

# *The Bluffs* *Food & Wine* *gazette*

February 2017

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A publication of the Council Bluffs Branch of the International Wine and Food Society





Photo courtesy of hugel.com

## President's Comments

**WHAT A SPECTACULAR FEAST** we had at Le Bouillon for my President's Holiday Dîner. Chef Paul Kulik crafted a delicious lineup of French comfort food. This was a labor intensive meal that showed a lot of thought. As an example of labor intensive, both Mary and I really enjoyed the beet ravioli, so Mary tried making it at home since she was used to making her own pizza dough. The first round was a bit of a disaster because the dough was too thick. So then we had to go out and buy a pasta roller to get the dough thin enough. That was a bit of an experience getting used to the machine. Then we broke several egg yolks trying to get them nested into the goat ricotta before enclosing them in the pasta. But that attempt was much better than the first. Finally, on the third attempt, things went much better, but it was still a lot of work. Much easier to let the professionals at Le Bouillon do it! It made me appreciate all the more the delicious meal we had at the restaurant. Kudos, Chef Paul!

In preparation for our wine themed Valentine's Day event, I have begun a three part series on wines from **Amador County**. Before 2016, I was only dimly aware that there was a wine district east of Sacramento, but after going on vacation and visiting Amador last October, I came back mightily impressed. If you love Zinfandel, this seems to be God's country. And Rhône varietals also do well in the Sierra Foothills microclimate. Call it serendipity, but Mary and I lucked out when we attended the **Big Crush Harvest Festival**. 45 wineries had open house for a weekend, with wine samples, food, music and just plain fun available. Take a moment to read all about it. Hopefully, it will pique your interest for our Sunday 2/12/2017 event at the Omaha Field Club where Amador County wines will be the theme.

So what is the most versatile white wine for food pairings? What white wine has a component that we usually ascribe to red wines only? What wine has a green component? If you were paying attention to the cover table of contents, you would know the answer is Sauvignon Blanc. A white wine has a red wine flavor...that alone should pique your interest. But then there is also the "cat's pee" dimension. I guess you are just going to have to read John Fischer's insightful article about the varietal grown round the world.

*Tom Murnan*

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**"Champagne is the only wine that leaves a woman  
beautiful after drinking it."**

***-Madame de Pompadour***

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# Event Report: President's Holiday Dîner

by Tom Murnan

Well, I asked for French Comfort Food, and the Chef/Owner of Le Bouillon, **Paul Kulik** delivered. Boy did he deliver. We had a magnificent meal if I do say so myself. This was an imaginative, creative menu that was just plain delicious. When we worked on the event, Chef Kulik zeroed in first on the wine. In fact, what he chooses for the menu primarily depends on which wine I have chosen, and I chose a small tour of France's wine appellations. He studies the professional wine reviews and crafts the recipe to promote the flavors and textures of the wine. The results were outstanding. Due to somewhat smaller numbers, we were able to use six round tables instead of the two long ones. We were cozy in the Fireplace and Mirror rooms, with 32 attending, 7 of which were guests. The hors d'oeuvres were served at the bar, which helped to spread everyone out. I brought some colonial styled centerpieces for half the tables: an apple cone crowned with a pineapple, and two lemon cones. Very Christmas-y.

We started out with French Champagne, the **Charles de Cazanove Tête de Cuvée** NV from Reims. The dry, brut style with its high acid and slightly chalky taste was just the introduction we needed to get the party going. The chef had prepared three appetizers for us: a **Truffle Mousse**; a **Cod Accras**; and an **Elk Short Rib "Paquet."**

**Cod Accras** is essentially Brandade, or salt cod. The cod was salted at the restaurant. Then it was soaked in milk several times to reconstitute it and soften the saltiness. Next it is cooked with potatoes, cream, sweet garlic and rosemary. This is balled up and covered with a prosecco batter and fried. It was topped with oven dried tomato and aioli. The **Elk** was essentially a stuffed brioche.

