

Does UC-Davis Have a Theory of Deliciousness?

A crisis we have all been watching brew over the last decade continues to build between the California Wine Industry and its once champion academic institution, the Department of Viticulture and Enology of the University of California at Davis. I want to propose a marriage of two schools of thought currently engaged in a cold war that greatly disempowers today's California wine industry.

It is no secret that in the wake of funding cutbacks, the once powerful Department is having a terrible time fulfilling its mission as stated in the 1880 Act of the State Legislature that created the Department "... to provide for special instruction ... in the arts and science pertaining to viticulture, the theory and practice of fermentation ... and the management of cellars, to be illustrated by practical experiments ..."

Much needed research has been abandoned midstream or ignored, staff has been cut, and facilities have suffered. Simultaneously, programs at CSU Fresno, Napa Valley College and elsewhere flourish and grow, funded by an Industry that has largely turned its back on Davis.

I believe the cause to be a classic paradigm shift, a change in point of view which Davis has failed to achieve. These shifts occur regularly in physics, astronomy and other sciences, and often send former heavyweights to their academic grave still supporting the earth-centered universe, flogiston, and other abandoned systems of thought. I can most briefly summarize the two warring points of view by excerpting a question and its answer from an interview with Department Chair Dr. Linda Bisson, printed last year in the inaugural issue of the UCD *Trellis Alliance* circular:

(Editor): *I occasionally hear from people that UC Davis doesn't care about quality, that we teach our students to make "squeaky-clean" wine, not to take chances that may enhance flavor.*

(LFB): *There is a difference between quality, meaning degree of perceived excellence, and qualities, meaning attributes. Quality is nothing more than a personal*

judgement as to the composite of the qualities or attributes in a wine, and how that composite measures up against past examples of that type of wine, always within the context of personal preference. Quality is thus impossible to measure or use in a scientific sense (emphasis is mine).

This is a remarkable assertion, that personal preference cannot be measured or be even scientifically meaningful. For Pope, "the proper study of Mankind is man." Here we have a flat rejection of behavioral science. In an era when even particle physicists concede that to measure is to distort, Dr. Bisson takes surprising refuge in the popular misconception of science as a realm of certainty rather than inquiry.

(LFB continues): *In contrast, we have done lots of work on measuring and assessing wine qualities so that, armed with this information, a winemaker can direct wine making to achieve his or her own definition of quality. Ann Noble has used principal component analysis to describe sensory attributes of groups of wines and to show how they differ from other wines, for example a few years ago she compared Pinot Noirs from the Carneros and from other regions. Such work is interesting and, in the case of the Carneros producers, quite useful but it is also complex, time consuming and expensive. We do teach our students how variables in grape growing and winemaking affect the qualities of wine, but we do not dictate style or hand out recipes. Instead, we encourage our students to know the marketplace, their fruit, and how to make the product they desire from that fruit. Then it is up to the consumer to decide if the winemaker was successful.*

This knowledge of the marketplace and how to make the "desired product," while it may be "encouraged," is sparingly imparted at the University itself. The "desired product" is not a simple summing of attributes. It is an artistic accomplishment, the preparation for which the Department identifies as outside its purview.

One can only applaud Bisson's reluctance to pontificate absolutes in matters of style. Indeed, most of us wish the Davis faculty would do less of this. Still, wines are not marketed in a vacuum, and wineries ignore the predisposed expectations of the marketplace at their peril.

The above question and its answer represent the schools of thought that I suggest should unite. Marriages never happen until both parties learn to focus on their own foibles and gain respect for their partners' strengths. So from

the outset, I want to make it clear that I have for over 15 years taught and practiced the principles I learned at UC Davis, and to much useful effect.

When I first began making White Zinfandel, the first wines smelled more like canned tomato soup than the fresh strawberries we hoped for. We set up replicate controlled experiments to examine the effects of grape maturity and skin contact. A trained panel smelled tomato soup and fresh strawberries. Then they estimated the intensity of these aromas in the experimental wines. Based on their findings, we changed our harvesting and vinification practices.

No question: we made better wine, to our lasting delight.

