living. Once you start to think about it, there are plenty of non-food words that we commonly accept as descriptions of taste. Words like crisp and rich get used to the point of cliché. How often have you seen the words "BOLD FLAVOR!" emblazoned across the front of some new kind of Doritos? It's a pretty pervasive way of thinking. The lines between literal meaning and metaphor even start to blur when you get to words like "sweet," which we probably use just as often to describe little girls as we do to describe candy.

There are a few foods that really are living, like yogurt or anything else involving fermentation and bacteria cultures. Meat and fruit were obviously alive at some point. Wine in particular is very much a product of life: its fermentation is the result of yeast living and consuming energy. So maybe it does kind of make sense to say that natural wine, with all that natural yeast unharmed by added sulfites, truly tastes "alive."

The Merriam-Webster defines supple as "compliant often to the point of obsequiousness; readily adaptable or responsive to new situations; capable of being bent or folded without creases, cracks, or breaks; pliant; able to perform bending or twisting movements with ease; limber; easy and fluent without stiffness or awkwardness." No mention at all of taste. If you want to be literal about it, I guess in a way a wine could be pliant, at least in the sense that a pinot noir can't exactly break. But does that really mean it can bend? I don't think that's what they mean when they say a wine is supple. There must be some kind of synesthesia going on, some way that a particular combination of sweetness and sourness and texture makes us feel like the taste is limber and compliant.

Our sense of taste comes from two sources: our actual taste buds and our sense of smell. Taste buds give us the basics: sweet, salty, bitter, sour, and umami, the recently discovered meaty, mushroom, soy sauce taste. These fundamentals are pretty factual, based on chemicals in our food triggering receptors in our mouth buds to send signals to our

brains. If something has acid in it, it tastes sour. If it has sodium molecules in it, it tastes salty. And so forth. Then the nuances of taste come from our sense of smell. We detect hundreds of different smells, and that affects how things taste. It's the reason why chocolate ice cream tastes different than vanilla, even though they're both essentially sweet flavors. So when it comes to describing taste, the first and most obvious thing we usually do is just take the factual route and say that something is sour, or salty or sweet. The problem is that they're also pretty general, whereas tastes are usually a lot more complex and unique. So to get more specific about describing a taste, we usually have to turn to analogies, i.e. "tastes like chicken."

Through associations, the sensations of sweet, salty, bitter, sour and umami have come to be connected with certain characteristics. This probably happened through a combination factors. First of all, some flavors are obviously better than others. Bitterness and sourness (at least in excess) are seen as bad, probably because of their biological connection to foods that are poisonous or rotten, while sweetness is good because it indicates ripeness and a food that contains lots of energy. The reason we use abstract metaphors to describe this goodness or badness probably has to do with a bit of egotism in the way we think. Basically, we see the world in terms of our place in it, and so it's probably easiest to measure everything on a scale relative to ourselves. That means that too much bitterness and sourness turns into negative traits: austere, aggressive, coarse, brawny, while more balanced tastes are lively, and sweetness is voluptuous. When we can't quite pin down what the uniqueness of a taste is in flavor terms, we turn to metaphors taken from the subject we know best: ourselves. Presumably it is some unique combination of tastes, some particular level of acidity and some specific sensation of texture that can make a wine "supple" rather than "amiable."

The word "austere" itself is not exactly a common one. It sounds like something out of a Victorian novel. But when it is used, "austere" almost always describes character. If you look it up, the dictionary will tell you that "austere" describes something "imposing" or else "severely plain." So when people use "austere" to talk about wine, it seems like another (particularly pretentious) case like "supple," and is used with apparent abandon. However the OED states the original meaning actually was a description of taste. The Greek root of "austere" means "making the tongue rough and dry," and the word was originally used to describe the taste of fruit or wine. But this translated so easily to the quality of severity and harshness that "austere" has been entirely appropriated as a character trait.

Language itself is a flexible, changing thing. In its own way, language might also be called alive, with most words constantly evolving the way austere did, cycling through meanings as we use them. You often can't pinpoint a word any more than you can pinpoint a taste or a characteristic. Simply put, a word describes but what exactly describes a word. With subjectivity stacked on top of subjectivity like this, there's no way words like "austere" and "supple" can really be used to communicate much detail about the taste of a wine. Unfortunately for both of us my austere might just be your sassy.

written by Marguerite Preston

THE DOG ATE MY POINT SCORES

written by Terry Theise • illustrations by Ted Mineo

from his forthcoming book *Reading Between The Wines*, 2010 by U.C. Press

When you're new to wine, you write tasting notes to focus your palate, hone your concentration, and remember what you tasted. You read other peoples' notes too, to taste vicariously (especially if you can't afford the glam-wines you read about) and to try and suss what a tasting note is "supposed" to be, and whether yours measure up.

