

Here, Now

I can't help myself; I jump into the February sun and within a few moments the aches of an age fade and all that remains is the familiar thump thump thump of my vigorous heart.

I recall other cold February mornings not so long ago, crossing the University Commons en route to Marshall Hall, a Yukon Express sweeping across the Great Lakes, and me gritting my teeth trying to will away a cold and clawing Syracuse winter. It never worked; the air stung my nostrils and no amount of powdered hot chocolate or Wegman's day-old pastry ever chased it off -- and no, there wouldn't ever be enough spare change in the world to pay for the ocean of lumpy cocoa that could inure me to Syracuse's bone splitting chill. Thankfully Marshall Hall was dotted with caterwauling banshee radiators and it was as warm a spot as any to be found on the campus where I'd set my brain to wandering. Warmth was where you found it. We used to say Syracuse had two seasons: fucking hot and fucking cold (and neither one ever made you want to stay). I was 17, working a Union Job, possessed of a blossoming foul mouth and wondering "what next?".

To this day I hear Jerry Vale (born Gennaro Luigi Vitaliano) and smirk, thinking back on Anthony Vecchio's mom idly warbling along with "Non Dimenticar" while smooshing her Kool Menthol 100 into a pile of coffee grounds in a rust stained kitchen sink. I remember my UFCW local #1 Shop Steward Mrs. Ciancaglini, the Deli Manager at the P & C, sending me west with a Cake and a Card and the idea that affordable school with my family was a good idea (like any good shop steward, she also knew it was also the best way to run a clean shop and get me to quit pitching quarters on break and organizing Baseball/Football pools). I was, I am, I will always be a blue-collar brat of labor; a union twerp, born to curious people, a lucky inheritor of a persistent agitation for more.

Dante had his Virgil, but I've always relied on the kindness of Deli People for moral guidance (twenty years later I hear another sage and wise Deli man tell me "It does people good to step over a bum once in a while" and that "you can make a lot of friends with a sandwich". Cured meat koans have burnished my character). I knew those people, I know them still and I still root for labor, for people who aren't supposed to win, but sometimes even in small measure they do. Labor brought me here; Labor is the simple notion that you work hard, you study, you get ahead; Labor builds a vision. Without it, without them, I wouldn't have known enough to know that I wanted more - and when the time came, I knew I would have to go. I wanted to go to school, more than anything, and school was not an option in Syracuse any longer. There were no silver spoons to be had, the familiar had become the impossible, and I missed my family.

It was what it was; as reasonable as any a place to grow up, a better place still to leave. Not that I didn't have a fond memory or two of my time at Assumption Catholic or Kieffer's Cigar and Magazine, (where Mr Kieffer used to chase me and the other Catholic School boys away from the girlie mags) fond memories, yes, and I still long for pizza frites and Mrs Visconti's shells with meatsauce - Oh that Columbus Bakery bread! - Always following the mouth I was, even then, but when it was time to go, go I did. Cake and card in hand I headed west, learning that distance, not even a couple thousand miles of it, ever makes "what next?" any easier.

But here, now, with a few pedal strokes, winter disappears and Syracuse seems long ago and far away. Still, its rust-belt chill stains the corners of my memory and makes these first few breaths of February warmth seem all the more vivid and vital. True, I still miss late night drives to the Onondaga lakeshore with my brothers in the old Chevy Impala for Coneys at Heid's - a Syracuse institution since 1917! But later that afternoon when the Grannies bring me a large #10, the broth fogs my lenses and as always when the mouth leads me to happy ends, I am dizzied and lost in the moment and thump thump thump goes my vigorous heart. I live at the mercy of memory through the grace of my mouth; yes it's my glorious mouth that keeps me ever in a vivid present. Oh desire begins in the mouth it does it does!

Other organs and orifices might be responsible for this seasonal froth, but for me it's always the mouth that betrays me first and makes me weak. Yes, the mouth, it always leads; it always leads, I inevitably follow. First beholden, then willful, then hapless, when the mouth steps in I have no choice in the matter. I never win. As luck would have it the current warming weather only exacerbates the current agitation and with that first cracking of winter frost comes the desire for motion, a need to move, agitate, be elsewhere, all forever pulling me forward. It breaks the chilling crush on my January mood, freeing me of a Groundhoggish month of sullen sour pudding bureaucrats whose only mission seems to be the ensuring of misery in triplicate.

