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Holiday 2009

**DON'T FORGET TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE.
YOU CAN ALSO VIEW CURRENT AND PAST ISSUES OF THE WINELINER IN PDF FORM.**



THE PEAK OF ARGENTINA

Pictured here are Harry and Ingrid Drung of H.H.D. Imports Inc. on one of the stops during their recent trip to Chile and Argentina. They are standing in the Serenade Vineyard southwest of Lujan de Cuyo in Mendoza Province. Owned by Argentina's Alta Vista Winery, Robert Parker has given his top rating - "Outstanding - 5 Stars" to them. Only four other Argentine wineries made it into the top category. The climate here is arid and the soil deep, mixed with clay turning into a base of rolling stone and gravel at a depth of 4 meters below the surface. Irrigation is traditional using waters from the Andes or from Alta Vista's own wells. The average age of the vines is 40 Years. One of the parcels is planted to Cabernet Sauvignon which provides material for the Cabernet Sauvignon described elsewhere in this newsletter. In the background are the Andes Mountains. In fact, the tallest peak we see in the picture is Anconagua at 6,962 meters (22,840 feet) above sea level, the highest peak in the Americas. The mountains are also shown on all the labels of the Alta Vista "Premium" range of varieties.

*"We are all mortal until our first kiss
and second glass of wine."*

Eduardo Galeano

TWO GLASSES OF WINE?

When things in your life seem almost too much to handle, when 24 hours in a day are not enough, remember the mayonnaise jar and the 2 glasses of wine.

A professor stood before his philosophy class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly, he picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was. The professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles rolled into the open spaces between the golf balls. He again asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed. The professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled everything else. He asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous "yes." The professor then produced two glasses of wine from under the table and poured the entire contents into the jar, effectively filling the empty space between the sand. The students laughed. "Now," said the professor, as the laughter subsided, "I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The golf balls are the important things; your family, your children, your health, your friends, and your favourite passions; things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full. The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house and your car. The sand is everything else; the small stuff. If you put the sand into the jar first, there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls. The same goes for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have time for the things that are important to you."

"Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your partner out to dinner. Play another 18 holes of golf. Take one more run down the ski slope. There will always be time to clean the house and fix the garbage disposal. Take care of the golf balls first; the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand."

One of the students raised her hand and inquired what the wine represented. The professor smiled. "I'm glad you asked. It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there's always room for a couple of glasses of wine with a friend."

HARRY'S HARANGUE (ABRIDGED)

SHOWCASING CHINON

First, let's talk about the Cabernet Franc grape. While it tends to be blended and overshadowed by the more widely planted Cabernet Sauvignon, in the Loire Valley and on the right bank of the Gironde in Bordeaux, the Cabernet Franc makes its mark both quantitatively and qualitatively. In fact, the Premier Grand Cru Classé Château Cheval Blanc in St. Emilion is the Cabernet Franc dominated First Great Growth of renown. According to the latest LCBO Vintages offering, this top drop will set you back \$450 for the 2004 vintage. But let's get back to the realm of the affordable. Cabernet Franc is the favoured red variety on the Loire River due to its earlier ripening characteristics. With 11,000 hectares, it outranks Rose d'Anjou and Chenin Blanc based whites by a long shot. The peak of quality and longevity is found in the Chinon appellation. And in Chinon the top draw is the Couly-Dutheil name. Both as large vineyard owners as well as merchants, they dominate the local red wine scene. Their Clos de L'Echo single vineyard is one of the most esteemed in all of France and will be found on any wine list worth its weight in foils gras. They also make a range of Cabernet Franc styles and price levels. Year in, year out, their Chinon La Baronnie Madeleine delivers exceptional quality at affordable prices. Named in honour of winemaker Arnaud Couly's mother, it comes from south-facing hillside vineyards, called coteaux, with an average vine age of 40 years. The soil is clay with varying substrata of sand and limestone and is farmed biologically. Harvest is by hand, where no machine would dare to go. In the glass we are met with a strong ruby colour and purple notes. The bouquet beckons us with red fruits and spices, while the taste is elegant and balanced. They like to serve their reds cool along the Loire, so give it a chill before taking it for a whirl. Why not pair this noble red with oven-roasted pork tenderloin with a bread, plum and goat cheese stuffing and a side of brown sugar glazed, baked julienne sweet potatoes. Since mom always said "eat your veggies," round out this yummy dish with red cabbage. Talk about comfort food with a comfortable wine! **2006 Chinon La Baronnie Madeleine V57059, \$21.95.**

