

CULTURE

A good friend of mine recently introduced me to the world of connoisseur-ship. She has a beautiful cabinet stocked with single-malt scotches and an informational video from a group of Scottish distilleries. In a fit of three-year-old admiration and envy, I decided I, too, wanted to be a connoisseur.

Chocolate. Wine. Scotch. Mustard. Cotton candy. Beer. For every food product there seems to be a group of fanatics dedicated to finding the best representatives to savor for their unique traits. Which food or drink did I love enough to dedicate years of taste bud-inspired excursions to specialty retail outlets?

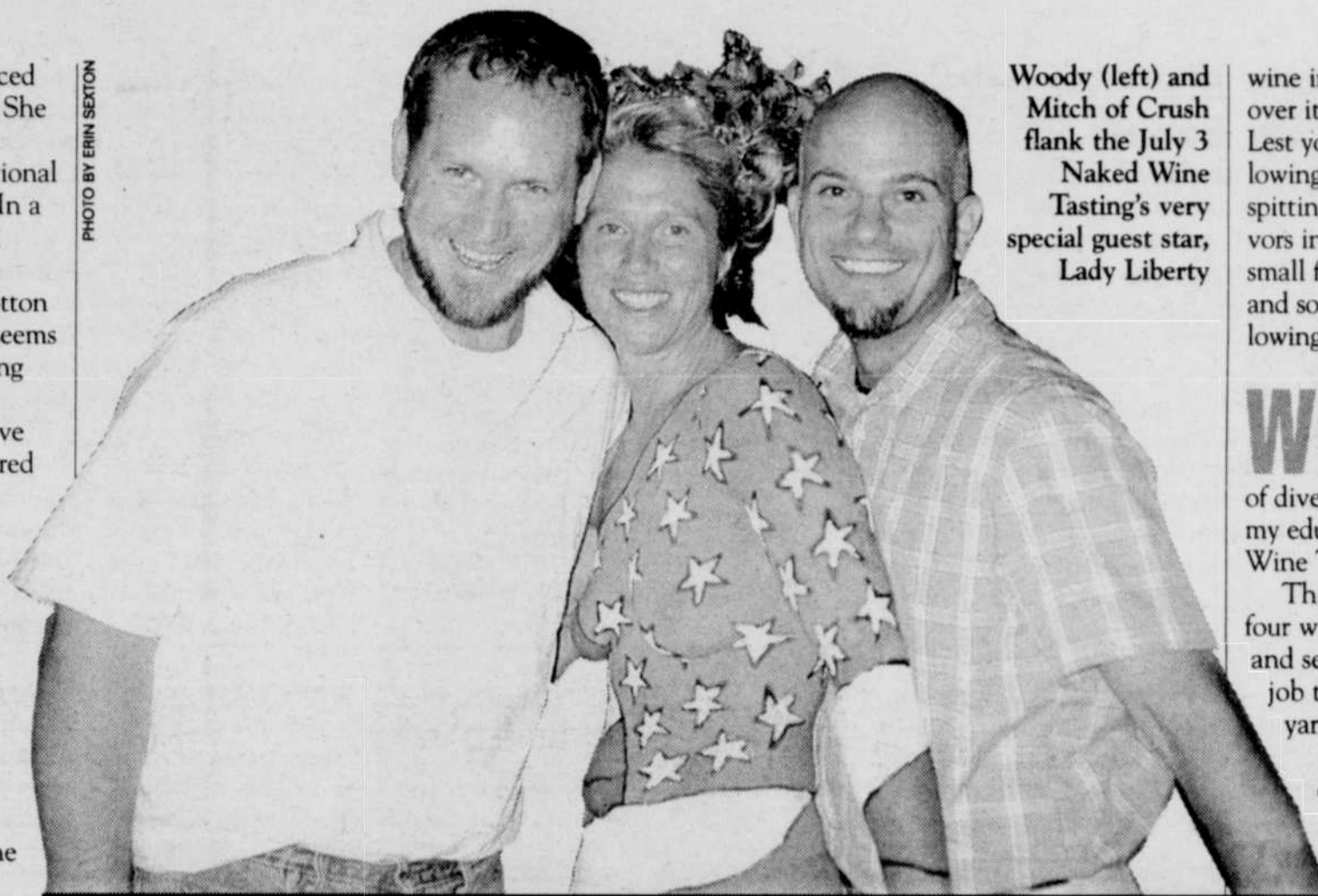
Scotch is expensive. I don't have a thing for chocolate. Mustard is good, but I can hardly imagine enticing my friends to share my newest find. "Look! Mustard!"