Wrapped in a brioche bun was Texas elk which had been braised with stock, wine, sweet onion, and wild mushrooms

from Omaha providers and then stuffed inside. As a side was some **Apple Dijon Butter. The Black Truffle Pecorino Mousse** was a change from the original menu since truffles became unexpectedly available. Pecorino cheese was added to the mousse. The mousse was seasoned with truffle salt. I could have gorged myself on the mousse alone!

It was time to migrate to table. Chef Paul came out and explained both the wines and the course for all the different flights. He was quite knowledgeable and educational in his explanations of both.

For our **Amuse** course, a **2010 Domaine Pepière Muscadet Sèvre et Maine 4** was selected. It hails from the estuary at the mouth of the Loire River, near the city of Nantes, where the delta is peppered with ancient sea shells which contributes to the character of the wine. This minerally flavor gets into the better area wines. It is difficult to get a good Muscadet. There's a lot of poor ones out there. But Domaine Pepière is among the very best. Made from the **Melon de Bourgogne grape**, it has nothing to do with Moscato. This wine has high acidity, is dry, with a small bouquet. (Muscadet is soft, sweet and has a huge nose.) The Melon de Bourgogne is a kind of refugee. It was chased out of Burgundy, who wanted Pinot Noir [and Chardonnay, editor] purity. It is a hearty grape that can withstand a bit of frost. It worked its way to the coast, to the delta at the mouth of the Loire where it found its home. The typical style is made sur lie, or on the lees. The wines traditionally sat for about 8 months or more on their lees and were not racked until the autumn.







Sèvre et Maine is the best part of the appellation. Pepière is the best of the best producers. The classic accompanying dish is oysters. Our presentation, however, was three seafood terrines with a **Verdant Sauce**.

Three different kinds of fish mousse were presented. I had trouble discerning their differences. The sauce was a cucumber based sauce, with some rice wine vinegar, herbs and a tiny bit of chili pepper and chopped sugared pine nuts to add crunch. It was acidic and lively. The Muscadet, a little muted and neutral on its own, came alive with the fish. It was minerally and dry. A good match.

Our **Entrée** course was **Beet Raviolo with Goat Cheese and Pistachio, Brown Butter and Sage**. Hidden from view within was an egg yolk. What a wonderful sauce that made once breached by the fork. A large raviolo pasta was stuffed with the beet and a ricotta of goat cheese. The cheese was depressed with a spoon so an egg yolk could be added just before cooking. Then the pasta covered the top. It was cooked for two minutes so the yolk would be runny. So the egg provided its own sauce. This was comfort food par excellence. The local beets added a sweet, earthy flavor. It sat in a pool of brown butter and sage. Chopped pistachios were sprinkled on top. Wonderful.

Our wine was the **2014 Thomas-Labaille Sancerre "Les Monts Damnées."** Chef Paul spoke of Sancerre, which is up the Loire River to the east from Muscadet. It is hilly in the area, but one of the most noticeable ridges is the Mont Damnée, the Damn Mountain, which has been a vineyard since the 10th century. The hilltop overlooks the town of **Chavignol**. The most prized goat cheese in France comes from Chavignol. Thomas-Labaille is in the top tier of producers. Sancerre lies on Kimmeridgian chalk soil, which is also found in Chablis and Champagne. Chavignol is also known for its chalky soil. The wine has a nice pear like intensity and a light, grassy finish that makes it a delight to pair with goat cheese.

The **Relevée** course was **Roast Lamb, Chestnuts, Wild Mushrooms and Panisse**. Medium rare lamb rib sat atop a bed of interesting and flavorful wild mushrooms, chestnuts and panisse. Panisse is a dish from Provence and a kind of polenta with a crispy exterior and a creamy interior.







That and the chestnuts acted like a contrast to the savory goodness of the rest of the dish. The lamb was so tender it melted in your mouth.

