

Traveling Light

I overthink and I overthink and I overthink. Its what I do. I wanted to stop. It gives me a headache and it makes others nervous. Really. Spend enough time alone (I do) and time spent in the company of others feels as if someone turned the volume and brightness up way too loud. Spring had gone all dull and leaden, leaving me in disarray and I was unable to focus through the competing voices in my brain. What can I say? I get tightly wound. So I found myself on the eve of a long journey (...well ...“journey” sounds so heavy, so laden with cheap doughy metaphor; let’s just call it a long long trip and leave the torturing of metaphors to less thoughtful writers) and all I needed was lightness ~ a little simple clarity; and thankfully, the precision of the White Burgundy in my glass (**Latour St. Veran “Les Deux Moulins” 2005, \$16**) kept anxiety at bay, focusing me on the travel preparations at hand. Distance is a tonic, and the opportunity to be on the other side of the planet looked like the necessary cure. I would soon tilt at windmills on the other side of the world.

Those traveling days were miraculous and the entirety of Italy seemed to hold the promise of bloom with each region immersing me in its own charms and spells. And it was dizzying. Piedmont smelled of oranges and jasmine and spice; Tuscany seduced with its lavender, roses, evergreen and rosemary, Alto Adige was crisp with the aromas of wildflowers and pine, the Veneto and Friuli were utterly hypnotic with a silky array of honeysuckle, lavender, cream and magnolia (frankly, the Veneto and Friuli smelled like expensive lingerie). The aromas may have induced calm (and put my mind in the gutter when we hit the Veneto & Friuli) but all of a sudden it was still Spring and I was curious and eager and happy again. Time stopped for a blissful two weeks and each appellation was a new seduction, a satiation of need and each day was pure glee. I ran in the morning mists in Castiglione. I rose at sunrise in Gaiole and walked through the forest behind the thousand year old Badia a Coltibuono. After a dinner of fresh porcini and pasta, I drank Chianti in a room wherein the Medici family plotted against Venice centuries before. In Friuli I snuck scraps of Prosciutto fat to a hungry cat. And over grappa one starry night, below the old hillside town of Montalcino. I saw fireflies. I had not seen fireflies since I was twelve.

Doesn’t everyone want a little magic, a little seduction? Clarity and calm too much to ask for? Maybe a chance at that which makes us whole? Do I really need prescription help? The fractured beauty of Need it is that its always something new that returns us to that whole, and makes us remember “Happy”; aroma, art, music, a belief in God, a woman, a journey ~ or just getting to see fireflies. Italy was an immersion in life as we hope it to be, and when my plane home rose out of the sultry Venetian skies, looping away from the city and back again, in a slow lazy arc; seemingly riddled with the same sort of broken and weeping second thoughts, doubts and furtive looks that one reserves for that one never-to-be-forgotten true love at a time of parting – it was, as I imagine, the way all people must part with Venice. And oh how my heart ached. It was that simple. The last place on earth I wanted to be was on a plane leaving the one thing I needed most. I could still feel the sweet tingle of the Prosecco on my lips, and the longing was crushing, immediate, sudden, as if returning would be the only way to ease the ache that was Venice ~ and Italy. I wasn’t second guessing. I wasn’t overanalyzing. I wasn’t overthinking. The heart wanted what it wanted – what’s the quote? “The heart has its reasons of which Reason knows nothing”. (Believe it or not, a mathematician came up with that one). It was unrequited love I tell you, I know this because I am an aristocrat in matters of unrequited love and Venice was the final stab to the heart, a falling in love story; just like an old Ronald Colman film, all clever words and silky touches, then Love Big Love -- all in one scant scene. (Vaporetto rides on the Grand Canal really are magic).



308 West 300 South
(801) 531 ~ TONY



Christiano is one of the nicest people on the planet. Christiano is also very talented; a passionate salumiere (maker of salami) from a family of salumieri that have plied and perfected their trade for over 500 years. His first American outlet is at Caputo’s (exclusive). And having just returned from Italy, (the land of great cured meats), I can say in all earnestness, **this is the real deal**. Talking with Christiano about his craft is like talking to Puccini about how to craft Opera. On the nights when a new batch is set to curing, Christiano sleeps next to the curing cell and awakens every two hours to check on “his babies”. The passion for his craft is obvious.

No preservatives, no additives of any kind, all local meat, organically raised without steroids or antibiotics, the animals are raised in open pens and allowed to grow in open, clean and free environments. The result is perhaps the most remarkable salami made outside of Italy (hell, even in Italy ~ the Creminelli Family meats won Slow Food Awards for best salami in perhaps the most famous salami region in the world ~ Piedmont). Prices vary according to ingredients and style.