Harry

*"People who only drink water
have a secret to hide."*

Charles Boudelaire

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BLUERIDGE

XR FROM AFAR

Domaine Boyar, Bulgaria's leading export winery, has crafted a range of delicious, modern style, easy drinking yet elegant wines under the Blueridge

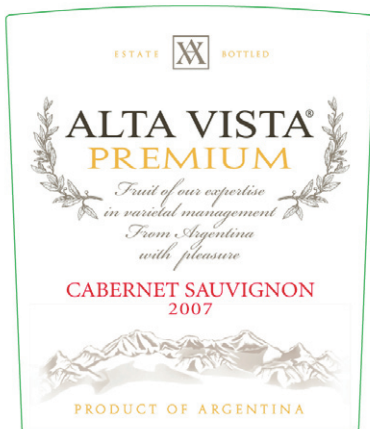
"XR" label. The eastern two thirds of country is divided by the Stara Planina mountain range. To the south is the Thracian Valley with its Mediterranean climate. Warmth and sunshine are what grapes crave and there is no shortage of either in this region. While this Cabernet Sauvignon comes from the great 2006 vintage, in fact, here a less than ideal vintage is almost unheard of. A few thousand years ago, this was politically part of the ancient Macedonian Greek province of Thrace, hence the appellation. Nowadays, still bordering both modern day Greece and Turkey, this is where the best red grape vineyards are situated. Domaine Boyar's Cabernet Sauvignon grapes are sourced from around the towns of Sliven and lambol. Their Blueridge winery is located in the lee of a section of the mountain range in Sliven also called Blueridge. With the way the sun shines towards dusk, it gives the towering rock formation its blue hue. Barrique aged for at least a year in French and American oak, the craftsmanlike winemaking shines through. On the nose we are treated to a bouquet of blackberries. The taste is intense with red fruit flavours underpinned by well integrated tannins and smoothed out with gentle vanilla notes. It is drinking beautifully now, no need to age any further. It would go well with any Middle Eastern dishes that include lamb. Duck or meat-based casseroles should strike one's fancy. With its uniquely shaped bottle and beveled angle out front, it will be hard to miss on the shelf. **2006 Blueridge XR Barrel Aged Cabernet Sauvignon V142166, \$11.95. (Dec. 5)**

FOOD & DRINK CHEER HERE

Weighing in at 910 grams (that's almost a kilogram) with 310 glossy pages, the beautiful, coffee table, lifestyle magazine, LCBO FOOD & DRINK, is here for the holidays. Best of all, it's free, but one per customer, pleeeeee! It ends up being scooped up by shoppers almost as fast as staff can unpack them and put them on the racks. A host of recipes awaits the host to match up with featured LCBO products. We are pleased to see that two of our products have been chosen by the Food & Drink matchmakers. On page 206, we find a real comfort food recipe of Black Bean & Bacon Chili Pot Pie. "Match the smoky bacon flavours of this hearty dish with a smoke beer that tastes as meaty as the pie." We are talking of the one of a kind, not for the faint-of-heart, **Aecht Schlenkerla Rauchbier 500 ml, G409110, \$3.15.** Checkout the brewery's website at www.smokebeer.com for complete information on the product and the UNESCO Heritage site city where it hails from, Bamberg, Germany. On page 214, we are invited to another pairing of comfort food, Turkey, Fennel & Sausage Pasta Bake, with a medium-bodied Austrian red wine. A blend of Austria's two most widely planted red varieties, Blaufraenkisch and Zweigelt, there is a pleasant dryness with wonderful notes of cherries and berries balanced by a nice acidity. The style is like a Beaujolais or Chianti. This will compliment the meat components of the Italian sausage and turkey while enhancing the spices which include fennel, red peppers and onions. Produced by Austria's most experienced winery, Lenz Moser, look for **Servus 2008 Blaufraenkisch-Zweigelt G439372, \$9.60.** This product has a specific, limited store distribution, so check out www.lcbo.com for LCBO store locations.

