

I heard it through . . .

# THE GRAPE VINE

The Newsletter of the Cellar Society of San Francisco

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## November 13, 2010 SOUTHEASTERN EUROPEAN WINE TASTING

By Vera and David Hartford

Most of the wine we drink today comes from Western Europe and the “New World” of the United States, Australia, and – to some degree – South Africa and South America. As a result, we are familiar with grapes called chardonnay, chenin blanc, sauvignon blanc, cabernet sauvignon, pinot noir, and perhaps zinfandel.

But the history of wine spans thousands of years – long before America was colonized or Western Europe was civilized – and is closely intertwined with the history of agriculture, cuisine, civilization and humanity itself. Archaeological evidence suggests that the earliest wine production came from sites in Georgia and Iran, dating from 6000 to 5000 BC. According to one scholar [Rod Phillips], “Many modern interpreters of wine history suggest that Georgia has yielded the earliest evidence of winemaking in the world, based on the excavation of domesticated grape seeds, silver-encased vine cuttings, and Neolithic pottery vessels decorated with grape cluster appliques.”

Traditional Georgian grape varieties are little known in the West. Now that the wines of Eastern and Central Europe are coming to international awareness, grapes from this region are becoming better known. The two most important grapes used in Georgian wines, Rkatsiteli and Saperavi, have the potential to produce excellent, if not great wines. Rkatsiteli is a white variety that is so widely grown in Eastern and Central Europe that it ranks third in the world in hectares grown. Rkatsiteli is high in acidity and is capable of producing wines with fine character. Jancis Robinson, author of the The Oxford Companion to Wine, calls Rkatsiteli “very important and high quality” in her review of world grape varieties.

Saperavi produces substantial deep red wines that are suitable for extended aging, perhaps up to fifty years. Saperavi has the potential to produce high alcohol levels and is used extensively for blending with other lesser varieties. A third variety, the white grape Mtsvane, is also important in Georgian wines, and is often blended with Rkatsiteli, to which it adds a fruity, aromatic balance.

Other scholars claim that the evidence of the earliest European wine production is to be found at archaeological sites in Macedonia, dated to 6,500 years ago. These same sites also contain remnants of the world’s earliest evidence of crushed grapes. Regardless of which version you believe, whether Georgia or Macedonia, it’s evident that the first vintners were from a region that we rarely think of today as a source of wine. And clearly viniculture and winemaking spread across geographies we now know as (Continues in box to right).

## October 2010 Carminere tasting

by Kathleen Gulf and Carl Nuesch

1	Concho y Toro: Terrunyo, Block 27; Cachapoal Valley 2006 Spec’s Liquors (website) Southern Hemisphere Wines	\$33.52,
2	Casa Lapostolle; Cuvee Alexandre Colchagua Valley 2007; Spec’s Liquors (website)	\$18.20
3	MontGras; Reserva Colchagua Valley 2009; BevMo!	\$16.99
4	Santa Rita; Coleccion Privada Rapel Valley 2008; BevMo!	\$16.99
5	ODFJELL/ORZADA; Maule Valley 2006 Spec’s Liquors (website)	\$16.88
6	Montes Alpha; Colchagua Valley Marchigue Vineyard 2007; K&L Wines	\$17.99
7	Lapostolle; Clos Apalta; Limited Release Colchagua Valley 2007; Spec’s Liquors (website)	\$75.60
8	Arboleda; Colchagua Valley 2007 Southern Hemisphere Wines (web)	\$14.99
<b>FAVORITE PRETASTING WINES:</b>		
# 1: Santa Rita, 120; Central Valley 2008, Spec’s Liquors (web) \$6.25		
#2: Santa Rita, Reserva, Rapel Valley 2007, BevMo! \$8.99		
# 3: Arenal , Vina Peralillo, Central Valley 2008, K&LWines,\$9.99		
#4: Casa Lapostolle, CASA, Rapel Valley 2008, K&L Wines \$11.99		

### \*\*\*\* NEWS FLASH \*\*\*\*

**REPAST** on Dec.10th

At: French Club in San Francisco

Members are encouraged to invite guest interested in joining the club. We are required to have a minimum of 40 people.

**FOR THE TASTING ON November 13:**

**RSVP:** to David’s my email –

[david.hartford@usa.net](mailto:david.hartford@usa.net) – or call (510) 339-3199

**LOCATION:** Montclair Bistro

118 Medau Place, Oakland, CA 94611 | (510) 482-8282

**TIME:** 6:00 pm

Southeastern and Central Europe: Moldova, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Croatia, Slovenia, even the former Czechoslovakia – before they made it to Spain, Germany and France – not to mention California.

**At this tasting**, we will be tasting from a range of wines from the region – and then seeing who can actually pronounce some of the varieties. [It may be easier after the tasting than before] You probably have encountered Tokaj from Hungary, and perhaps even Egri Bikavér [Bull’s Blood]; but have you tried aszú, leányka, hárslevelű, kadarka, or szamorodni? You probably thought that zinfandel was a California wine – well, the name is, but the grape originated in what is now Croatia [a small country with 300 distinct wine regions], which also produces Bogdanuša, Bratkovina, Cetinjka Bijela, as well as the unpronounceable Grk and Prč.

We will be tasting a range of these wines, both geographically and oenologically. Hopefully, it will be an enlightening experience.