

Wine Bashing the Talibushes

America's true hearts and only hope.

Still early morning, air heating rapidly toward mid-summer swelter, I prowl my shabby office on the 17th floor of Eugene's most ghastly office building; stop, stare out the grimy windows, look down on the milling throngs at Saturday Market, awash in color of spring, thick clusters of callas, poppies, iris and lupine. Up here, trapped in this monument to functionalist mausoleum archi-



wines at 90 points (excellent) or better, most from the fine 2001 and 2002 vintages. *WS* rates a whole raft of Oregon pinot noir and gris at 85-90 points (very good). Many of these (ahem) have been mentioned in this column — more to follow — but we should keep in mind that most Oregon producers are so small that they won't even send samples to the press, even if their products are superb (Broadley Vineyards comes to mind). And sometimes

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ecture, the defining style of Eugene commercial building for the last half-century, I grind my teeth and wrestle with angst: massive corruption in government, young men and women dying daily in the Halliburton wars, poor and ailing millions sinking in despair, mere victims of "Market Forces" and the corporate ethic of unbridled greed and moral indifference — and I should write about the frail beauties of wine and food.

Words from my lovely daughter, Sulwyn, erstwhile manager of Marché, offer some comfort: "Dad," she pleaded, "you of all people know that it's all about doing the work of beauty and pleasure, 'cause if we don't hold on to that, we all get the short end of the hoo-hoo."

She's right, of course; it's a blessing to have our children return our support and love and modest modicum of acquired wisdom. I breathe a little deeper, even as I watch the city's smog wrap around city walls like a napping cat.

Sip dark coffee, peer through haze: sweet blend of Bluegene citizens fingering hand-made arts and crafts, baskets laden with fresh produce, hands/arms heavy with pots and plant starts, pretty faces, all colors, all ages, eternally hip and blandly square, easy smiles, America's true hearts and only hope.

Mind wanders: Last weekend, more than a half-million women thronged Washington, D.C.'s, great Mall to demonstrate for women's rights, most importantly the right to control their own reproductive decisions. Their passion and fervor was electric, despite all efforts of media reporters and anti-choice hacks to downplay or disparage the massive display of unity and the depth of the women's moral commitment. Freedom: The word means the individual has the right to choose, and the state created by free people must, first and foremost, protect that right. Imagine, now, a half-million freedom-loving, women-honoring men rising in support of those dynamic marchers. Imagine the despair of mean-spirited, misogynistic Talibanners the world over. Wouldn't that be cool?

OK, from the sublime to the merely mundane, but still in the spirit of choice, let's choose some wines. BUT FIRST: Take note, Oregonians, that the latest issue of *Wine Spectator*, prime world-scale winepress, for the first time in memory lists over 50 Oregon

we get local-folks prices that contrast sharply with national retail.

Case in Point: **Griffin Creek Viognier Rogue Valley 2002**; *Spectator* rings up 88 points (reeeeal good), praises this lovely dry white for flavors "rich, spicy and effusively floral" (all true, and more — round, ripe, brilliant with fresh crab), retail at \$25. Nah, on sale on local shelves at \$13, super value for superb wine. Haul the penny-jar to favorite wineshop, pull clerk's coat, say vee-o-nyag, gimmesum.

We cook a lot of Asian-style — love the spicing, textures, colors — enjoy the way Oregon rieslings and gewurztraminers match-up, particularly Amity Dry Gewurztraminer (*WS* 87 pts., \$12, mentioned in March column), but lately we've been charmed by **O'Reilly's 2002 Oregon Pinot Gris** (\$10), so generous with flavors/aromas of ripe pears, minerals, hint of starfruit, so bright and clean. Don't see any particular reason to share this lovely juice with outtastaters; OK, one bottle to Molly Ivins. She's a hero and suffers living in Texas.

Last month, we surveyed local wineries, tried to give some love to Eugene's own, but one slipped under the radar, newbies in the Lorane Valley, neighbors to King Estate et al., and recently hired Sundance Wine Cellars' longtime manager, the gentlemanly Keith Tabor, to become general manager. We refer, of course, to the producers of **Iris Hill 2001 Pinot Noir** (\$15); the label is funky but the wine is light in body yet with fresh fruit flavors of cherries and raspberries, tasty with light meats and ripe cheeses.

Local foodies' new rave is Zelaya's at 839 Lincoln, where Patrick and Madeline McKee (who opened Red Agave, then moved on) have turned a teeny space into a fine dinery with Spanish flair. Popped in the other night for Patrick's fresh halibut, drank a bottle of **Burgans 2002 Albariño** (\$13 retail), such a pretty white from Spain's Rias Baixas region: dry, clean, with flavors of limestone, pears, apples, floral notes, just all over the mouth, danced a charming pas de deux with the grilled fish. Doubt me, test me, try it — but keep yer paws off Maddy's swelling, boy-bearing tummy.

'K, hit the bricks, folks, serve and protect your freedoms. Don't let the Talibushies give you the short end of the hoo-hoo. **EW**

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