Over the years I have run hundreds of similar experiments on problems that could be reduced to such simple terms. How do we reduce bell pepper in Sauvignon Blanc? Does cold stabilization affect body? What correlations exist between the pineapple, pear and apple aromas; bitterness, alcohol, pH and browning potential of chardonnay?

And my wines were clean, but dull.

At the University of Wisconsin, teams of milk tasters compete in the naming of defects: onion grass, lactic bacteria, freezer burn. The ideal milk is said to be totally bland.

In France, lowfat milk tastes like cream. They have a completely different idea of what milk should be. A theory of deliciousness.

Wine evokes a strong visceral response in the same way as do other forms of expression that we readily accept as art—painting and music, for example. Instrumental music is my preferred parallel because, like wine, it is completely non-representational. Musical pieces evoke all sorts of powerful, vivid images, but these are similar among listeners in mood rather than in detail. Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* evokes for me being chained and dragged through hell. The graphics created by the animators in Disney's *Fantasia* might never have occurred to us, but we recognize them as containing the correct emotional flavor. Its facility to convey emotional flavor is exactly what I contend distinguishes wine as a beverage and explains why there are no hundred dollar beers.

This is a post-technical approach. It advocates a fusion of the Davis analytical approach with the older visceral, holistic method of assessment, and becomes an integrated inquiry into what makes wine delicious. It is clear from

Normally Clark Smith and/or Rick Jones, of Vinovation, Inc, Santa Rosa, CA would write under the Technology column banner. Because of the nature of this subject, it was more fitting that it appear as one person's opinion about a controversial topic. Watch for rebuttals next issue.

Bisson's remarks that this post-technical synthesis is intended and encouraged by Davis, though steadfastly not taught there. This, I hope, can change.

Today, the activities at Davis are neither trivial nor misguided—they are simply preliminary, in the same way that voice training is prerequisite to singing, body conditioning to dance, color theory to painting. Contemporary art is also built on an education in classic theory or art history: modern dance builds on ballet, serial composition builds on Bach, Picasso on the Dutch masters. This is vital because the audience has a predisposed system of evaluation in place. The eventual purchasers may very well be unschooled sheep, but at least the dealers, impresarios and critics function as gatekeepers and direct traffic in the marketplace. Success in the arts has always entailed speaking skillfully to this predisposition, and such instruction is never left to chance or to be picked up on the street. It is organized, packaged and delivered at the University level.

Somehow the combination of variety, origin, and producer leave their mark on wine in a way that can be sometimes appreciated instantly, in the same way as one identifies the composer or performer after a few seconds of Mozart or The Beatles. The core of my message is that when a customer lays out \$20 to \$50 for a wine, he is not motivated

purely by hype. He is seeking a depth of sensuality that is not addressed by the aroma wheel, but requires a language for the whole wine. The \$4 consumer may or may not possess so sophisticated a view of wine, but the gatekeepers who control what he buys probably do.

Historically, this has been done by tapping into the most discriminating and universal system of perception humans have: people watching. Personifications of wines as charming, generous, elegant or austere, though ridiculed at Davis, are widespread among gatekeepers and may well imitate the method of many consumers. When you open a bottle of wine, it's no different than going to a blues club. You hope to experience soul.

Davis studies failing to find reproducibility in the application of these terms remind me of Kelvin's thermodynamic "proof," in ignorance of radioactivity, that the Earth could be no more than 100,000 years old. This excellent scientist got blindsided by a point of view he couldn't anticipate, and ended up looking like a chump.

As a winemaker and aging baby boomer, I find myself facing similar dilemmas in the health industry. I'm in pretty good health; I just want advice on how to live to be 100. My doctor, schooled in Western medicine, checks my blood pressure, cholesterol, bilirubin

and so forth, and tells me to come back when I'm sick. He thinks wellness is the absence of disease.

So I try an acupuncturist. I find out he's got a theory of wellness. He looks me over, gives me a tune-up with the needles and some herbs, makes some useful suggestions. I feel good. I ask him for advice on prostate cancer, and it turns out he doesn't know what disease is.

Just as Western medicine has no conception of wellness, UC Davis offers no theory of deliciousness. What it does offer, though, is just as vital. Robert Parker and the Wine Spectator are forthcoming about the personalities of wines, but they do not possess a theory of spoilage. Said another way, the Davis approach, like Western medicine, is analytic, and their counterpoints are holistic. What we need is a synthesis that integrates both approaches.

