

## Haywire

Valentines Day is a bastard child - a random middle finger of a holiday. I've always wanted to love it, but it seems determined to remain an unrequited affair. No matter. I persevere through January's filthy biting grind; I scribble, I prescribe, I preach. I become a wine-mad Lear wandering on the heath, spitting my indignant rage and disdain at the notion that this is a holiday for two; then, the truffle notes of an exceptional Pinot Noir (**Belle Glos "Los Alturas Vineyard" 2007 / \$49**) make me wince at the absence of another mouth. It's a sweet funk not designed for one, a mating impulse in a glass and the texture of it only intensifies my internal melee between logic and lust - I don't know whether to drink it or dip my parts in it. Only a dormant sense of Catholic Guilt and propriety keep me from offering further detail.

There is a fundamental unfairness to a wine that pushes my biochemical buttons so, but so what. None of this is fair; this isn't a month for "fairness". Reason takes a back seat to Want and it doesn't stop with the wine. A woman walks past. I can smell her, I even lean a bit, catching the last bit of air draft from her deliberate stride past my table. I can name the perfume (Quelque Fleur). I can even smell that vague sense of heat from her skin, carrying the scent. She couldn't have been more than two hours out of the shower. I grit my teeth and force myself back into the magazine I am pretending to read over dinner. The accumulated Lusts and Losses and Loves, that primal catalogue of the Sweet and the Poisonous, the Alluring and the Irresistible, that sits in the most primitive recesses of my brain takes another bruise. It leaves a mark; but that's what its there for, to make me remember. None of this comes as a surprise, yet it is. My first time seeing Esther Williams' liquid turn in "Take Me Out to the Ballpark", I didn't know if I was being aroused, falling in love or just counting down to Pitchers and Catchers. I was, all at once, eager and stupid and shy. It was yet another confirming instance that women would always easily confuse me.

February is a calculated tease; temperatures rise and fall, aromas spark the subconscious and the central portion of the brain, particularly the mating-centric amygdala, snaps and crackles and pops, whirring back to life. Always February. I remember a February night in the regal old Utah Theater on Main Street, sitting in the expectant dark watching Mastroianni in "Dark Eyes" tell his new-found true love that he didn't like to sleep as a child. Marcello looks at her and says "I didn't want to miss anything". It's a gorgeous lie of a moment, he knows his time with her is short and he doesn't want to lose a moment of bliss now that he's found it; I knew that restlessness then as I know it now. I've always loved movies where unlikely people fall for other unlikely people, or when simple stories are told in folk-tale impossible settings. For as dour as I can be, if I believe in things that aren't supposed to happen, then anything remains possible. Reason takes a back seat to want and I can still hear the flicker of the projector.

A shrink once cast me as a "liminal personality" - not quite sure I ever understood that completely, but I recall it seemed an awfully polite way to call me a coward (at the time I'd developed into a bit of a chicken-shit when it came to matters of the heart). The Daring Grand Romantic Gesture had fallen by my wayside; a man can only take so many banana cream pies before he gets gun-shy after all (well...that and most women tend to run like hell). Ascribing a greater sophistication to this seasonal silliness, lathering it in candy and wine and words of love (as I have often done and as many do) makes for a lovely pink sugar icing, and it explains most of my amorous efforts for a number of years; but when one is more nebbish than knock-out, one develops a talent for guile, deceit and trickery. I see it as a compensatory development, an evolution, fool for love that I am, that we all are (opposable thumbs and frontal lobes don't make us *that* special - we just like to think we are). Even so, as February creeps in from January's chill, I am gleeful slave again to the same old impulses of idiocy and extravagance and chest thumping warmth, boom boom booming like a bold bass line. Yes I still get the pitter-pats (and I wouldn't give them up for anything). Its not like I have a choice in the matter. There's a reason why the brain's most primal circuits wire olfaction with emotion and arousal (along with other necessary survival functions like eating and drinking). **We aren't supposed to think straight.** (It's the wiring stupid).

