

Tick Tock

There are no “stages” to Desire as there are to Love. There will be no Admiration thank you, certainly no Acknowledgement, no Hope (Hope be damned) and there will be little Delight.

You can keep your Romantic Poets too, the ones that drank absinthe into the wee hours, gangbanged and dosed interminably on laudanum (all of it so much insufferable drunk-talk) and yes there may very well be a Platonian Ideal out there, somewhere a perfect incarnation in a perfect universe, but please understand that Desire does not spring from purity. Desire is base, it whispers in the dark, it talks dirty. Alone I learned desire with a slug of Almaden Mountain Chablis and a mouthful of fennel salami. I wasn't quite ten and *I was getting away with something*. My father was whistling Beethoven while changing the oil on the old '71 Chevy Impala in the garage just off the kitchen. He would come in later and stomp and curse “Goddamnsonofabitch” at the loss of his stash and I would ever after hear “the Pastoral” charged with the greedy energy of a little brown sparrow hopping about outside the Starbucks scavenging for Madeleine crumbs. My first wine memory is as simple as a shock of lightning still, and the last cured a stab to the heart (a bottle of '07 Latour Corton Charlemagne of course, on a recent sunny September afternoon that stretched on for days if you must know. I was feeling persecuted and sulky which led to a surge in feelings of entitlement). Daddy deserved a treat (I don't self regulate well if you hadn't guessed by now). The priests and brothers and nuns at Assumption Catholic Academy threw just enough Aquinas at me to convince me of nothing, nor did they succeed in breaking me of my exercises in profligate excess. In the immortal words of Black Jack O' Geary, “One's too many and three's not enough.” And lets get the rest of them out of the way; the path of excess does indeed lead to the palace of wisdom and yes, quantity does indeed have a quality all its own, and the hard-wiring from mouth to genitals never changes (because desire begins in the mouth). There is accumulation in perpetuity, a Pavlov's list that sets me to drooling yes shimmering strings and honking horns and clanging bells, the crackle of brain hardwired to a mouth, who knows, maybe it's the angry fix and the haze of neurochemical reactions upon anticipation of immediate gratification, but it's where the story begins that matters, and the story begins as all good stories do, when no one - and I mean no one - is looking. That's when we see a point on the horizon and move forward for better or for worse, motivated by rational need, irrational want or green desire, and it's there that the fractures begin, the moment the brick leaves the hand.

I am running on a woodchip trail in a twilight summer drizzle. It begins as a slow deliberate trot and accelerates to a loping gallop until my legs and lungs can take no more and then I walk. I repeat this process until I can't and the music in my ears fools me into believing I am faster and lighter than I am. I recall that the liner notes read “Awakening of Cheerful Feelings upon Arrival in the Country”, accompanied by the careful direction “Allegro ma non Troppo”. I am careful to rush nothing - considering my ample girth, its not as if I have a choice in the matter - but I am awash in green and mud and the resonant smells of summer growth and for the first time since glaciers etched the valley, I am at ease in the warmth of my flesh, I feel light, and lightness has never come easy or quick. I may be beneath the stars but I am not bound to earth in my brass-hat skin and for a brief firefly moment I get the boulder to the top of the hill. There is peace, but the quiet is distressing.

My accidental life in this accidental city is under scrutiny. I never meant to stay. I don't remember how I got here; I don't know how I arrived at this momentary conclusion. I backed into an academic pastime, I reached for one survival after another, I developed a talent for crisis response, for rising to the occasion, for doing what needed to be done right there and then at that moment. I had a talent for getting by and now I do not recognize this quiet, this stable life, this routine. When did I stop wanting to leave? and why is it that in the high muggish heat of a desert summer I feel a chilly wintry anxiety?

It's the end of Act I, or so it appears. We've been introduced to the major players, we've been sprinkled with recurring conflicts, and there's even been the occasional love interest. There's been a journey or two. All the elements are there for great narrative. As far as Act Ones go, at least I know where I stand. Exposition awaits, or so I recall if Father Jerome was indeed correct about the nature of all great narrative. “Exposition” follows “Introduction” and “Resolution” completes the circle. I suspected then as I do now, that the old boy was right. Right as rain. I've always been a sucker for good exposition, the tension of “what next” keeps me on the edge of the seat ever more, but the elevated stakes of the “what next” anxieties of my own season are roiling my innards. The only question remaining now is whether I keep my sanity.