Definition

Sommeliar: an unscrupulous individual who tries to foist overpriced wines on unsuspecting, gullible customers with money to burn.



CALLING A CAB A CAB IN SPANISH

Depending on which type of cab you want, you could say "Cabernet Sauvignon, por favor, or un taxi, por favor." We had to hail a few four wheel cabs during our trip to Chile and Argentina recently, Cabernet Sauvignon tastings notwithstanding. Finishing our business in Chile, we took the famous 8 hour bus ride on the Trans Andean Highway

between Santiago, Chile and Mendoza, Argentina right through the top of the Andes mountains at an elevation of 3,200 meters. On the Chilean side, it is steep, steep up with 33 hairpin turns. We sat in the front seat for the best view, while the bus switched back and forth. As the oxygen level thinned while motoring ever higher, our physical and mental state teetered between terror and exhilaration. White knuckles grabbing onto our seats were the order of the hour. Between large transport trucks and trailers coming straight at you before they turn in the last moment, and then looking out the bus window to see ant-sized vehicles crawling along the road several hundreds of meters below, it certainly takes one's breath away. Like a broken record, the tune, "Take my Breath Away" by Berlin kept playing over and over in my mind. This is the main truck route for transporting freight between the southern countries of South America and the Pacific ports of Chile. The road follows the abandoned rail line which served the same purposes for decades and decades before the internal combustion engine and just-in-time delivery took precedence. Close to the top, we pass by the Portillo ski resort where many a national ski team, including Canada's, has practiced in the off season due to opposite seasons. In fact, the 200 km/h downhill ski racing barrier was first broken here. In the background, majestically situated, is the turquoise colored Laguna (lake) del Inca's with its uncanny resemblance to our own Lake Louise in Alberta. Once through the 3 km

