The American Wine Society (AWS) is a non-profit, national organization with over 5,000 wine enthusiasts and 125 chapters throughout the U.S. and Canada - people from beginner to expert who love to learn about wine.

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Editor’s Message

It’s 6º F outside (without the wind chill) so it gives me great pleasure to write about spring. Canadian poet, novelist and environmental activist Margaret Atwood once richly observed that “in the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.”

George Medovoy

VIA-RAIL

Discovering Halifax and Nova Scotia Wine Country-Part 2

Arriving in Halifax, our VIA Rail train pulls into the historic Beaux-Arts-style station across the street from a statue of Lieutenant General Edward Cornwallis, the first British governor of Nova Scotia.

Michael Schafer, CSW

Grüner Veltliner

Easier to drink than to say!

Grüner Veltliner (GROO-nur VELT-line-er), now that you know how to pronounce it, is one of the world’s most flexible wines for pairing with food. One-third of the grapes grown in Austria are Grüner Veltliner. It’s Austria’s national grape. How many countries have a national grape? Now you know one!

Rick Kushman

Chianti Classico - So Italy

Both the sun and the temperature were dropping on the small group of American wine writers visiting the Chianti Classico region in Italy. All had been to Italy before. And they’re journalists. Their job is to not be astounded. Still, they were nearly mesmerized by the view.

Jim Rink

Greenhouse Effect Paves Way For World Class Reds in Michigan

Climate change is generally not viewed as a good thing in most parts of the world, but one Michigan entrepreneur is busy creating his own “greenhouse effect” to try and duplicate growing conditions found on the 45th parallel across the sea in Italy. Usually associated with vegetable farms or nurseries, the ubiquitous greenhouse — aka hoop house, high tunnel or nellasserra™ — has been repurposed by renewable energy czar and reality TV star Marty Lagina to shelter premium red wine grapes.

Wayne Stitzer

Getting To The Bottom of Wine

I am often asked about racking wine. Usually in terms of “is it harmful?” And they are usually surprised by my answer; it’s harmful not to rack. The concern is that the wine is being exposed to air, which contains oxygen that will hurt the wine. Actually, what lies at the bottom of your wine is way more damaging than a little whiff of air.

David Falchek

New Jersey Winemakers Get To The Heart of Red Blends

A new class of blends unique to a New Jersey wine region is bringing attention to the Garden State’s reds, and may offer direction for making red wines throughout the East.

Randy Caparoso

Next Stop, Lodi

As we begin another year, we have the chance to reflect back on 2014 and some of the exciting news we’ve shared throughout this past year and help us look to the future of what makes Lodi such a special wine region! Here are some thoughts and reflections from writers and others who share our excitement for Lodi wines.

Ellen Landis, CS, CSW

21 Wines to Watch

In her continuing column, Ellen Landis selects 21 wines for you to enjoy with any occasion or celebration.
It’s 6°F outside (without the wind chill) so it gives me great pleasure to write about spring. Canadian poet, novelist and environmental activist Margaret Atwood once richly observed that “in the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.”

After a winter under cover, grapes (and people) are more than ready to get out and embrace the life-affirming warmth of spring. In this issue of the Journal, we will learn how the seasons and, yes, the dirty soil itself, impact some of our favorite wines.

But first, it gives me pleasure to announce that our very own Wayne Stitzer was recently awarded “Connecticut Wine Person of the Year 2014.” Wayne is a professional member of AWS, a frequent guest speaker, winemaking consultant and longtime contributor to the Journal.

In this issue, Wayne “gets to the bottom” of wine and offers timeless advice on how to remove sediment and other insoluble solids that can adversely affect the flavor of wine.

Climate change is generally not viewed as a good thing in most parts of the world, but one Michigan entrepreneur is busy creating his own “greenhouse effect” to try and duplicate growing conditions normally found on the 45th parallel in Europe. Read my story to learn more about the unusual odyssey of Marty Lagina, grape grower, wind farmer and treasure hunter.

We will also examine a couple of wine-growing regions — one old and one new. New York Times bestselling author Rick Kushman romances us with tales of the Chianti Classico region in Italy, examining the landscape and its people, who, at times, seem inseparable. Veteran Journal contributor and AWS Director of Member Services David Falchek brings our attention to a new New Jersey red wine blend (Coeur d’Est) that has emerged from the Outer Coastal Plain AVA.

On the travel front, George Medovoy takes the Harvest Highway to discover Halifax and Nova Scotia wine country. In Part 2 of his VIA Rail Canada journey, George discovers some fascinating wineries and a vineyard with a red phone box. I would say more but I don’t want to spoil the surprise.

Michael Schafer, CSW, shares some information about a wine grape that is easier to drink than to pronounce. Say hello to Grüner Veltliner, Austria’s national grape.

Sommelier Ellen Landis, CS, CSW gives us more “wines to watch” in her popular regular feature. In this issue, Ellen features mostly California and New York wines, with British Columbia, France, Italy, Missouri, Virginia and Washington also represented. Wine prices in this issue’s collection range from $9 to $150.

Stay thirsty,
The AWS is the largest consumer based wine education organization in the U.S. A non-profit group, the AWS is devoted to educating people on all aspects of wine. Its members include wine novices, experts, grape growers, amateur and professional winemakers, chefs, wine appreciators, wine educators, restaurateurs and anyone wanting to learn more about wine.

AWS ACTIVITIES

AWS Chapters: Local community groups of AWS members sponsor programs, usually monthly. Activities include: tastings, dinners, lectures, picnics, winery tours, winemaking and cooking demonstrations, viticulture conferences, amateur wine-judging events, and other wine-related social events. Guests are welcome and novices have nothing to fear. Chapters are self-supporting, so expect a nominal charge to attend a tasting, dinner, etc. If a local chapter does not exist in your area, the national office will be glad to assist in forming a chapter. All that is needed are a few interested wine lovers. Meeting can be informal and held in member’s homes or in other settings, such as restaurants and wineries.

AWS Regional Events: Organized by regional vice-presidents, include statewide wine judging, contests, special tastings, regional wine conferences, regional picnics and dinners.

AWS National Conference: Held each fall—a two and one-half day national conference and extravaganza of wine. Attendees become part of a tradition that has drawn wine-lovers, connoisseurs and novices together to discover what is new in wine. Members experience fine food at America’s finest American hotels and resorts. The annual conference brings professionals, serious wine appreciation, wine production, grape growing and cuisine. Members experience fine food at America’s finest American hotels and resorts. The annual conference brings professionals, serious wine appreciation, wine production, grape growing and cuisine. Members experience fine food at America’s finest American hotels and resorts. The annual conference brings professionals, serious wine appreciation, wine production, grape growing and cuisine. Members experience fine food at America’s finest American hotels and resorts. The annual conference brings professionals, serious wine appreciation, wine production, grape growing and cuisine. Members experience fine food at America’s finest American hotels and resorts. The annual conference brings professionals, serious wine appreciation, wine production, grape growing and cuisine. Members experience fine food at America’s finest American hotels and resorts. The annual conference brings professionals, serious

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Gaspereau Vineyards is one of Nova Scotia’s exciting young wineries

VIA RAIL CANADA:
Discovering Halifax and Nova Scotia Wine Country—Part 2

Arriving in Halifax, our VIA Rail train pulls into the historic Beaux-Arts-style station across the street from a statue of Lieutenant General Edward Cornwallis, the first British governor of Nova Scotia.

A hilly city overlooking the second largest harbor in the world, Halifax recalls British rule at the famous Citadel, where visitors can watch costumed soldiers ‘fire’ canons high above the city.

Today’s Halifax is a very friendly city with a hip waterfront and an architectural mix of modern and historic, like the lovely Georgian-style Government House on Barrington Street and Victorians painted in riotous colors.

Our comfortable bed and breakfast is also an historical landmark – a brick building called The Halliburton, completed in 1823 as the home of Sir Brenton Halliburton, an early chief justice of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court. The B&B also has a popular restaurant called “Stories.”

THE “TO-DO” LIST

When we have continental breakfast off the lobby, our friendly waitress suggests a drive to Lunenburg, the pretty seaside town southwest of Halifax, and we write that in our “to-do” list. Halifax has many great eateries, including a rousing Irish pub called Durty Nelly’s, which was built in Ireland and assembled in Halifax. For a different experience, visit the busy Halifax Seaport Farmers’ Market, where local produce, baked goods, and cheeses are for sale.