I guzzle salty mineral water, “Like its going out of style” as himself would have said, buying cases of Vichy Catalan twice a week. My thoughts are peppered with Depression Era bon mots, remnants of my Father, who I believe with some reasonable substance was a man of many passions, but moreso a man of tremendous restraint and thus modest habit. I wish I shared more with him than an affinity for dated speech - I inherited much, just not that critical part, and so there is no Great Wall upon which I might rely for sustenance and strength, (Cont'd on p2)

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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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Tick Tock (continued from p.1)

(Cont'd from P 1.) and the bottles are stacking up like you might imagine they would for a man wanting to not take a drink. And yes - I am not wanting to take a drink (the little glass birds perching around my apartment chirp in unison). After all, as himself used to say, "No one's gonna wipe your own ass but you". Point taken.

Fear and preparation have crafted my conscience of late and I find I miss being fearless, that venturing into strange lands and dark places ~ even if only for a brief foray on that fine line between comfort and road rash. I shall seek remedy in the coming months and there may be scarring involved but such is the way of necessary forward progress. I may fear that I am no longer young, but I know that I have not quite yet arrived at old, and now I am now more conscious of both. I have become well aware of time and it is a frightening moment of lucidity. I can't look for the easy virtue of pop culture cliché here, as easy as that sort of bland pudding would be, its just that I am now well acquainted with the finite reserve of my soul's allotments of try-and-fail-and-try-again and the perpetually increasing stakes of the nature of risk. I am well aware of what it means to lose and so it makes the stakes of the coming exposition that much sweeter. But - summer months are not meant for contemplation and the keening streak of red that slashes away at the summer-green hills announces that my contemplations are consuming a resource in short supply. Time is certainly not on my side (sorry Mick), it's a-wasting and such navel gazing is for lesser souls, so I flick my bellybutton lint and deny the universe, refusing any thoughts of staling age. I can worry about old and stale when I am, as himself would have said, "wormfood". There's a market waiting tonight and such worries are a leisure. The setting sun is casting a warm lavender hue about the city and there are farmers gathering as they are wont to do, there are people strolling with dogs and kids, boys walking with girls and I watch the hippie farmer who grows the dazzling heirloom cucumbers flirt with a pale brunette, he shows her a handful of beans the color of magic, she tucks her hair behind her ear and just then he insists, *insists* that she sample his prized greenery. Maybe he wants to sell, maybe he wants to share, maybe his passion for plants and Mother Earth (and patchouli) is just that infectious, but maybe just maybe, he is as taken with her as I am for that moment when she pushes her dark heavy glasses back up her slender nose and smiles at the perfect timeless crunch that is the essence of a soft summer night.

The best of the best wine stores;

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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

Legends of the Fall



I am fond of pink wines, really and truly. It is also no secret that the Pink suffers from many a sling and arrow of outrageous fortune brought on by domestic producers travails through the gnarls of White Zinfandel and other sweet-ish mistakes. It takes awhile to remedy the mistakes of the learning curve, and this is a business after all, so its easy to forgive winemakers who are just following the cookbook and giving people what they want. BUT...given the opportunity, those pink wines can be nuanced little beasts with grip and expressiveness that show a steel spine beneath that nancy/fay exterior. The great dry roses are above and beyond all, truly brilliant food wines and easy refreshing sippers. It's the acidity stupid (and a little astringent tannin never hurt). **Pink Rule #1.** Drink it as fresh as possible. This means that you want the vintage to be as close to the current year as possible. Old pink wine tastes like old tea. Fresh pink wine, 2010 vintage, shows a brilliant freshness and vibrancy. My personal favorite is the **Alois Lageder Lagrein Rose, Alto Adige 2010 (CODE #918083 / \$17.99)** a rich ruby red loaded with aromas of farmer's market fresh ripe raspberries and a pinot noir-ish delicacy to it ~ in all honesty, Lagrein is usually a forgettable medium bodied purple fleshy red ideal for hamburgers and BBQ, but as a rose Lagrein becomes far far more interesting and a much more versatile companion at the table.