Cristo Redentor (Christ the Redeemer) tunnel, we enter Argentina. Stern looking border patrol officers flag us through and several kilometers later we enter a huge shed-like bus depot for passport checks and baggage x-raying. The mountain vistas are breathtaking as the road meanders gently while closely following various huge, never-ending crevasses and multiple river beds. Rocks and boulders are randomly strewn everywhere. Eventually it all becomes part of the Mendoza River, the source of irrigation waters from the melting Andean winter snows. Otherwise, the desert region below wouldn't be the huge oasis of grape and fruit growing that it has become. This was their late spring, so no snow except on the peaks. In winter, the snow can get 20 - 40 meters deep and during spring runoff the river becomes a torrent of wild water several kilometers wide and at least 20 meters deep. Several hours later, we arrived at the main bus terminal in Mendoza. We needed to grab a cab and get money to pay. Late Sunday evening, no bank machine in sight, no money exchange. Not good since the cab drivers only wanted to accept Argentine pesos whose paper has the feel of cold war era Eastern European toilet paper. No Americano Dollars! Por que? Why? According to the cab drivers, there had been a lot of US counterfeit cash circulating. And to boot, the cabs were pretty dinky - small Fiats, VW's and Renaults whose capacity was two passengers and barely enough room for a suitcase. In fact, we had to look up and down the long line of taxi cabs until we spotted a mini van that would be able to hold our two American Tourister normal size suitcases. Playing traffic cop, in broken Spanish no less, we were able to hire and pry the right sized vehicle out of the lineup and run the visual gauntlet of piercing nasty looks of cabbies as they saw a potential fare going poof. But hey, as they say, if the suitcase doesn't fit.....! "Argentine Pesos only accepted," emphasized the driver. We nodded, wanting to get out of this totally congested bus terminal filled with cars spewing out all kinds of eye-watering fumes. We would figure out payment later. Once we reached our hotel in Chacres, a pretty residential suburb about a half an hour south of Mendoza city centre, we explained our cash dilemma to the manager who then paid the taxi driver in pesos. The sum was added to our hotel bill. We spent the next day at the Alta Vista winery in the neighboring town of Lujan de Cuyo, epicenter for top Argentine reds. After a few "pardon me's," our ears eventually became used to the pronunciation of Caver-neh So-bee-nyon since in Spanish the BEE is pronounced as a VEE and vice versa. Any way, it still left the same wonderful taste in our mouths. The grapes are sourced from Alta Vista's own vineyards. After vinification, for one year, half of the wine was aged in American and the other half in French oak barriques. The taste and bouquet evoke beautiful nuances of black currants and black cherry fruit. While not as plump as many Argentine reds, a Bordeaux-like elegance comes through. No wonder, since Alta Vista is owned by the d'Aulan family, major Bordeaux Chateau owners. The winemaking team is headed up by General Manager Philippe Rolet, himself an ex-pat Frenchman. What we wouldn't give to go back to the La Cabrera Grillaço (Grill & Steakhouse) in the trendy Palermo Viejo district of Buenos Aires and enjoy this very wine with a grassland, gaucho-raised, mouth-watering flank steak of medium-done Aberdeen Angus beef. **2007 Alta Vista Premium Cabernet Sauvignon V129957, \$14.95.**

RELAX, IT'S GOLD!

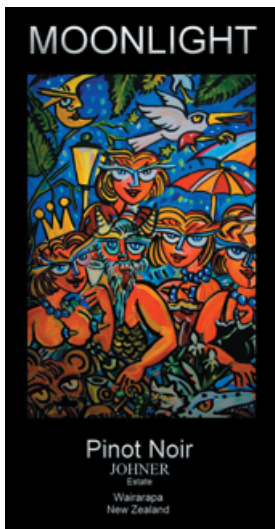


Sales of Relax Riesling continue to shoot through the roof in all markets. Why? Is it the beautiful cobalt blue bottle? Is it the easy-to-pronounce brand name, without teutonic tongue twisters, that conjures up all kinds of pleasant thoughts? Is it the fruit-driven, crisp, easy-to-drink style? Obviously, all of the above. STOP PRESS Relax Riesling just won the Gold Platinum Medal in the 2009 Wine Style Asia Awards Competition held recently in Singapore. **Relax Riesling G621888, \$11.40.**

NOTE PRICES: LCBO prices are valid on the date of the publication, are subject to change without notice and are for 750ml sizes unless specified otherwise.

Consignment warehouse prices are for licensees including all taxes, charges and delivery. G=General listing, V=Vintage listing, CW=Consignment Warehouse, CC=Classic Catalogue

ISD=In Store Discovery - selected city key LCBO Stores. Check www.lcbo.com/vintages for locations.



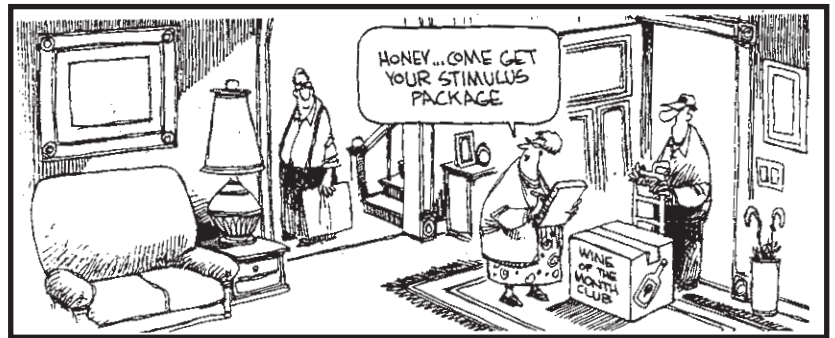
WHY WAIRARAPA? MOONLIGHT DELIGHT!