Pauillac is home to some of France's best Bordeaux, but it also produces great lamb. So lamb figured in Chef Paul's calculations for the wine pairing. In this case the wines had nothing to do with Pauillac. The **2012 Château Malartic Lagravière** hails from Pessac-Legognan (the old Graves area), south of the city of Bordeaux. The Atlantic Ocean plays a huge role in the wines of Bordeaux, with its maritime winds, temperature and moisture. The area of Pessac-Legognan looks like Fremont, Nebraska to Chef Paul, with gentle rolling hills. In 1855, Graves got famous [with Château Haut Brion being named a first growth]. But most of the rated wines were in the Medoc. So Graves got jealous and made their own classification about 100 years later. Malartic is one of those classified wines. The white wines are also famous from this region. The red wines here are Cabernet Sauvignon based, while the whites are Sauvignon Blanc based.

The **2012 Fleur Cardinale** comes from St. Emilion, from the Right Bank of the Gironde River. It is a newer establishment. Wines from the Right Bank are more Merlot dominated. St. Emilion is an old, picturesque city with a strong religious element. It sits on a slight rise, and these little things make a difference. It is a bit more continental. It is a little cooler and harvest is a little earlier which is why they grow Merlot and Cabernet Franc rather than Cabernet Sauvignon.

The **Rôti** course was next. Again, Chef Paul spoke about the wines and food. Our northern Rhône wine was the **2010 E. Guigal Côte Rôtie**. No name is more associated with wine making in the Rhône than Guigal. The Rhône used to be dominated by wine merchants, but Guigal propped up the grape growers themselves with long term contracts. With Côte Rôtie you see a dramatic, dramatic change in culture, climate, sensibility and geography with its trellised ancient, sloped granite vineyards. Côte Rôtie is divided into two areas, the Côte Brune and the Côte Blonde. These are south and southeast facing slopes. The Rhône appellation itself is divided into the Rhône alps in the north, which is more influenced



by the mountains above Avignon, and the Rhône maritime areas in the southern Rhône. In the northern alps region, you get the wind coming through the mountains, cooling the vineyards. On the flip side, going south past Vienne, instead of having these sharp, steep canyons, you have these sprawling plateaus. The difference is jarring. The northern Rhône thinks of themselves as slightly Burgundian. They are influenced by the mountains and the city of Lyon.

By the time you get to Avignon, it's Provence, it's the Mediterranean. They grow olives, they grow citrus. It's a totally different mindset. They grow Grenache, a completely different grape than the northern Syrah. Syrah is dark, dominated by black pepper flavors, black olives and smoked meats. Tasted young it is like a clenched fist, whereas Grenache is generous even from its youth. It's round, supple, rich, alcoholic, powerful. In Châteauneuf-du-Pape they permit 12 different varieties including white. They often blend a number of grapes into their cuvees. The **2010 Xavier Vignon Châteauneuf-du-Pape Cuvée Anonyme** is a blend. It is almost unnerving how stony the soil is in the southern Rhône, like someone heaped up rocks for a construction site. It is like ancient, decomposed mountains torn apart by glaciers.

The dish for this course was **Pot au Feu**, or pot of fire. There is a pave, or square, of pork belly, a variety of vegetables, and the broth itself is a foie gras broth that has been concentrated. This was the essence of comfort food. The pork was so tender that we were only given a soup spoon for the dish. Rich and unctuous, this had umami written all over it, especially with the foie gras emulsion, which seemed to me to be a chicken stock based broth with the addition of foie gras. The **Côte Rôtie** was the heavier of the two wines, earthy nose, blackberry, smoky, and bacon notes in the body, tannins smooth with the food, delicious. The **Anonyme** was lighter in body, and tasted of raspberries, plum, and woody notes, it sported ripe, fine tannins even without the food to smooth things over.

Finally, we arrived at the **Savoureux** course.

