

FOOD & DRINK



WINE NOTES

By Dorothy J. Gaiter and John Brecher

A DELICIOUS! LIST

I enjoyed your article on the Delicious wines of 2007. Have you ever compiled a list of the wines you have rated the exclusive Delicious! over the years?

—Mark Tucker, Columbus, Ohio

When we began drinking wine together almost 35 years ago, we kept notes and rated wines on a scale from Yech to the rare Delicious! Our highest rating was reserved for wines that were not only tasty and well-made, but genuinely exciting, the kind of bottle we'd remember forever. Few wines made the grade, but we remember each one so vividly, from a 1963 Martinez Port to a 1964 Faiveley Latricières-Chambertin from Burgundy to a 1971 Schloss Groenesteyn Rudesheimer Berg Rotland Spätlese from Germany to a 1978 Robert Mondavi Sauvignon Blanc "Botrytis" dessert wine. But Mr. Tucker's question made us wonder ourselves: In the 10 years we have been writing this column, how many wines have rated Delicious! in our comparative tastings? So we did some research and found out. There have been 15. (This doesn't include wines from our own cellar.) Here they are, in the order in which they appeared in the column, with some general notes about the types of wines they represent.

Wynns Michael Coonawarra Shiraz 1993 (Australia). Back when we first tasted Shiraz from Australia, it was still pretty rare and the best examples were explosive and powerful. We called this wine "a triumph."

Château Lafite Rothschild 1996 and 1998 (France). Even after all of these years—all these centuries, really—Lafite continues to impress. As we said of the 1998: "A profound wine, and a profound experience."

Chalone Vineyard Chenin Blanc 1998 (U.S.). One thing that can make a wine special is surprise. Chenin Blanc is a noble grape, but so thoroughly discredited by cheap, watery, jug wine called Chenin Blanc that few wineries risk making it anymore. You can imagine our surprise when we tasted this one and wrote: "Stunning. Big, rich and almost chewy, yet fine, with great finesse. Pineapples, peaches, pears, vanilla and some smoke. Marvelously clean."

Clos Floridene Graves 1996 (France). We love white Bordeaux. It's one of the classiest wines around and it tends to be a good deal because it's generally an undiscovered gem. This was particularly notable, with tastes of citrus, honey and minerals.

Fife Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon "Reserve" (Napa Valley, Spring Mountain District) 1995 (U.S.). Too much American Cabernet, even expensive Cabernet, has become a parody of itself, blowsy and hard to drink. This is an example of what Cabernet can be. We'd like to taste it again in a few years.

Domaine Vocoret & Fils Chablis Grand Cru "Blanchot" 1998 (France). Chablis—the real thing, from

France—is a classic for a reason, with pinpoint tastes that are perfect with seafood. Anyone who has tired of Chardonnay needs to drink a Chablis sometime soon to remember what Chardonnay can be.

Vigil Vineyard "Valiente" Meritage (Napa Valley) 1997 (U.S.). Americans have become too varietal-centric, overly concerned with a wine being predominantly made of one grape or another. In fact, many of the world's great wines are blends, and that has led to the Meritage movement in the U.S., which promotes Bordeaux-style blends. This was one great example.

Saint Cosme "Montsalier" (Louis et Cherry Barruol) Côte-Rôtie 1997 (France). Some of the world's great bargains come from the Rhône Valley of France, and so do

some of the world's most distinctive wines. We can still smell and taste this Côte-Rôtie, of which we wrote: "Rich and roasted, with a heady scent of lilacs and perfect balance."

Rombauer Vineyards Chardonnay (Carneros) 2000 (U.S.). This is a great example of how special American Chardonnay can taste and it was no fluke: Rombauer was our best of tasting in two successive blind tastings of mid-range Chardonnay.

Château Latour 2000 (France). When Latour is right, and it usually is, it can just about blow your head off, and this was an amazing experience. We'd love to try this again when our grandchildren turn 21 (we don't yet have grandchildren).

La Spinetta "Vigneto Gallina" Barbera d'Alba 2001 (Italy). A wine doesn't have to be showy to be Delicious! Barbera from the Piedmont region of Italy is one of the wine world's great treats and this one was special, like "roasted, ripe red berries and so rich it's like drinking dark velvet."

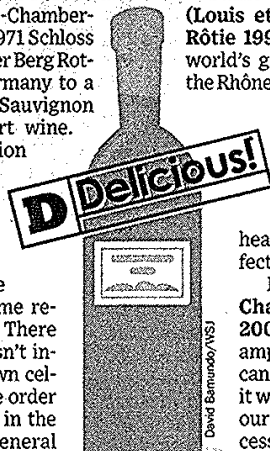
Château Mouton Rothschild 2002 (France). Had you asked us before we started this column, we would have told you that Mouton was our least-favorite first growth, but it has done quite well in our tastings over the past 10 years, especially recently. We also were very impressed with the 2004.

Screaming Eagle Cabernet Sauvignon (Oakville, Napa Valley) 2002 (U.S.). In a tasting of California's cult wines, this stood out. As we wrote: "Drink this in tiny sips over many hours and each taste is like a world in itself."

Penfolds Grange 2001 (Australia). In a tasting of 10 vintages of Australia's most famous wine, several were terrific and the 2001 was totally over the top.

There are Delicious! wines from all over the world in every good wine store. We hope you will open one tonight. If you don't, well, darn, you'll just have to keep trying new wines until you find one that rates a Delicious! from you.

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