Why would a successful European Pinot Noir producer acquire a property half way around the world and spend opposite seasons making the finicky, heart break grape, a.k.a. Pinot Noir, in New Zealand? I guess it would be the same word in both English and German, wanderlust, the desire to wander and see what's happening beyond one's own day-to-day sandbox world. Karl Heinz Johner is a very successful Pinot Noir producer in the town of Bischoffingen located in Baden's Kaiserstuhl region of Germany, sandwiched between the Black Forest and the Rhine River and Alsace, a stone's throw away. In 2001,

after traveling extensively with his son Patrick in the New World, the decision was made to set up shop near the town of Gladstone, in the picturesque Wairarapa Valley. Located about an hour's drive east of the nation's capital of Wellington in Martinborough, the south east end of New Zealand's North Island has established itself as another Burgundy outpost. But why here? Are pinotphiles really masochists who enjoy punishment as their pleasure? The soil is poor, free draining gravel. The climate is cool with maritime influences and low rainfall. The growing season is particularly long due to long autumns and New Zealand's greatest average temperature differences between night and day. And the emphasis on cool climate viticulture here is really on "cool." As in Burgundy, the Wairarapa Pinot Noir scene is dominated by small and medium growers who make their own wines. Karl Heinz and his estate manager, Steven Bates, are fanatic about working their 8 hectare Pinot Noir vineyard starting with high density planting and low trellising of the vines. Very low yields of less than 2 tons per hectare result in wines of great concentration and finesse. Both the bouquet and taste are reminiscent of black cherry and blackberries. In the mouth we encounter a harmonious balance with well rounded, integrated tannins. Drum stick roll please - with a wine like this, the turkeys this Christmas will be lining up to be paired up with this Kiwi charmer. The label most certainly will be a great conversation starter. Entitled "Moonlight," the art label was created by famous French artist Christophe Emmanuel Bouchet. **2007 Johner Estate Moonlight Wairarapa Pinot Noir V141895, \$19.95. (Dec. 5)**

PORT REPORT

It was on Sept 10, 1756 that the Real Companhia Velha was founded by Royal Charter of King D. Jose I. It is the oldest continuous producer of Port wines in Portugal as well as the largest. It is also one of the largest owners of prime vineyard sites along the Douro River. Simply explained, port wine is red Douro table wine whose fermentation, after 2-3 days, has been stopped by the addition of grape spirit (arguardente) bringing the percentage of alcohol up to 19% - 20% by volume. Then it is a matter of aging and blending to achieve the desired type and classification. If a fine port is left to age for many years in oak casks it will gradually lose its original deep purple colour and take on a delicate amber brown hue known as tawny. Throughout the aging process, the simple fruitiness of young wine gradually recedes giving way to a vast range of subtle, mellow aromas: spice, licorice, walnut, vanilla, ripe jam and fine oak wood. The knowledge and experience of the cellar master serve him well as to when he decides to select those aging ports to integrate into, in this case, the 10 Year Old Tawny. In a cute 200 ml decanter shaped bottle, it makes the perfect stocking stuffer for Christmas. Or just treat yourself to this affordable little luxury and forget the economic climate for a while. It is perfect for sipping on its own, or pairing with rich nuts such as walnuts. Or how about the classic Port and Stilton cheese combination to end that special meal! **Royal Oporto 10 Year Old Tawny 200 ml V661223, \$12.95.**



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Stomp
and press hard
but don't make
me wine.