Imagine taking an analytical approach to producing a piece of music (see Musical Tone Wheel™ sidebar). Of course the instruments must be tuned, the musicians rehearsed. But we know intuitively that we cannot fine tune the presentation by committee. The intensity ratings of a trained panel fed into principal component analysis will not result in the great soulful sound we crave. What we need is a great director who will stand in front with the audience, listen, and fine tune the performance to assure a moving experience.

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It may well be argued that to explore consumer preference is outside the scope of science, and therefore inappropriate material for a technical degree program in any greater depth than it is already treated in the introductory class VEN-3. To so decide would certainly leave UCD the odd man out among the world's leading enology programs. Moreover, the 1880 Act directs "instruction in the arts and science."

Yet here I'd like to argue a more fundamental point. Not to know how to measure an effect is not the same as proving that the effect can't be measured or doesn't exist. In *Wines: Their Sensory Analysis*, Maynard Amerine cleverly sidesteps a question about the practice of letting wine breathe: "What chemical reactions could take place within a few minutes or hours that would produce enough additional desirable odors to be recognizable?" To use the limits of one's own imagination as a yardstick for veracity reminds me of the consumerist invocation, "Never eat what you can't pronounce."

Don Blackburn of Bernardus Winery devised a clever experiment to show that wine style is in fact a tangible, measurable commodity that can be examined rigorously and from which statistically significant distinctions can be obtained. He sampled 49 subjects on three wines: a French nouveau Beaujolais, a California Pinot Noir, and a California Cabernet Sauvignon. He then asked the subjects to listen to three pieces of music and match them with the wines: Hayden's 60th Symphony, Mozart's 17th Divertimento, and Beethoven's 9th Symphony.

Although there are six ways to match these up, 85 percent agreement was obtained to put the Mozart with the Beaujolais, the Hayden with the Pinot, and the Beethoven with the Cabernet. Chi square analysis of these data show 0.1% probability of obtaining this outcome by chance. An exploration of this correlation need not be outside academic scope. For the subjects, the choice was obvious, because they found in the musical pieces three differing moods which they associated easily with the varied styles of the three wines.

But why must Davis concern itself with these matters? The Department has never really claimed that it is educating winemakers, merely training fermentation scientists. Fair enough. But if the University chooses to be viewed as distanced from the wine industry, then they should not feel frustrated when that industry declines to support them. Winemakers balance risk and reward differently today than in 1960, and the University's advice has become less and less helpful as we move into an era where spoilage is the exception and greatness is the goal.

Clearly UCD must find a balance between responsiveness to the current needs of the industry and a broader commitment to basic research for the benefit of scientific understanding. The line is a difficult one to draw, and priorities naturally follow dollars. In managing its image, the Department needs to avoid being seen as decades behind the times in its obsession with preventing spoilage. UCD cannot be seen as offering sound winemaking advice unless it can convince winemakers that it has updated its view of market expectations.

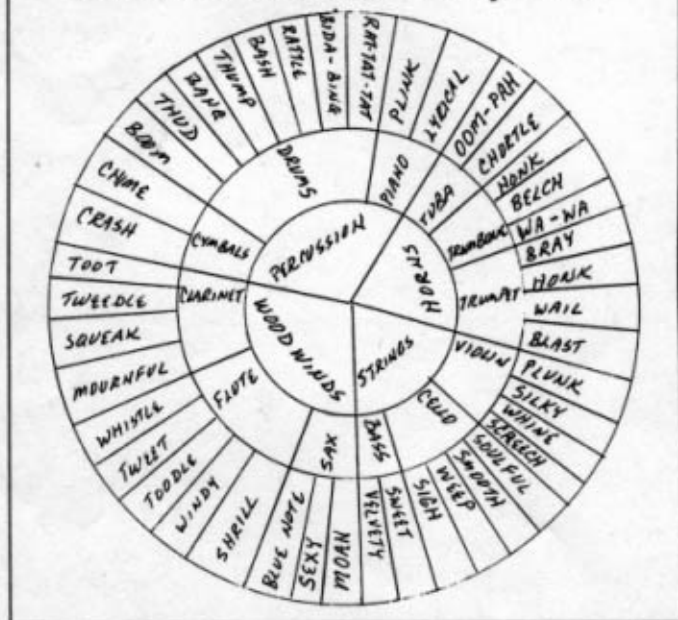
I recently had the pleasure of working with Prof. Pascal Ribereau-Gayon, director of the Institute of Oenology at the University of Bordeaux, on a project involving bordelais varieties from several countries. In summarizing his purpose in publishing over 200 papers on wine phenolics and microbiology, he remarked that it was not to terrify winemakers into making high acid, low pH wines, but rather to elucidate the perils of high pH in order to permit responsible low acid winemaking with its benefits for tannin structure in the mouth.