This was a Passion Fruit Bombe. A piece of chocolate cake was covered by passion fruit flavored ice cream that to me tasted like mango. The bombe was drizzled with chocolate syrup. The dessert also sported a few pieces of peanut brittle. Our wine was the **2000 Zind Humbrecht Gewurztraminer Goldert Vendange Tardive**. There was a little bit of noble rot in the wine. Very aromatic. Alsace has stunningly beautiful villages and vineyards. Alsatian soils are also incredibly complex. There are 51 Grand Cru vineyards in Alsace. The history of Alsace is also fascinating as it alternated between French and German ownership. Even though Alsace is all the way to the northeast corner of France, it is actually is one of the warmer regions. The Voges mountains trap warmth and moisture that would otherwise be blown away by the wind from the Atlantic. The added moisture ripens the grapes and helps promote noble rot in the Vendange Tardive wines [and the sweeter Selection de Grains Noble wines, which are like a Sauternes].

This course was the only one that I thought the food and wine did not marry quite as well as I had hoped. I think the fault lies with the ice cream, which is notoriously difficult to pair with wine. My opinion, as well as a few others at my table, was that by themselves, both wine and dessert was wonderful. Put them together and the wine struggled (and lost) to the ice cream. Other tables liked the combo, however.

I would like to thank **Chef Paul Kulik** for one of the best meals the IWFS CB has had this year. Thanks also to **Chef de Cuisine Sam Zacchoni** for executing the meal. For a guy with a Finance degree from Creighton, and never went to culinary school, he did a marvelous job. Thanks also to our servers **Katie Robert**, **Bryan Cavalieri**, and **Robert Little** for stellar and attentive service. Every time I got up, and it was a lot, I found my napkin folded by the time I got back. Thanks as well to the kitchen staff, and to manager **Haley Lindholm** who worked with me to ensure a seamless production.

