When I moved to Portland four years ago I learned quickly that Oregonians take their beer very, very seriously. And though I love a good frothy one now and again, it fills my tummy with bubbly carbonation. So I headed on over to Hip Chicks Do Wine to learn how to taste the nectar of the Goddesses.

Owners Laurie Lewis and Renee Neely have chosen a great hiding spot for their fabulous winery. Following bright signs strategically placed just off Holgate, the treasure at the end of the rainbow is a looming warehouse with an incredible inside mural and barrels and barrels of women-made wine. A table set with "wine tasting word" place mats, wipe-off markers for inspirational notes and spittoons for, well, spitting, drew us tasters to the center of the room.

The lesson started with a rundown of how wines are made, how they get their names

PHOTO BY ERIN SEXTON



Woody (left) and Mitch of Crush flank the July 3 Naked Wine Tasting's very special guest star, Lady Liberty

## Hip chick does wine

Everything you ever wanted to know about wine tasting but were afraid to ask

BY ERIN SEXTON

and how to look at wine. That's right, campers, I learned a good wine should be clear and not cloudy when held up to the light and that—especially on Chardonnays—brown edges are bad.

Then begins the sniffing process. Now, I have heard people talking about the "nose" and the "bouquet," but, frankly, I just thought they were being snotty. Turns out that the nose (or aroma) reflects the grapes used and that the bouquet is indicative of the wine-making process as well as how the fermenting and aging processes come together.

To get a good whiff, wine has to settle after it's been poured. Once you've stuck your nose in there, swirl the glass gently and sniff again to smell the bouquet. I was surprised to notice a really big difference. The tiny, sharp

edges of your crystal or glass vessel act to release the complex fragrance that you then get to describe using wine words.

The most useful piece of paper I've received in a long time has to be the "Aroma Wheel" published by the American Society for Enology and Viticulture. (Say that three times fast.) This simple page breaks down common vino scents into categories like "fruity," "vegetative" and "woody."

From there you can distill what you're smelling even further into "tropical," "canned/cooked" and "resinous." And, finally, you can assign words like "cherry," "asparagus" or "oak." Such as, "It has a vegetative nose with a canned asparagus bouquet."

Once you've described the smell you get to taste the wine. Finally, the reason I came!

Imagine my horror when Laurie calmly told us to take the

wine in our mouths, swish it about, suck air over it on our tongues, then SPIT IT OUT. Lest you think wine can be best tasted by swallowing it, let me be the first to sadly admit that spitting it out allows you to experience the flavors in a simpler, less convoluted manner. That small fact, however, did little to discourage me and some of my fellow rogue tasters from swallowing after the initial taste.

What does one do with this newfound knowledge of wine? My fellow queers, we live in a wonderful city with a rich blend of diversions to tickle our every fancy. I took my educated taste buds to Crush for Naked Wine Tasting.

This Wednesday evening event features four wines from the same region decanted and served for your tasting pleasure. It's your job to discern the variety, vintage and vineyard. Hah!

I set my own personal goals of not dribbling whilst spitting and using my new words to describe what I tasted. Unfortunately, there are no spittoons, and I was too self-conscious to ask lest the sweet boys of Crush be offended I was spitting out their nice wine.

My favorite of the evening was a 1999 Joseph Drouhin Cote De Nuits-Village. It has a spicy nose with a robust and full bouquet. I'd tell you more, but I got carried away and drank it before I remembered to write the rest down. Plus there was this naked, painted lesbian running about, which made concentrating really difficult.

While I don't feel like a connoisseur yet, I did learn my most important lesson at Crush. Across from me was a long table full of laughing, talking, drinking wine-type folks. I may not be able to tell you what vintage or vineyard my Pinot Noir comes from, but I can tell you that the best thing about wine is drinking it with friends. ☐

HIP CHICKS DO WINE, 4510 S.E. 23rd Ave., offer tastings and are perfectly happy to sell you wine, too. Visit them at [www.hipchicksdowine.com](http://www.hipchicksdowine.com). CRUSH is located at 1412 S.E. Morrison St. Visit them at [www.crushbar.com](http://www.crushbar.com).

ERIN SEXTON is the Office Manager at Just Out when she's not unscrewing a spicy vintage of Mad Dog 20/20 with a cherry bouquet.



The dykes of Hip Chicks Do Wine teach wine, too


PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS



Just Out's own wine-tasting snob, Erin Sexton

PHOTO BY LISA BRADSHAW

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