With Autumn creeping in clip-clop on its calloused hooves, the mouth wants more and **Kenneth Volk Pinot Noir, Santa Barbara County 2007 (CODE #915832 / \$21.99)** is a brilliantly rich and well fruited effort from Santa Barbara. It is hands-off stuff with minimal oak and no fining or filtering which gives it an unmistakable palate heft. **Cruz Andina, Malbec 2008 (CODE #918112 / \$18.99)** left me eating yet more crow, this is shamefully good opulent stuff with a deep dark purple hue and a long fine finish. This bursts from the glass with heady aromas of blackberry pie and hints of baking spice thanks to some time in fine French Oak. I still have issues with Malbec (its perpetually clipped finish) but when it shows this sort of charm, I can overlook such venial sin.

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Piu Please



Piu means “more” in Italian and more indeed is in the bottle with **Inama’s magnificent red blend Carmenerre Piu ‘08 (915875 / \$19.99)**.

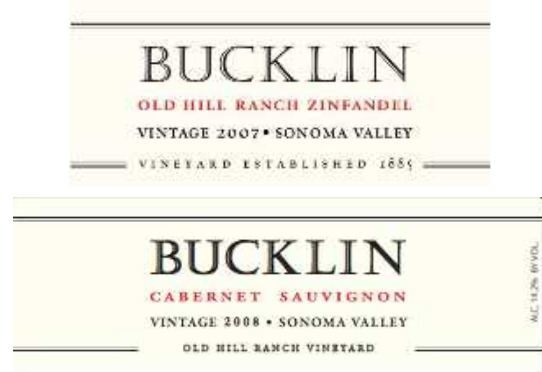
Don’t know how this esoteric variety made it from Bordeaux, but there it is in the rolling hills of the Colli Berici. The ‘08 is a blend of Carmenerre and Merlot (80/20) that shows aromas and flavors of black fruits, plums, soy and cocoa. Thanks to a complete destemming of the fruit, the wine is terrifically 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. This new vintage is exceptional and considerably more profound than its previous release. Calls for considerable airing before serving but it will also age with grace.

Top Secret



Spy Valley Sauvignon Blanc 2010 (Code #917861 / \$14.99) I stuck my nose in a glass the other day and thought, “WOW—that’s popping”. Explosive aromatics, razor sharp varietal typicity of fresh grapefruit, sweet herb, melon and pepper. Slam dunk winner in New Zealand style Sauv Blanc. Racy summer fun, this wine gets better and better.

Glen Ellen Gold



Glen Ellen is a gold mine. And each year it seems there are new finds and new talents. I came across Geordie Carr at the same facility where the inimitable Will Bucklin works his own brand of viticultural magic (and Morgan Peterson of Bedrock). It’s sort of a “Yankee Clubhouse” for wine talent. Geordie Carr makes his debut in Utah this year with his remarkable **Bump Cellars Sauvignon Blanc (Code# 918097 / \$14.99)** this is not your usual crispy steely Sauvignon Blanc where one tastes like the other which tastes like the other ad nauseum. This is a different beast entirely. This undergoes full cluster pressing (it is exactly what it sounds like; the full cluster is pressed) which creates a remarkable mouthfeel with a texture one usually finds in a red wine. This astringency buttresses the acidity to make this wine particularly fleshy yet refreshing. The wine is also unfiltered and unfinned. The wine undergoes native ML in neutral French oak which rounds out its silky rich mouthfeel with a headspinning array of grapefruits, pineapple and baking spice. The result is a lipsmacking refreshing spin on an old favorite.

Summer Reds are less easy to find. How to find richness and strength without excess flab and goo? The answer lies in Will Bucklin’s newest releases; the **Bucklin “Old Hill Ranch” Zinfandel 2007 (Code # 914223 / \$24.99)** and the sister wine, the unforgettable **Bucklin “Old Hill Ranch” Cabernet Sauvignon 2008 (Code # 915894 / \$24.99)**. I have had the privilege of working with these wines for some time and each year, they show me something new. The 2007 Zinfandel was released a little over a year ago and upon recent tasting it happened to be occupying a very open opulent window. This wine always smells more like a place than a wine to me which is, in essence, the point of a truly great wine. The aromatics are dizzying perfumy and distinct as always with the trademark “Old Hill” perfume of wildflowers, lavender, rosemary and eucalyptus, there is cassis and layers of black fruit under all of it, but it’s the place that speaks the loudest, it’s a vacation in a bottle.