# Amador County Wines: The Big Crush Part 1

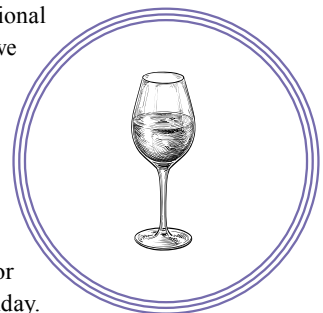
by Tom Murnan



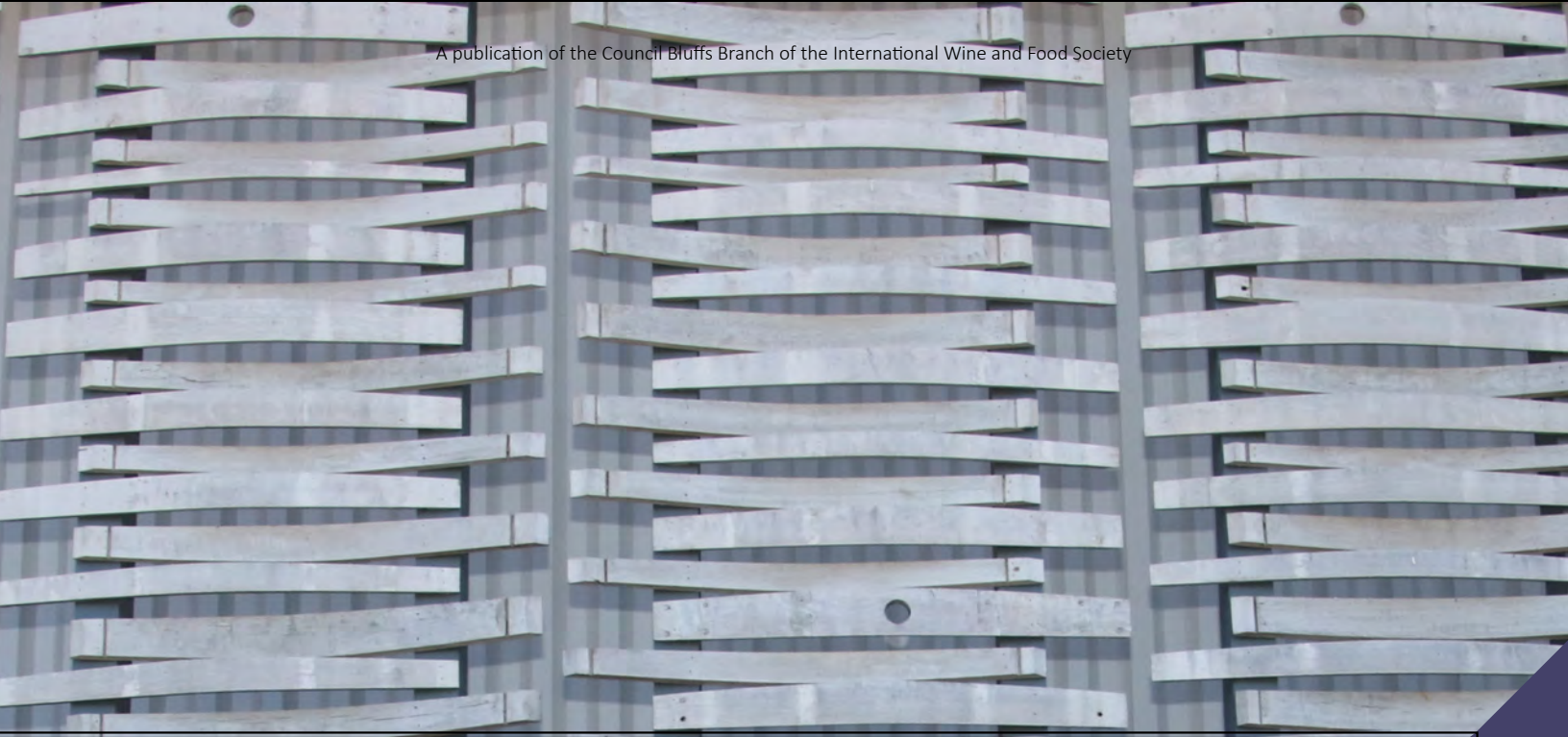
**A**MO, AMAS, AMAT, AMAMUS, amatis, amant. Amadeus. Amador. What is the common thread here? These are all variations on the word love. The first six are the first conjugations a student learns in Latin class: I love, you love, he loves, etc. Amadeus: beloved of god. Amador: Spanish for one who loves. On February 12th, two days before Valentine's Day, that feast of Love, we will feature the wines of Amador County.

This September, Mary and I journeyed to California to visit our daughter. After stopping in Lodi and sampling the wineries there, we visited Yosemite National Park. But on the way back to Sacramento, we visited Amador County. In the Sierra Foothills, about one hour east of Sacramento, lies Amador County. We were in luck. The 24th **Big Crush Harvest Wine Festival** was being held October first and second. For a mere \$55.00 we had the chance to visit 45 different Amador County wineries over Saturday and Sunday. Each address provided different attractions. They all had fantastic food (like wood fired pizza), some had live music, some had grape stomping, samples of newly crushed must, barrel samples, and majestic, rugged scenery. I saw several signs at several properties warning visitors to Beware Rattlesnakes.

