



I'll be the first to say that the notion of making New Year's Resolutions is a fairly preposterous one. From January 2nd to roughly the end of the month the health clubs are teeming with diligent New Years Resolutioners, Sara Lee sales take a dip and checkbooks throughout the land are balanced. Then real life takes over sometime in February and, for a brief while, an air of failure hangs in peoples' New Year's psyches. I believe this contributes to making February the lousy month that it is. But like any good Cubbies or Brooklyn Dodgers fan can tell you there is always the rallying cry of "just wait 'til next year!"

Well, Babalou I have got a New Year's Resolution for you. . . along with 10 good reasons to have a "stick-to-it" attitude. It's easy, fun and, as you'll see, actually quite good for you. So my (and this applies to you many readers out there) New Year's Resolution is "Drink More Wine!" And with apologies to the intellectual property of NBC, from the home office in Seal Rock, Oregon, the Top 10 Reasons why you should Drink More Wine.

10. The Copenhagen Study. A follow up to the French Paradox Report which showed that the French, despite eating a high fat and cholesterol diet, had less nasty sorts of ailments generally associated with that diet. The reason? Moderate consumption of red wine on a daily basis. This more recent study shows that consumption of 3-5 glasses of wine per day significantly reduces death rates for every type of disease commonly associated with the aging process. Consumption of red wine was also linked to the quality of life at older ages as well. Basically, because of red wine's complex structure, it is beneficial to your health to drink. Cheers!

9. Visit new places. While you could travel around to all sorts of famed wine regions you can also simply get to know the wines from particular areas. Almost every country produces wine. Obviously some are more famed than others. Get to know Australian Shiraz, German Rieslings, Washington Merlots, California Cabs, Canadian Ice Wines and, of course, Oregon Pinots. The wines say something about the place from which they come because they are a product of that region's soil and climate as well as the people's palates and attitudes.

8. Improve your senses. Wines offer myriads of flavors. People who don't drink wine often wonder about (and are sometimes turned off by) wine drinker's quest to describe the flavors, bouquets and textures of their favorite wines. In the past 2+ years of wine drinking my ability to discern particular scents and tastes has improved markedly. Not just while drinking wine either, but in eating foods and just the overall awareness of my surroundings. While the color of a wine is important and interesting the least important sense in wine tasting is your sight. Open your senses and you open up a little more of your mind.

7. Discover new foods. I have eaten better (and maybe even healthier) in the last 2 years than at any time in recent memory. Wine was made to be eaten with food. The right combinations can bring out flavors in the food and wine that would not be perceptible on their own. I have improved my culinary skills and have been willing to try exotic foods, all because of my experience with wine.

6. Find creative uses for your basement or closet. If you really start to get into wine it is almost inevitable that you will start stockpiling it. Wine's worst enemy is heat. Wine that sits in a consistently warm environment (above 70 degree F) will age poorly. Dark closets and basements (such as mine) become impromptu wine cellars for those afflicted with the collecting itch.

5. Make shopping more fun. Grocery shopping by its very definition is a tedious event. Sure, maybe the canned cat food will be 4/99¢ rather than 3/99¢ this time but that still does not make the trip something really to look forward to. Having an interest in and a knowledge of wine can help relieve some supermarket boredom. I check the wine department of every store I go into. Okay, I will admit to a slight neurosis that you may not want to deal with. However, I have found some fabulous wine deals by poking around. Getting a good deal on a nice bottle of wine is something you can be happy about and even relate to people who can appreciate your good fortune.

4. Meet new people. By and large the people who work in the wine industry (Oregon's at least) are great folks. I have made many friends of the past 2 years simply because of wine drinking. You might even be able to turn on some friends of yours to wine

drinking and discover a whole new aspect of camaraderie and friendship. Wine drinking is, almost by its very nature, a bonding type of experience and it doesn't involve sports.

