

Notes From The Cellar (NFTC); Winepairings e-letter Jan 09, 2008

Today: Beringer Private Reserve Cabernet

2004 was an excellent vintage in Northern California, especially for the Cabernet Sauvignon based wines that Napa & Sonoma are famous for. It is now acknowledged by the critics and wine media that the wines from the next vintage 2005, while good, will not reach the highs of the 2004's. Of course, such generalizations should only serve as guidelines: as individual wines should be evaluated based on their own merit. Nonetheless general vintage trends tend to play a role in availability and pricing of wine. In previous newsletters I have discussed the worrisome trend of the increasing prices of imported wines, due to the decline of the \$ US. Well, it appears that some of the domestic producers have decided to use the general increases in prices of imports as a justification to raise their own prices (the old and lame argument of ;"if they are getting so much for their wine, mine has got to be worth at least this much...) Other domestic producers are holding the line on pricing with hope of increasing market share, but in the high end of the market where supplies are limited, this is unfortunately rare. I am convinced that even with the domestic producers; subsequent great vintages will continue to be priced higher and higher. This makes today's offering especially timely.

Back in October while attending the bi -annual Wine Experience tasting in New York, I had the chance to sample some of the big perennial top producers. The list of California Cabs was impressive, it included most of the notable big guns, wines such as Shafer HSS, Mondavi Reserve, Harlan, Pride Reserve, Foley, Dominus, Phelps Insignia, Opus One and more....All those wines carry price tags of over \$100 and some are in the \$200+ . Many of these wines have also increased in price recently.

One of my overall favorites of that tasting, regardless of price was today's featured wine. "This is one to add to the cellar" I thought as I knew that Beringer priced their wines at relative good value (and that is true across their entire line -not just their top tier flagship wine that I am writing about here). Over the past 30 years Beringer's wine maker: Ed Sbragia has been recognized as one of California's most talented. Well, as far as I was concerned, when I sampled the 2004, Ed and his team hit the bull's eye. This was the best young Beringer I have ever tasted! I knew that with some careful shopping I could find this wine for my own cellar for under \$100 a bottle. At the time earlier ratings from wine spectator already had this wine at 93 points, and Robert Parker has rated barrel samples at 92-94 points. To me this wine was better than those scores. My assessment was reaffirmed when Parker published his year end report, and increased his ratings (this time from bottle) to 95 points (see review below). I had to act fast, as this wine is a standard feature on many high end steak houses and high end restaurants. (It is after all a solid wine in any vintage, and as such you will seldom find it in those establishments priced at less than double the price we are offering it to you today) With the new Parker ratings it is only a matter of time before the current supply will get snapped up. I managed to obtain a fantastic price from our distributor, and in order to get our 6th year in business to our best start ever, **we have kept the margins ridiculously low. Consider this a special Thank You to all of you who have made WINEPAIRINGS possible.**

\$\$\$ Special wine deals \$\$\$

Collector's corner

Beringer Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2004 \$77- (reg. \$110-115)

Great wine, seldom are the critics all in agreement:

Robert Parker 95 points: *“The final blend for the 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Private Reserve has turned out fabulously. The wine’s dense purple color is accompanied by a rich, sumptuous bouquet of creme de cassis, lead pencil shavings, chocolate, toast, and spice box. It possesses fabulous fruit, low acidity, a rich, full-bodied mouthfeel, and a long, pure finish. This cuvee remains one of the most underrated great Cabernet Sauvignons of Napa. In vintages such as this, it is capable of lasting 20-25 years.”*

Steven Tanzer 94 Points: *“Medium ruby. Welcoming aromas of black raspberry, chocolate and sexy oak. Lush, layered and sweet, with superb energy and depth to the black raspberry and bitter chocolate flavors. The longest on the aftertaste of these 2004 cabernets, finishing with very suave tannins and lovely aromatic persistence.”*

James Lube Wine Spectator 93 points: *“Rich, dense and chewy, with ripe plum, blackberry, fresh earth and mineral flavors, framed by smoky, cedary oak. Intense and persistent, ending with a mix of cherry and currant fruit. The tannins are firm but ripe. Needs time. Best from 2009 through 2018”.*

Events & stuff:

On Friday January 11th USA Today will feature a write up on the top Wine Festivals in the USA This should give us some ideas on fun travel opportunities.....

Now you can hit a trendy spot & save money on wine....over the Winter months “North” Restaurant in Chery Creek is reducing their entire wine list to ½ price and they have quite a nice wine list (we have no affiliation or commercial interest here..)

Tues Jan 22nd Aix Restaurant & Paul Dolan from Parducci Vineyards host an evening of organic food and wine.Parducci Winery, the oldest family-owned winery in Mendocino County, is the first in the United States to achieve carbon neutrality \$65 details :<http://www.restaurantaix.com/>

The special lights display (over 1 million) is still on at the Denver Botanic Gardens until January 20th and now that the holidays are over you don't have to deal with the crowds check them out at:
<http://www.botanicgardens.org/pageinpage/blossomsoflight.cfm>

Thanks again for all your support and referrals, tell your friends, Cheers ! Paul David, Chief Fermented Grape Taster.

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