My experience with Old Hill Cabernet hasn’t always been perfect. I’ve always liked it, but it’s a style of Cabernet that needs explaining, a little understanding as it were (as people are sluts for alcohol and sugar in this era of flabby Cabernet bouncing its way around palates with its flabby alcoholic glycerol goo mouthfeel) but as is the case with all wines, there are years when something special happens. Maybe 2008 was Will’s Year of the Comet? I am inclined to believe so. Regardless, whatever magical confluence of circumstances came together, this is perfect perfect perfect stuff. The Old Hill perfume sings here with elements of cedar wending its way through a range of fresh ripe red and black fruits, the palate texture is flawlessly structured too. It is also impervious to oxidation like nothing I’ve ever experienced. It took my counter-top test for over 5 days. **My choice for Cabernet of the Year** (esp considering the price).



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Yes, Garnacha



Let it suffice to say that truly great summer reds are far and few between. It is a holy grail of sorts, a red wine that doesn't overwhelm in the blaze of a Utah summer. Grenache provides just that safe haven (and is perfectly fine and delicious when served with a chill. These two extraordinary values are from Calatayud, just north and east of Madrid, specifically a tiny ancient roman town known as Borsao which sits beneath the imposing Alto Moncayo mountains (they are the three peaks referred to in "Tres Picos").

Again, 2009 brings great bounty. The French might have some claim to making great Grenache (and they do), in my occasionally humble opinion, Spain makes better Grenache than anyone, especially when price is taken into account. Think about the production parameters for a minute, both are old vine, very low yield sources and both see a little time in French oak — these are factors that point toward more premium pricing.

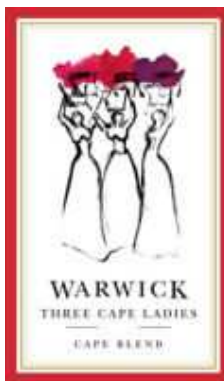
The Bodegas Borsao Campo de Borja, sources from the younger holdings of the Bodegas Borsao, a mere 45-60 years of average age, the fruit is tank fermented and then finished in oak. There is a dollop of Tempranillo for added zing. A tremendous value all in all, terrific with a slight chill. **Bodegas Borsao 2009 (Code # 914925 / \$8.51)**

"Compelling" and "under \$20" are two phrases that rarely marry in the wine world yet rarely are those two better together than with the **Bodegas Borsao "Tres Picos" 2009 (Code #914924 / \$17.99)** The vineyard itself is extraordinarily desolate, arid and beautiful; its the sort of place you might imagine the world would first come back to life following a nuclear apocalypse. The soil looks as though it were planted in the remainders of a bombed out brick factory and is so inhospitable that not even weeds grow there. All of this stress expresses itself in a wine that shows otherworldly concentration, depth and expressiveness. The 2009 may very well be the best vintage of this I've tasted in over a decade. The Grenache program at Borsao is spectacular and since they started kicking some of the single vineyard cuvees (all \$75 - \$200 a bottle) into the Tres Picos program, this wine has rocketed to the top of my GREAT VALUES OF ALL TIME list. This wine shows extravagant depths of truffle, lead pencil, black fruit, anise and sasarilla aromatics which follow on the palate with intensity and precision. Its an E ticket ride now, but will age gracefully for a decade (and then some). Brilliant brilliant stuff.