But eventually you reach a dead end with the whole tasting note thing. It becomes a form of absurdity. Most tasting notes are associative (describing wine flavors in terms of other flavors) and this is of course tautological; saying a wine smells like peaches is to say peaches smell like peaches. Nor is it any help if your reader never smelled a peach.

There are basically two ways to taste wine. You don't have to pick just one, but eventually most of us settle on the one that comes naturally. You can taste "aggressively," that is, aim a beam of concentrated attention directly at the wine, using your palate to take a sort of snapshot. This is entirely desirable, but taken to extremes it has the effect of seeming to torture a confession from the poor wine.

Or you can taste "passively," or peripherally; you look away from the flavors and see what the wine says when you're not trying to nail the sucker down. You quietly let the wine come to you. This approach brings you closer to the gestalt – I might even say the truth – of the wine. But the liability is it's very hard to verbalize, unless your tasting note takes the form of a Zen koan.

On the other hand, for most of us, no one is going to read our tasting notes, so we can write whatever we want. I say this notwithstanding the distressing phenomenon of internet wine bulletin boards wherein people share their tasting notes with other lonely wine geeks, and I'm sure this is fun for them, but I find it a little sad. I have a melancholy feeling that lots of people spend their weekends drinking wine in order to post their notes on Monday. "Look what I drank!" The cork is pulled, and suddenly there are all these hypothetical eyes upon you. Your life becomes a kind of performance. But don't mind me. I'm just a private introverted guy, and my relationship to wine has always been intimate.

As a merchant I have made myself write tasting notes because I want to help my customers determine what to buy, and because I seem to have lost the omniscient recall I had in my thirties, when I remembered every wine I tasted. These days I have to consult notes for a wine I tasted ten days ago. The job requires me to write notes on some 1000-1500 wines per year, which may be why I almost never write tasting notes at home.



Ted Mineo

But some wines embody a story, not merely a narrative, but a kind of curiosity, as if they cast tentacles out into the ether. Or else the wine stimulates the imagination and you're off and running. I am very sure these things are worth getting down, but if you seek to share them you will sometimes run afoul of a certain kind of person who actually does want to know that your 2004 Domaine de la Crachoir tasted like "beer-battered kiwi fritters, boysenberries, and pork snouts." When Hugh Johnson's charming memoir *A Life Uncorked* was published, someone on the internet was bemused. The book was useless to this person, because "He never says how the wine tastes; he only says what it was like to drink it." Well my good man, that there's the very point of the thing. I'd far rather read the genial musings of a humane spirit mulling over the little nimbus between his soul and the wine in the glass than to see how many arcane adjectives some anal geek can string together.

You've read such notes, I'm sure. This dramatic wine has the burnish of torched sienna, that hint of Tuscan chickens, perhaps even pullets, that gamey, feathery aroma; a dishy first impression of guppies spawning and bracken roasting in the Castilian sun, and the high wind blowing from offshore when a garbage scow has recently run aground, not exactly fresh passion fruit, but passion fruit after it has been chewed by a horse that's just run through a heathery dale, you know, sort of sopping wet fetlocks and old dogs; and the finish, oh, just a portrait of nasturtium, or shuttlecocks dipped in quince jelly, or the stench on a fox's muzzle after he's eaten a number of small rodents or the ice caked on a refrigerator in a Paris apartment, or like new sandals, especially if the feet in them have been soaked in a bromide solution - and with revisiting the nose is all rotty mulch sluicing out of a bilge pipe in a fetid stream of sweetly

blooming hawthorne in a flighty perfume of freshly starched uniforms of a flight attendant in the first-class cabin in a manly swill of gassy medicinal opaline mordant porcine gratuitous acetate begonia-laden air-freshener or like the fannings from a fire of souchong tea or like.... Somebody make him stop! Just one more thing: am I the only one who finds this wine a bit hirsute???