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, let me know at francis.fecteau@gmail.com

e-libation

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

The Year of the Comet

The “Year of the Comet” is a magical one in Wine Lore, referring to the legendary vintage of 1811, when one of the largest, most visible comets in history marked the sky in Bordeaux during harvest. Since, it's always been shorthand not for a good vintage, or a great one, but a *perfect* one. Burgundy 2005 is such a vintage. Without exception, 2005 Burgundies, both red and white, are exceptional with excellent texture, balance and richness. The unfortunate part of that phenomena is that values are far and few between, and difficult to find (but fortunately I'm a magician). Latour has crafted a brilliant batch of 2005s, all very reasonably priced.



Latour Bourgogne Chardonnay 2005 (\$12) Remarkable. *Première Cru* fruit from a legendary vintage ~ lush, long and rich with remarkable cream, apple, pear and spice notes. Drinks like its expensive cousins from the Grand Cru.

Latour Beaulonais Village “Chameroy” 2005 (\$11) ~ treat Beaujolais like Pinot Noir, with open-top fermentation & French oak, and it creates a complex, deep, dark richly flavored wine. From the town of Chameroy, this is a brilliantly rich and aromatic wine (I use it to fool Pinot snobs) Serve chilled.



Latour St. Veran “Les Deux Moulins” 2005 (\$16) ~ is named for the two windmills straddling Burgundy's La Petite Grosne river. It shows all the richness, opulence and definition of the great vintage with an array of silky apple/pear fruit laced with mineral & citrus notes.



Latour Chablis “La Chanfleure” 2005 (\$20) ~ halfway between Dijon and Paris sits the isolated Chablis section of Burgundy. The ancient limestone bed underlying the region creates ping-pong flavors & aromas of minerals, talc, lemon and lime. A brilliant match with seafood, oysters or any summer excuse.



A new arrival in Utah, **The Prisoner 2005 (\$32)**, is an enigmatic blend of Zinfandel, Cabernet, Syrah, Petite Syrah and Charbono. Sourced from several of Napa's most highly regarded vineyards: To-fanelli, Morisoli, Page Nord, and Marston, the wine doesn't show the heaviness that we've come to expect when we see “Napa” and “15.2% Alcohol” on a label. As a matter of fact, its very un-Napa like in its elegance and brightness. Its concentrated and rich without being heavy and with airing (it does take a little coaxing) it reveals a full rich body with layer after layer of black fruits, licorice, blueberries and cocoa in its aromatics and on its palate. Winemaker Dave Phinney has crafted a most Italian fruit bomb in the heart of Napa Valley. Wine Spectator laid a nice score on it too — 93 pts. Oh, and for the art curious, Dave Phinney is an art nerd and Goya is the inspired source for his label art.

Fresh from Down Under



Something old, something new. Evans & Tate is one of Australia's oldest and most well established producers, Spy Valley is one of New Zealand's newest. The **Evans & Tate Chardonnay 2005 (\$18)** is an elegant highcheekboned rendition of Chardonnay, a refreshing departure from the region's tropical oaky fruit bombs. Showing an almost Burgundian elegance, the finish is long, spicy and fresh with bright apple and creamy pear notes (**Wine Spectator 90 points**). The **Spy Valley Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough NZ 2006 (\$15)** is a brilliant rendition of Sauvignon Blanc with bright, tangy, gooseberry, passion-fruit, peppers, minerals and lime. No oak here & a brilliant texture from 4 months on the lees. Its cheeky. F*ck Cloudy Bay ~ this is 1/2 the price for 2x the wine from the same place.

Venetian Light



Franco Adami, President of the Prosecco Producers Consortium swears **Adami Prosecco, Garbel 13 (\$14)** is the only antidote to Venetian humidity. Spend a day walking the ancient streets of Venice, doing as the Venetians do, stopping and eating “cichetti” (small tapas-like nibbles) accompanied by “ombra” (small glasses “shadows” of wine), as clouds gather and disperse in cycles of mist and sun, and the late afternoon rose gold hue on the clouds will, as if by some magic become even rosier. I don't know if it's the addition of a small percentage of Chardonnay that makes for the exceptionally long finish or the almost French finesse of the mousse, but the bottle I opened while unpacking, made the sting of having left Venice a little less bittersweet.

The best of the best wine stores;

- Park City**
- 1901 Sidewinder Ave
- 435-649-7254
- Metro Salt Lake**
- 255 South 300 East
- 801-533-6444
- Cottonwood**
- 1863 East 7000 South
- 801-942-2580

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The Summer Wind...

Just because the Summer Wind is burning most of Utah, it doesn't mean you have to burn along with it. White wine (or pink) with high acid and low alcohol, thanks to their sharper textures, elicit physical reactions that alleviate the effects of heat and when high acid wines are paired with high acid foods, the resulting flavors become sweeter and brighter. The acid also stimulates digestion (there's an enzyme in saliva that's responsible).