At the nearby Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, we find tattered suitcases and photographs that recall the immigrants who stepped off the boat in Halifax, their gateway to Canada. This is also where I find the entry papers of my late father, who immigrated to Canada in 1924. Outside the building, an old Canadian rail car is still standing, as if waiting for the immigrants to get on and take them to other parts of Canada. At the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, things turn somber with the story of the Titanic, the ill-fated ship which went down in 1912. The remains of many of the passengers were buried in Halifax.

But on a happier note, we take a number of interesting side trips.

HARVEST HIGHWAY

One is a drive about an hour north of Halifax on the Harvest Highway (Highway 101) to pretty Annapolis Valley wine country near the small university town of Wolfville. The area offers views of neatly-manicured vineyards and peach and apple farms overlooking the Bay of Fundy; the young wineries produce lovely whites, reds, ice wine, sparkling wine, and fruit wine, too. Since Nova Scotia grapes have

Story and photos by George Medovoy
a shorter growing season, its wine story is not about what one winemaker here referred to as “old-world wines.”

Instead, it is dominated by wines like L’Acadie Blanc, a French-American hybrid developed in Vineland, Ontario in 1953 and now the most widely planted white in Nova Scotia. The wine’s name recalls the early North American colony established by French settlers in the 17th century.

“In versatility it does resemble Chardonnay,” says Gina Haverstock, winemaker and sommelier at Gaspereau Vineyards. “It can look a bit like Chablis due to its minerality and acidity.”

Haverstock describes Gaspereau’s L’Acadie as pear, apple, a hint of lemon on the nose, fruit forward with a lighter structure on the palate and a dry finish. Other popular whites grown in Nova Scotia are New York Muscat, Vidal, Seyval, and Ortega, with whites such as Chardonnay and Riesling growing in popularity.

Among Nova Scotia reds, the most widely planted is Marechal Foch, while others include Leon Millot, Baco Noir, Marquette (from Minnesota) and Lucie Kuhlmann.

GASPEREAU VINEYARDS

Outside the Gaspereau tasting room, I chatted with wine consultant Jonathan Rodwell, a Brit who studied winemaking at the University of California at Davis.

Here (in Nova Scotia), he says, “You’ll see places which remind you completely of St. Helena, Calistoga, Yountville, and Healdsburg.” In other words, the California wine country! “There’s a great deal of experimentation going on here,” he says. “It’s very interesting because it expands the whole world of wine, as it should. The band of wine making (in other parts of the world) has been quite narrow…and here it opens up very interesting possibilities…where there are no restrictions basically.”

Gaspereau Vineyards is part of Devonian Coast, which also owns Jost and Mercator wineries. Jost, the largest winery in Nova Scotia, is located two and a half hours from Gaspereau on the north shore of Nova Scotia, looking across the Northumberland Strait to Prince Edward Island. Mercator is outside of Wolfville. Like other Nova Scotia wineries, Gaspereau makes Tidal Bay, the province’s important white appellation wine.

TIDAL BAY STYLE

“The great thing about Tidal Bay is basically it’s a style of wine,” says Haverstock, “a terroir-driven, aromatic, dry white wine that is fruit-forward with bright acidity.”
During their visit to Nova Scotia in 2014, Prince Charles and his wife Camilla enjoyed a tasting of Domaine de Grand Pre’s Tidal Bay wine. Visitors can come to Domaine de Grand Pre on the Wolfville Magic Winery Bus, a double-decker bus, and hop on and off at several other wineries, too.

**THE RED PHONE BOX**

At Luckett Vineyards, we meet owner Pete Luckett, a jovial Brit from Nottingham, whose Crush Pad Bistro serves a lovely vegetarian panini of grilled zucchini, fired Roma tomatoes, bell peppers, fresh herbs and goat cheese.

“We’ve got the best view in the Annapolis Valley,” he says, “with lovely manicured farm fields out in front of us.” On the patio setting, I notice California fig trees growing in large containers. Luckett explains: “I look after them inside the barn all winter, and in the middle of April, I bring them out and they become a part of our patio décor.”

Something else I notice reflects Luckett’s good humor – it’s a red phone box from his native Nottingham that he’s planted in the middle of his vineyards. Luckett has “an arrangement with our Canadian telephone company where we have toll-free calls anywhere in North America. It’s an old dial-up, and people love the experience.”

“It’s all a part of making people smile when they come here,” Luckett says. “So we’re not just selling wine – we’re in the ‘feeling good’ business.”

During our visit to the wineries, we stayed overnight at the Old Orchard Inn, where an outdoor seating area overlooks the lovely valley.

**THE CALIFORNIA CONNECTION**

The origin of Nova Scotia winemaking has a California connection in the person of Roger Dial, who moved to Nova Scotia from Northern California in 1969 to take a teaching position at Dalhousie University in Halifax.

Dial had made wine in Northern California and continued his interest in Nova Scotia. Around 1974, he “began to realize that this was potentially a great place to grow wine grapes,” and in 1979 he purchased a five-acre vineyard, which he named Grand Pre Vineyards and moved onto it with his family. Hanspeter Stutz purchased the winery in the early 1990s and re-named it Domaine de Grand Pre.

“The quality of Nova Scotia wine is just out of this world,” says Dial, “on a par with some of the very best that is being produced anywhere.”

We could spend much more time at the wineries, but there is more to see near Halifax…One morning, we took an afternoon drive 26 miles west of Halifax to Nova Scotia’s romantic southern shoreline and the charming fishing village of Peggy’s Cove, where we saw its iconic lighthouse, which has guided mariners since 1868.

On our way back to Halifax, we followed the advice of our waitress at The Halliburton and made one final stop in Lunenburg, which turns out to be one of the prettiest seaside towns we’ve ever seen, with painted Victorians that seem like an artist went wild with bright colors.

**IF YOU GO…**

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**About The Author**

George Medovoy is a longtime contributor to the Journal. George is a veteran travel writer, whose website, www.PostcardsForYou.com, covers regional California destinations, as well as national and overseas travel. George can be reached at tpostcard@aol.com.
rüner Veltliner (GROO-nur VELT-line-er), now that you know how to pronounce it, is one of the world’s most flexible wines for pairing with food. One-third of the grapes grown in Austria are Grüner Veltliner. It’s Austria’s national grape. How many countries have a national grape? Now you know one!

Twenty or so years ago, virtually no one outside of Austria had even heard of this wine. Then just a few years ago, this grape became the darling of sommeliers on the coasts because of its affinity for food and because it was new and different.

Very little Grüner Veltliner is exported to North America. If the Austrians let it out of the land of “The Sound of Music,” it usually goes to their northern neighbor Germany. But, lucky for us, there are quite a few excellent examples available from your local wine store or online.

Let’s explore a bit about this refreshing white wine. It’s “not easy being green” according to Kermit the Frog! Most Grüner Veltliner has a greenish hue, similar to that of Vinho Verde from Portugal. The name of the grape is translated as “Green Wine of Veltlin.” If it’s a bit yellower in color, that means it “sat on the skins” for a while. Either way, it’s a very pale wine.

The steep slopes of the Danube river in Northern Austria are a challenging place to grow grapes. That makes the wines all the better! The minerality of the terroir (you know that term, don’t you) is expressed in the aromas of the wine.

Most folks remember this grape for its spiciness, specifically its pepperiness, yes, that’s right, pepper is the aroma frequently used to describe Grüner Veltliner. Getting even more specific, it’s white pepper! When you try one, you’ll know exactly what I’m talking about. There’s also hints of honey and herbs, particularly dill. This is one spicy white wine.

The flavor profile of these wines is, in a nutshell, refreshing. They’re tangy, with bracing acidity. They seldom, if ever, see any oak and therefore are very fresh. Citrus flavors of lemon and lime are characteristic of this grape.

Utilizing the most fundamental of pairing principles, mirroring, Grüner Veltliner pairs perfectly with Asian-spiced foods. It’s also one of the very few wines that enhances artichokes and asparagus! Rich foods like kidneys and liver are also complemented by this crisp wine. Indian foods are also great pairings with this zesty grape.