This Firebird strikes with a crash of brass, first long ago, as a seasonal twitch of the leg under my desk at Assumption Catholic Academy, a signal to brave the capricious elements by wrapping myself in wooly armor for the season's first ride. The minute the ice clears from the roads and recedes to a gutter crust, I want out out out and once out, I sniff the air and sure enough

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Your feedback is welcome and wanted - any thoughts on how I might improve this newsletter are welcome. I want to hear it all — the good, the bad and the ugly. Questions, concerns, thoughts, experiences, both fair and foul, francis.fecteau@gmail.com. Please visit www.libation-online.com

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Here, Now

(continued from p.1)

- you could say it was a twitch of a leg - but I chase a woman the better part of a city block - maybe follow is a more gentle word - just to ask what beguiling scent it is that has me risk pepper spray and arrest. The day repeats itself year upon year ad infinitum in the February sun. The Prosecco at lunch (yes I drink at work) the **Adami Dei Casel** binds and gags any semblance of restraint I might have today, holding it under water until the bubbles stop; it is a fizzy self-indulgent afternoon. Impulse wins.

Of course I follow my obsessive compulsive bits and pieces, my ever gluttonous viscera, mouth and crotch, give in to the occasional genital flush and tingle, think with organs not designed for the process, I am a man after all, and who among us is innocent in responding to those naughty tugs and twitches? I don't always succeed, I fail often (that's how its evolved for the chasing half) and I commit offenses at the behest of my mouth that, in a moral universe, should confine me to the lower circles of Inferno - were I a Skinner rat I would have been dead by now - but none of it ever comes to anything without that first constriction of blood vessels, that drying of the mouth, that flutter as when the elevator rises or falls too fast. I float, even if only for a minute, or a second or two, yes, I float and oh how I forever push and shove and elbow my way back to that E ticket line wanting it again and again. It's been that way since I first rifled through my Father's stash of Finnochiana, Herring and cheap Chablis, it's been that way since my first fumblefingered back seat adventure, it's been that way since my first sip of Corton Charlemagne, it's been that way since Wetzel Road Elementary School, me kissing the girls and making them cry.

The rutting madness comes early and often regardless of my whereabouts and like all one's best impulses, is concerned only with a Gene Kelly-in-a-pirate-film-Technicolor-Now of I want I want I want. My skills may not have improved much but my persistence remains unbowed and my urges remain ever ravenous. I accept that at this late point in the game, there are certain aspects in the living of one's life that require an embrace rather than constant denial or attempts at change - it's not that I don't want to learn new tricks you see, its just that I have come to believe that restraint is best left for more pious souls.

The best of the best wine stores;

Park City /1550 Snowcreek Drive / 435-615-8538
Metro Salt Lake /255 South 300 East / 801-533-6444
Cottonwood /1863 East 7000 South / 801-942-2580
The Big Shiny New One /280 West Harris Avenue
(about 1600 South, 300 West) / 801-412-9972

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and delicious in the world of wine.

Vote Now Vote Often

Simple fact of the matter is Salt Lake City has become a great food town, loaded with GREAT talent. Where the F did that come from? Its due in no small part to two new-ish (and brilliant) talents manning the stoves at **PAGO 878 South 900 East / 801-532-0777** and **FORAGE 370 East 900 South / 801-708-7834**. They've been nominated for Food & Wine Magazine's "People's Best New Chef". I don't know where they came from, but we can now call them Utah's own, Mike Ritchie of Pago and the Forage Team of Bowman Brown and Viet Phams. Help put SLC's talent on the map! Vote Early Vote Often. **Voting closes March 1st.**

<http://eatocracy.cnn.com/2011/02/15/food-wines-the-peoples-best-new-chef-southwest/>

9V Spumante Thrill



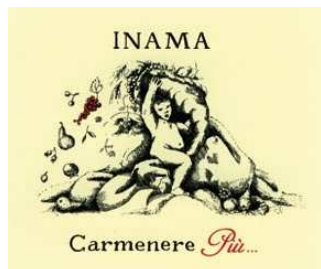
The oral fixation began a long time ago with a 9 V battery to the tongue and with that silly exercise of kiddy caprice, the transmission of sensation through the oral cavity became a regular thrill. That said I give you Prosecco, adulthood's 9 V thrill and a lovely way to greet Spring. Italy has world class method champenoise wines, but Prosecco is the bubbly heart of Italy's sparkling wine offerings. Now that Prosecco is an official named appellation, the name of its primary grape is now "Glera" (please make a note of it). Adami is and always has been the reference point for quality Prosecco, establishing that benchmark with their famed single vineyard offering Vigneto Giardino. Sparkling wine is a tough gig; you have to make wine twice. Once the initial "vin Claire" is made, a dosage of sugar, yeast and wine creates a second fermentation which creates the bubbles that underscore its acidity. The French do it bottle by bottle, the Methode Champenoise; the Italians do it in much bigger batches using the Charmat Method.

