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NEXT WINE CLASS BEGINS MAY 4



In this four week class we will explore the characteristics of dominant grape varieties and learn to distinguish between them, study the importance of climate and soil and their impact on wine, discuss the effects of winemaking styles and techniques, explore fundamentals of wine and food pairing, and generally just plain have a lot of fun. Next class May 4, 11, 18 & 25 Wednesday evenings 7:30 to 9 pm. \$95.

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Wine BY LANCE SPARKS

History Nags

Wine is divine, but meantime...

Somehow, I'll bring all this back to wine, to what it means to live a life in pursuit of graceful companionship, simple beauty and social pleasures.

Meanwhile, I'm struggling with the sense that our pleasures are being daily drained from our lives by this persistent political nightmare that's transforming America into something even George Orwell could not imagine.



posed by piles of naked men. The torture proxies' methods must be worse than those revealed by Army and Navy investigators that detailed Afghan men in American custody "chained to the ceiling ... one of them maimed over a five-day period, dying with his leg muscle tissue destroyed from blows to his knees and lower body" (AP, 3/13). Now, can the proxy torturers in Egypt do a better job? Do we really need to outsource this activity? Is this part of the New America envi-

Perhaps some conversation might be devoted to how we might wrestle America's honor from the brutes who have done it such terrible damage.

Born into a family with a long history of military service to this nation, I grew up intensely patriotic, and still feel deeply stirred when I reflect on the majesty of this great land and the common generosity and decency of its peoples. But I also feel increasingly outraged that this sweet land has been hijacked by cynical scoundrels who hide their criminality behind facades of piety and drape themselves in our flag while committing acts of brutality in our country's name.

I want just to go on, live a normal life, do good work, laugh with pals and pretend that none of this is real or at worst is only temporary.

But I'm nagged by my own knowledge of history: As World War II was ending and the true scope of the horror that had been the conduct of the Holocaust was being documented as official truth (unofficially known for years) and war criminals were being arrested and brought to trial, many investigators turned their inquiries toward the huge numbers of people who, through the simple and "normal" conduct of their lives and performance of daily duties, not only allowed the genocide to proceed but shuffled all the simple, essential pieces of world that ensured efficient operations of murderous machinery: truck drivers, train engineers, bakers, tailors, folks just "doing business." Their response, their defense of their actions and — perhaps more importantly — their inaction became known as the "Good German" defense: "I was just doing my job. I am a good German."

I've just been doing my job, paying bills, and tending our garden. Oh, I've raved a few times in this column, certainly not enough to bother thugs like Tom DeLay and his ilk, but the Bush policy of "rendition" for prisoners of war has shattered my peace. In case you missed the *Washington Post* and other media who have carried the story, "rendition" is the term used to cover the practice of using a "private" (CIA) Gulfstream turbojet to fly our nation's war prisoners to other countries where they will be tortured by methods Americans might be reluctant to use, perhaps because the methods are so ghastly, or just so plainly illegal.

Which raises several questions: First, what methods might those be? Plainly, they can't be those "high-spirited college initiation pranks" revealed by the photos at Abu Ghraib prison: grinning American soldiers

sioned by the radical Republican "conservatives"? Lastly, is this what is meant by "Christian values"?

Maybe we dreamed that other, finer America of our youth; maybe this nightmare is what we find when we wake.

Sorrowing Americans and Eugeneans who cherish life can find some solace in sharing good wines among good friends. And perhaps some conversation might be devoted to how we might wrestle America's honor from the brutes who have done it such terrible damage.

Oregon is basking in a beautiful spring; Saturday Market has reopened, bringing lovely greens and root veggies; it's time for bright white wines and lively pinot noirs.

An amazing bargain in flavorful whites is **Domaine de Montmarin 2003 Viognier** (\$8); it originates in the Cotes de Thongue region of southern France, is crisp and refreshing, with hints of ripe pears and lemon zest, balanced by sufficient acidity to make it a nice match for fresh Dungeness crab or shellfish. When you're out to bag some vino, occasionally check the back label; if you see Zancanella Importing of Portland, chances are good that you've found a solid value.

I've got a known jones for Spanish whites from the Rias Baixas region, and the **Condes de Albarei 2003 Albariño** (\$15) made my palate tingle. The flavors remind of melons and pears, a hint of almond, with a stony/mineral quality found in great rieslings from Germany's Moselle Valley. I just love this varietal, with seafood or Asian dishes or as a sipper while cooking.

Spring and pinot noir go together like weddings and June, and pinotphiliacs have been whispering praises for **Medici Vineyards 2000 Pinot Noir** (\$20). Turns out it's robust pinot, dark, rich in black cherry fruit backed by toasty oak and medium tannins. The Medici estate vines are fairly young but reaching early maturity, yielding fruit with a strong, distinct center, with hints of developing complexity. You could hide a few bottles of this wine for a couple years, then find it and grin big.

I'd rather write much more about fine foods and tasty wines, and maybe I'll get a chance again soon. For now, please forgive me if I lapse from the silence of "just doing my job." America needs every humane voice.

EW

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