As Wolfgang Puck says, “Wiener Schnitzel, to me, and a great glass of Grüner Veltliner is a perfect meal.” Thai, Vietnamese and spicy Chinese dishes all benefit from being paired with Grüners. Bitter greens and salads love this green wine. Smoked pork and a glass of Grüner Veltliner makes for a happy mouth!

A commonality Grüner shares with Argentina’s national grape Malbec, of all wines, is that most versions of both wines are reasonably priced. If you want elegance and complexity, it’s available for “just a few dollars more” as Clint Eastwood said.

Grüner Veltliner is not for everyone. It’s only for those with a sense of adventure, who are seeking a classic old world wine with fascinating aromas and flavors. If you’re seeking something different in the world of wine, try this refreshing spring sipper! Drink what you like and like what you drink.

by Michael Schafer, CSW

About The Author

Michael Schafer Esq. is a sommelier and a CSW (Certified Specialist of Wine), based in Michigan. As an instructor at the International Culinary School of the Art Institute of Michigan, he teaches classes in Viticulture & Enology and in Food & Beverage Operations Management.

For more information, visit Michael’s blog at www.Wine-Counselor.net.
Both the sun and the temperature were dropping on the small group of American wine writers visiting the Chianti Classico region in Italy. All had been to Italy before. And they’re journalists. Their job is to not be astounded. Still, they were nearly mesmerized by the view.

The thing was, in some ways, the view was not particularly unusual. They were near the bottom of a valley of vineyards, standing above a wood-fenced pen of all white Chianina cattle – a local breed that’s one of the oldest on Earth. Above them, vineyards climbed in every direction, not steeply or in any kind of order.

Some blocs went left, some right, some went halfway up toward a ridge, then a new set of vines changed directions. Some were still green, but fall was taking over and some were red or yellow or gold. All the colors had a glow to them, an extra intense-but-soft note from the late afternoon sun. In between the blocs were patches of olive trees, so the impression was of a giant, nature-colored, disorganized checkerboard, with no squares exactly aligned, leading up to an ancient town speckled along the ridge.

And at one point, this small group simply stopped talking and took it in, until someone said, “I want to imprint this in my head. This is so Italy.”

That’s the magic of Chianti Classico, the heart of the Tuscany hills between Florence and Siena, and the region that stands for everything Americans love about Italy. It’s the area’s oldest wine region, and was officially mapped out as top-notch wine country in 1716. The “Classico” title goes only to that original, core region. It’s also the place that looks exactly like every painting and poster of Italian countryside. The food, the people, and, of course, the wines, are what we close our eyes and imagine when we dream of Italy.

That view that mesmerized the journalists was part of the Fontodi property in Panzano in Chianti, and it was just one shade of what you find all over the region. But the view probably made the wines of Fontodi that much more enjoyable to even these professional tasters. That’s why wine lovers travel to places like this, to be enveloped by the world around the wines.

But just as much, seeing the place helps you understand the wines in ways far more deeply – and more genuinely – than dull tasting notes and lists of flavors. Fontodi winemaker Giovanni Manetti is so clearly enthralled with his property and his region, and is so earnest about what he does, it seems he’s bottling his enthusiasm. The 2011 Fontodi Chianti Classico was alive with dark, rich fruit, a touch of gentle dustiness, and a long, layered finish. You can almost see the vineyards when you taste it.

Up in that town on the ridge – the town of Panzano – the restaurant Cecchini’s Officina della Bistecca serves both Manetti’s wine and his beef, and Fontodi’s Chianti Classico melds with the food like a well-chosen spice. In a meal with the journalists, Manetti switched between professional pride and boyish happiness as he tasted and ate.

Officina della Bistecca, by the way, is a popular restaurant on the second floor of a popular butcher shop and is sometimes called, with affection, Benihana of Italy. Owner Dario Cecchini and his crew serve mainly beef in family style meals where the food just keeps coming as they hoot and holler and toss pieces of meat around like a genial circus act.
Like many others regions in Italy, the local restaurants and cafés around Chianti Classico are semi-linked to the local wineries. Their food and vines grow in the same meadows and hills, they serve each other’s products, they bond with a kind of magnetism that reminds you why food and wine belong together.

That, too, is the magic of visiting a place like Chianti Classico. When you taste the wine with the food and hang with the people, everything makes more sense. The wines aren’t just a label American drinkers are trying to memorize, they’re the very soul of the place, and the wines and the settings imprint on you.

That happens everywhere you go in Chianti Classico. There is, for instance, the small Le Miccine winery, a centuries-old wine estate in Gaiole in Chianti that was once a way station for travelers between Siena to Florence, and you can almost hear old wagons clunking along the roads behind the trees. Paula Papini Cook, a 30-year-old Canadian winemaker whose grandparents lived in Tuscany, has taken over and given her wines a modern, ethereal lightness to match the elegant fruit in all her wines.

And there’s the larger Castello di Monsanto, with an ancient cellar under the castle that goes back to 1740. In 1961, Aldo and Fabrizio Bianchi bought the property between two spectacular hilltop towns, Barbarino and San Gimignano, and Fabrizio still meets visitors who come to taste one of the better-known Chianti Classicos in America. Monsanto’s 2011 version has all the brightness, intense fruit, earthy undertones and snap that make the region’s wines so appealing.

Everywhere you go in this region, you find a mix of ancient heritage and tradition combining with new, modern approaches to wine. That’s also true in a new designation for some Chianti Classico wines called Gran Selezione, a sort of best-of-the-best combined with the localest-of-local grapes. The Gran Selezione title became official in 2010 and applies only to wines made from a winery’s best grapes in its own vineyards, and the quality must also pass muster with Italian tasting committees.

The ancient/modern pairing is also everywhere in the properties themselves. You keep finding families or estates that have been there 1,000 years, give or take a century or two.

One charming example is Castello La Leccia in Castellina in Chianti, more or less halfway between Florence and Siena. Historical traces of what was there go back to 1077. The hilltop and strategically well-sited property was battled over – and occasionally leveled – almost from the start.

What is there now is a version of the 18th century castle, meticulously renovated into a 12-room hotel and winery. Winemaker Francesco Daddi, whose family bought the property in 1920, runs his winery in the buildings that were once the farm, and his sincere connection to the land and region are absolutely heartwarming.

There is a depth and softness to all his wines, which he said are about “the people and the place and the years” as much as the vineyards. Daddi is also completely unpretentious. He wants people simply to enjoy what he offers.

“When I taste wine,” he told that group of journalists, “I don’t taste ‘flowers after spring rain’ or something silly. I taste the grapes. They taste like my home.”

That’s why you go to a place like Chianti Classico, to taste the grapes in their home.

About The Author
Rick Kushman is a New York Times bestselling author and an award-winning journalist who is the wine commentator and a contributing host for Capital Public Radio, Sacramento’s NPR affiliate. He is also the creator and co-host of the radio show “Bottle Talk with Rick and Paul” which airs on KVON in Napa Valley and can be found at www.rickandpaulwinel.com, and he firmly believes that anyone who makes wine too complicated or snooty should be sentenced to drinking low-carb beer.
Climate change is generally not viewed as a good thing in most parts of the world, but one Michigan entrepreneur is busy creating his own “greenhouse effect” to try and duplicate growing conditions found on the 45th parallel across the sea in Italy. Usually associated with vegetable farms or nurseries, the ubiquitous greenhouse — aka hoop house, high tunnel or nëláserra™ — has been repurposed by renewable energy czar and reality TV star Marty Lagina to shelter premium red wine grapes.

Lagina is the affable owner of Heritage Sustainable Energy. On a good day, his 29 wind turbines in McBain can power a city the size of Traverse City, which serves as his corporate headquarters. But he has recently turned his attention to another renewable resource — the sun — to make world-class red wine on nearby Old Mission Peninsula. Lagina has actually been growing grapes for 14 years and outsourcing them to local vintners, but in spring 2015 will open his own tasting room and wine cave as a showcase for his “tunnel” vision. His varietals include Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Malbec, Nebbiolo, Sangiovese, and Syrah.

“The theory is that the best grapes are grown around the 45th parallel,” he said. “So our vineyard receives the same amount of light as those in premier wine growing regions, but we don’t get the same amount of heat — there’s no Gulf Stream.”
Lagina’s plastic shelters, stretched on aluminum frames in long rows over the grape trellis, capture additional heat from the sun, adding the equivalent of six weeks to his growing season, creating, in effect, his own personal Gulf Stream.

