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Wine BY LANCE SPARKS

Wine in Strange Lands

Heading north of the border
for the love of the grape.

Decades of sleuthing for wine has taken me deep into strange and beautiful places and encounters with rare and remarkable people.

Case in point: A few weeks ago, I was moping around the tasting lab, got a call from Bob Sogge, respected Oregon wine educator. Bob Sogge probably has done as much to bring fine wine to Eugeneans as perhaps any other single person: In 1970, Sogge operated a photography studio by the UO campus but applied to OLCC for a license to conduct wine classes in his home. A natural teacher, Sogge turned a lot of tenuous wine consumers into avid students of the grape. He's still teaching; for example, he sang some sweet praises for my wine columns, then pointed out, quite gently, that I had misidentified the grape for a Spanish rosé: "Um, Lance, far as I know *uvi libri* on the label is another term for *tempranillo*." Oops: "Gosh, Teach, I think my cat walked across the key board, or, um" He chuckled, then gave me important news.

About five years ago, Sogge and an active group of wine people got together and began making moves toward creating a viticultural program that would encourage young people to transform their sense of the "romance in wine," as Sogge called it, into entry-level knowledge of wine, grape-growing and winemaking. They organized, talked to schools and wine pros, wrote a grant application. Result: Chemeketa Community College for the last four years has developed and offered a program that allows students to earn an AS degree in viticulture, and on Friday, Sept. 5, will dedicate the Viticultural Center on the campus. On a final note, for wine-inquiring minds, Sogge will teach two courses this fall, Wine Appreciation and Wines of the World; of course, students will taste many wines, but (for worried bluenoses), Bob notes that, "We don't swallow. We spit it all." But everyone learns that "all you need to know about a wine comes before you swallow." True dat.

As a loyal Eugenean, it takes me some severe mental yoga to imagine Salem as a center for wine, but the simple truth is that some of the state's best vineyards grow there. Rumor has it — probably silly — that the capital also has some fine dining now. Sure.

Wine in strange places? How 'bout British Columbia. Last year, Kat and I, with partners Peter Poet and Soho Sandy, visited parts of B.C. and came back dazzled. This year's experience was even more palate-pleasing. Foodies, write this down: Vancouver, B.C., has to be one of the most cosmopolitan and food-obsessed cities in this hemisphere.

Kat and I rolled off the ferry from the north country, crossed over Lionsgate Bridge, cruised through huge and spectacular Stanley Park, passed the marina at Coal

Harbour, into the heart of the city. We rambled through canyons of great glass and steel highrises, most of them apartments and condos, most with patios for outdoor living above the streets. We flipped down Denman Street, sidewalks teeming with natives and visitors, berthed at the venerable Sylvia Hotel on the shore of English Bay. Then we ambled Denman's mere seven blocks, seeking the food. Omigaw: half-dozen restaurants per block. Wattayawant? Partial list, gotcher Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai, Indian, Persian, Russian, Ukrainian, French, Italian, Spanish, English even. Two coffee houses every block, ice cream shops, specialty markets, everything from hot dogs and snacks to exquisite desserts. The air wafted with tang of sea salt from the bay, gas and diesel from the cars, protean alterations of cooking scents. Stomach juices raging, we reeled into Banana Leaf, this month's hot spot, serving Malaysian fare ("No reservations. We open five o'clock, place full by six, line forms until 9:30"): fresh clams in fermented bean curd (\$8 U.S.), Abundance of Seafood (\$10), grilled snapper in bay leaf (\$9), every dish superb.

Wine another matter: B.C. is making jazzy juice, especially from the Okanagan Valley (at this time burning up, over 800 wildfires), but restaurants there (as here) serve white wines way too cold, and the servers typically struggled, even in the best places. And the wines were spendy — imported wines (including U.S.) way overpriced. Change will come.

Good wines from wheredat? **Hugues de Beauvignac 2002 Viognier Vin de Pays des Cotes de Thau** (\$8); in



none of my books could I find where in France the Cotes de Thau might be, until importer Greg Zancanella pointed to Languedoc, between Béziers and Montpellier. From any place, this is tasty viognier at bargain prices. Put this next to fresh crab, savor flavors of ripe pears and white peaches, citrus tang on a crisp, clean

frame. Same folks, same place, same price, tasty **2002 Chardonnay**, lightly oaked to yield flavors of apples, tropical fruits, with food-friendly acidity.

Want a touch of sweet to match the hot in Asian foods? Look for the dog's head label, find **O'Reilly's 2002 Riesling Yakima Valley** (\$8.50); Oregon producer (Newberg) is fast becoming one of our fav's. This wine is simply lovely, concentrated with flavors of pears, peaches, lychee, as delicately balanced in acidity as a fine Moselle Valley spatlese.

Next month, more on British Columbian experiences (just an eight-hour zip up I-5 to a new world), then it's time to investigate autumnal wines — rich whites and lively reds — to revel in the glories of the harvest, the romance of wine.

EW

Free Tasting Schedule

FRIDAYS AT 4PM

September 5: Syrah
September 12: Spanish whites
September 19: Keeton-Reed
September 26: Rhone reds

Month of September

SATURDAYS AT 4 PM

September 6: Stangeland
September 13: Cooper Mt.
September 20: Secret House
September 27: Lemelson

Our next wine class begins:

Wednesday,
September 24

Our next Introduction to Wine class is now open for registration. Often imitated but never duplicated, this class is a rollicking tour through the world's great wine regions. A class for the intellect as well as the senses. Call Steve to register. Four consecutive 2 hour sessions. 7:30 pm \$95.

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