

## Does Vintage Matter?

Of all the terms in the wine world, perhaps the most misunderstood, debated, over-used and hyperbolic is *vintage*. Rarely glimpsed without modifying adjectives (*sensational, classic and awe-inspiring or disastrous, difficult, and short*), the ability to drop vintage outlooks into wine conversation confers 'connoisseur' status on the speaker; or just as likely proves that your brother-in-law is even a bigger blowhard than you thought.

Speaking simply (a rarity among wine geeks), *vintage* refers to the year the grapes were harvested. A 1970 vintage means the grapes were picked in 1970 (or most of them anyway, differing countries have differing rules as to the percentage of grapes that must be of a specific year in order to label the resulting wine thus, but that's another column). The reason it may be important is that, theoretically, vintage variations are reflective of weather changes. I say theoretically, because in order to discuss various vintages, one must assume that all other winemaking variables stay the same. Many 'experts' would have you believe that grapes from the same vines from the same plot of land are picked at the same time every year and made into wine in the same manner, so the only change that occurs is the weather, therefore determining whether the vintage is good or not. The reality is that grape growers make hundreds (if not thousands) of large and small decisions that affect the quality of the grape, some driven by weather, some driven by the winemaker's preferences. In addition, many (many, many, many) wines are made from grapes sourced from a variety of sites, and blended to achieve a taste profile that never changes. Also, technology (centrifugal presses, rotary fermenters, de-alcoholization and the like) in the winery can change or mitigate the effects of the weather. And finally, the modern trend towards planting grapevines in moderate and temperate climates that rarely vary suggests that weather is far less of a factor than is often thought.

So, vintage doesn't matter, right?

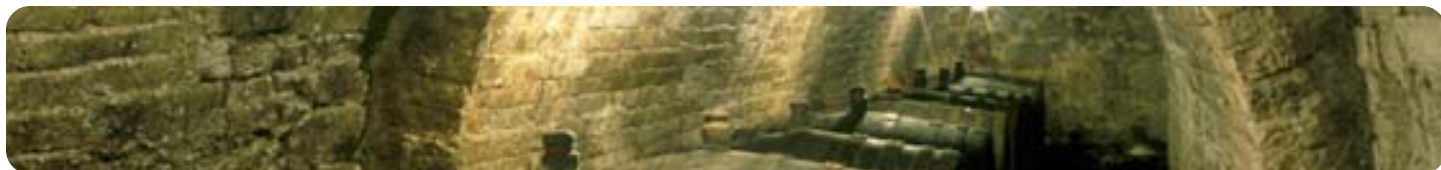
Well, it *can* matter. Some wineries and winemakers still choose to let weather variations be reflected in their wines; either because they are *single-vineyard* productions (and they don't have much choice) or because they seek an expression of place in their wine, that banded-about term *terrior*. And sometimes, despite one's best planning, Mother Nature refuses to co-operate. It rains (or hails or freezes) when it shouldn't, or it doesn't rain when it should, or its too hot or too cold, well, I think you get the idea. All of these variables make the grapes under-ripe or over-ripe or bloated, which may make the wine less than great, according to the critics, who are supposed to know about these things.

Oh, right. Wine critics.

The real problem with vintages is that the wine critics almost never get it right. I believe that there exists a gang mentality among wine critics; once someone claims that a vintage is great the others pile on. The reverse is also true. It also seems that wine critics don't understand *micro-climates*. They seem to assume that if it rains in one part of, say, Italy, it rains in all parts of Italy. Sometimes, as we non-wine critics know, it rains in Towson, but not Glen Burnie! It is possible then, that it rained in Apulia but not Piedmont? I mean, they are almost 600 miles apart and one is on the west coast and the other on the east? Possible, right? The real business of wine critics is selling magazines or newspapers, not wine. You can sell more magazines with a headline claiming that a particular vintage is great (or disastrous) than you can with a headline that says, "Another typical vintage in Napa Valley." So, you can't really trust the critics.

So what should the average consumer do regarding differing vintages?

Well, if your intent is to consume a given wine, than consume it. Don't let the questions about vintage muck up a perfectly good wine that you have enjoyed a zillion times before. Or, if you're not sure about a wine, ask us (your local retailer) to describe the *effects* of a particular vintage, *not* the quality of it. Because the other thing the critics get wrong all the time, is that only they can judge the quality of a wine.