“I like red wines,” he explained. “But I was not happy with the red wines I tasted locally. I started wondering ‘how can it be improved?’ We had lived in England for a while and I saw the shelters (greenhouses). They used them for vegetables and small fruit trees. I then realized you could extend the growing season.”

“All in the Family

Lagina and his son Alex recently made their way to Italy to get design ideas for their own winery — Villa Mari (pronounced Mahry). Plans call for a 6,000-square-foot winery/tasting room above ground and a 15,000-square-foot wine cave below ground. It will be buried deep (as deep as 35 feet) to achieve a constant 55º temperature year round. Heavy block, cavity wall construction will maximize the energy savings, and yes, wind-generated power will energize the entire operation.

The cave will have a formal front entrance (“Like a hobbit house,” says Lagina) and will also be accessible from the winery/tasting area. The idea for the wine cave came from his experiences as a youth in Iron Mountain, Mich., and the winery itself is named after his maternal grandmother, Teresa Mari. Wine, you might say, runs in the family.

“My grandmother had a little wine cellar in the house that my grandfather Enrico carved out of the rock,” he recalled. “It was such a neat place. They had barrels in there. We always drank wine. They would put an ounce or half ounce of wine in a glass of water.”
According to Lagina, grandmother Mari, who lived into her late eighties, was a “fabulous” woman who took charge of the whole family after her husband was injured in a mining accident. She raised chickens and rabbits, canned vegetables and fruit and even made a little moonshine on the side to help make ends meet.

The family even had high-powered connections in the wine industry that traced its roots back to the ancestral home in Le Marche (pronounced Lay-mar-kay), Italy. (The Marche area merits further study — located in the central area of the country, it shares a long, eastern coastline with the Adriatic Sea and has been called “the next Tuscany.”) One day, Lagina came home after reading a biography of Robert Mondavi. He flopped the book on the table and his mother said, “Oh, Mondavi — we know him.” Apparently, Lagina’s grandfather (Enrico Cavelieri) and Robert Mondavi’s father were buddies who grew up together in Le Marche.

**THE MONEY PITS**

There are two “money pits” in Lagina’s life. Needless to say, the nellaserra™ approach to grape growing comes with a stiff price tag. Lagina estimates the cost of installation alone at $30,000 per acre. For this reason, only the winery’s premium wines will be grown under sheltered conditions. Lagina says they are still tweaking the bottle prices, but the range will likely begin in the low-teens and reach upward to $60 for hoop house varietals. He said the warm days and cool nights typical of our region will lead to intense flavors in the wine, and the high tunnels will only magnify this effect. The shelters come with side curtains that can be raised and lowered to control heat and humidity. Other side benefits of the nellaserra™ method: fewer pesticides are needed and the grapes tend to “short crop” themselves (fewer clusters mean lower yields, which tend to benefit overall wine quality).

The “greenhouse” effect, however, cannot work miracles. During the Polar Vortex of 2014, even Villa Mari experienced winter damage. According to Lagina, it reached -15° F over several days on the peninsula.

The other money pit in Lagina’s life is an actual pit, as in deep hole, on Oak Island on the south shore of Nova Scotia, Canada, rumored to contain buried treasure. The
subject of a reality TV series called *The Curse of Oak Island*,
the pit was originally discovered as a shallow well in 1795
and has been excavated to deeper and deeper depths only
to find intriguing clues (wood timbers and booby traps),
but, as yet, no buried treasure. Marty and his brother Rick
now own much of the island, and their often expensive
ttempts to get at the truth have been documented by the
History Channel.

Lagina said the “TV people” won’t allow him to reveal any
new developments about the project, but that he and his
brother are “still looking.”

**WINNING WINES**

In terms of his winemaking enterprise, the proof, as they
say, is in the pudding and Lagina’s wines, vinified by Sean
O’Keefe, have earned him plenty of loot in the form of
shiny medals. Following the 2014 San Francisco Chronicle
Wine Competition, Villa Mari walked away with three
silver medals for their 2010 Praefectus, 2010 Ultima Thule
and 2010 Row 7 blends. Row 7 is a “mystery” red blend,
the result of a chaotic but serendipitous planting session.
Praefectus contains Cabernet Franc (76 percent), Cabernet
Sauvignon (22 percent) and Syrah (2 percent). Ultima Thule
(pronounced Toolie) is a blend of Nebbiolo, Syrah, Cabernet
Sauvignon, Merlot and Malbec.

Other Villa Mari wines include Solo Nove, Bel Tramonto (a
Merlot/Sangiovese blend) and a straight Cabernet Franc.
Ultima Thule and Row 7 are both produced using the
nellaserra™ method.

Although Villa Mari’s initial focus has been on red wines,
there are plans to include white wine varieties in the
stable. These varieties will include Sauvignon Blanc,
Riesling, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Grigio and Malvasia
Bianca. They are also experimenting with some non-tra-
ditional Italian red varieties, such as Schioppettino, grown
predominately in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region of north-
east Italy, Refoso and Teroldego.

Whether Lagina’s nellaserra™ method catches on with other
local wine growers remains to be seen. For the time being,

his greenhouse effect will create the best kind of climate
change, transforming his corner of Old Mission Peninsula
into an authentic Italian cantina, subterranean cave, oak
barrels and all. Grandma Mari would be proud.

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**About The Author**

Jim Rink is editor of the American Wine Society
*Journal* and his family owns and operates Bosky-
del Vineyard in Lake Leelanau, Michigan. He can be
reached at rink@americanwinesociety.org.
I am often asked about racking wine. Usually in terms of “is it harmful?” And they are usually surprised by my answer; it’s harmful not to rack. The concern is that the wine is being exposed to air, which contains oxygen that will hurt the wine. Actually, what lies at the bottom of your wine is way more damaging than a little whiff of air.

If you were to look at winemaking from the bottom up you would see varying sources of what we find there and where it comes from. Depending on the type and style of the wine being made, what falls out can vary from a wispy light dusting to heavy slug.

The first thing to look at is the origin of the fruit and its path to juice. Insoluble solids make up most of the lees we find in juice. These are solids that do not break down in the wine-making process and it’s better if they are not part of it.

The more efficient the press the less you will have of this at the beginning. Of course, that also depends on the condition of the fruit. Ripe sound fruit will give you a cleaner press than unripe, damaged or infected fruit. The cleaner you start out the less you will have to contend with later. Fermenting macerated fruit (skins and seeds and juice) presents other complications; more on that later.

When starting out with white grape juice or apple cider, it is best if you can “crash cool” the juice and let it settle out and rack it before beginning fermentation. Sometimes enzymes can be used if cooling is not possible. Be sure if using an enzyme that it is the proper choice for the juice and follow manufacturers recommendations. The advantage isn’t so much that there will be less on the bottom later, but that a cleaner juice will ferment with less chance of complications created by compounds that may develop from solids present while fermenting.

IN THE MIX

These solids and other compounds that you add to the fermentation will react with the process and may still be there in one form or another after it’s finished. If you add sugar to get alcohol and later find it still on the bottom, then it wasn’t added properly and you didn’t get the alcohol. Sounds simple but it happens a lot. I recommend if you are adding sugar that you start the fermentation with the available sugar and in a day or two when the temp of the fermenting juice has come up a bit then slowly shake in the measure needed. This way, the action of carbon dioxide will help mix the sugar and the temp will aid in it going into solution.

If you add acid (like to California grapes) be sure that it all goes into solution by mixing well; adding while the juice is moving in a pump over is best. If you have to de-acidify (like with hybrid grapes) it is best to use potassium bicarbonate because if you use calcium carbonate you have to wait at least three months for it to come out of solution (white flakes) before bottling the wine.

YEAST INFECTION?

When you start fermentation, you will be adding what appears to be a small amount of yeast (compared to the volume) but remember it will multiply by the millions; this is what you will find the most of at the end of fermentation in white grape wine and cider. The remains found after fermentation are usually referred to as “gross lees” and understand it’s called “gross” for a reason. This becomes even more complex when fermenting reds with the skins and seeds. It’s not just the skins but everything that was on those skins. Some of it has become part of the product, some has not.