His language is richly holistic. For him, wines may possess charm, elegance, harmony, breeding, femininity, power, grace. I couldn't help imagine a lambasting at the hands of the sensory scientists of UCD for using such terms. Yet these are the terms of commerce, where they are more meaningful than the menu choices of the aroma wheel.

In my observation, this language is employed in Bordeaux with no less rigor and reproducibility than our "grocery items" approach. Even if it were not so, does it really matter? What if your mental pictures from *Carmina Burana* are different from mine? Is not the real goal to produce wines that capture people's interest, in the same way as painting or music? My view is that our training has resulted in wines that are clean, but dull.

The analytical sensory approach does not by itself contain the tools for a sophisticated appreciation of a wine as a whole. The problem is that you cannot

Musical Tone Wheel symbol




Mr. Smith has provided this device for readers who wish to use it as an aid to composing and performing symphonies.

put elegance or balance in a glass as a reference to score against. These concepts require teaching, practice, correction, mastery. In most of the world, these functions, not basic research, are the primary goal of a University.

In our project, I was surprised to observe a commonality between the wines of Chile and Bordeaux, which the Californian and Australian wines lacked—finesse. This could not be explained by climatic or viticultural similarities—the vineyards could not have been more different. We could only conclude that the Chileans send their children to school in Bordeaux rather than to California.

Some say maybe we should, too. I am not among them. The Department's largely unsung heroism on our part in such recent matters as ethyl carbamate, lead, and health benefits issues indicates its willingness to rise to the occasion when crises appear. We owe in return some patience in making a difficult transition. A broadening of the current program to include training in the traditions of quality evaluation is all we need ask.

Perhaps a winemaking art history class could be developed in the College of Letters. Better to hope that the Department returns to its 1880 mission, which specifies arts and science, and teaching basic research. Jim Lapsley, who has recently emerged as the Department's first PhD in Wine History, is well equipped to provide undergraduate instruction in the traditions of wine quality evaluation. More important, though, is that the faculty themselves wake up and smell the *terroir*. 



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A Non-Rebuttal: “Does UC-Davis have a Theory of Deliciousness?”

Please let me say from the outset, I do not intend to be a referee. In fact I don't even want to be one. What would be cool is that some space could be created here and forget the me or “them”.

If you did not read the July-August 1995 article by Clark Smith, maybe you should read it, and maybe you shouldn't read it. Here is not the synopsis, but the account of the dynamic state of what resulted from the article.

Two people are hurt. And a wonderful institution has a chance of being hurt or helped. What happened was two parties, Clark Smith and Linda Bisson, out of their love for this institution, have entered into a non-dialogue. Clark's intention, being a former UCD student, was to start a vitalizing process to bring more into the department of Enology and Viticulture. Linda, as the department chair, was put in an extremely difficult position, and one can easily see how Linda would have taken the article as a personal attack, and institutional attack, and hardly an invitation to dialogue.

So here we are, and for God's sake let's not have a rebuttal. Let's create some space where both parties, everyone, can grow into the next phase in greater harmony. Let's empty out the tea cup a little.

“Emptying out the tea cup” is a reference to a very esteemed Western physicist visiting with a great Zen master. The physicist wanted to see if the thoughts of this Zen master could advance his own Western ideas on physics. The master greeted him and invited him to tea and poured him a cup. The master did not stop pouring when the cup was full. Rather he kept pouring until the repeated shrieks of the physicist implored him to stop. When the master did stop, having overflowed the cup, saucer, table top, and part of the floor, he said when you come to learn, don't come with a full cup. If the cup is full where would you put any new learning?