## So it's hot...drink more wine.

As the calendar rushes headlong towards August, and the weather report becomes maddeningly consistent (highs in the 90s, humidity in the 90s), some people start thinking that other alcoholic beverages outperform wine in the all-important 'I need a drink and I need it now!' category. *Au contraire, mon ami!* The key is to drink wines from the hot (temperature, not temperament) places where the locals have been making and consuming wines for this type of weather for centuries. Places like...the southern Mediterranean coast of France! Crisp, aromatic whites! Refreshingly dry rosés! Elegant, herbal reds! Put aside those big, alcoholic monsters that awaken the sweat glands and deaden the senses! When it's hot, drink cool (temperament, not temperature). (PW)

### 2004 Chateau La Baronne Montagne d'Alaric Blanc

Corbieres

Regular price \$14.99 TWS price \$11.99

The best vineyards of Corbieres stretch downhill almost to the Mediterranean; the loose alluvial soil allows the vines to dig deep and provide mineral notes in the wines. Higher elevations, like the hillsides of Montagne d'Alaric, provide cooler and windier conditions, offering longer ripening, crisper and cleaner fruit tones, and richer and more expansive flavors and texture. This unusual blend of local grapes never sees a lick of oak nor does it undergo malolactic fermentation, the process where crisp *malic* acid is replaced by creamy *lactic* acid. The resulting wine is bright with honeysuckle and lime aromas, followed by leesy, broader flavors of fuji apple. Really. Fuji apples. Anyway, drink this wine with any seafood dish, any salad of your choosing or just in a glass. By its own self. (PW)

vol. 2, no. 15

two

### 2005 Mas Carlot Cuvée Tradition Marsanne/Roussanne

Vin d'pays doc

Regular price \$11.99 TWS price \$8.99

One generally finds grape varietals Marsanne and Roussanne in the northern Rhone Valley, although Roussanne is an allowable varietal in Chateauneuf-du-Pape as well. Sometimes hard and un-lovely, the grapes and subsequent wines, when handled well, provide rich and wonderful flavors of apples and peaches, but often need bottle age to soften and open. Big, bold whites, I've put red dye in them to fool wine snobs into thinking they're drinking red. But I digress.

This wine, from the southwest coast, is lighter, fresher and far more friendly than its more northern counterparts. Exhibiting those same apple and peach aromas and flavors, it offers a big mouthful of flavors, followed by cleansing and enlivening acidity. Really, a delicious wine and a great value to boot. (PW)

### 2005 Saint André de Figuière Cuvée François Rouge

Côtes de Provence

Regular price \$13.99 TWS price \$10.99

Near to the beaches of Estagnol and Brégançon, the organically farmed vineyards of Saint André de Figuière lie in a beautiful natural setting that allows for perfect (and balanced!) ripeness touched by both the sea salt tinged air and the herbal mountain vegetation. A blend of Cinsault, Syrah, Cabernet and Grenache it shows both a depth of flavor and a lightness of spirit. Enlivening, fresh and smooth, it's a fabulous wine for summer fare; anything grilled, chilled pastas, bold salads and watching the sunset. (PW)



## 2005 Domaine Tempier Rosé

Bandol

Regular price \$31.99 TWS price \$24.99

Once a year there is a Rosé moment that captures everyone's attention at The Wine Source: the release of Tempier's Bandol Rosé. The 2005 model is its usual pale hue and packed with bright fruit and the unmistakable scent of herbs de provence. Traditionally made from a healthy dose of Mourvedre, the wine's color belies the power and complexity lurking in the palate. This is a pricey Rosé, but one you have to taste to believe. (IAS)

## 2005 Trinquedvel Rosé

Tavel

Regular price \$18.99 TWS price \$14.99

We don't normally associate power with Rosé, but rather the qualities of grace, elegance, and crispness. However, here is one amazing exception which comes to us from the Southern Rhone in the form of a brawny, muscular Tavel Rosé. The 2005 Trinquedvel is a monster based on the Grenache variety, possessing a deep color and rich, spicy, dark fruit on the palate. Despite all this weight, the wine finishes with remarkable crispness and refreshing acidity that makes for a delicious well balanced treat. (IAS)

## 2001 Aphillanthes "Les Galets"

Cotes du Rhone Villages

Regular price \$18.99 TWS price \$14.99

The 2002 and 2003 vintages were both difficult for most southern Rhone producers. Bad weather and scorching heat made for two equally inconsistent and atypical vintages. On the other hand, the 2001 vintage was very typical for the southern Rhone, featuring easily ripe fruit and the influence of the earth still very present in the resulting wines. 2001 Les Aphillanthes Cotes du Rhone Villages is an excellent reminder of the beauty and strength of 2001, a blend of ripe, peppery fruit and a long, clean finish. Try this ready-to-drink treasure with any grilled fare, especially herb-infused lamb. Quantities are limited, so grab yours today. (IAS)

## Bornem Beers

Bornem beers are 'living' abbey beers. This means that after the primary fermentation in the keg, the beer also continues to evolve during the second fermentation in the bottle or in the keg after packaging.

**Bornem Triplel - \$3.49** - Abbey triples are usually blond or light amber in color. The Bornem Tripel is a party beer, hoppy and full of flavor, soft in the mouth, with an outstanding sweet-bitter balance, a pleasant aroma and a good head. It leaves a long aftertaste that hints of the wooden fegs it was stored in. A 'triple' means that the brewer uses three times as much malt in the brew kettle as he or she would use for a regular beer. A Triple used to be reserved for the Bishop or for Father Abbot. And you can bet they knew a good thing when they tasted it.