Latour Ardeche Chardonnay 2005 (\$10) - not technically "Burgundy", its pedigreed is. Corton Charlemagne vines are the source for this incredibly rich, powerful wine. No oak, all stainless steel, loaded with rich sweet apple fruit and citrus.



Hagafen Cellars Potter Valley Riesling 2006 (\$11) - from Mendocino's famed Potter Valley vineyard. Not cloying or heavy, it shows an array of peach, apricot & mineral aromas and flavors with bright acids, just like its German exemplars



Broadbent Vinho Verde NV (\$9) - the most authentic of all Vinho Verde. Made with traditional Portuguese varieties, its as fresh and bright & citrusy as white wine gets - and its got bubbles! (from injected gas and suppressed malolactic). Perfect summer wine for summer fare.

Summer Color, Hot Pinks

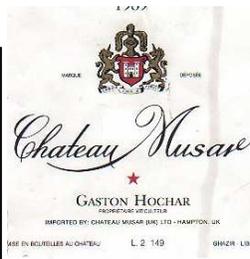


Biodynamic and Organic & perhaps the most nuanced, fruit expressive wines in Mendocino **Jeriko Estate Grenache/Syrah Rose 2006 (\$10)** shows exceptionally fresh aromas and flavors of strawberry, watermelon and spice. No oak and fermentation in stainless steel frame this wine in fresh bright acid that will refresh any summer fare.

Belle Glos, Oeil de Perdrix
Rose of Pinot Noir



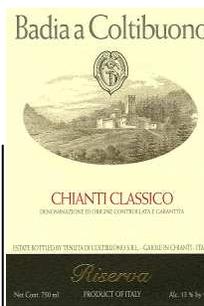
Belle Glos Rose of Pinot Noir 2006 aka "Oeil de Perdrix" has returned. For every bottle sold, **Caymus makes significant donations to the Susan G Komen Breast Cancer Research Foundation.** Great cause aside, this is a brilliant effort, full of peach and strawberry notes with a bracing dry freshness that begs for a blissful summer picnic experience.



Summer reds are a tough nut. When temps peak 100, the last thing on my mind is some 15% alcohol palate burner. That said, **Chateau Musar 1998 (\$43)** is a compelling, elegant, sensuous experience. With airing it has all the silky appeal of old Burgundy with a range of autumnal orange, brandied cherry and liqueur-like and the finish is nothing short of brilliant.

A Perfect Vintage

Bolgheri, slightly north and east of Tuscany, is known for very rich, concentrated and expensive Bordelais styled wines such as Sassicaia (\$250+). The **Aia Vecchia "Lagone" 2004 (\$15)** is a stunning Bolgheri blend of Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Sangiovese that shows tremendous richness and power one does not expect for \$15 (or deserve). With airing, it develops tremendous character showing notes of plush black fruit, anise, chocolate & espresso that develop into a long lingering finish. It isn't called "Baby Sassicaia" for nothing.



When I told winery owner Roberto Stucchi how thrilled I was at the **Badia a Coltibuono Chianti Classico 2004 (\$25)** He replied, "Its what we in Tuscany call a perfect vintage". Terrific now, this polished, velvet textured red drinks like gorgeous Burgundy with a thrilling array of red and black cherry fruits spiced with rosemary, pepper and anise; it has the stuffing to outlive most of us. What a stunner

Caffe Niche

779 East 300 South
Salt Lake City
801-433-3380

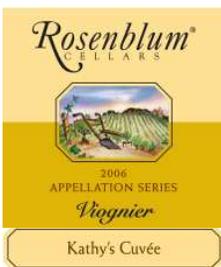
You feel cooler & hipper (metaphysically so) just walking in the door; and for someone as tragically unhip as me, it's a nice change. (Granted, all the beautiful people from Dexterity Salon sharing the space doesn't hurt, but the Caffe is no afterthought). The food is brilliantly executed (the lunch menu is particularly outstanding), the pastries are ethereally fresh and the wine list is esoteric and fun (cheap too! All selections are \$6 a glass, \$25 a bottle). On weekends there's a fresh, elegant breakfast menu, on weekend nights there's a saucy little tapas menu of little nibbles and bites, and all at a very very reasonable price. I'd like to keep it a secret, but in good conscience, I have to give praise, loudly, where it is long overdue. Go soon, go now, go often.

e-libation

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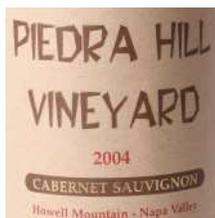
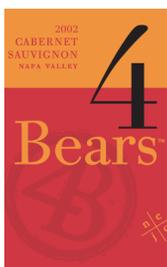
New Releases