2009...Seriously...2009



It truly is the golden year for all things southeastern France. As much as I have been accused of playing the part of shameless shill, shrill whore of all things Latour, there are vintages where as Mamma Loman would have put it, "Attention must be paid". The pedigree on these two are remarkable; take vine cuttings from one of the finest Grand Cru plots in Burgundy (Corton), a plot which usually produces Chardonnay in the \$100 / btl range, prune them exactly the same way keeping yields impossibly low. Let one finish fermentation (and malolactic) in stainless steel, allow extended lees contact and then let the impossibly long pure finish of the **2009 Latour Montagny La Grande Roche (Code # 917092 / \$19.99)** dazzle you. The concentration and purity of this wine is mind blowing with aromatics of almond, honeysuckle, pear and citrus zest. Best served NOT ice cold but cool. **And my vote for best \$12 Chardonnay on the planet right now?** The **Latour Grand Ardeche Chardonnay 2009 (Code #255425 / \$11.49)** undergoes the same upbringing as the Montagny, but it finishes its upbringing in old Corton Charmagne barrels (After the Corton barrels are used for only two years they go to the Grand Ardeche program; these barrels still have plenty of flavor) thanks to a superior vintage, the Grand Ardeche is showing a thrilling depth and intensity that belies its modest fee. While less bright, thanks to its barrel time, and more rich than the Montagny, it shows a house style that is more reminiscent of the fatter bottlings found in its more expensive northern cousins. I've always called the Grand Ardeche a gateway drug (as it is what started me on the lifelong shamefully expensive habit of White Burgundy). I am amazed at the aromatics which show the spice notes of a gorgeous French oak barrel underscoring the ripe full bodied fresh apple sweet mineral fruit. The palate feel is rich and full and the finish long bright and focused. This becomes amazing with airing. Go get some Epoisses from Caputos and sit around and mispronounce French with your friends.



Shock value. I love finding extraordinary wines in unexpected places. (Sure, I love getting flashed by pretty girls on the occasion that it does happen, but I'll take an unexpected pleasant surprise wherever I can). So... **Warwick (pron. "Warr-ick") 3 Cape Ladies Blend 2007 (Code #917742 / \$19.99)** shows remarkable depth aromatics and intensity. It is a Bordeaux blend that relies heavily on South Africa's native strengths of Pinotage buttressed by Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz. A dead ringer for much more expensive Bordeaux.

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Aromatics



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The treasures greet you on entry, the artisanal aromatic goodies abound and this month the bounty is grander than ever. As always Matt is on the lookout for the most authentic artisanal goods that have come to define Caputo's. My personal new favorite is the **Olli Salumeria from Virginia**. It's an extraordinary range of meat products from Speck (a dead ringer for Pata Negra) and Prosciutto (a dead ringer for Italy's San Daniele Gran Reserva) - I actually smell the slices of prosciutto as I eat them, the aromas are rich with the smells of acorns, apples earth and spices ~ a characteristic of well cared for pigs. The quality level of these artisanal meats are extraordinary due to their devoted, strong network of certified organic small farmers and heirloom pig varieties like Berkshire and Mangalitsa. When pigs get treated well and fed better, they are much more delicious and with Olli's network, the pigs are allowed free range. Caputo's, as always, has the exclusive rights to them in Utah. And speaking of swine, the other treasure well worth digging for are the **black summer truffles**. These aromatic fungi are a grace note for every dish. My perfect breakfast all summer long? My breakfast of champions? Well, let it suffice to say that Wheaties have nothing to do with it. Clifford Farm Eggs, Truffle, Mandriano butter and **Louis Latour Bourgogne Chardonnay 2009** (UDABC Code 915660 / \$13.99) It's the common elegance of Burgundian life and I am gratified to know what somewhere in the world Burgundy is a breakfast beverage. I know the signs say hundreds of dollars per pound, but when you get right down to it, a golf ball sized hunk of this funk runs about \$10 and lasts for a week or two (if properly cared for) and will elevate everything from eggs to popcorn to soup. Smell. Eat. Drink.

Learn Learn Learn

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Yep. 100 pts.



I know that some of you are, well...sensitive to the numbers on the little cards that hang below the wines at the wine store (despite my best pleadings to the contrary). I must confess that even I, with some 15+ years of professional tasting under my ever straining beltline, still fall prey to temptation when the numbers get to that magic 98/99/100 point window. This is after all flirting with perfection and who doesn't want to say that they too, from time to time, get to flirt with the unattainable? Its never the most expensive wine that always gets my attention, it's the one that's hardest to find.

Casanova di Neri, Tenuta Nuova, Brunello di Montalcino 2006 (UDABC Code # / \$74.99) is likely one of the most perfectly proportioned wines I have ever tasted. I could rhapsodize about its perfection at great length. While showy now, this will age effortlessly for another decade or two. This NOT a Californicated showpiece with lots of glycerol and weight. This IS a glorious piece of Italiana.