**Bornem Double - \$2.99** - This typical double with its warm dark brown color and bordeaux red undertones, has a fruity flavor that immediately makes you think of grains. You'll also find a hoppy aftertaste in this velvety soft beer. Its creamy, rich and robust head crowns this jewel of a beer. Few other dark doubles can rival this Bornem Dubbel. A 'double' means that the brewer uses twice as much malt as for a regular beer. That gives this beer its full round and rich flavor. It is said that the monks ate or drank nothing other than their Dubbel during Lent. So you can survive very well on this special beer. Delicious.



### It's Back!

#### 2005 Pomelo Sauvignon Blanc

TWS price \$11.99

Buy it by the case...\$115.20 (20% off!)



This wine was one of our most successful offerings of the spring and early summer and we were saddened when it appeared that it was sold out at the winery and would be unavailable until the release of the 2006. Imagine our delight, then, when the phone rang this morning and we were able to score some more!

Alive with grapefruit, lime and lemon flavors, this fresh and refreshing SB from Randy Mason, the Napa Valley King of Sauvignon Blanc, is exactly what the doctor ordered to get you through the upcoming dog days of August. Don't don't delay...after this batch, it really is gone.

vol. 2, no. 15

## Mark Your Calendar!

### \$10 TASTING AT IGGIES

Taste some Bubbly and a selection of Iggies gourmet Neapolitan-style pizza.

Wednesday, July 26, 5 - 7 pm  
Iggies, 818 N. Calvert St.

### WINEMAKER TASTING

Massimiliano Coppo of  
Coppo Winery of Italy

Friday, July 28, 4:30 - 7:30 pm  
The Wine Source, 3601 Elm Ave.  
For more information, call 410.467.7777

### FREE BEER TASTING

Suds of Summer

Saturday, July 29, 1:30 - 5:30 pm  
The Wine Source, 3601 Elm Ave.  
For more information, call 410.467.7777

### \$10 TASTING AT IGGIES

Taste wines of the Mediterranean and a selection of Iggies gourmet Neapolitan-style pizza.

Tuesday, August 8, 5 - 7 pm  
Iggies, 818 N. Calvert St.

### FREE WINE TASTING

Summer Whites

Friday, August 11, 4:30 - 7:30 pm  
Saturday, August 12 1:30 - 5:30 pm  
The Wine Source, 3601 Elm Ave.  
For more information, call 410.467.7777

### \$10 TASTING AT IGGIES

Taste wine and a selection of Iggies gourmet Neapolitan-style pizza.

Wednesday, August 23, 5 - 7 pm  
Iggies, 818 N. Calvert St.

**For a complete up-to-date listing of our events, check our website at [www.the-wine-source.com](http://www.the-wine-source.com)**

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## Cachaça: Rum's Mysterious Cousin



For many of us inhabiting the upper reaches of the northern hemisphere, rum has always held an exotic, mysterious, and some might even say dark place in the hierarchy of distilled beverages. Rum may bring to mind tropical breezes and fruit cocktails on the beach, but it also may conjure images of pirates, smuggling, revolution, and long, brutal, humid working days in the sugar cane fields. As exotic as the imagery surrounding rum is, there is a related beverage that occupies an even more mysterious place for those of us north of the Tropic of Cancer: Cachaça (pronounced ka SHA sa ). Rum and Cachaça are related in that both are derived from the sugar cane plant. The difference lies in the fact that Cachaça is derived straight from the sugarcane juice while rum is distilled from the sugar cane molasses. Cachaça comes mostly from Brazil, where the Portuguese introduced sugar cane in the 1500's for the sole purpose of producing white sugar. The slaves who worked the cane fields used to feed the scrap cane to their animals, and it was during this process that they noticed that cane left in water would naturally ferment after a period of time. Low-grade Cachaça was born. Originally a homemade drink of the poor, it began to be mass produced, and has now come full circle into an artisanal beverage that is hand crafted. Enough with the history, how is one supposed to drink it? Here are a few recipes:

**Caipirinha** - Probably the most famous cocktail that uses Cachaça.

Ingredients:

- 1 Lime cut into 8ths
- 2 teaspoons of sugar (preferably superfine)
- 2 1/2 oz. Cachaça
- ice cubes

Mixing:

In a lowball glass, muddle the sugar into 3 or 4 lime wedges. Fill the glass with ice cubes. Stir. Pour the Cachaça into the glass and stir well again.

A **Caipifruta** is prepared in the same way, replacing or complementing the lime with any other fruit (always fresh, never juices). Popular fruits include passion fruit, kiwi, lemon, pineapple, and strawberry.

**Batida Abacaxi** -

Ingredients:

- 2 oz. Cachaça
- 4 oz. Fresh Pineapple chunks
- 1/2 tsp granulated or super fine sugar
- 1 cup crushed ice

Mixing:

Place all of the ingredients into a blender. Blend well. Pour into a wine glass.



vol. 2, no. 15

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