



WINE NOTES

By Dorothy J. Gaiter and John Brecher

IN THE YEARS we have been writing our Tastings column, which appears on Fridays, we have received thousands of questions about wine from readers. In this column, we answer some questions that touch on common themes. We have edited the questions for space. If you have a question, drop us a note at wine@wsj.com. Be sure to include your full name, city and state.

FINDING WORK IN THE WINE BUSINESS

I recently graduated from Pacific University outside of Portland [Ore.]. At commencement the speaker talked about following our passions, even if it means working/interning free to get there. So: In Oregon, where would a recent college graduate find a respected winery to perhaps work/intern for?

—Matt Leady,
Forest Grove, Ore.

We are often asked about jobs in the wine industry. Because we're in the journalism business and not the wine business, we're not the best source of information on this. We'd suggest schmoozing with a local wine merchant, winemaker and wine distributor. In addition, thanks to the Internet, looking for jobs—in the wine industry and elsewhere—has gotten easier. Here's one place to start: Go to wineinstitute.org and search on "jobs," which will give you a nationwide roundup of various wine-job Web sites. You could also check out the job boards for the local colleges and universities with a viticulture program, such as www.chemeketa.edu/aboutus/locations/eola/ijobs.html. Beware: Many who work in the industry say it's much sexier from the outside looking in. It's a tough business and the beauty of what's in the bottle obscures the hard, unpleasant work that goes into it. We applaud people who follow their passion—it's why we became journalists—and we'd give you the same advice we'd give someone looking for any job: Do your research. Know what a winery produces, and what it's proudest of, before you contact it. And read books. The new best-seller "The House of Mondavi: The Rise and Fall of an American Wine Dynasty," by Wall Street Journal writer Julia Flynn Siler, would be one good place to start.

A SURPRISE FROM AN AGED RIESLING

I was rooting around my wine cellar and found a bottle I had long forgotten about. It was a 2001 Fetzer Vineyards Echo Ridge Johannisberg Riesling. I don't imagine that it cost very much. I thought it might be just so-so after six years, but imagine my surprise when I opened it. It had matured to a deep yellow, full-bodied, truly wonderful wine that reminded me of some of the expensive, good German Spätlese Rieslings I have tasted over the years. Are Rieslings supposed to mature so well?

—Armando Favazza,
Columbia, Mo.

There is something magical about a wine that is well-aged by accident and is thus a complete surprise. Many wine-lovers we

know, including us, have had that experience. Our sense is that most people don't age whites and this is a shame because some—and good Riesling is an example—gain depth and complexity as they age. More broadly, we'd urge anyone who enjoys wine to lose some wines in the back of the closet—you just might be surprised. Especially with inexpensive wines like that Fetzer, there is little downside and a lot of upside potential. Many years ago we laid down some inexpensive California reds from Louis Martini. A long time later, they were a treat, tasting so much more expensive than what we paid for them.

DO BY-THE-GLASS DRINKERS MISS OUT?

When we're out to dinner, my wife and I tend to order wines by the glass rather than by the bottle, except on special occasions, where we'll pick a special bottle. I like to experiment and my wife prefers the familiar. We tend to frequent restaurants that put a lot of attention into their wine, so there are typically good (and freshly opened) options for each of us. There is also far less risk of springing for an entire bottle that turns out to be disappointing. I'm wondering, though, if you think we're missing something by not ordering bottles.

—Will Miner, Denver

We're with you. When we are at a restaurant that has a good by-the-glass list and where we're sure the wines are just-opened or carefully preserved after opening, we enjoy ordering by the glass (with the added caveat that the by-the-glass price isn't outrageous). We can experiment with more wines that way—sometimes we each order a different Chardonnay, so we can taste them against each other—and we can also pair each course more carefully. This is one way we've always tried new wines, especially some that are only available at restaurants. We'd also urge you to check out the half-bottle list. More fine wine is being packaged in half bottles and more fine restaurants offer them. The only downside: Many very good or very unusual wines are not offered by the glass, so they have to be ordered by the bottle. At a restaurant in Washington, D.C., recently, for instance, we ordered a bottle of Viognier from Uruguay. We would have preferred to order a glass because we knew it was chancy, but we understand why the restaurant didn't offer it by the glass because, really, we can't imagine there is overwhelming demand for a glass of Uruguayan Viognier. (It was an interesting experience, but for now, we'll stick with Uruguay's Tannat.)

—Melanie Grayce West
contributed to this column.