The Extra Dry **Adami Dei Casel (917575 / \$18.99)** shows a little extra baby fat fruit in its aromas and flavors with dazzling ranges of honeysuckle and peach with a terrific minerally lift. The bone-dry **Adami Bosco di Gica (918022 / \$18.99)** has an equally alluring bouquet of fresh white peach skin, but follows with a lengthy and bright minerally finish. Begin with Gica, finish with the Casel. They are perfect bookends to any event.

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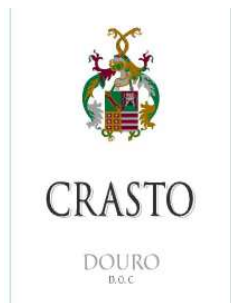
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More Indeed I'm as Surprised as Anyone

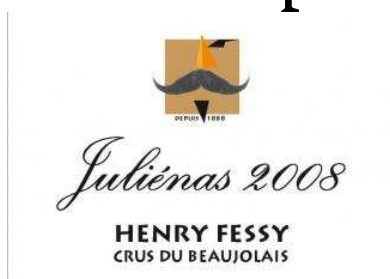


Piu means “more” in Italian and more indeed is in the bottle with **Inama's magnificent red blend Carmenere Piu (915875 / \$19.99)**. Don't know how this esoteric variety made it from Bordeaux, but there it was in the rolling hills of the Colli Berici. This is a supple soft blend of Carmenere, Merlot and Raboso Veronese that shows aromas and flavors of black fruits, plums, soy and cocoa. Thanks to a complete destemming of the fruit, the wine is terrifically supple and unctuously textured with a long fine grained finish. (This is marvelous with Creminelli soppressata salami btw). Magnificent stuff. Think Merlot. Only interesting. And delicious.

Douro Dazzle



It's a magic formula; hot hillside, low yield and taste the sunny concentration. Touriga Nacional and Tinta Roriz for the backbone of this little known plump juicy bit of goodness. It's a gracious bottle and a friendly companion at the dinner table with minimal oak, bright acidity and a lengthy purple finish. These guys still go all “I love Lucy” on the grapes. **Quinta do Crasto Douro Red (914974 / \$14.99)**



So it is with hard times, dollars don't stretch as far as we'd like, love as in all times, never comes easy (nor is it always cheap) and there are many things I've never loved (and I've even bitterly resented their joyless effects on my life). Beaujolais has been at the front of the line for decades. I never understood the tart kool-aid charm of Beaujolais Nouveau. Then I met these...thump thump thump. Love in the strangest of places; pass the crow please. **Henry Fessy Beaujolais Moulin a Vent (917998 / \$16.99) & Henry Fessy Beaujolais Julienas (917997 / \$16.99)**. Who knew Cru?

This is easy to understand Eurotrash, the name of the grape, Beaujolais is also the name of the place, Beaujolais. The grape itself is thought to be a mutant cousin of Pinot Noir and when treated with the same viticultural protocols, bears striking resemblances to good Burgundy. There are only 12 villages (from more than 100) that merit the best “Cru” designation. Repeat after me, its “Terroir”. Tasting these side by side reveals their distinct character; the **Moulin a Vent** is the more juicy of the two with an anise, blackberry flair, the **Julienas** is the more serious of the two, flashing notes of coffee, cocoa, earth and deep rich plummy fruit. Do not expect unctuous rich high alcohol octane stuff with jammy sweet characters. These are low alcohol, with racy acidity. They resisted oxygen on my counter for four days, tearing through any food I offered up. Notably, this may very well be the best most versatile cheese wine I've ever encountered. Well...hard times come again no more and love comes easy. Live large spend small. And don't forget the charcuterie. ALSO - THE EPIC 2009 VINTAGE IS NOW HERE



Spring in a Bottle



I yearn to smell something sweet in the air again and these two granted me some small measure of relief. Like I said 2009 WAS EPIC especially in southern Burgundy where Pouilly Fuisse lies. **Maison Louis Latour Pouilly Fuisse 2009 (962974 / \$21.99)** is brilliant stuff. Loaded with notes of talc, jasmine and sweet apple in both the nose and on the palate with a Premier Cru finish, long and intense. This is punching WAY above its weight class. The **Bodegas Naia “Naia” Verdejo 2009 (916262 / \$14.99)** '09 is also terrific for Spanish whites (make a note of it). This is stainless steel ferment (like the Pouilly) undergoes no Malo and gets extended lees contact in French Oak. Initial aromas are explosive; pineapple, flowers, baking spices, all of which follow on a lengthy and sweet layered finish. Spectacular value.