I've been called a girl, more than once (true more often than not - *I am a drama queen*). I've been called an obnoxious crank, more than once (true more often than not - *I can be a real dick*). I've been called many many things, more than once. I'll live, but I can still make this a holiday for one if I want (insert masturbation joke here). Its not my first solo "Valloween", and it won't be the last and it means no less to me for it. Its become something much greater, a sign of a coming bloom. Love is not the necessary province of Twos - it is a much grander affair. I look about and see that I am surrounded by love in its finest forms-committed, passionate, caring people, and I am thankful for it - it may not be that primal chest-thumping-furniture-humping springtime rutting madness at the moment (don't worry, my furniture has taken a pounding before), but to me, at the moment, its something far deeper and richer, its something borne of time and effort and communal passions and I can't imagine anything better or anyone luckier.

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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](mailto:francis.fecteau@gmail.com)

# e-libation

A Salt Lake City guide to all things juicy and delicious in the world of wine.

## Desperate Love

There it was, right there on the New York Times front page, "The Recession. Isn't It Romantic?", a commentary on the spike of dating activity (internet, dating services and the like) that has corresponded with the recent economic downturn. Loneliness it seems doesn't go on holiday or pay attention to paychecks and Fear it seems drives us into the arms of others. There is nothing wrong with wanting a little company. Here's some recession pricing for recession love.



**L**i Veli Passamante Negroamaro 2007 (\$12.99) is the best release of this wine yet. This 100% Negroamaro shows a brilliant range of earthy black fruit with bright acidity. Following the initial fermentation in tank to maintain liveliness, the oak treatment here is minimal, 6 months all in large cask. As a result, the fruit is the primary focus here, making this a terrific addition to the table, complementing most Italian fare with ease. Gets better as it airs.

**B**ethel Heights Pinot Gris 2007 (\$17) without fail one of the finest non chardonnay whites around. Tropical, unctuous and expressive without being gooey sweet and overbearing. Shows terrific definition.



**T**enuta St Antonio Valpolicella Classico 2007 (\$13) from Corvina and Rondinella, this "Italian Beaujolais" is rife with fresh bright red fruits, lively and cheap. A great complement to simple Italian food, think antipasti.



## Lend a Hand

**I**ntro to Wine and Cheese ~ Reserve Edition. Tuesday March 10th, Caputo's 7:00 pm. Please join me for a very special educational experience. In conjunction with Caputo's, I will be hosting a Wine and Cheese Pairing Class with Cheese Guru Troy Peterson. The wines poured that evening will be some of California's greatest;

### Mer Soleil

Central Coast Chardonnay, 2005

### Belle Glos

"Taylor Lane Vyd", Sonoma Coast, Pinot Noir 2007

### Orin Swift

"The Prisoner", Napa Valley, Red Table Wine 2007

### Altamura Vineyards

Napa Valley, Cabernet Sauvignon 1999

### Caymus Vineyards

"Special Selection", Napa Valley, Cabernet Sauvignon 2005

As an added bonus, these extraordinary wines will be poured from large format bottles of 1.5 Liters or greater. Large bottles are well known for adding life and dimension to wines. Larger bottles are also noted for their extraordinary aging potential.

**Cost is \$75**

**Attendance for this class will be capped at 25**

**This is a Benefit for "Boys to Men"** Boys to Men is a nine week summer program that balances life skills counseling with basketball skills for troubled, at-risk youth. Each summer after an extensive interview and selection process, Director Ranee Tademey selects 20 kids to participate. Ranee runs this camp free of charge. Please join Caputo's and myself for a very special evening of spectacular wines and cheeses. **Caputo's has graciously agreed to donate the evening's proceeds to the "Boys to Men" program of Salt Lake City.** RSVP to Caputo's (801) 519-5754. A CC # is required to hold your place. Cancellations after March 8 will be billed at the full amount.

# chocolatier • blue

chocolates of the season

These new selections from Chocolatier Blue sit squarely at the nexus between aroma and lust. With each new season, Blue captures its essence, framing it in Amedei chocolate. This latest batch is perhaps the most brilliant range of flavors yet, inciting a hormonal riot between my brains and my naughty bits. Ever want to roll in something? Better still considering the holiday, make it a roll for two. The balance of aromatics, brightness and sweetness is brilliant. Begin your exploration with **Darjeeling**, the dark fruity spice notes of the tea are perfectly mated with lush buttery caramel. **Pomegranate** is brilliant too, an explosion of rich red fruit married to a perfect finish of butter-toned rich caramel ~ its as if Pomegranate were reimagined in a butter caramel skin. The other flavors are no less thrilling; sasparrilla, lemon, port, mas amiel (a wine liqueur from Languedoc), pine nut, ginger and star anise. Did I mention there is no added sugar? These terrific little treats are actually *healthy*, about 35 calories a pop, a get-out-of-hell-free card for damnable times. Chocolates are \$2 and available in any increment you desire (last time I threw this many dollar bills on a counter, there was a scantily clad girl scooping them up). Boxes are available as well, increments of 5,10,15,24 and 50. Available only at **Caputo's**, 314 West 300 South, 801-519-5754