One of the early wine books I read is the (tragically out of print) *Fireside Book Of Wine*, a compilation done by the late Alexis Bespaloff. Among the works were many old tasting essays (it's minging to call them mere "notes...") by a few of the old-school British writers like Maurice Healy and the great André Simon. If you read some of the travel literature of the 19th century, you'll discover that the ostensibly staid and prosaic British were wont to extravagantly emotional and flowery prose. As a fledgling reader of wine-lit, I was getting the message that intense emotion was a normal response to intense beauty. I was in effect given permission to respond this way myself. I was also reading Hugh Johnson of course, and Gerald Asher's elegant columns in *Gourmet* magazine, and so each of the writers whose work formed me were either excellent writers or they wore their hearts on their sleeves. People new to wine these days are just as apt to be corrupted as to be inspired; there's a lot of lousy prose and shallow thinking out there.

I want any tasting note I care to read - my own or others' - to be visceral. Most of the time the telling image is more valuable than the literal description. You risk incoherence and self-indulgence if you write intuitively, and I'm sure I resemble that remark now and again, but it's a risk worth taking.



SCRIBE

Severine von Tscharner Fleming interviews

Andrew P. Mariani of Scribe Winery in Sonoma, California

How did you come upon naming the winery?

When I first came to the farm it was covered in debris, abandoned sheds, and non-native vegetation. It was a disaster. While I was rehabilitating the site I discovered old stonewalls, antique tools and wine bottles, bits of china. With the help of these artifacts, county records and a few oral histories from some elderly Sonomans, I've been able to reconstruct the history of this place. The stories we uncovered were amazing, some of them dating back to 1858 when one of the first commercial wineries in California was founded on the site. It went on to produce blue ribbon winning wines before devolving into a speakeasy and brothel during Prohibition. I realized I had an opportunity and an obligation to impart this history to others. So, I guess I consider myself a sort of scribe of this land, transcribing and transmitting its history. Anyways, that's where the name came from. And then I realized this idea of transmission was also a good way of describing our winemaking philosophy: to produce organic wines that are expressive of their place, terroir-driven wines. Our hope is to let the vineyard express itself and to assist it in its natural progression to wine.

Tell us about the grapes you have chosen to grow, and why?

The Scribe Estate vineyard in Sonoma lies at a crossroads between the Sonoma Valley, Carneros viticultural appellations and the border of Sonoma and Napa County. It makes up a distinct microclimate created by the convergence of San Pablo Bay marine influence, Petaluma Gap winds and the steep terrain of Arrowhead Mountain. The cool climate and mineral rich volcanic soil make it ideal for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. We've also planted Riesling and Sylvaner vines in honor of the Dresel brothers, pioneers who founded the original 1858 vineyard. Those are the varietals they're credited with having first brought to America from their father's vineyard in Giesenhiem, Germany. I'm especially excited about the Sylvaner block, which to my knowledge is the only one in Northern California.

Tell us about the landscape you were brought up in, and its emotional resonance. Where is California agriculture headed?

My family grows nuts and fruit in the Sacramento Valley, so I grew up around orchards, harvests, 100 degree summers, pick-up trucks, swimming in creeks, that kind of stuff. I didn't realize how much influence this agricultural upbringing had on me until I took my first post-University job at the Delegation for the European Commission in D.C. doing agricultural trade research and monitoring negotiations between the U.S. and the E.U. We would do research, write reports, send them off to Brussels and then go through the motions again. But when we sent off these reports that was it; there was never any response or effect. It was like reporting to the ether. I began to suspect that the mailman was just dropping them in the dumpster. I grew up watching how the seasons affected life and food. I observed the farmers plant in the spring, tend during the summer and harvest in the fall. I think I need that kind of rhythm in my life. I think that's really the direction California agriculture is headed. People are beginning to crave that connection to the land and will increasingly demand it.

Is there currently a welcoming climate for new organic wine producers?

I feel a sea change is underway. Five years ago there was a perception in the market that wine made with organically grown grapes was not good quality wine. You had a lot of high-end Napa producers wanting to get a 95 rating at any cost. I think there was a perception that if you were talking about organics, or permaculture, or the ecosystems of the vineyard, that you were losing touch with the ultimate goal, which is to make great wine. But that doesn't make sense. By embracing nature and individual ecosystems, you are giving the vines the best opportunity to grow naturally and express place. Fortunately, this is happening more and more, and is leading to a more distinct and diverse set of California wines.

What unexpected hurdles did you face?

