



Part of the purpose of this column has been for me to babble on about wine, food and people. When combined correctly and in ascending degrees of moderation these elements can coalesce into a lovely mixture worthy of full fledged enjoyment and, of course, the printed word. However, another purpose to this column was to present an industry that is bountiful, growing and, in relation to industry as a whole in this country, remarkably clean and conscientious. In my efforts to duplicate "real life columnists" situations and to frustrate the boss, I occasionally am writing my column several days after the deadline. In doing so it is sometimes convenient to skip the philosophy and the politics and focus solely on the wine.

This is not necessarily bad; however, it is not exactly in keeping with my look on life or with the spirit and heart with which this paper is published. The other day while working away at my real job, Moz Wright -- sword swallower supreme, entertainer extraordinaire and good guy in general -- showed up with a load of material to recycle. Included in that load were several copies of The Edge. Of course, I wish people saved their copies of The Edge the way people save National Geographic or The New Yorker but failing that it warms my heart to know that they are meeting a fitting destiny. The appearance of The Edge gave me a clue as to my April column: wine bottle washing.

I believe the Good Reverend was the first person I ever met whom I was aware of being completely nuts for recycling. Billy was, of all the untold number of people who worked on the 1990 Recycling Initiative, the most ideologically clearheaded about it. Actually, he gets a tie with Quincy Sugarman. Now that, good gracious, in some ways I am a professional recycler I believe it is only fitting to incorporate that aspect of what I do with this column, at least for this month.

What happens to all the wine bottles you go through? Oh sure, you recycle them, but what is the end result? I am sure you've heard of the "Green Glass Mountain" created by tons of unwanted, used green glass. Well, once upon a time there was a plan to wash, and, therefore, reuse wine bottles. Reuse comes in second on the 4 Rs scale: That is, Reduce, Reuse, Repair and Recycle. Reduction of use obviously comes first and needs the most work by our society; reuse is an increasingly viable concept; repairs can save tremendous amounts of landfill/ recycling/ junkyard space on large, durable products; and recycling, the most infamous, sexiest and widespread of the Big 4 completes the way to protect the environment from unnecessary waste.

In 1992 an eager beaver of a Reed College grad named Xander Patterson decided to see if he could tap into the expanding wine and recycling industries and bring them together. In cooperation with the darkly destined Sunflower Recycling he applied for a grant from Metro (a widely criticized bureaucracy) under the now-extinct 1% For Recycling project. As it turns out he was unfortunate enough to be granted, in total, in the neighborhood of \$150,000 to start, implement and oversee this star-crossed concept. The total does not include the large sums of money that Xander reportedly sunk into this venture.

The first project that was undertaken was to collect and sort bottles. Now you might think that this was a fairly mundane part of the task. On the contrary the collection of unbroken wine bottles was laborious and the sorting system was convoluted. To give you an idea of the sorts that were used allow me to run you through some of the basics: First, you start with the size of the bottle. A 3, 7, or 1 to classify a 375, 750, or 1000 ML bottle (of which over 99% of wine bottles fall into). Secondly, the shape. Numbers m1-4 to denote claret (Bordeaux), Burgundy, hock and Cal hock (for tall tapered bottles). Thirdly, color, of which there are 8: Flint, tinted, dead leaf green (the most widely used Burgundy color in the USA), emerald, dark green, olive, amber, and smoke. Pen-ultimately, punt or no-punt (the indentation in the bottom of the bottle) and lastly, country of origin. So... imagine throwing around bottles and yelling out "723PF" or "121NA" and knowing what the hell you were talking about. A handful of people lived this sorting existence for months.

The thing about washing wine bottles is that you need something to wash them with. That "thing" was to be the most sophisticated, high-tech specifically designed bottle washing machine in the world. (At this point I will resist telling a long, convoluted story about an allegedly less than reputable partner in this business. The telling of this story could potentially involve huge lawsuits, legal precedents and all sorts of unpleasantries so this will all be left to the imagination.) Essentially, the machine did not work to expectations. The problem: Pressure Sensitive Labels. They simply did not come off.

So it all came down to having a machine that did not do what was expected of it, a manual that was written in German (honest), tons of well sorted bottles, incredibly labor intensive work and a product that only sold for between \$4-\$5 a case. Sales were actually no problem, wineries were

lining up to buy back washed bottles, but orders could not possibly have been filled given the problems.

Ultimately the weight of the problems brought this far-sighted venture to a screeching halt in early 1993. This, coupled with the demise of Sunflower, ended two of the most adventurous sojourns into recycling this country has ever known. The point of the column has not been to trash recycling as a viable business, but to talk rationally about two industries with complementary interests that tried to get together once, failed and learned from the experience.

The amount of glass used in the country is staggering, even given the amount of companies that have switched over to plastic bottles. Gobs of glass is recycled. Much of it, especially green glass which is mostly imported and, therefore, has little market for domestic recycling, is waiting for cost-effective things to be turned into. Reuse is still such a small portion of our mindset and recycling market, that good ideas turn into nightmares. You should be asking the question of everything you recycle, "What happens to this?" and especially of items such as glass wine bottles that have tons of potential to be reused before they are recycled or left to sit in piles out by the airport.

Markets will drive our move toward conservation. For instance, Xander's wine bottle washer was recently purchased by Port Townsend, WA, which has a virtual mandate to reuse; they are too far away from recycling plants, being up on the Peninsula and all, to recycle cost effectively. Their landfill space is limited as well so the city has a commitment and investment to return the bottles of Cabernet back into the system. Wineries have an investment because, in the long run, reused bottles are cheaper than new ones. Soon, sooner than a lot of us (Newt included) care to think, the reality that Port Townsend faces will be all of our realities. We have the time and the opportunity to act before we face a situation in which reuse is mandatory (and therefore expensive) and recycling imparative.

To find out more about what you can do to alleviate your own personal solid waste crises call Metro at 234-3000 or Recycling Advocates.



Recommend Wines for April: I have been experimenting with wines from all over the world recently and have found many Oregon wines that stand up in terms of quality, uniqueness and value. I am going to send you all over the board this month so be prepared.

Chateau Lorane 1994 Late Harvest Marechal Foch: Hold onto your hats! Succulently sweet red wines are a rare find, but when done correctly they can be a sinful treat with chocolate. This young wine shows tons of potential for aging into a monster dessert wine. The deep, rich, full-bodied characteristics of Marechal Foch blend together with the botrytis affected quality of these late harvest grapes to make one of the most interesting wines you will ever lay upon your palate. Chateau Lorane is located in Cottage Grove and I doubt you will find this \$10 beauty outside of that domain.

Nicolas Rolin 1992 Pinot Noir: NR follows up on their magnificent 1991 vintage with a similar and potentially more subtle stunner. This wine is crafted in an elegant style that brings out opulent fruits, luscious tannins and good amounts of extract. While the '91 has it over in bottle aging the '92 shows the kind of potential you look for in a wine you can drink with enjoyment now or put away for a few months (or years) to allow it to develop into a full-blown red Burgundy.

Hinman 1993 Pinot Gris: Delicious, soft and complete. Joe Dobbes showed up a few years ago and turned around Hinman's future. The '93 Pinot gris is a superb example of the change in quality. Incredibly clean, nearly slate-like, this gris is a fantastic sample of the up and coming varietal. A heavenly match with seafoods, this Pinot gris will blow you away at \$11.

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