And what has not will eventually fall to the bottom. I was mentored by a German trained winemaker who was fond of saying, “If it falls to the bottom you don’t need it.” And he meant it.
No matter what kind of wine you have made, I can’t stress enough that is best to get off those gross lees as soon as possible. There is no reason to keep what hopefully is very good wine in contact with something we call gross. The first racking is the most important as new wine is most susceptible to spoilage yeast and bacterial growth. It is also the time the first sulfite addition is made unless the wine is undergoing a second malolactic fermentation. Even if the wine is being put through ML is should be racked; racking will not affect ML.

**RACK, RACK, RACK**

Racking can help avoid almost all post fermentation problems with wine. While in training my mentor would not just say rack, he would always say “Rack! Rack! Rack!” Believe me, after hearing that a hundred times, it sunk in.

As soon as the yeast’s job of fermentation is over it will start to deteriorate and give off enzymatic flavors. Now in some cases this can add complexity to a wine like in the “sur lies” fermentation of Chardonnay. However that process will only come out correctly if monitored and controlled. Dead yeast and other things around it can break down to create off flavors and aromas that later may be difficult to overcome. It’s best not to have to deal with in the first place.

That brings me to the next questions I am asked: “How many times do I rack?” This answer also seems to confuse; you rack until nothing is falling to the bottom. They always want a number; I can’t give a number. A white wine may be clear after one racking, whereas red may have to be racked five times before falling clear. There are many variables why wines take different times to clarify, everything from temperature to shape and size of the container. A colder wine seems to settle faster and a tall slender tank seems to go more quickly than a short squat one. Even convection current can affect settling. If you make more than one type or style of wine they all will react differently and need to be treated accordingly.

**FINING AND FILTRATION**

The cheapest and easiest way to clarify wine is to rack it. Not all wine will rack to clear; some will need some help. Fining and filtration are two things that can help. Be sure to understand the difference. Not all fining agents are meant to clear wine. Some are for stabilizing, others are for color or flavor adjustment and some are for clarifying only. Make sure you are using the right product for the job. Using the wrong fining agent can strip the wine. Read the directions and follow the manufacturers recommendations. Filtration should be done in stages as a “step down” procedure. Always start with a large porosity filter medium and progress as necessary to a tighter one. This also prevents stripping the wine.

Racking can also help expose flaws. Tasting a “dirty” wine is just that, dirty. Suspended solids can cover up delicate flavors and aromas as well as off flavors and aromas. Racking will help bring out the true character of the wine. The little exposure wine gets to air when racking is actually helpful in “waking up” esters that show aroma and flavor. Think of swirling wine in a glass, how much better it smells and tastes after.

**COLOR SET**

Another thing found when racking is changes of color in red wines. I also hear this a lot: When a new wine is first pressed the color looks dark and rich, but by the third racking it looks like rosé. What has happened here isn’t a fault of racking, it’s a fault of winemaking. The color pigment was extracted but wasn’t “set,” thereby falling out during racking. There are many variables here also but usually temperature is the main reason for a bad set. The fermentation didn’t get hot enough or hold a high temp long enough to set color. It is usually necessary to hit the plus side of 80°F for at least three days to get and keep good color.

Every time you rack a wine you should not only inspect it visually but taste it also. Sounds like it’s a given, but it’s not. To some, racking is a mundane step when actually it’s a practical winemaking practice and should be viewed as such. It should be done before every post fermentation addition that requires mixing or pumping over and again before the first filtration so as not to clog filters with the first pass.

It sounds like a lot of racking, but it’s all necessary. Your wine will be healthier and happier! So if you look back on wine that you have made in the past, think about the problems you might have had and whether an extra racking may have made for a better wine. In the future, consider all the points at which wine should be racked and if not sure, rack anyway, you may be surprised at what you find at the bottom.

**About The Author**

Wayne Stitzer was recently awarded “Connecticut Wine Person of the Year 2014,” is a professional member of AWS, a frequent guest speaker and winemaking consultant. He can be found at Winemakinghelp.
A new class of blends unique to a New Jersey wine region is bringing attention to the Garden State’s reds, and may offer direction for making red wines throughout the East.

The blend, Coeur d’Est (“Heart of the East”), comes 7 years after formal approval by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) of the Outer Coastal Plain American Viticultural Area, a 2.2 million acre expanse in southeastern New Jersey.

The first iterations of Coeur d’Est, a blend of Chambourcin and mainly Bordeaux varieties, hit tasting rooms last spring, uniting in a more formal way the top-performing red hybrid with the tried-and-true vinifera varieties.

The Outer Coastal Plain winemakers are nothing if not aspirational. In 2010, the group brought in a slate of experts for a wine-making symposium, including Cornelis (Kees) van Leeuwen, a professor at the University of Bordeaux, to explore the suitability of crafting Bordeaux-style wines in New Jersey.

Coeur d’Est parts from the conventional Bordeaux blend, taking advantage of Chambourcin, the French-American hybrid once widely planted in Bordeaux after the ravages of the phylloxera louse, but now a favorite throughout eastern wine regions.

Dante Romanini, a grower in Vineland, N.J., part of the group that founded the AVA and came up with the Coeur d’Est concept, said the creation of an “identity blend” was a natural step for the Outer Coastal Plain region. “We wanted something to promote the region that was uniquely identifiable with the Outer Coastal Plain that reflected varieties that do well here,” he said.

With this in mind, Romanini, along with Lawrence Coia of Coia Vineyards, Franklin Salek of Sylvain Farms Winery in Atlantic County, and Larry Sharrott of Sharrott Winery in Camden County, set to work.

**SETTING STANDARDS**

For several vintages, the group asked wineries to develop bench blends of their best wines. A committee evaluated both the trial and commercially available blends, and then developed the Coeur d’Est parameters. The name was trademarked through the U.S. Patent Office and is used under license.

Coeur d’Est standards require that 75-100 percent of the wine be comprised of two or more of the following three varieties: Chambourcin, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Chambourcin is the only required variety and must be between 25 to 50 percent. The standards allow as much as 25 percent of the blend to include Cabernet Sauvignon or Syrah.

Barrel aging is required, but not defined. Residual sugar may not exceed .5 percent.

The grapes must be grown in the Outer Coastal Plain AVA and the producer’s facility must be located in the region. The finished wine must undergo third-party sensory evaluation, currently through the Beverage Testing Institute (BTI). Prospective Coeur d’Est wines must achieve a BTI score of 85 or greater.

The parameters could change with experience, Romanini noted. The committee couldn’t reach a consensus on whether or not to set a price requirement. However, current Coeur d’Est prices start at $20 per bottle.

Bellview Winery in Atlantic County released its first Coeur d’Est, vintage 2012, in May of 2014 for $25. While Chambourcin draws sideways glances from vinifera-centric consumers and buyers and may have a mixed reputation, Bellview owner Jim Quarella said Outer Coastal Plain
producers have learned to coax greatness from the grape by giving it the attention and effort they would a prized Bordeaux variety destined for their top-line wines.

**STANDING OUT**

While visiting Heritage Vineyards in Gloucester County, Rutgers University professor and extension agent and past American Wine Society president Gary Pavlis saw the Coeur d’Est concept at work. The name “jumped” from the winery’s tasting sheet, catching the eye of visitors, Dr. Pavlis noticed. “Oh, What’s that? Well, I want to try it,” he recalls a visitor saying.

While consumers often compare the East’s lighter-bodied Merlot, Cabernet or Bordeaux-style blends to heavier hulks from the West Coast, Coeur d’Est offers a liberated identity. While a novel marketing tool, Dr. Pavlis said, Coeur d’Est does represent what the region does well. Chambourcin, considered the least hybrid-like of the hybrid reds, has always excelled and produces reliable, quality wines. Most of the estate wineries and growers in the Outer Coastal Plain produce the same mix of Bordeaux varieties, as well.

Coeur d’Est formalizes and enhances what producers have been doing with Chambourcin for years, he added, by enhancing it with vinifera. With naturally low tannins, Chambourcin shows improved structure with just 10 percent addition of a Bordeaux variety. The Coeur d’Est blends expand vinifera’s role and elevate the wine (it’s hoped) to a quality were it can stand alongside the producers’ Bordeaux-style blends.