Three years ago, when I came back to California to start the Scribe project I was 24 years old. The current food movement really rewards people who take risks and take action and are radical in doing so. It's definitely a 'learn by doing' environment. So yeah, age, and then... what else? Oh yeah, everything else, it's like a marathon of hurdles.

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To call Radikon unique would be redundant or perhaps just lazy. All the wines we love are cultish. They will create a challenge for the drinker. The challenge should be intellectual or metaphysical and not physical, with the understanding that wine should be fun with dinner.

Modern style wines are often rich and ripe, full of fruit, oak, and chocolate but deficient in character. Very little distinguishes them from each other or their geography. Like the suburbs and fast food. That milkshake and fry is going to taste the same anywhere.

A wine is sometimes defined solely by its grape varieties, geography, natural process or artisanal qualities. But what makes a defining wine is the way in which all these components and choices made in the vineyard create mystery and liveliness from one bottle to the next.

Mystery inevitably gives way to curiosity. The key to sustaining uniqueness, appreciation and reverence for a wine is the learning process. For example in my favorite geographic regions new grapes that I haven't heard often offer a new and more complex experience. In the Loire, the arbor grape is rare, and also known as menu pineau. Or in Piedmont the erbaluce di caluso grape is a fun muscat like grape, flowery on the nose creating a easy to drink white wine... or a gamay from the south of Burgundy. Usually gamay is from Beaujolais and Loire and so we get to see how the grape functions differently.

The Radikon is radical. This area of Friuli is known for a group of back-to-the-future winemakers using very traditional techniques that are simultaneously cutting edge. Stanko Radikon makes his white wine like red. After the crushing the ribolla gialla grapes he leaves the skins in contact with the juice. This is a very old school wine making technique. And like any good cult leader he, and the people in his area using similar techniques, have followers. Abe Schoener of the Scholium Project in the states is now also making white wine macerated with the skins on.

Radikon has the most amazing cartoon sunset color, goldish brown with tinges of pink. Modern white wine is very clean and filtered for the most part. And it's tricky; if someone put a glass in front of your nose you would think you were drinking a fruity red wine. It has an apple-cidery, nutty, hay and yeast smell to it. You almost just want to smell it. It is wholesome and healthy

in spirit and structure; the whole grape is in there. Only sold in a 500 ml bottle, Stanko thinks the Radikon is the right amount of wine to drink during dinner for two. Or you can drink two bottles at dinner and not get too radical.

RADIKON



RECIPES

For all of our attempts at quantifying it, pairing it and opining about it, the true enjoyment and understanding of wine is more often than not spontaneous and unpredictable. The way we experience wine varies widely based on mood, setting and company. A wine thoroughly enjoyed on one occasion can fall flat on the next, not because it has changed but perhaps because we have. Wine is and must be an entirely subjective experience to be lived and enjoyed. It is only what it does to and for us that matters about it. Of course the subject and matter of wine is complex and meaningful and certainly I am a snob about what I think is acceptable and unacceptable to drink. But I do believe that the occasion, or even just the day, must be right to truly enjoy the full experience that wine puts us in contact with. Wine can be transportive, for sure, and I believe that it is a unique beverage in this way. It doesn't simply make us drunk; it makes us tingly, open and amorous. It can also make us ornery and ill-fitting (maybe that's just me), tight and angry. It plays both ways and sometimes you get one while looking for the other. But if we are lucky the right bottle and the moment can quickly restore our faith in our very human condition.

WRITTEN BY CAROLINE FIDANZA

There are so many things to do with wine and food, thinking how and when they go together. The best thing to do is wait for and be open to the perfect moment and when you find it, savor and remember it.

A PERFECT MEAL

artichokes and arugula from Guy Jones
good olive oil
sea salt like Sel Gris
Pecorino "Cineri"
Austrian Reblouchon
baguette
Vernaccia di San Gimignano

Doesn't this seem immediately pretentious? Look at all the names, the labels. What really happened is a bit more mystical. I went to Guy Jones and discovered to my thrill and amazement that you can grow artichokes here in New York state. These huge, beautiful perennials bearing one of my absolute favorite vegetables was standing right in front of me. Guy in his typically generous manner invited me to take as many as I like. I only took a couple knowing that I would eat them that night alone. So what to do with these prized thistles? The weight of how to properly handle them almost overwhelmed me. The truth was I didn't actually feel like cooking. I felt sad and wanted to be taken care of. In other words, I didn't want to take care of an artichoke. So I mostly bought my dinner. In addition to the artichokes I had some baby arugula so I could make a salad. I bought a pecorino for the salad and a Reblouchon just because it looked good. A baguette and a bottle of wine.