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'09 '09 Everywhere

Belle Glos

2009 is epic here too. California Pinot Noir in 2009 shows exceptional, depth, concentration, richness and balance. Within a very short period of time Belle Glos, a Wagner Family portfolio / Caymus Vineyards property, has established itself as an iconic Pinot Noir producer in the California firmament. You've heard me rhapsodize about this benchmark producer, but on occasion when a new vintage hits the market, I feel the need to trumpet its virtues.

The program is designed to capture the essence of California's 3 great appellations for Pinot Noir; Sonoma Coast/"Taylor Lane Vineyard", Central Coast/"Los Alturas Vineyard" and Santa Barbara/"Clark & Telephone Vineyard". It's a remarkable exercise. I have lined the three up on several occasions and it makes a fascinating travelogue. The **Sonoma Coast/Taylor Lane** shows the most restraint balance and structure—the most "French" if you will, the **Central Coast/Los Alturas** shows more bottom notes and more ripeness. It still shows a lively acid structure. The **Santa Barbara/Clark & Telephone** is the most brassy of the bunch, the most rounded and ripe. The back labels of these are a wine geeks dream, showing information on soil, oak treatment protocols, viticultural protocols and climate. It is an intimate snapshot of style.

The 2009's are the most finely turned in several years. There is no end of stuffing for immediate gratification (my inner child / immediate gratification brat celebrates) but it also has the structure and stuffing to make old bones—these are perhaps the most well structured they've ever been. These will age well (yes Doctor, I am talking to you). The price will increase as of 4/1/2011. Take advantage of this epic vintage now before the price goes up. If 34.99 is a little out of your comfort zone, take advantage of the entry level wine Meomi (pronounced May-oh-me...although the intensity might merit Me-oh-my). The Meomi blends all three appellations together and drinks well above its meager price tag.

Belle Glos "Meomi" Pinot Noir 2009

(914331 / \$19.99)

Belle Glos "Clark & Telephone" Pinot Noir 2009

(914018 / \$34.99)

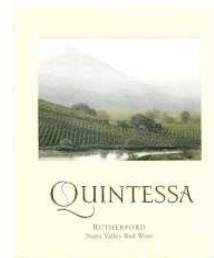
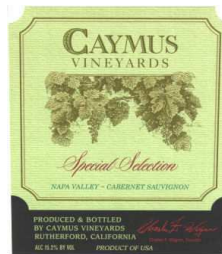
Belle Glos "Los Alturas" Pinot Noir 2009

(914876 / \$34.99)

Belle Glos "Taylor Lane" Pinot Noir 2009

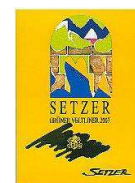
(914019 / \$34.99)

Go Large or Go Home



I have done shameful and shameful things for tastes of **Caymus Special Selection Cabernet Sauvignon 2008 (910529 / \$109.97)**. This is everything I've always loved about Napa Valley Cabernet and about Special Selection specifically. This is opulent, rich, loaded with aromas and flavors of blackberry jam, anise, chocolate, baking spices that are framed by an uncommon brightness and lift. It goes on and on for 45+ seconds on the palate, it is the essence of immediate gratification. There are an abundance of expensive wines that require patience and virtue, few if ever deliver like this one with such power and immediacy. This is profound stuff.

A neighbor down the road is **Quintessa Rutherford Napa Valley Red Wine 2007 (915630 / \$129.99)**. This will reward patience, but it does deliver a wallop of cassis, black fruits and aromatic cedar. It is impeccably crafted and, on a greener note, Napa Valley's only super-premium Biodynamically produced wine. As always, good clean farming shows. Two good reasons to resist any urge toward impecunious behavior (...you can always trade off and buy cheaper detergent or Costco brand TP. It's all about the priorities).