It is a shame that the wine writers pretty much ignore the Sierra Foothills. For one thing, it is hard to find a professionally rated wine. But that doesn't mean they make poor wines. The **Wine Enthusiast** is one of the few publications that has devoted much time to the county. Amador County excels in making Zinfandel, Rhône blends (Syrah, Grenache, Viognier, Marsanne and more), Semillion, and a few Italian varietals (Barbera, Sangiovese). The county seems to be undiscovered by the greater wine world, which



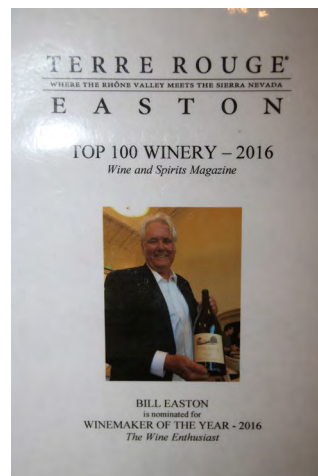




Amador founded a successful gold mining camp near Amador City. Some of the best **Mother Lode** gold camps were found right outside the city. The Shenandoah Valley, where quite a few wineries are currently located near Plymouth, CA, was once a principal viticulture region of the state. In the mid 1800's, over a hundred wineries located in what was then called the Mother Lode area after the discovery of gold, and some of the winery areas are still in use today. The 1869 **Original Grandpère Vineyard**, with an altitude of 1600 feet, is still in use after about 150 years and is the oldest documented Zinfandel vineyard in America. It was named vineyard of the year in 2016 by the California State Fair. **Andis Wines** is one of four wineries getting fruit from Grandpère. (The others are Scott Harvey Wines and Vino Noceto, both from Amador County, and Macchia in Lodi.) We will be pouring Andis Mouvedre at our 2/12/17 event. The decline of the California Gold Rush and Prohibition devastated the wine industry in Amador. It has taken until 1973 to return. Here is a quick sketch of some of the wineries we will sample at the Valentine's Day event Sunday February 12th, 2017, at the Field Club of Omaha.

**Domaine de la Terre Rouge and Easton Winery** are two of the principal wineries in Amador County. They actually are two divisions of the same company. Terre Rouge focuses on Rhône style wines, while the Easton brand concentrates on Zinfandel, Barbara and Sauvignon Blanc. Both wineries are housed in the same low key, architecturally sleepy buildings. It is owned by Bill Easton and Jane O'Riordon, who founded this artisanal winery in 1986.

What they lack in architecture they make up for in their wines. Over thirty different wines are made, many of them in very small lots. Bill Easton is nominated for 2016 winemaker of the year by the Wine Enthusiast. He was also honored by the







**Rhône Rangers** for a lifetime achievement in pioneering and promoting Rhône varietals in California.

Our first two dinner wines will come from Terre Rouge and Easton. We will compare a Terre Rouge Viognier, a Rhône white wine, to an Easton Sauvignon Blanc. Later in the evening we will have other Rhône varietal wines: a Syrah Cotes de l'Ouest as well as a Muscat à Petits Grains from Terre Rouge. The latter is interesting because it is a California take on the classic Rhône sweet wine, Muscat Beaumes de Venise, where sweet Muscat grapes have their fermentation stopped by the addition of high alcohol. That way the natural sweetness in the grapes is preserved.

The wineries make other wines including: the Terre Rouge Enigma, a 50% Marsanne, 29% Roussanne and 21% Viognier Rhône white wine; Six different Terre Rouge Syrahs with vineyard designations; a Rhône blend called Tête-à- Tête, and one called **Garrigue**, which is a Rhône term used to describe southwestern France's wild shrubs of lavender, thyme, sage, rosemary and kermes oak. In this case, Tête-à- Tête is a Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon blend. They also do Mouvedre and Grenache, more Rhône varietals. The Easton division produces a number of Zinfandels, a Pinot Noir, a Cabernet Sauvignon, and a Sauvignon Blanc. Easton also produces a dessert Zinfandel.

This is an important pair of wineries in Amador county and their wines deserves to be tasted.

**Andis Wines.** Unlike Terre Rouge, with its understated and traditional building, Andis has a strikingly modern winery facility. Andis is a relatively new winery that was only built in 2010, but that doesn't mean they have all young vines. The vineyards were actually planted in 1978 by Don Potter. In 2009, the Potter property was purchased by ex-Marine Core veteran Andrew Friedlander and Janis Akuna, a certified financial planner and a new facility was built in 2010. The winery owns about 20 acres. 7.25 acres are planted to Zinfandel, making it the largest varietal Andis







makes, including a 38 year old plot. Other plots, like the afore mentioned **Grandpère Vineyard** are leased.