I quickly assembled the meal in the time it took to saute the tender artichokes and open two packages of cheese. I tossed the artichokes and arugula only with olive oil and sea salt, deciding against using any acid to affect the flavor of either. I shaved the pecorino on top of the salad and then sat down to a table of unexpectedly good dinner companions. I don't know what hand was guiding me to choose the things I did, to compose dinner in just such a way. I just chose exactly the things that were going to make me feel warm with all that is good and right. Maybe Guy's love and generosity shone through the salad and into my heart. Maybe I realized that what is good is just what is good, the moment and its potential to be perfect and beautiful. The unexpected opportunity to see the divine in the ordinary is the gift we receive every time we sit down. I don't know. But I do know that that dinner moved me to document it that night and to remember it and recount it to this day, two years later.

A MEAL TO BE POUNDED WITH A WINE BOTTLE:

CHICKEN OR PORK CUTLETS WITH FRIED EGG, BITTER GREENS, ANCHOVY AND CAPERS

For approximately 4 cutlets:

2 large chicken breasts or 1-1½# pork loin
4 eggs
1 cup flour
2 cups breadcrumbs
olive oil
butter
1 bunch or a combination of; watercress, chicory, frisee, dandelion, arugula
1 small tin anchovies
1 Tablespoon capers
1 teaspoon dijon mustard
1 shallot, thinly sliced
¼ cup red wine vinegar
½ cup extra virgin olive oil

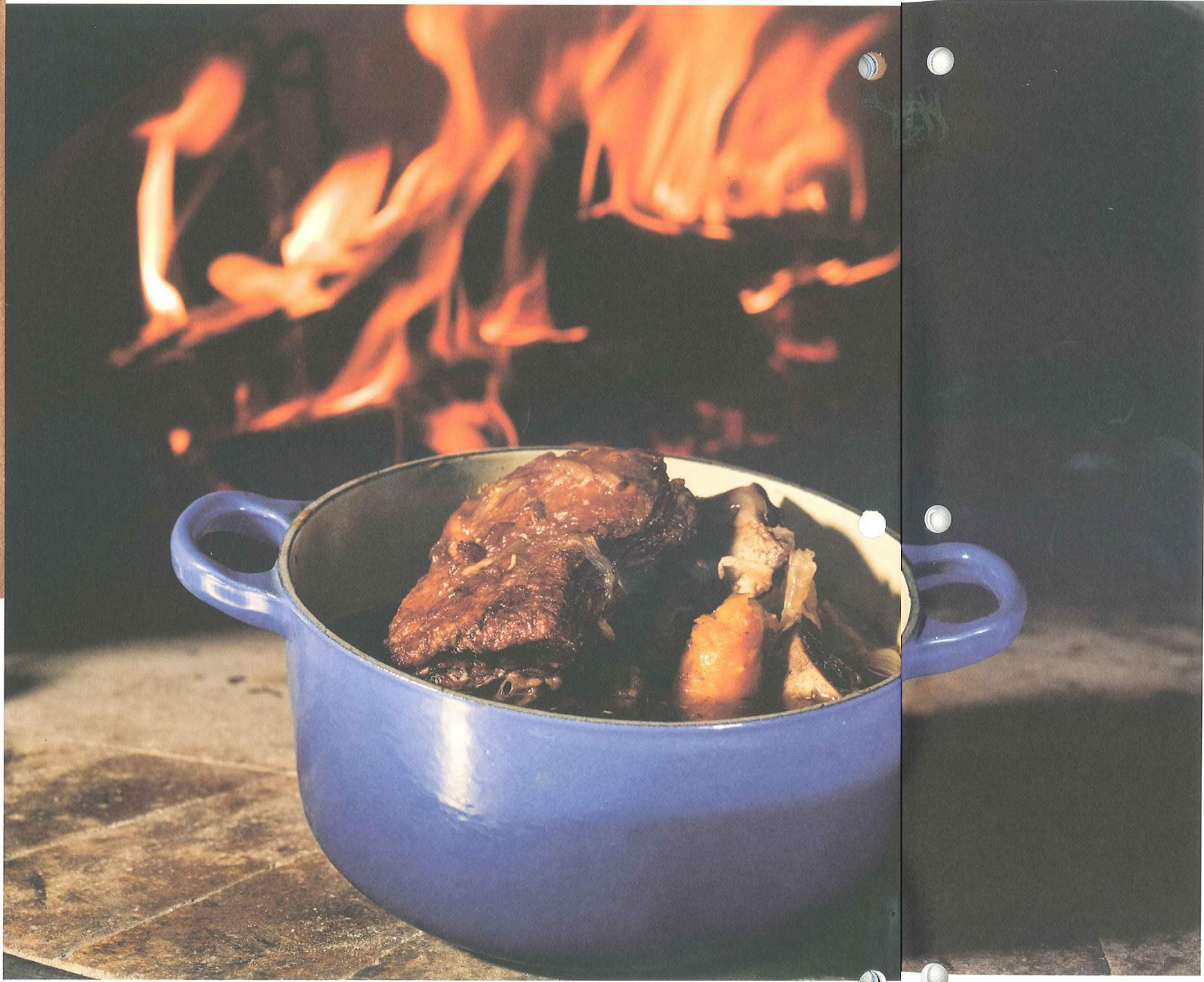
Slice the chicken breasts into two equal pieces crosswise. If using pork slice the loin into 4-6 ½" slices. Pound the chicken or pork with an empty bottle between 2 pieces of wax paper or plastic wrap until they are ¼" thick. Lay meat out on a plate or tray and season well with salt and pepper. Whisk 2 eggs and place in a wide bowl. Place flour and breadcrumbs each into a wide bowl or plate. Dredge the meat in the flour, shaking off any excess and then dip into the egg and then into the breadcrumbs. Make sure cutlets are generously covered in breadcrumbs. Continue until all of the cutlets are prepared.