If the \$74.99 price tag is out of your wheelhouse, consider its junior partner, the **Casanova di Neri Rosso di Montalcino 2008** (UDABC Code # 917057 / \$19.99) this is as good a use of \$20 as you'll find. Tremendous polish and force behind its expressive ripe red fruits and aromas of flowers and fine leather. This is what most people try to pass off as expensive Brunello (as it could easily pass for it), but take advantage of this brilliant winemakers generosity.

\$9.99....yes....\$9.99



I too appreciate immediate gratification. This Indian summer, take a look at these little gems, **Pares Balta Blanc de Pacs 2010** (UDABC Code #906391 / \$9.99). From Penedes, the heart of classic Spanish sparkling wine production, this is made from the same varieties; Xarelho, Parellada and Macabeu and captures that bright racy minerality just fine without the bubbles thank you very much. **Pares Balta Ros de Pacs 2010** (UDABC Code # / \$10.99) is a slightly off-dry yet tightly structured Syrah, Cabernet and Merlot pink wine that, light sweetness aside, is too much balanced fun to drink!

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Great Idea...S.L.U.R.P.

Adam Kreisel, one of Salt Lake City's all-time great chefs, and in the interest of full disclosure, a very dear friend is back. At long last, Adam is self employed and free to flex his own particular brand of culinary genius. Adam Kreisel's creation, Chaia Cucina is Salt Lake City's newest catering and consulting company and it's a welcome and necessary addition to Salt Lake's catering community. It came as a great relief that his food was once again commercially available (as his pesto alone should qualify him for deification). Other than being insanely talented with all things edible, he's also created what I think is a brilliant idea based on the CSA model (I presume). The program, S.L.U.R.P. or (Soup Lends Understanding, Relaxation, & Pleasure), is a soup subscription service. Each month Kreisel whips up copious amounts of seasonally fresh soup, that reflects the best of what the farmers markets are offering. I am a loyal devotee (and subscriber since early early on). Each month two new flavors and two quarts of Kreisel's blessed goodness await. These are nothing short of liquid silk with vibrant fresh seasonal flavors. As Kreisel's website says, these are based entirely on his whim and you have no choice in the matter, which is all fine and dandy with me. Subscriptions are available in any increment, monthly, quarterly or annually. A year will run you about \$218 for 12 months of soup, two quarts a month. www.chaiacucina.com

Upcoming Features

Just in case you were unaware, you can order anything you want. That's right, any wine you've ever had anywhere can come to Utah. Its called a "**special order**" and I'd be happy to help you. Contact me directly with your thoughts on the matter and I can do my best to get you the wine you crave. Restaurateurs and consumers alike are welcome to this assistance. From time to time I will also send special order offers to select broadcastees. Feel free to let me know via email if you'd like to be included on these offers.

Just one more thing. From time to time I will offer wines in this newsletter on a special order basis. The only requirement is that all special orders be a 12 bottle (or one case) minimum. Share a case with friends!

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www.libation-online.com

Education



Utah's newest wine education opportunity "The Wine Academy of Utah" is about to enter its fall semester (and for those of you too lazy to make it to a Caputo's class) this is as good a spot as any to learn the basics of wine evaluation and appreciation. Owner / Operator Jim Santangelo is certified by the Wine & Spirit Education trust to teach their system of appraisal and analysis. **Restaurateurs take note** — Jim does have courses that focus specifically on teaching servers how to more effectively sell wine ~ wine education courses may come and go—everyone's got one, but effective methods to teach wine sales are hard to come by. Courses are available for all levels of appreciation. Prices vary. See for more information- www.wineacademyofutah.com

Yin & Yang



New vintages reflect a winemakers best efforts in taking the bitchslapping that Mother Nature occasionally hands out. The **2010 Atrea Choir White Wine 2010 (UDABC Code #916665 / \$15.99)** is a testament to careful winemaking. We dodged the raindrops that year and out came this peachy little wonder, a blend of 62% Roussane 38% Viognier. A little more Viognier than usual gives this a roundness that belies its usual diamond cutting acidity, this is an easy wine to love with summer market bounty. 2007 on the other hand was a year for winemakers to get out of the way. **Atrea Old Soul Red 2007 (UDABC Code # 916321 / \$19.99)** is as juicy bouncy as its ever been if not more....a blend of Petite Syrah, Syrah, Malbec and Zinfandel, well...you get the idea, lots of oomph and charm. This is a brilliant wine for anything off the barbecue with its minimal oak and maximum jammy extract.