Bright White

I always like to play stump the wine dork. I know many of them and these two wines have provided me with no end of glee. Austrian White Wine usually does that. The **Heidi Schrock Weissburgunder 2009 (917191 / \$24.99)** is actually Pinot Blanc, despite its misleading name. It is an opulent and ripe fleshy thing with aromas of sweet hazelnuts, tangerines and sweet herbs. It is a unique rendition of this mutant cousin of Pinot Noir, a vivid scintillating glass of wine, with an expressiveness found nowhere else in the world.

The **Setzer Gruner Veltliner 2008 (917190 / \$13.49)** is my vote for best value white on the planet. **This is a 1000 ml bottle** (that's 6 glasses v. 5 glasses in a 750) and a mere \$13.49. This is ripe, bright stuff, loaded with aromas and flavors of lime, fennel quinine and zippy citrus notes. No wood, no ML, this is brilliantly food friendly stuff. A little lees contact gives it grip and texture. This is a cheap glass of wine that engages and delivers.

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Eating, Drinking



308 West 300 South
(801) 531 ~ TONY

They are the best source for accessible friendly food and wine education out there and now they are only getting bigger and better. More cooking classes have been added, more product information classes, classes for restaurant trade only are also in the works. Matt is committed to educating Utah at every conceivable level and to that end has contracted the inimitable (and NYT published foodie) Vanessa Chang to assist in spreading the Caputo love of all things edible to the four corners of Utah and beyond. More education for consumers, more education for trade ~ a rising tide lifts all boats (and palates!).

There are also delicious new things to eat! Start your next tasting tour with Jean D'Alos Cheeses from Bordeaux. Alos is the premier affineur in the world and it shows with a dazzling range of perfectly textured cheeses. Creminelli is introducing an entire new line of pig products including a silky new Mortadella (if you can recognize a Jerry Vale song, you will know this delightful meat stuff), a stunning finocchiana and a Coppa. **The kickoff of 13 new meat products will be taking place at the March 7 Cured Meats class.** And Chocolatier Blue's new range of flavors will have you stuffing your cheeks with lively childhood reminiscences of PB & J ... or naughtier thoughts with spicy new additions like Pink Peppercorn, Rose and the aptly named "Sex on the Beach".

Learn Learn Learn

March 7th - Caputo's 3rd & 3rd
Come Taste 13 new Creminelli Products!
Call 801 531 TONY to reserve a spot
Class: \$25 Wine: \$15

March 8th - Caputo's on 15th
Sheep's Milk Cheeses & the Right Wines
Call 801 486 6615 to reserve a spot
Class: \$25 Wine: \$15

March 14th - Caputo's 3rd & 3rd
Spanish Cheese & Wine Basics
Call 801 531 TONY to reserve a spot
Class: \$25 Wine: \$15

March 15th - Caputo's on 15th
Goat Cheeses & the Right Wines
Call 801 486 6615 to reserve a spot
Class: \$25 Wine: \$15

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Questions?



I have always loved and appreciated these wines. They do not pretend to be anything other than what's on the label. And the labels tell it all. Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Merlot. What's in the bottle is quite profound however. These wines are sourced from some of the finest vineyards along one of Washington's Premiere AVAs, vineyards such as Milbrandt, Wahluke Slope and Clifton provide the intensity here. For most mortals, these are single vineyard sourcings. Nor do these guys go it cheap during production. All of these are aged in 100% new French oak. These are EXCEPTIONAL values. These are dark, intense and sappy efforts that drink well out of their weight class. They've got \$50 swing in a \$15 suit.

The **Magnificent Wine Company Cabernet Sauvignon (917193 / \$15.99)** is the most elegant of the bunch. This is inky stuff loaded with characters of cassis, black fruit, truffle and lead pencil shavings. This shows insane length with time in the glass. The **Magnificent Wine Company Merlot (917767 / \$15.99)** shows bright aromas and flavors of ripe raspberry, smoke, coffee and finishes with lovely acidity. This gets very serious with air and has a remarkably long finish. The **Magnificent Wine Company Syrah (917025 / \$15.99)** is the most rustic of this trio showing aromas and flavors of dark jammy black fruit, espresso, bacon and chocolate with notes of smoke and leather. Ridiculous values all.



The fact is this; I want it easy sometimes. I don't always want to have to toss off pretentious wine adjectives willy-nilly on demand like some barking seal. The **Magnificent Wine Company House White (915003 / \$9.99)** is a serious and fresh little mélange of mostly Chardonnay, Riesling, Muscat, Gewürztraminer and Pinot Gris (in that order). Stainless Steel ferment, no Malo, no Oak~ couldn't be more exuberant. The **Magnificent Wine Company House Red (914592 / \$9.99)** is juicy soft blast based on Cabernet, Merlot, Syrah, Malbec, Zin and Petit Verdot. All Columbia Valley fruit. Damn.