Prepare your salad greens and make a vinaigrette. Place the dijon, shallot and vinegar in a jar with a pinch of salt. Shake vigorously to dissolve the dijon. Add the olive oil and shake again. Season with salt and pepper.

Heat a large saute pan with a generous amount of olive oil. When oil is hot but not smoking add a couple of tablespoons of butter to the pan and then add the cutlets, shaking them as you go so that they don't stick. Cook cutlets on medium heat, allowing them to brown but not burn or get greasy. When they are brown flip them and brown on the other side. Remove from the pan and season again with salt and pepper.

Heat a non-stick or cast iron pan with olive oil and fry one egg per person. Toss the greens with vinaigrette, the anchovy and capers.

Place cutlets on a plate with a generous serving of salad. Place a fried egg on top of the salad and serve with a glass of Alsatian Reisling, or any other fantastic French white.



BRAISED BEEF IN LAST NIGHT'S RED WINE

BY ANDREW TARLOW

1 MEAL IN 2 DAYS

When I am planning on making brisket I always make it the night before. This is a dish that works best when served the next day and the only way I can figure out how to accomplish that is to make it after dinner. This way I am not hungry. I feel like after tending to something for a couple of hours my immediate want is to eat it but in this recipe a big part is to let the meat rest in the braising liquid.

The night I make the brisket I usually make a simple pasta following Caroline's instructions you will find on the next page. Depending on the evening I will have anywhere between a 1/3 to 2/3 of a bottle of wine left over since I am the only one who drinks in my house. This is perfect because I will be using the wine for cooking so I choose something that is appropriate for both. Most likely a Beaujolais village or a Dolcetto. I drink them very often so I am ok not saving them to see how they taste the next day.

Before you start to make pasta take the beef out and season it. It should be fully encrusted with salt and pepper and paprika. You also want the beef to come to room temperature.

NEEDS

brisket with good fat
paprika
salt
pepper
onions
can of tomatoes
carrots
stock or water
garlic

NOTES

should be cooked in large creuset
sear the meat in the pan, you want it to be well browned on all sides
remove and add onions and scrape all the bits on bottom of pan
then add garlic and a pinch of salt to help them sweat
try to build some more bits on bottom of pan
add wine and scrape bottom of the pan, you are building layers of flavor
at this point I usually cook some of the wine off not sure if it's necessary
I add stock and tomatoes
add the beef and carrots
bring to a boil, then let simmer with top on
then in low oven for a couple of hours.
when it's all done when meat will be very tender.
take out of oven and let it rest in juices until cool
everything goes in the fridge, meat should be stored in braising juices
if it gets late you can always stop cooking anytime and finish the next day.
I think the most important part is letting it rest in its braising juices

reheat next day - you can add new carrots - serve over pasta

makes great sandwiches on the third day

PIZZA

I sometimes think the less formal a meal the better wine tastes with it. A simple compliment rather than a big dinner where the wine has to accompany too many flavors. I think this is why one pot meals have their perfect counterpart in wine. Bolognese, pot au feu, bouillabaisse. The list goes on but the harmonious notes of the dish and the wine couple with the geography of the place that gave rise to them make it very easy to understand why they are meant to be together.