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## Self Pleasure

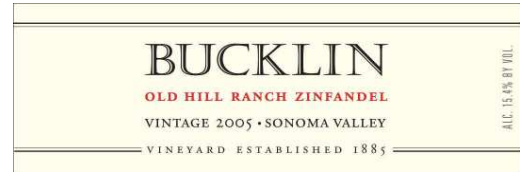
It is at the heart of an ongoing discussion between some friends and myself. My friends are far better people than I am you see. They see every open bottle as an excuse to be generous and communal, and God bless them for it ~ I don't. Not always. The world is a better place for them, as is my life, and it's a simple minor disagreement; I say occasionally a bottle needs to be a one-on-one affair. Its an almost vinous/sexual calculus; some find groups fun, some prefer a single partner and almost all of us are happy to take care of our own business when the need arises, it's a chase for fulfillment. I recall sitting in the Jardin des Rampart in Beaune, France, staring at a plate of risotto, wild mushrooms and golf ball sized hunks of truffle paired with 20 year old **Corton Charlemagne**; I likely would have been arrested had my thoughts been made public. I would risk arrest for a repeat.

The debate began as I related a recent dinner experience. Feeling flush from a recent paycheck, and in need of some food "Prozac", I sat in a favorite restaurant and ordered a magnificent bottle of wine (**Latour Corton Charlemagne 2001** ~ a wine that makes me weep to this day). At the end of the bar sat three acquaintances, boisterous folks all, and ordinarily, all great company. Trouble is at the end of that day, all I wanted was a little escape to Paris and this was as close as I could get. I wanted to be "elsewhere" but alas it was not to be. Those nice folks at the end of the bar extended their stay and joined me for the remainder of mine (and my wine). It was a fine experience. It was not what I wanted. I wanted to stick my head in the glass and inhale the wine, let its aromas do what aromas do; cajole me, tease me, prompt me, excite me, thrill me, send a shiver down my leg. As it was, I was left, leaning, trying to catch a breath of the perfume as it took a deliberate stride by my table and out the door, a missed opportunity.

Wine isn't always there to fuel a buzz. It's the difference between eating for fuel and eating for pleasure, a drive-through or foie gras ~ on occasion it deserves your focus and attention for greatest pleasure. I regularly keep a bottle open on the counter at home and revisit it every few hours. I pay attention as it unfolds, opens, closes, breathes; how the aromas change, develop and seduce; how the texture plays on my tongue, opulent, juicy and unctuous one moment, tart and bright the next. On occasion, magic ensues. The truly extraordinary create an experience through an interplay of aroma and flavor that seduces its way past my analytical frontal lobe to wreak havoc on the emotional parts of my brain, all through a combination of extraordinary fruit layered by terroir (a wine's own unique sense of place ~ think of it as a wine's accent, the absent "R" of my beloved Bostonian Aunt Cecile's patois) and attentive winemaking. Bottles in recent memory have seduced me non-stop for days before showing fatigue, others transported me to happier places through aroma alone (see "Talking Dirty"). This doesn't happen with the phone ringing, the radio on, the TV blaring and the Blackberry chirping, or, even the presence of three well intended jovial folks at the end of the bar.

I've had mad mad love affairs, I've done some things that left me blushing in the dark and there have been loves that leave me wistful to this day. I can name the bottles, the places, the people; I know where the bodies are buried and each time I revisit them, they give me no end of joy, all I need do is listen.

## Talking Dirty



The new release is here, **Bucklin "Old Hill Ranch" Zinfandel (\$25)** and its worth singing about. I have waxed and rhapsodized over Will's wines and the new release is as spectacular as ever. It balances nerve (a vibrant acidity) with spectacular concentration. **This wine is not for everyone.** If you prefer juicy sweet jammy zinfandels look elsewhere ~ (Ravenswood makes a more dully predictable wine for \$60—no joke); if an aromatic, balanced, rich and subtly nuanced, yet expressive experience is what you seek; if residual sugar in your wine is anathema; if you are capable of falling in love from an aroma alone, look no further. When I ramble on about taking an evening alone with a bottle, and letting it speak to me over the course of a day, this one is loaded with a generous magic. This stuff is the heart of the matter.



