

Orangewood Wines

Small Wineries, Great Wines

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Introduction

We missed Hallowe'en, and we are racing through November. Thanksgiving is nearly upon us. We have been so busy that we have barely had time to sit back to savour our lives. What better way than with a glass of wine!

This month, Leslie has a thought about wine scores, and the Rambler...

Wine Ratings

Portfolio Notes - by Leslie Zellmer

For years I have insisted that I don't care about wine scores. I realize now that I have been kidding myself. A few months ago, while counting physical inventory with warehouse manager, Mike, he pulled out a bottle of the new vintage of Alain Brumont Château Bouscassé. I hadn't seen the bottle, since we were still selling the previous vintage. Mike, not a huge wine nerd, said, "did you know this got 94 points? It must be really good!" Did Mike suddenly have a subscription to Wine Enthusiast that I didn't know about? He eventually revealed the bottle showing a sticker with the score and the rating organization (Wine Enthusiast). I already know and love this wine (a blend of Tannat, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon from Madiran, France), but found myself becoming more excited with this new information and the possibilities of leveraging this score in the marketplace.

What are the merits of scores and why should we pay attention to them? Along with a description of a wine, a score helps take some of the risk out of buying an unfamiliar bottle. Most use a 100-point scale, like the grading scale A=90-100 and so on. Alternatively, you can find peer reviewed aggregate scores on consumer apps like Cellar Tracker and Vivino. These peer ratings can vary greatly from the professional ratings, mostly because the professional ratings are methodical and standardized. Professional ratings are more focused on the region - does the wine taste typical of wines from that area? Peer reviews are based more on the deliciousness of the wine.

There was a time when winemakers were crafting wines to appeal to a certain critic's palate. I realize now that it is this homogenization of wine that I am against, not wine ratings.

If you want to rely on using scores to drive your wine buying decisions, you should calibrate the reviewer or the reviewing organization. Even better, shop at your local wine store and get to know the people who work there. The more you engage them about wine, the more they'll learn your likes and dislikes. Also, remember that not all wines are reviewed. In fact, more wines are not rated than those that are. If you only drink wines with scores, you will be missing out on some amazing adventures.

The Rambler

As we struggled to get our thoughts into shape for this newsletter, I got a newsletter from my Digestive Health folk. One of the headlines was "Why is End of Year a Good Time for a Colonoscopy?" One can imagine someone saying, "Hey! We are behind on colonoscopies, someone please put a section in our newsletter. We have to meet our quota." It made writing a wine newsletter seem more wholesome.

We are now past the autumnal equinox. It is a fine time of year. The alarm goes off at 5:00 which gives us time for a cup of coffee, a check to see if any orders came in overnight and a review of any breaking news, before heading out to deal with the horses and take Lucy, our black lab, for a wander. We head down the road and along the wash that runs by and through two sides of our property. Lucy is fascinated by any new smells and looks for the perfect places to do her morning rituals. By the time our wander is complete, Laurie has the horses (Jazzy and Ruby) munching their vitamins, and I begin my calisthenics that involve a muck rake and result in a "clean" corral. Meanwhile, Laurie has prepared hay bags for the day and we can take Lucy for our morning hike. We are again seeing, Noir, our local Phainopepla that we [mentioned](#) in January. In spite of not necessarily being a migratory bird, he decided to disappear for the summer. He is back now along with wife, kids, brother and sister-in-law and their kids. Good to see you back, Noir.

The rambler rambles on...

Cheers,

Richard and Laurie
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