Pizza is another of those uncomplicated foods that wine so perfectly situates itself next to. Pizza is one of the things that makes me happiest in general. It is impossible to be in a bad mood around pizza.

While there are many ways to make pizza at home and the general sentiment seems to be that people like a thin, crispy crust. My favorite home pizza is (surprise, surprise) my mother's, which is a fat, foccaccia-like dough with just the right amount of sauce, cheese and garlic.

3 cups flour
1 ¼ cups warm water
2 teaspoons yeast
1 Tablespoon sugar
1 Tablespoon salt
1 Tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

1 can quality plum tomatoes, drained of liquid and pureed
½ -1# fresh mozzarella
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
grated parmesan or pecorino
sea salt
12 leaves basil

Place the warm water in a bowl and sprinkle the yeast over it. Allow yeast to activate for about 10 minutes. In a separate bowl or in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the dough hook, mix together the flour, sugar and salt. Pour in the yeast and the olive oil and begin mixing. Knead dough either by hand or machine for 10 minutes. Swirl some olive oil in the bottom of a large bowl. Place the dough on top of the oil and then flip it over so that both sides are covered with oil. Wrap bowl with plastic wrap and let dough rise in a warm place until at least doubled in size. Once dough has risen, place it on an oiled 12" round or rectangular roasting or pizza pan that ideally has a little lip on it. Begin pushing the dough out from the middle until it reaches the edges of the pan. If it begins to stiffen, let it rest covered a little and then work it again. Once the dough is fully in place allow it to rest, covered for 10 minutes.

Drizzle the dough with olive oil and then a modest amount of tomato and mozzarella. Don't overload the dough. Scatter

garlic cloves and sprinkle with parmesan or pecorino and sea salt.

Bake in a 400° oven until crust is golden and set on the bottom. When the pizza comes out of the oven add freshly torn basil.

HOMEMADE TAGLIATELLE BOLOGNESE

I have made fresh pasta using a wine bottle as a rolling pin. In fact when I first made this recipe for Bolognese, that's exactly what I did. I have since bought a rolling pin but not a pasta machine. I recommend a pasta machine but in its absence use a wine bottle. It's better than not making fresh pasta for this dish.

I know that classic Bolognese does not use ground pork but I kind of can't resist tossing a little in the batch for flavor.

For the sauce:

½ pound ground beef
½ pound ground pork
1 large Spanish onion, small dice
4 cloves garlic, sliced
2 medium carrots, small dice
2 ribs celery, small dice
3 bay leaves
nutmeg
1 Tablespoon picked thyme or rosemary
1 cup whole milk
1 cup white wine
1 28oz can tomatoes, chopped
olive oil
Parmesan

Heat a large, ideally enamel coated cast iron pot with ¼ cup olive oil. Season and brown the meat in the pot and then strain, reserving the fat, and set aside. Add ¼ cup of the rendered fat back to the pot and when hot add the onion and garlic along with a good pinch of salt, cooking until the onion becomes translucent. Add the carrot, celery, another pinch of salt and bay leaf and saute until the vegetables start to soften and even turn a little golden. Add the meat back to the pot along with the herb. Allow the meat to warm through again and then add the milk and a good grating of nutmeg. Turn the heat down to a simmer and allow everything to reduce. Once the milk is almost completely evaporated add the wine and let simmer until completely reduced. Add the tomatoes and their juice and cook on the lowest simmer, stirring occasionally for 2 hours or longer. If sauce appears dry add a little water to it.

Meanwhile make the pasta dough.



