

Grateful Wines

And other objects of my affection

Any country that makes a national holiday to raise collective thanks probably can't be all bad, even if the thanks are sometimes misplaced or rather belated or fraught with a dubious materialism spiced up with vindictive malice ("Thanks for the Lexus and would you please give mine enemies genital warts? Thanks again").

Still, think about it: An entire modern industrial nation, whose military forces rampage through a hundred other nations, takes a day off work to settle accounts with a few million turkeys while raising voices in gratitude for all the good stuff — even if it could be a little more, like that Lexus could come with the walnut interior trim, but still, thanks, really, it's nice.

I mention these national thanks now, largely because during the celebrations I found myself awash in wave after wave of epiphanies of grace. Sure, I should be focusing on the upcoming holidays devoted entirely to material excess in the Name of One who taught humility and the virtues of poverty; in fact, let's get that done: Merry Christmas, and buy more stuff, OK? Back to the thanks.

Right: Thanks for the (still) breathable air and drinkable water and the bounty of the garden which is Oregon. This place, including the communities of Eugene/

Springfield and surrounding villages, is so beautiful it makes my pulse race just looking around.

A'ight, now thanks for this fab family — great job on the grandkids, Desmond, Meagan, Brian, Olivia and Owen — even terrific in-laws.

Thanks, too, for sweetest friends whose love and generosity is the stuff of dreams.

The entire LCC community, from President Mary Spilde, Dean Susan Carkin, some of the best teachers any college could hope for, dedicated staff, to an incredible spectrum of students, a 30-year career of soul-satisfying work: endless thanks.

Heartfelt thanks to the entire staff of *Eugene Weekly*. It's been an honor to share pages with such fine writers, editors, production and sales crew.

Somebody has to say it: Thanks to all the fervent people who comprised the Occupy movements and endured the cold and the wet, plus the slurs and insults from Tea Baggers, all in an effort to bring America back to its conscience.

Of course, thanks to all the wonderful people who constitute the wine community: growers, vintners, pickers and harvesters, wholesalers and retailers, artists and designers, hugely talented wine-makers. You bring pleasure to thousands, with wines like these:

Iris 2008 Pinot Gris (\$11): Mark Nicholl, wine-maker at Sweet Cheeks, called this gris "gorgeous," not a word he uses loosely. It's firmly structured, with flavors of pears and river rocks, fully matured, ready to drink

Cowhorn 2010 Viognier (\$30): Stiff ticket, right? But this is a gift wine, for somebody who has a wicked jones for Rhone-style whites. Made biodynamically (think organic to the third power) to yield flavors true to the fruit and land, it's a complex integration of flavors that mimic tropical fruits, white flowers, citrus and vanilla. *Mon dieu!*

Welcome newcomers, **Abelone 2009 Pinot Noir** (\$18), a small producer in the shadow of Spencer Butte, making only pinot noir. Their first bottling, the 2009 is deeply fruited (cherries, strawberries) with earthy notes and a blast of black pepper, very satisfying.

We're grateful to all of these, and all of you. And merry Christmas, too. **EW**



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