**Latour St Veran "Les Deux Moulins" 2006 (\$15)** when I don't have a spare \$100 for Corton this extravagantly expressive bottling gets me close enough with its bright citrus and talcum aromas and driving bright freshness. Similarly produced Chardonnay from California runs 3x the price. Made from low yield hilltop vineyards and treated to fine French oak.

Some things bear repeating; these wines get better every year. **Belle Glos "Los Alturas" Pinot Noir 2007 (\$49)** is a sweet truffled funk wrapped in a cloak of velvety ripe red fruits. The texture alone, creates a lasting impression with a sweet drive down the dead center of the tongue. As good as this is with a group, its better with just two or one.



### 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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## Green Valentines



Two of my favorite green values all year long, Jeriko knocked it out of the park with these two. **Jeriko Cabernet Sauvignon 2005 (\$16)** is a striking expression of cool climate Cabernet with terrific acidity, definition and a lingering finish. Only 20 pct new oak, focus is front and center on a dense core of cassis fruit. Even more striking is the **Jeriko Grenache 2005 (\$16)**. Rare in California, this shows terrific dark jammy fruit, only found in Spain's best. Available in two places in the U.S.; Jeriko's tasting room and Utah. I am indeed a wizard...

## Spanish Fly



**Bodegas Muga Rioja Reserva 2004 (\$30)** lifts Tempranillo to new heights. The 2004 is magnificent sexy bastard of a wine with deep black fruits, the smell of sun-baked leather and a long ripe finish, that shows bright acidity on its energetic lifting finish. There's a reason the Spanish export so little (15% of total production) why share?

## Heartthrob

### ALTAMURA

**Altamura Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2005 (\$65)** is a landmark effort. *This is without fail the finest thing Frank has ever made, and that, is saying something.* I understand times are tight, but wines like this buoy hope and imagination. This is deep, dark, shamelessly fruit forward stuff with perfect structure, a leather clad Jessica Rabbit in a bottle. The **Altamura Sangiovese 2005 (\$38)** inspires equally lusty thoughts, but we knew that. These will both be appearing on many a top 100 list for 2009, yet are breathtaking now. True Love? A bottle of this wouldn't hurt.

## Get the juices flowing...



I sat 6 hours from any ocean in the sandy desert plateau of Rueda. Old Viura vines squatted low to the ground baking in the March sun. I dug my fingers into the loose beachsandy soil and was struck by the aroma of fresh ocean wash. **Bodegas Naia "Las Brisas" (\$12)** is a dead ringer for great Chablis. A blend of Viura, Sauvignon Blanc and Verdejo, this is a stirringly fresh and lively bottle. No malolactic, no oak and a rest in stainless steel preserve its bracing acidity that will indeed get the juices flowing (acid does make you salivate). As an interesting contrast, the slightly more expensive **Naia (\$14)** sees the same upbringing yet owes its expressiveness to a single varietal, Verdejo. Still the same refreshing citrusy grapefruit acidity, it shows a slightly more silky texture. Both are a natural with seafood, especially raw.

## The Wild Grape hosts...



481 E South Temple  
Salt Lake City, UT 84101  
Phone: (801) 746-5565



JUDD'S HILL

NAPA VALLEY

Now appearing at Salt Lake's newest wine-centric eatery, the man who put the Judd in **Judd's Hill**, Judd Finkelstein. Wild Grape Dinners are wonderfully accessible, three courses, paired with five Judd's Hill Estate wines. \$70 (\$35 for food, \$25 for wine). It will be a casual meet and greet with the winemaker. A chance to educate your palate and dork out with one of Napa's most talented young Cabernet producers with the highlight of the tasting evening a side-by-side comparison of the 2004 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon bottling with the revered 2001 Estate Red.

Call (801) 746-5565 for details

## Easy L'Amore



**Aia Vecchia Lagone 2006 (\$17)** is a poor man's Sassicaia, a plush lush Bolgheri Red that blends Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Sangiovese into a cashmere rich, deep dark blend that makes for compelling drinking, loaded with truffle black fruits, lead pencil and spice. Stunning depth and complexity for the \$\$, develops gorgeously as it sits open.