PASTA DOUGH

1 cup all purpose flour
1 egg
1 egg yolk, maybe
salt

For every restaurant that makes their own fresh pasta there is another version of pasta dough to be learned. A concern about what the best recipe might be should not supercede or impair the fact that you should at least try to make pasta at home once or twice. Start to read too much into it or about it and you'll never make it. The most basic recipe for homemade pasta is one egg to one cup of flour. Add some salt and bring it all together. There are plenty of recipes however that call for two eggs to one cup of flour, semolina, olive oil, etc. This is really the most basic recipe for what most people have at home, feel free to upgrade from here. Two eggs will make the dough richer. If you only use one egg you may need to add some water to the dough if it's too dry. Start with one egg. Don't get too hung up on it. If your dough is too dry add another. Mix the flour and salt, make a well in the center and break the egg into it. With a fork start to scramble the egg, first just into itself and then slowly start to incorporate the flour into the center. This is the part that will make you feel so great and excited you'll wonder why you never did it before. Incorporate the flour slowly and if the dough seems to be getting too stiff before all of it's incorporated, don't add it all, you can always knead more in. If you add all of the flour and the dough seems sticky, add more flour as you knead. Gather the dough together and begin to knead, adding flour to the board as necessary. Continue on for about 10 minutes or until the dough no longer tears as it stretches over itself. Rub dough all over with olive oil and wrap in plastic. Flatten the dough a bit with the palm of your hand and let it rest for an hour.

Cut a 2" piece of dough off the ball and re-wrap the rest of the dough. Place some semolina flour (if you have it) on the board or table and if you are rolling by hand roll out the piece of dough as thinly as possible. If you are using a pasta machine, go through the required notches. It doesn't hurt to run the dough a few times through the first setting to get it set and square.

Once you have rolled out a sheet of pasta fold it over itself 3 or 4 times and cut dough into ½" to 1" pieces. Once the dough is cut unravel it and loosen the pasta from itself. Either drape the cut pasta over a dowel until you are ready to cook it or store it flat on a sheet tray lined with parchment paper and sprinkled with semolina flour.

TORTELLINI IN BROTH

I don't know why but we were all sitting around the table at my cousin Michael's house, which used to be my Aunt Jeannie's house. It seems like it would have been a funeral because we were eating the kind of thing you would for comfort and because it's quick. My mom used to make her version of tortellini en brodo but cheated because she bought the chicken broth and the tortellini so it was a really quick meal. For some reason she made it at Michael's house that night. Maybe Aunt Jeannie had just died or maybe it was after that but anyway we were sitting around the table eating this simple little meal and Michael and Janice both poured the wine from the table into their soup before they ate it. Neither is a drinker in particular so this gesture was surprising but so obviously familiar to them that it seemed remarkably matter of fact. We all followed their good sense and topped off our soup with a little wine and felt an even deeper connection to that moment of quiet understanding that happens when eating with family.

This tortellini recipe is from Dave Gould. I think one day he walked into work and improvised the recipe for classic meat tortellini, exactly the kind that you would (hope to) buy frozen and throw into your chicken broth. As with many of the things he turned out on a regular basis, I was stunned and delighted.

For the broth:

- 1 chicken carcass
- 1 carrot, cut in half lengthwise
- 1 small onion, cut in half
- 4 bay leaves
- 6 sprigs thyme
- 1 teaspoon whole black peppercorn

Place the chicken bones, carrot and onion in a pot and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil and then skim the stock well.

Reduce heat to a simmer and add the bay, thyme and black pepper. Simmer for an hour and a half. Turn off the heat and allow chicken to cool in the stock. Strain the stock of the bones and large vegetables first and then strain a second time through a fine strainer or cheesecloth to get a very clear stock. Season with salt.

For the filling:

- 1 cup roasted pork, ideally leftover scraps from a roast or a piece of loin or shoulder cooked through with salt and pepper
- 1 cup mortadella, diced
- ½ cup grated parmesan
- 1 or 2 eggs
- Nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon chopped thyme
- salt and pepper

Place pork and mortadella in the bowl of a food processor and puree. Add the parmesan, one egg, a good grating of nutmeg, thyme and season well with salt and pepper. Puree until you achieve a thick paste, the consistency of play-dough. Add the second egg if necessary to achieve this.

For the dough see recipe on page 29. Roll dough out into sheets, one at a time. Cut the sheets with a pasta cutter or a knife into 2" squares. Place a small amount of filling in the center of the square, less than you might think is enough, a half teaspoon. Wet the edges of the dough with a finger dipped into water and fold the dough over the filling into a triangle. Fold the two pointed ends around and pinch together with a dab of water. Keep tortellini in a single layer until ready to cook.

To serve, cook the tortellini in a pot of boiling salted water. Drain well and then add to hot chicken broth. Add some parsley and shaved parmesan, fresh cracked pepper and when you sit to eat, a tumble of white wine.