**CORO/MERITAGE COROLLARY**

The Meritage effort also echos in Coeur d’Est. The term created by California winemakers more than two decades ago give an identity to blends in the Bordeaux tradition. Meritage arose from federal regulations. It had been that a wine required just 51 percent of any variety to bear the varietal name, giving ample room to blend in the Bordeaux tradition or, more nefariously, water down wine with mixed black or Alicante Bouchet even as both wines were considered Cabernet Sauvignon. When feds wanted to crack down on jug wines, they left producers of fine wine in the lurch, having to call their Bordeaux-style blends “Red Table Wine.” They convinced regulators to remove “table” and created the portmanteau of “Meritage” and “Heritage.”

On the West Coast, Mendocino County wine producers did something similar more than a decade ago with Coro, a Zinfandel-dominated blend. Those producers wanted a flagship wine category that didn’t seem like an attempt to replicate what was happening in Sonoma or Napa. Coro remains in limited production and for most participants it’s a “hand sell” in the tasting room or through case clubs.

Julie Golden of Golden Vineyards, one of 21 members of the Coro Consortium, said Coro built the confidence of the upstart region toiling in the shadows other appellations. Coro empowered them to produce an ultra-premium line that offered wine drinkers something unique and special. Coro production is clearly defined with requirements on aging, wine chemistry parameters, barrel and bottle aging, and production limits. The wine must pass a winemaker review panel and producers share a common Coro label and packaging. Most are priced between $30 and $60 a bottle.

From the Latin word for “chorus,” Coro stimulated new collaboration among winemakers who encouraged each other and shared their knowledge and experiences in building the blend, which must be 40-70 percent Zinfandel.

In the Outer Coastal Plain of New Jersey, winemakers hope Coeur d’Est does the same, creating a new standard for red blends that defies comparison and gets attention.

by David Falchek

**OF RED BLENDS**

“Coeur d’Est” designates Outer Coastal Plain Chambourcin blends

Coeur d’Est formalizes and enhances what producers have been doing with Chambourcin for years, he added, by enhancing it with vinifera. With naturally low tannins, Chambourcin shows improved structure with just 10 percent addition of a Bordeaux variety. The Coeur d’Est blends expand vinifera’s role and elevate the wine (it’s hoped) to a quality were it can stand alongside the producers’ Bordeaux-style blends.

**About The Author**

David Falchek writes a weekly wine column for *Times Shamrock Newspapers* and contributes to several national magazines. He is a wine and beverage instructor at Luzerne County Community College and serves on the board of directors of the American Wine Society.
**RED WINE — STILL GOOD FOR YOU**

Scientists at The Scripps Research Institute (TSRI) have found that resveratrol, the red-wine ingredient once touted as an elixir of youth, powerfully activates an evolutionarily ancient stress response in human cells. The finding should dispel much of the mystery and controversy about how resveratrol really works.

“This stress response represents a layer of biology that has been largely overlooked, and resveratrol turns out to activate it at much lower concentrations than those used in prior studies,” said senior investigator Paul Schimmel, professor and member of the Skaggs Institute for Chemical Biology at TSRI.

Recently, scientists in this field have disagreed about the signaling pathways resveratrol activates to promote health, calling into question some of resveratrol’s supposed health benefits—particularly given the unrealistically high doses used in some experiments.

The team’s experiments showed, however, that the TyrRS-PARP-1 pathway can be measurably activated by much lower doses of resveratrol—as much as 1,000 times lower—than were used in some of the more celebrated prior studies, including those focused on SIRT1. “Based on these results, it is conceivable that moderate consumption of a couple glasses of red wine (rich in resveratrol) would give a person enough resveratrol to evoke a protective effect via this pathway,” said Sajish.

“We think this is just the tip of the iceberg,” said Schimmel. “We think there is a lot more amino-acid mimics out there that can have beneficial effects like this in people. And we’re working on that now.”

For more information, [www.nature.com](http://www.nature.com).

**BOTA BRICK KEEPS WINE FRESH**

Bota Box, the nation’s leading eco-friendly wine producer of premium 3-liter varietals, announces the launch of Bota Brick, a groundbreaking new entry in the 1.5-liter wine category. Featuring the same environmentally responsible packaging as the original 3-liter Bota Box, Bota Brick offers wine consumers a new alternative that stays fresh after opening more than four times longer than any 1.5-liter glass bottle.

“In pilot tests conducted this summer, Bota Brick demonstrated strong consumer pull in the 1.5-liter category, previously untapped by producers of premium boxed wine,” said Mark Koppen, Marketing Brand Director, Bota Box. “Bota Brick is at the forefront of paving the way for this new innovation and we are eager to continue the positive momentum with the national rollout.”

Packaging for Bota Brick is made from unbleached, post-consumer fiber and is 100 percent recyclable. The carton is printed with VOC-free inks, and is constructed with corn starch over synthetic glues. State-of-the-art bag-in-box technology allows consumers to enjoy wine from Bota Brick for up to four weeks after opening.

The inaugural portfolio of Bota Brick includes a Pinot Grigio, Chardonnary, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and RedVolition, a red wine blend. The equivalent of two, 750ml glass bottles, Bota Brick is now available in the 1.5-liter glass section of retail outlets nationwide at a suggested retail price of $12.99.

Bota Box takes its name from the traditional Spanish wine skin known as a bota used to carry wine for centuries. For more information about Bota Box, visit [www.botabox.com](http://www.botabox.com) or find Bota Box on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/botabox](http://www.facebook.com/botabox).

**GALLO WINE SURVEY SAYS...**

E. & J. Gallo Winery recently commissioned its inaugural Gallo Consumer Wine Trends Survey to capture the state of Americans’ wine drinking attitudes and behaviors. The survey posed a series of questions to 1,001 frequent wine drinkers in the U.S.

As a whole, the survey said that Americans are enjoying wine more often than ever before by bringing it into dining, entertaining and even the most casual experiences — all while demonstrating an eagerness to experiment with various flavors and formats. These changes are part of an exciting transition in the wine industry as wineries focus more on catering to customers rather than asking them to conform.

Among frequent wine drinkers, those in the younger 25–40 age group are increasingly turning to social media to talk about and discover new wines, with more than half (54 percent) participating in conversations about wine on social media and nearly half (49 percent) posting and sharing wine photos.

When asked about specific varietals they typically purchase, Moscato and champagne were popular choices among the younger set. These younger wine drinkers are also shedding the preconception that sparkling wines are just for special occasions.

Generational differences were more prominent display with younger drinkers seemingly unbound by traditions that have often governed wine. Unlike previous generations, they are experimenting with different ways to enjoy wine and are unapologetic about their choices. Of those surveyed:

- 66% mix wine with fruit or fruit juice
- 51% make a wine cocktail
- 48% mix wine with other cocktail mixers like club soda
- 46% drink wine over ice
- 27% occasionally even drink wine in a cup with a straw

The survey also revealed key thoughts and behaviors shared by almost all frequent wine drinkers. Of these, the most noticeable common ground was convenience.

Between premium and value box wine, tetra paks, screw tops, and portable 187ml bottles, there are many different and convenient ways to enjoy wine today.

The varietals that continue to enjoy the most popularity were Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Grigio, which rounded out the top five choices of survey respondents.

As we begin another year, we have the chance to reflect back on 2014 and some of the exciting news we’ve shared throughout this past year and help us look to the future of what makes Lodi such a special wine region! Here are some thoughts and reflections from writers and others who share our excitement for Lodi wines.

Just a small percentage of American wine lovers subscribe to Decanter, a publication in the U.K. that bills itself “The World’s Best Wine Magazine.” There’s a lot to be said for this, though, because the English are arguably the most sophisticated wine lovers in the world. Universally respected organizations such as the Court of Master Sommeliers as well as the Institute of Masters of Wine were founded in England. Many of the world’s most popular wine writers – such as Hugh Johnson, Jancis Robinson, and Michael Broadbent – are English.

And so it is something that the lead story in Decanter’s special “California 2014” issue was entitled (drum roll, please…) Next Stop, Lodi, composed by Master Sommelier Matt Stamp. The story line, as it often is for outside publications, was that Lodi was “once seen as a backwater purely for value wines.” Decanter’s exciting news: “Lodi’s treasure trove of old vines coupled with exciting winemakers is throwing up some exciting and complex bottlings.”

