

# Sleepless Wines

Vino makes unraveling nation easier to swallow

It's another sensory-overload spring in the South Willamette Valley, and usually I'd be deliriously sappy, soaking up the eruption of blooming colors, the sweet scents of daphne and hyacinths, the skin-tingling caress of first warmth. I'd be thinking of shucking clothes and turning soil, giggling to dig in a boatload of dahlias, besotted by the blood rushing through my veins.



Of course, we've seen this before. Anyone who reads history can point to this pattern repeated incessantly, almost compulsively, across the centuries, each chapter a litany of destruction, with the destroyers usually — but not always — escaping justice. But recognizing the pattern offers no comfort, no easing of the mind, no better sleep.

Instead, I spend sleepless nights alternating between being roundly pissed off and sadly grieving. I want to do my job, ply my arts, enjoy my family, tend my garden, share vernal bliss with our neighbors. But I find myself almost paralyzed, like someone watching a horrific accident in slow motion. These beautiful countries — both Oregon and the United States — have begun to unravel, largely because a coterie of the obscenely rich (only some, not all) have decided that it is their right to simply abandon any sense of social responsibility and have taken to hoarding their wealth, even if it means massive suffering for large numbers of people not fortunate enough to have chosen rich parents.

It's difficult to write about the simple pleasures of wine and food, though these should be our common heritage. Still, I offer these, almost as balm:

Continuing a theme we began recently, look at two pleasant and affordable white wines from Portugal. **Casa Santos Lima Ferno Pires 2008** (\$10), a grape varietal that rarely escaped the Estremadura region until recent times; it's round and ripe with pretty melon flavors, easy to drink, friendly to seafood and poultry. **Coroa D'Ouro 2007** (\$10) is also pleasant, with elusive mineral/citrus flavors — one sip seems to call for another.

As a result, our schools are crumbling, our streets are rutted, our air and waters increasingly poisoned. The oceans themselves are dying. Thousands of species are being driven to extinction. And the insanely wealthy wash their hands and declare, "Not my problem." And they want more. There seems no upper limit to their greed, no bottom to their indifference. Not content to live like lords, they would live like gods, scornful of the merely mortal. The hereditary oligarchy and the corporate aristocracy have combined to loot the public treasury, denying the very existence of a "public" entity at all, and bunker down in their fortified mansions and ignore the spreading pain.

Still available despite all the fanfare about Oregon's superb 2008 vintage, **Territorial 2008 Pinot Noir** is a pinot bargain (\$18), offering charming cherry/raspberry flavors, a dash of spice, a graceful finish. Doubt me? Drop into their tasting room, 907 West 3rd, and test for yourselves; in fact, test *all* their wines. You won't be sorry.

Truly super cab at under \$20? **Los Vascos 2007 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon** (\$17) comes from the Rothschild properties in Chile and, for the price, is simply outstanding — sturdy, deep in dark fruit flavors, firmly balanced for food, like most French-inspired wines.

Wine won't solve our problems, but if shared among friends can — for a moment — relieve some of the pain. *Santé.* **EW**



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