I may have rhapsodized about certain wines and producers before, but from time to time, its important to point out new bottlings or new vintages of old favorites. Its a critical part of every wine geeks education to observe consistency over time in the hands of their favorite producers, and on occasion its tremendously entertaining to see just what certain producers do when they throw a new flavor out there for you. Curious winemakers like to experiment and great winemakers make great wine. Frank Altamura said to me some years ago, over a discussion of winemaking styles, "Large wineries have to make the same wine year after year, so they resort to all sorts of tricks over and over again; **I just take what Mother Nature gives me and try to get the hell out of the way**". And that's what I've always loved about the small producers, they always in the immortal words of Gomer Pyle, "Su-prise, Su-prise, Su-prise!" year in, year out.



Rosenblum "Kathy's Cuvée" Viognier 2006 (\$15) is a discrete 14.5% alcohol compared to last years shameless 15.6%. Last year was fun, but **this year** is livelier, sassier & brighter with all the peach and honeysuckle you could hope to get slapped with; its got balance, its got grace, **it talks dirty**. A young Audrey Hepburn with a very naughty streak.

Buy this wine

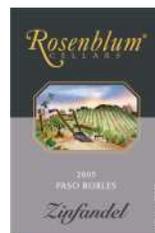


Abby Hoffman may have sold out (or gone insane in the years preceding his death ~ he did turn Republican, so insane is likely) but **4 Bears Napa Valley Cabernet 2003 (\$11)** harkens to that same strain of rebellion of sticking it to the man; its the negotiant brainchild of two winemakers, formerly of King Estate in Oregon, Will Bucklin and Sean Minor. This means that two supernaturally gifted winemakers bought Cabernet on the bulk market and finished it the way they saw fit. Its a plush concentrated effort offering loads of black fruit that gains in plushness and intensity as it sits open. \$30 Cab, \$10 bottle. '03 is a brilliant follow up to a stellar 2002 debut. **Piedra Hill** is the brainchild of William H Smith. He creates the legendary La Jota Estate in the 80's, source of California's then most collectible Cabs, he creates WH Smith Pinot Noir 5 years ago. **Piedra Hill Cabernet Sauvignon 2004 (\$33)** is the new benchmark in Howell Mountain Cabernet, and is the most subtle and expressive (and unusual) Cabernet I've tasted in 10 years. It has terrific extract and length on the palate, with a showy display of cherry liqueur flavors, sweet green herbs, anise, black fruits and chocolate & the tannins are silky sweet. Great winemaker keeps making brilliant trendsetting wine. Go figure

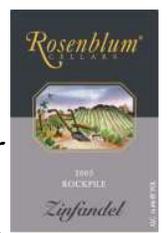
SELBY WINERY

Suzy is unique. Suzy is curious. Suzy gets great fruit, Suzy makes great wine. Suzy surprises the hell out of me. Two new releases from her Healdsburg Winery are well worth noting; **Selby Sauvignon Blanc, Dry Creek 2006 (\$11)** would shame a kiwi with its plump, sumptuous expression of ripe pink grapefruits. No oak, unfiltered, lightly fined, it is a sumptuous, rich, bright summer refresher. **Selby Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County 2004 (\$21)** is plump, rich, loaded with well defined black fruit and seamlessly integrated sweet French oak.

Zin Freaks rejoice



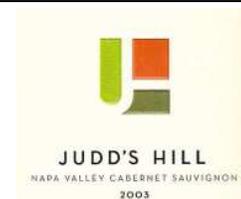
Richard Sauret Vineyard



Rockpile Road Vineyard

2005 brought with it a more evenly tempered year. No heat spikes during critical harvest times and the result are two splendidly rich, powerful, expressive Zinfandels. The **2005 Rosenblum "Richard Sauret Vineyard" Zinfandel (\$25)** shows loads of black fruit and briary spice that are the hallmarks of Paso Zinfandel fruit. The **2005 Rosenblum "Rockpile Road Vineyard" Zinfandel (\$33)** shows more delineation and acidity. Clarety finesse, Zinfandel power.

Righteous Cab



I love these people. The Finkelsteins of Judd's Hill are kind, decent, sweet, generous beyond reason and talented. And every year their wine gets better and better. Their new facility on Napa's Silverado Trail enables them to reach new levels of genius. The new **Judd's Hill Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2003 (\$34)** is a blast of ripe raspberry and sweet dark chocolate, sweeter and deeper than ever, with deftly managed oak and silky tannins. The flavors are so pinpoint you'll imagine that you are spitting raspberry seeds into the sink after a mug of hot chocolate. This is already climbing the charts, **named as one of the SF Chronicles best Cabernet's under \$50**. Their best yet (no small feat). Its easy to love great wine, easier still to love it when great people make it.