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Please Join Me

Utah is STILL the most popular market in the country right now with wine personalities alighting willy nilly like horny Monarch Butterflies flapping for attention. Some of Utah's finest restaurants have created events around some awfully fabulous wines. Please join us if you can.

Will Bucklin & Brian Larky

You've heard me rhapsodize about these two in perpetuum and for good reason. One is a member of the Italian Wine Hall of Fame, the other learned his trade at a first growth chateau and now stewards California's most historically significant vineyard. Special bottlings have been ordered (to say the least)

March 1st / Pago presents a Meet & Mingle with Will Bucklin of Bucklin & the irrepressible Brian Larky of Dalla Terra Imports Doors open at 5:30 for meet & mingle with Brian Larky & Will Bucklin. Call 801-532-0777 for reservations or RSVP to Scott@pagosl.com Tasty nibbles \$10, Additional Wine Pairings \$45

March 2nd / Sea Salt presents an Evening with Will Bucklin of Bucklin Wines and Brian Larky of Dalla Terra Italian imports Dinner begins at 6:30, Dinner is \$45, Wine is \$30. 1709 East 1300 South Call 801-349-1480 for reservations. See the menu at www.seasaltslc.com

Pago proprietor Scott Evans is a major league wine dork, Pago Chef Mike Ritchie has been nominated for Food & Wine Magazine's "The People's Best New Chef" and then there's Salt Lake City Magazine's Winner of Best Italian hosting these two wine legends for a dazzling Venetian tinged menu of specialties paired with extraordinary wines.

Dave Phinney / Orin Swift

March 7th / Park City's hottest new hotspot (the place really is GORGEOUS) will be hosting the winemaker and wine-making staff of Orin Swift wines - these are the people that brought you "The Prisoner", "Mercury Head" and "Papillon". These are gorgeous, lush plush wines that dazzle and spin and in a setting like Silver, make plans for a cab ride home. Passed appetizers \$35, wine \$40. Begins at 6 pm. Silver is located on 508 Main Street, Park City, Utah Call 435-940-1000 for reservations.

Honig / Phelps / Renard

March 9th / The Triple Header at Wild Grape - Winemakers Kristin Belair from Honig, Ashley Hepworth from Joseph Phelps, Bayard Fox from Renard. Great winemakers, great wines and impeccably matched food. This is one of my favorite events of the year. Proprietor Troy Greenhawt and Chef Phelix Gardner do yeoman's work delivering the goods at a value. They like what they do, they care about what they do and it shows~Wine Wednesdays are always a treat. Wild Grape, 481 East S.Temple, 801-746-5565 for reservations.

A Little Love



There are few people in the wine business I admire more than the fine folks at Ken Volk, himself "aka Kenneth Volk", long ago and far away put a little winery called Wild Horse (and with it, the entire Central Coast AVA) on the map for Pinot Noir. I've always admired his handiwork, be it impeccable Malvasia or the always stunningly deep Pinot Noirs. The man never met an oddball grape he didn't like, and to this day you see oddballs like Tempranillo, St. George, Clairette and Mourvedre one barrel at a time in the cellar. Some are odd because they are odd, some are odd because they have no business in Santa Barbara. Either way, the farming is clean and wine gets minimal manipulation. He also is one of the world's great technodorks with some of his cellar innovations (Twirly racks are incredibly cool. Ask me about those someday and I will someday explain). **Kenneth Volk Pinot Noir 2007 (915832 / \$21.99)** a recent bottle sent me down the memory hole of summer, reflecting on ripe raspberry jam in the car with a dark chocolate bar for a scoop. I can still feel the seeds in my teeth. The wine finishes long and gentle, because you see, this man knows a groove when he hits it. Think Eddie Jefferson "Parker's Mood". YouTube it and pull the cork.

Go Find Them



Blind Dog Grill has moved. They are now located at 1251 Kearns Blvd, Park City Utah 435-655-0800. These guys have always done a knockout job on a number of fronts be it their massive, impeccably selected wine list or their penchant for finding insanely fresh ocean treasures (it helps when one of the owners is a former commercial fisherman). They know fish and their crab cake is nothing short of perfect. The new space is a complete overhaul of the old Anderson Lumber space and is a worthy new home for their always worthy efforts.

That's right. A website!

www.libation-online.com