3. Have a religious experience. This may be going a bit far but it sounded better than saying "a really great experience." As you drink more types of wine your palate becomes more sophisticated and you know what you like. You also get a sense of what you would really like. And sometimes you get to experience the wine that takes you to a whole new level of understanding and appreciation for wine. Maybe you get an opportunity to taste a 1982 Margaux or a 1992 Leonetti Seven Hills Merlot or a 1990 Grange or . . . whatever and new vistas open for you. By the way, when this happens you will be hopelessly hooked and there is no going back.

2. Support an Oregon industry. The easiest way to learn about wine and wine drinking lies practically right in your backyard. Oregon boasts over 100 wineries now, most of which are open to the public for wine tasting. At tasting rooms you can get a sense of a variety of different wines and winemaking styles and begin to determine what you like to drink. It is fun, picturesque (most wineries are located in gorgeous areas) and relatively inexpensive. At the same time you are learning something about purchasing wine from other parts of the world, you are developing an appreciation for what we are fortunate enough to have right here.

And the #1 reason to Drink More Wine in 1996. . .

1. Enjoy life. That's what this is all about.

Recommended Wines for the Month: I guess I have it all wrong. December is probably the biggest month for wine sales. My feeling is December, with all its holidays and what not is not an ideal wine drinking month. There's so much going on and holiday parties aren't usually designed for drinking great wines. January is one of the slowest wine sales months. I think January is an ideal time to get into wines. It's cold (and most likely rainy) outside, it gets dark early, the only holiday is one that most people have to work on and most things go into a dormant phase for 31 days. What better time to find some Merlots and Cabernets and hearty Pinots to pass the time? Support your local wine merchant in January by buying some wine! Here are some to look for.

Penfolds 1992 Cabernet Shiraz Bin 389: Most likely Australia's top winery. This wine was recently ranked by The Wine Spectator as one of the Top 100 wines of 1995 (#29). It is a big, rich blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz. The use of American oak barrels lends a slightly smoky, toasty quality to the deep, opulent fruits. Flavors of dark chocolate, leather and a touch of mint and anise combine for a long finish that glides through the tannins. Better in a couple of years but at only \$17 drink some now.

Ravenswood 1993 Sonoma County Zinfandel: A mammoth wine. Loaded with ripe raspberry and black cherry fruit. Silky smooth already, even with the tannins being so young. A long finish with notes of tar, anise, spicy pepper and a bit of cedar. A very, very nice wine. Appropriate for cold weather drinking. A good deal at \$18.

Ken Wright 1994 Pinot Noir Willamette Valley: The first release of Pinot from the former winemaker of Panther Creek. Young and tight but exhibiting unbelievably smooth, focused fruit. Black Cherry, wild berry and spicy flavors dominate the wine. At \$20 it may seem high but for the vintage and the winemaker it is well worth the price. If you can find the single vineyard designates (Freedom Hill and Canary Hill) they are both simply spectacular Pinot noirs.

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Pacific City: The River House

Oceanside: Ocean Side Espresso

Lincoln City: Trillium Natural Foods, Driftwood Library, & Eats 'n' Stuff

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Corvallis: Not Necessarily News, & The Environmental Center

Salem: Heliotrope, Salem Library, & The Peace Store

Astoria: KMUN, Columbian Café, The Community Store, & Café Uniontown

Seaside: Buck's Book Barn, Universal Video, & Cafe Espresso

Portland: Act III, Barnes & Noble, Belmonts Inn, Biblot Art Gallery, Bijou Café, Borders, Bridgeport Brew Pub, Capt'n Beans (two locations), Center for the Healing Light, Coffee People (three locations), Common Grounds Coffee, East Avenue Tavern, Food Front, Goose Hollow Inn, Hot Lips Pizza, Java Bay Café, Key Largo, La Patisserie, Lewis & Clark College, Locals Only, Marco's Pizza, Marylhurst College, Mt. Hood CC, Music Millennium, Nature's (two locations), NW Natural Gas, OHSU Medical School, Old Wives Tales, Ozone Records, Papa Haydn, PCC (four locations), PSU (two locations), Reed College, Third Eye, TransCentral Library, & YWCA

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