The theme of Lodi wine country being newly “discovered,” or qualifying as “the next big thing,” was also echoed in a 2014 story called 5 Reasons Why Lodi, California Is the...
Next Napa Valley, composed by Details Magazine “Food + Drinks” correspondent Anthony Giglio. From a pure perspective of terroir (or “sense of place”), we may not see any reason why any region – be it Lodi, Sonoma County, Santa Barbara, Walla Walla Valley or Finger Lakes – would want to be like another region, such as Napa Valley.

The best Napa Valley wines, after all, are grown in Napa Valley; just as the best Lodi wines come from Lodi. Every significant wine region is special for its own reasons; not because it is comparable to another region.

Mr. Giglio, however, makes a point apparent to “any student of California winemaking history, where an area starts out making bulk or cooperative winemaking, and then suddenly wakes up and says, Enough... Let’s do it better!” Finding parallels in the recent history of wine regions like Sonoma and Santa Barbara, Giglio’s “5 reasons” why Lodi is an appellation to be reckoned with:

1. Lodi is “Zin Central”
2. Lodi winemakers are “Progressive”
3. Lodi is “Way Ahead of the Organic Pack” (in reference to Lodi’s industry-groundbreaking Lodi Rules for Sustainable Winegrowing)
4. Lodi’s “Weather Is Perfect”
5. Lodi wines have “Amazing Prices”

…and we couldn’t agree more (thank you, Mr. Giglio)!

Also in the news this past year was the naming of Lodi’s Bechthold Vineyard as the California State Fair “2014 Vineyard of the Year” by a jury of wine professionals. Originally planted in 1886 and owned by the same family ever since, the ancient Cinsaut vines in Bechthold Vineyard are now meticulously hand-tended by Phillips Farms (the agricultural arm of Michael David Winery).

Upon learning of this honor, Bechthold family member Greg Burns (who owns the Jessie’s Grove Winery estate, next door to Bechthold Vineyard) was quoted by Lodi News-Sentinel to say, “For a vineyard in our appellation to get the opportunity to be considered, and named, is a tribute to the entire Lodi appellation... The fact that this is the oldest vineyard in the Valley is also a tribute to Lodi.”

But of all the things happening in Lodi wine country this past year, the most widely covered development has been the debut of the Lodi Native project: the release of six 2012 Lodi grown Zinfandels from six heritage vineyards (defined as at least 50 years of age); made by six of Lodi’s respected wine producers, utilizing native yeast fermentation and other strict protocols emphasizing the sensory qualities derived from vineyards rather than brand or winemaker styles, or the “varietal character” of the Zinfandel grape itself.

The goal of the Lodi Native winemakers, in other words, has been to draw attention to the fact that there are unique vineyards in Lodi producing distinctive wines from the Zinfandel grape – vineyards and wines worthy of as much attention as Zinfandel vineyards in any other region of California.

The press has been all over it - among the many pieces written on the Lodi Native project, along with some quotes:

- Laurie Daniels of San Jose Mercury News on The Lodi Native Wine Project: “The results were eye-opening. The Lodi Native wines have ample fruit, but they’re also...
elegant, savory and aromatic, with a
complexity and even a delicacy that’s
downright rare in most commercial
zinfandels. And they show what’s
possible in Lodi…”

- W. Blake Gray of wine-searcher.com
  on Lodi Winemakers Strip Back Their
  Zinfandel: “If Zinfandel was treated
  with more like Pinot Noir, how differ-
  ent would it taste? In Lodi, a group of
  winemakers are finding out…”

- Elaine Brown of Hawk Wakawaka
  Wine Reviews on The Lodi Native Zinfandel Project: “…Lodi commonly gets underestimated by wine media who
take the region to produce only overripe mass market
wines… Together the collection offers crystalline insight
into the character of Lodi’s Mokelumne River appellation
giving pure expression to the vineyards. Separately they
each carry the juiciness of wines to drink with food, and the
medium to medium-light body that allows them to work on
their own…”

- Fred Swan CS of norcalwine.com on Lodi Zinfandel Goes
  Native: “The Lodi Native project has achieved its primary
goal in the very first vintage. The wines very clearly show
the differences between some of Lodi’s most-prized her-
itage vineyards. And, despite a commitment to sacrificing
ideal balance and maximum deliciousness to achieve that
aim, the resulting wines are very, very good. They show

that, when taken from fine, lovingly-farmed vineyards and
made with care, Zinfandel needn’t be sweet, thick in the
mouth or dressed in new barrels to captivate. Bravo!”

Thirsty for some good ol’ Lodi Zinfandel or any of our count-
less other varieties being grown and made here in Lodi?
Well then, we invite you to take a visit to our home,
experience our vineyards and wines, and get the chance to
meet the amazing people and families that make Lodi such
a special wine region. You can begin planning your visit or
learn more about Lodi wines at www.lodiwine.com.

Adapted from a blog post written by Randy Caparoso
for the lodiwine.com/blog
21 Wines to Watch

**Forman Vineyard | 2010 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon**
Napa Valley, California

Complex and age-worthy, this stunning Cab Sav is blended with 10 percent Merlot, 8 percent Cab Franc and 7 percent Petit Verdot. Scents of plums and tobacco spice enchant the nose. On the palate layers of cassis, black plum and raspberry entwine with black licorice, savoury spice, a touch of mint and earthy nuances. Aged 22 months in 50 percent new and 50 percent two year old French barrels, the oak is finely integrated, the tannins firmly structured, and the balance is immaculate through the memorable finish; a perfect cellar selection.

Food pairing: Tournedos of beef | SRP: $95 | www.formanvinyard.com

**Stony Hill Vineyard | 2011 Chardonnay | Napa Valley, California**

The moment you lift a glass of this vibrant Chardonnay, the exquisite composition of citrus, minerality and orchard fruit captivates the senses. Crisp Granny Smith apples, notes of fresh figs and a thread of lemon-lime carry through deliciously on the palate. Reminiscent of a French Chablis with its stony minerality and brisk acidity, this classy Chardonnay is pure, graceful and lively, and I adore how the subtle oak sits modestly in the background.

Food pairing: Creamy corn chowder | SRP: $42 | www.stonyhillvineyard.com

**Le Ragnaie Winery | 2012 Chianti Colle Senesi | Montalcino, Italy**

This 100 percent Sangiovese, fermented in concrete vats and aged in neutral oak for 6 months, is a fine example of a well built, expressive Chianti. The nose displays a perfumed dark fruit fragrance with hints of earth. The palate is equally fascinating with its dark cherry, red and black berry fruit, spice notes and smooth texture creating a parade of flavors that coat the mouth. A dense yet vivacious wine from the supple entry through the lifted finish.

Food pairing: Linguine alla puttanesca | SRP: $22 | www.leragnaie.com

**Chrysalis Vineyards | 2013 Albarino | Middleburg, Virginia**

Mouthwatering fruity aromatics lead to fresh picked apricots, crunchy-fleshed pears, lemony citrus notes, hints of blanched almonds and spice unravelling tastefully on the palate. Boasting a wonderful balance with well-placed acidity, this wine is breezy and marvelously refreshing through the bright, delectable finish.

Food pairing: Almond crusted Dover sole | SRP: $24 | www.chrysaliswine.com

**Two Jakes of Diamonds | 2011 Merlot | Lake County, California**

An alluring Merlot that proclaims juicy berry and cherry fruit aromas with herb and spice suggestions. The wine broadens out fully with rich plum, blackberry and blueberry fruit, tinges of earth, savoury herbs, hints of toasty oak and caramel flawlessly streaming across the palate. This is a smoothly textured, nicely weighted wine with underlying mineral notes and refined tannins supporting the firm structure.

Food pairing: Rack of lamb | SRP: $30 | www.twojakesofdiamonds.com

**Domaine Morey-Coffinet | 2011 Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru**
Burgundy, France

Wow, this white Burgundy that spent 18 months in 35 percent new barrique and 8 months in tank will leave you breathless. Intoxicating floral, wet stone and tree fruit aromas make way for the silky entry and a rich, intense mouthful of Jaz apple, Anjou pear and hints of butterscotch, lemon verbena and licorice. Layered and complex, decant to enjoy the power and grace now, or cellar for future enjoyment.