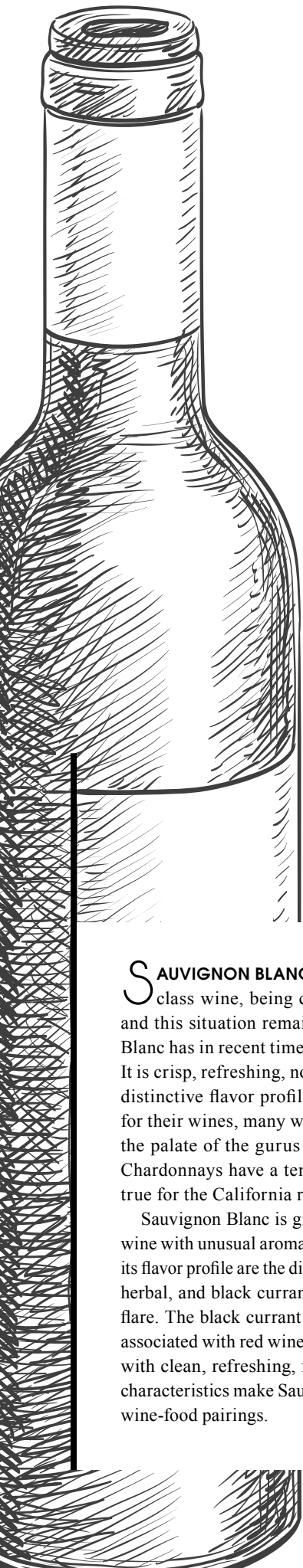
Other varietals include Barbara, 2.8 acres of Malbec, and 2 acres of Sauvignon Blanc. Rhône varietals include 1.1 acres of Petit Syrah, 1 acre of Grenache and 0.9 acres of Syrah, and a small amount of Mouvedre.

Primitivo, Semillion, Cabernet Franc and Viognier are also used. All vineyards are dry farmed. Andis uses both traditional and innovative winemaking techniques, including aging wine in concrete. Their building is state of the art modern with a "green" design that exceeds California's strict specifications by 15%. For example, the placement of the building reduces energy loss from the sun, and the barrel room uses **evaporative cooling** instead of air conditioning. This creates a higher level of humidity and reduces the "angel's share" of wine lost to evaporation, which disrupts the original balance of the wine.

Continuing the "green" and recycling theme, the visitor discovers their signature Barrel Stave Wall on the building exterior. This is a large, accented screen wall on the north side of the building that is completely fabricated from recycled wine barrel staves and stained in a soft gray to create a textured, woven effect. Interestingly, you can have your name branded into the stave before it is placed in the wall.







## Sauvignon Blanc— The Most Versatile White Wine for Wine-Food Pairings

by John Fischer

**S**AUVIGNON BLANC HAS LONG been regarded as a second class wine, being continually outflanked by Chardonnay, and this situation remains so to this day. However, Sauvignon Blanc has in recent times experienced an increase in popularity. It is crisp, refreshing, not overly heavy, and has a varied though distinctive flavor profile. In an attempt to receive high scores for their wines, many winemakers tend to make Chardonnay fit the palate of the gurus who rate the wines. As a result, many Chardonnays have a tendency to taste alike. This is especially true for the California rendition.

Sauvignon Blanc is grown worldwide and makes a distinctive wine with unusual aromatics. The most remarkable components of its flavor profile are the distinctive green vegetal, gooseberry, citrus, herbal, and black currant flavors, which give the wine an exotic flare. The black currant flavor is unusual, as it is almost always associated with red wines, especially Cabernet Sauvignon. Along with clean, refreshing, flavor supporting acidity, these varietal characteristics make Sauvignon Blanc a choice wine to be used in wine-food pairings.

