

Notes From The Cellar (NFTC); Winepairings e-letter October 22,2008

More Port! the perfect holiday gift for your clients

If you are not paying attention you are missing out! This is the greatest time to be stocking up on wine. Sure if you are stressed out, a bottle of wine shared with your friends is the perfect antidote. Yet I am looking at the situation in an even more in -depth manner. If you have interest in building or further stocking a cellar, the opportunities we are seeing now; deals on world class wines are unprecedented. The flow of information, and as such, wine offers has become so widespread due to e-mails and the the Internet that it is a full time job just keeping track. Yes the exceptional buys are out there: importers whole sellers as well as retailers and private sellers are all hurting for cash. A buyer's market it is, yet keep in mind that we are purchasing Wine – a perishable product. Provenance -the source of the wine and how it was cared for is the most important aspect of any deal. More so than ever I am very carefully scrutinizing all of our sources. If you are a Warren Buffet kind of wine buyer in this market, you will find yourself in a very good position not if, but when the economy turns around. Let me know what you are after, so we can add you to those who are aware of the opportunities. If you are just looking for good wines to consume, you will benefit as well by keeping in touch. As I have mentioned in previous recent newsletters; I am committed to providing you with the most bang for your wine purchasing \$. and the choices are some of the best I have seen in years.

On to today's NFTC deal: I am a self professed port lover. Like many port drinkers, my introduction started many years ago when first introduced to Ruby ports. From there it was Vintage ports , Tawny, Madeiras and the likes. Over the years I also came to the realization that in the world of fine wines and Spirits, ports are a relative bargain; especially when considering the quality and efforts that go into producing a good bottle. Sure laying down a good bottle of vintage port for long term aging will ultimately result in one of the world's finest beverages at what will seem down right cheap. Yet you don't have to delay gratification for that long. As a bonus ports can be very enjoyable when drank young as well -especially if you like that exuberant fruit profile. They also make a great pairing with a large variety of foods when young; from game and smoked meats to cheese and even desserts -especially chocolate. We try to offer them every time we get a crack at a good one.

Within the world of ports perhaps the best deal is in the Late Bottle Vintage category, often reffered to by the acronym “LBV”. These are very similar in composition to the vintage ports, blended from some of the best parcels and grape batches. They are single vintage designated and the major difference from the regular vintage ports is that they see longer aging in barrels-typically a minimum of 3 years. Vintage ports see less time in wood (a year is common), as they are intended to be aged in the bottle over long periods of time (to reach their ultimate flavor development). LBV's are thus released later (you get a minimum of 3 years in wood plus at least a year in bottle). The idea here is that the longer barrel exposure actually results in an a faster maturity profile. By the time the LBV's are released (which is typically 5-6 years from the vintage) they are ready to drink and enjoy. Another major difference is the price: at the current mid \$20's to low 30's range they are often less than half the price of the vintage port. Why are the vintage port pricier? There are several reasons: In a good declared vintage year they may represent the better grape selections as they are designed to be aged

longer hence also the potential for better development and larger price appreciation. Also they have been around longer and several hundred years of marketing has caused an established market. Can LBV's improve with age? well that depends. They will change in character to a more mature flavor profile but don't expect them to develop the complexities and nuances of a fine vintage port. Up to recent vintages most LBV's were filtered to remove the heavy sediment characteristic of vintage port -after all they were meant to be consumed shortly after release. But more and more we are seeing unfiltered LBV's especially from top producers such as the ones we are featuring today.

Those continue to improve in bottle and I have had bottles at age 10 or more which I liked better with age than upon release. So yes go ahead and let some of your bottles age for a few years and you will not be disappointed.

Today's Wine Deal \$\$\$

Noval LBV Port 2001 Vintage \$21-

Graham LBV port 2001 Vintage \$20-

Insider's knowledge: Both of today's LBV ports are from 2001! This is significant as the previous year 2000 was a generally declared vintage port year (only once every 3-4 years in recent history are generally declared). Not only was 2000 declared, it was also acknowledged to be one of the finest vintages of port in recent history. The previous 1997 was very good but not as exceptional as the 2000. You will not get the major port houses to readily admit this, but most experts agree that 2001 had the quality to be a generally declared vintage, but coming on the heels of the spectacular 2000 most port houses decided not to apply for the declaration (this eliminates over supply to the market which can dilute sales, and hurt prices -again not something the producers like to discuss). So grapes that from a quality stand point would have normally gone into vintage port bottles have instead gone into some of the LBV's. This is why many of the 2001 LBV's are the finest ever! and exactly why I have been on the lookout for some good deals on the 2001's

Today's offerings come from 2 of the finest port houses, and both are well known for producing top notch LBV's as part of their lineups.

Noval is known for the structure, yet elegance of their wines, a great balance between power and softness with a complex finish. **Graham** has a unique rich style, very fruit driven which comes across as sweeter on the attack yet full & delicious.

In 2001 both produced world class LBV's. There is no choice really but to grab them both. **The deal:** Lucky for us a major distributor was sitting on a nice stash and offered us a price we could not ignore. Knowing that Winter is a period when port consumption goes up, as well as their popularity during the Fall holiday season, we wanted to jump on this early to avoid disappointment. Both LBV's are offered at exceptional prices so we encourage you to stock up now as we don't expect this inventory to last very long. Keep in mind that a nice 7 year old LBV port makes for a very welcomed holiday gift for your associates friends or clients. Though once you taste this juice I will not blame you for wanting to keep it for your "in house" consumption.

EVENTS:

Did you know that Denver is celebrating it's 150th anniversary this November. This will make the traditional **Annual Champagne Fountain** at the Brown Palace even more special. November 9th at noon, this event is free for general admission though VIP packages are also available. For info see :

http://www.brownpalace.com/champagne_cascade/index.cfm

My favorite event at the **Denver Int'l Wine Festival** is the **Taste of Elegance** which will be on Thursday Oct 30th. Get more details and tickets at :

<http://www.denverwinefest.com/order.html>

Thanks again for all your support and referrals, tell your friends, Cheers

Paul David, Chief Fermented Grape Taster.

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