Food pairing: Steamed clams | SRP: $150 | www.domainemoreycoffinet.com

**Balboa Winery | 2009 Eidolon | Walla Walla Valley, Washington**

Here is an alluring blend of 37 percent Syrah, 37 percent Cabernet Sauvignon, 14 percent Malbec, and 12 percent Petit Verdot that thoroughly conveys the Northwest wine vibe. Floral, dark fruit aromas rise from the glass and join flavors of cured meats, juicy blackberries, raspberries, hints of earth and savory spice swirling on the palate. Lush and fully flavored with a firm backbone of tannins, this complex blend finishes long with a vital lift.

Food pairing: Standing rib roast | SRP: $75 | www.balboawinery.com

**Henry Marionnet Domaine de la Charmoise | 2013 Touraine Sauvignon**
Loire Valley, France

Wildly expressive aromas and flavors make quite a statement with this 100 percent stainless steel aged Sauvignon Blanc. Fragrant floral notes lead to a tasty mouthful of passion fruit, key lime pie, guava and a dash of fresh herbs exploding vibrantly on the palate. The finish presents a juicy kick of citrus that remains buoyant and lingers delightfully.

Food pairing: Boiled crawfish tails | SRP: $18 | www.henry-marionnet.com

**St. James Winery | NV Friendship School White Cayuga White**
Ozark Highlands, Missouri

This semi sweet Cayuga White (a hybrid grape) is intriguing with its hint of foxiness playing off the sweet star fruit. Citrus accented fresh pineapple pleases the nose and cascades onto the palate. The 3 percent residual sugar is offset by nice acidity and the wine remains in balance through the bright finish.

Food pairing: Chicken chow mein | SRP: $9 | www.stjameswinery.com

**Brian Carter Cellars | 2009 Tuttorosso**
Yakima Valley, Columbia Valley, Washington

Engaging earthy, dried cherry scents promise plenty up front, and this sassy blend of Sangiovese (68 percent), Cabernet Sauvignon (22 percent) and Syrah (10 percent) confidently delivers. Red cherries, blackberries, cranberries, earthiness, dried herbs and oak nuances expand on the palate. A pleasing level of acidity and graceful tannins meld with the focused fruit; precisely balanced.

Food pairing: Parmesan chicken | SRP: $29 | www.briancartercellars.com

**Mission Hill Family Estate | 2013 Reserve Chardonnay**
Okanagan Valley, British Columbia

Crisp green apples and fresh chopped herbs on the nose equally shine in the mouth, joining bright orange notes and a nice element of wet stone minerality weaving through the palate. This nicely crafted Chardonnay is upbeat and thirst-quenching with subtle oak and lively acidity persisting through the clean, well-defined finish.

Food pairing: Orecchiette pasta with burrata cheese | SRP: $21.99 | www.missionhillwinery.com

**Domaine Rémy Gresser | Kritt 2012 Pinot Blanc**
Alsace, France

Inviting stone fruit aromas set the stage for this succulent, stylish wine. Nectarine, white peach, citrus-flecked pineapple, a drop of honey and mineral notes swirl harmoniously on the palate. It is round with a nice level of acid allowing through, keeping it carefully balanced. Medium bodied and elegant with a silky texture, this dry white wine finishes with a lovely tactile sensation.

**Jamesport Vineyards | 2012 Dry Riesling | North Fork, Long Island, New York**

Here’s a beautifully fresh and spirited Riesling with varietally spot on mineral notes and stone fruit engaging the senses. Juicy white peaches, sun ripened apricots and Bartlett pears flood the palate with wet stone and crushed herb highlights. Vivid acidity keeps this energetic wine well balanced throughout.

Food pairing: Kung Pao shrimp | SRP: $24.95 | www.jamesportwines.com

**Sherwood House Vineyards | 2011 Cabernet Franc | North Fork, Long Island, New York**

Beautifully expressive aromas of red fruit, herbs and spice are echoed on the palate with this sophisticated, nicely structured Cab Franc. It is bright and pure, showcasing flavors of fresh red berries and cherry jam interlacing melodiously with notes of spiced roasted green peppers, graphite and a trace of tobacco. The finish lingers with an appealing brush of oak spice.

Food pairing: Hungarian goulash | SRP: $45 | www.sherwoodhousevineyards.com

**Waters Crest Winery | 2010 Merlot | North Fork, Long Island, New York**

New World meets Old World with this glorious, violet scented Merlot. Saturating the palate are rich layers of blueberries, purple plums and black cherries entwining with pipe tobacco and dusty earth undertones. It is a remarkably balanced wine with expressive acidity playing off the rich fruit. Pleasing oak nuances and firm, velvety tannins are well integrated, and the finish is heavenly.

Food pairing: Veal parmigiana | SRP: $34.99 | www.waterscrest.com

**Lieb Cellars | 2013 Bridge Lane Rosé | North Fork, Long Island, New York**

This well balanced dry rosé, a blend of 63 percent Cabernet Franc, 21 percent Merlot, 8 percent Pinot Blanc, 5 percent Riesling and 3 percent Gewürztraminer shows off a brilliant, pale salmon hue. Tantalizing aromas of fresh berries and flowers fill the nose, and flavors of strawberries, raspberries and pink grapefruit mesh deliciously on the palate with a pretty dash of herbs. Snappy and refreshing with a vibrant finish.

Food pairing: Herbed Gruyere omelet | SRP: $18 | www.liebcellars.com

**Pellegrini Vineyards | 2013 Gewürztraminer | North Fork, Long Island, New York**

Perfumed aromas of rose petals and tropical fruit enrapture the nose from the moment you start pouring this Alsatian style Gewürz. Sashaying across the palate are gorgeous layers of mango, lychee, and sweet cementine with clove and nutmeg spice galore. Lively and focused with bright acidity counterbalancing the abundant fruit, and the finish lingers with style.

Food pairing: Spicy crab bisque | SRP: $19.98 | www.pellegrinivineyards.com

**Duck Walk Vineyards | 2013 Sauvignon Blanc | North Fork, Long Island, New York**

The level of grassiness here should please those who lean to a grassy, herbaceous SB style. It should also appeal those who favor a juicy, honeydew melon with a squeeze of Meyer lemon style Sauv Blanc, as the fruity profile is well represented. This easy to quaff wine remains fresh and balanced with a good measure of acidity.

Food pairing: Lobster roll | SRP: $18.99 | www.duckwalk.com

**Raphael Winery | 2010 La Fontana | North Fork, Long Island, New York**

composed of Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, and Petit Verdot, this Bordeaux style blend offers up beautiful floral and spice adorned aromas and a smooth entry. Luscious layers of cassis, flavorful spice, blackberry and black plum fruit wrapped around firm tannins richly fill the mouth, and underlying oak notes are gracefully integrated.

Food pairing: Pan seared Delmonico steak | SRP: $30 | www.raphaelwine.com

**The Old Field Vineyard | 2010 Cabernet Franc | North Fork, Long Island, New York**

Here is a darkly fruited, intensely flavored Cab Franc that showcases lovely purity and balance. Cherry jam and earthiness on the nose lead to black cherry and boysenberry fruit mingling with hints of roasted bell pepper, graphite and tobacco spice generously coating the mouth. The finish climaxes with a kick of cinnamon; delicious.

Food pairing: Baked ham with a cherry glaze | SRP: $40 | www.theoldfield.com

**Domaine de la Bergerie | 2011 Quarts de Chaume | Loire Valley, France**

This decadent sweet wine made of 100 percent Chenin Blanc was aged 18 months in French oak barrels. The enticing aromatics are outrageously compelling. Sweet meets savory on the nose and through the palate. Butterscotch laced pears, pineapple chunks and candied orange peel flavors interlace with zesty spice accents and a good dollop of acidity. The aftertaste is resplendent with a touch of honey drizzled dried apricots.

Food pairing: Fresh fruit compote with warm gingerbread | SRP: $60 | www.yves-guegniard.com

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**About The Author**

Ellen Landis, CS, CSW, a published wine writer, certified sommelier and wine consultant, is involved with many aspects throughout the world of wine. As wine director and sommelier at Landis Shores Oceanfront Inn (Half Moon Bay, CA), which she co-owns with husband and chef Ken Landis, she coordinates and hosts wine events to help further educate wine aficionados. She was also a sommelier at the Ritz-Carlton for four years. Ellen has traveled extensively to many wine regions throughout North America and overseas.

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