One of the scents that can be detected in Sauvignon Blanc is “cat’s pee.” This description is tossed about in wine circles, and you would think that it would make the wine an abomination. However, the scent is subtle and in the context of the other savors in the wine, it surprisingly does not sabotage its character. Rather it is a scent to look for when attempting to identify the wine in blind tastings. Please do not leave this article with the mental image that the wine reeks of cat’s pee; it most certainly does not. Sauvignon Blanc is a savory wine that can be thoroughly enjoyed with or without accompanying food.

The structural makeup of Sauvignon Blanc is founded on a hefty concentration of sapid flavors supported by a solid core of tartness and in some wines an occasionally dash of sweetness. In California the wine is usually aged in oak and blended with Semillon, a soft, round, low acid wine; virtually all white Bordeaux wines (all are Sauvignon Blanc based) receive similar treatment. The blending and oak treatment rounds out the wine and makes it richer, softer, more complex, and fuller bodied—and more Chardonnay-like.





However, such ministrations take away from its food-friendly nature, as food pairings are more successful with lighter, tarter, and less cumbersome wines.

Sauvignon Blanc wines from New Zealand and the French wines of Sancerre and Pouilly Fumé do not see oak and are unblended. These wines and other such unadulterated versions represent the best choices for matching with foods.

Some of the many characteristics that make this wine so successful in wine-food pairings are the green vegetal and herb flavors, which mirror similar flavors in foods; its racy tartness, which reduces the weight of foods and invigorates and enhances their flavors; and its medium body, which allows it to pair with a wide variety of foods. By contrast, many California Chardonnays are full-bodied and should only be matched to full-bodied dishes. Because of its hefty weight and low acidity, pairing Chardonnay with full-bodied food often makes the combination cloyingly heavy and overly rich. I find it peculiar that Chardonnay commands such a major role on the menu of most restaurants in spite of the fact that it is rather limited in its ability to pair with many foods.

Because of its green flavors, Sauvignon Blanc is a great match with green vegetables such as asparagus, artichoke, spinach, and bell peppers, the likes of which are difficult to match with most other wines. It is a perfect wine for green salads in vinaigrette dressing and other light, tart foods, as the high acidity of the wine will not be washed out by the tartness of the dish. Fish, often served with a fresh squeeze of lemon, have a strong affinity to tartness, which Sauvignon Blanc can readily provide. Salty foods such as ham, sausage, corned beef and the likes need wines with good acidity, and Sauvignon Blanc can fill the bill.

If you need a white wine to match to a particular food and are in doubt, try a Sauvignon Blanc. You will be amazed at the number of dishes that it can be paired with. It's a wonderful match with cheeses (especially goat cheese), most fish, shellfish, and poultry dishes. If a dish can be enhanced with a squeeze of lemon, it will most likely make a great match with a Sauvignon Blanc.





## Upcoming Council Bluffs Branch Events

Mark Your Calendars!



### January 22, 2017

V. Mertz

Theme: The Art of the Cellar with guest host Mike Glasby of Courtier Wines  
Producers: Jill Panzer and Mike Glasby



### March 11, 2017

Omaha Press Club

Theme: Todd and Joe's Birthday Bash  
Producers: Todd Lemke and Joe Goldstein



### February 12, 2017

Omaha Field Club

Theme: Amador County wines featuring great Zins and Rhone Varietals  
Dance to the music of the 60's-80's with DA the DJ, Dennis Aliano  
Producers: Mary & Tom Murnan



### April 23, 2017

V. Mertz

Theme: All Champagne Dinner  
Producers: Patti & Steve Hipple

### Hosting an event?

Let us know when, where and a little bit about what's going on!

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in hosting an IWFS event.

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