So, once again, here we are. The invitation is to the premier institution of wine study and its department chair, Ms. Bisson. The invitation is to one of the best innovators and s—t-disturbers of the wine industry, Mr. Smith. The invitation is to stop and realize the love and longing you both have for this wonderful institution is what keeps you. Sounds curious doesn't it?

Clark cries out for the inclusion of full-humanness in the study of wine. Linda cries out for acknowledgment, funding, and the survival instinct of full-humanness.

As is said in the final mentation of Forrest Gump, “It's both.”

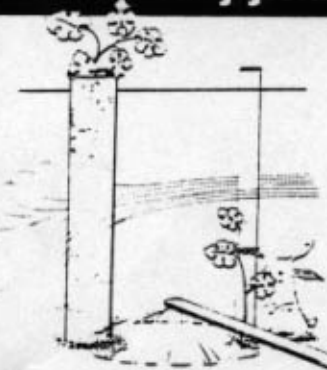
Bringing the humanities, much less full-humanness, into science will take decades. Let's be patient . . . and mindful. In the meantime there are two wonderful books that can help establish a common vocabulary for the “both” sides.

The first book is Robert Persig's book “Lila, An Inquiry into Morals: A Meta-physics of Quality.” This is from the same guy that wrote “Zen & the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance” two decades ago. The other book is Gary Zukav's, “The Dancing Wu Li Masters,” which is physics and thought for non-physics majors. The two books are in print and available in their unabridged form from the company, Books-On-Tape, (800)626-3333.

Read or listen to these two books, sprinkle in a little bit of Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus, for the benefit of the Martians, and we can have a dialogue—for the betterment of both. Forget the rebuttal.

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UC/D and the Holy Grail

by Christian Butzke

In the July/August edition of *Vineyard & Winery Management* the fifteen members of the Department of Viticulture & Enology at UC Davis and the California wine industry were criticized by a wine industry supplier, Clark R. Smith of Vinovation, Inc. Clark is a UC Davis graduate and has been teaching our 'Fundamentals of Wine Chemistry' Extension class for several years. I appreciate the effort and thoughtfulness he has put into writing his critique, and I welcome the opportunity to respond to his opinions and to put a few things straight.

First of all, our Department is not a kafkaesque, anonymous authority that does science for its own sake; it is a group of fifteen independent scientists dedicated to this industry and contributing and combining their individual and diverse expertise to the benefit of our wine community.

To clarify a few misconceptions, which are not becoming more true just because they are repeated, let's analyze a few of Clark's statements, which are printed in italics here:

... pontificates absolutes in matter of styles. Indeed most of us wish the Davis faculty would do less of this." Two wrong points here: Why on earth would any of us teach students to make wine in a certain style. Nobody here does, but maybe we should make it mandatory for alumni like Clark to come back to the Department every fifteen years or so to get a tune-up in common winemaking sense. Since Clark graduated, 12 out of 14 faculty members started new at the Department and they are, with an average age of under 40 years, the most open-minded people I have ever worked with, with the most diverse backgrounds, from which they contribute to our students' education and our research. Our students and visiting scientists come from all wine producing countries on earth and share their experiences and points of view with everyone here. With that we are certainly different from the fossilized, self-indulged European university faculty. And I am sure all women in our wine community are delighted to hear Monsieur le Professeur describe the femininity of a wine. It's a comment about as sensitive as nuclear testing in the South Pacific. And his approach has not prevented the wine consumption in France from dropping dramatically over the years either. Clark refers to France at least four times in his essay. What is their, and more importantly, our, concept?—to make more people interested in drinking wine: traditional Burgundian whites, Bordelais reds? I don't think so. New original-to-California ways of winemaking and grape growing have to be encouraged and developed. There are a lot of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven wines out there in the world, but where are the rock 'n' roll wines that attract both baby-boomer and generationX consumers?

Secondly, Clark's opinion is in general not representative of the majority of the California wine industry, whose interests and needs are far more diverse than he seems to be aware of. Surely, everybody would like to make (and sell!) \$50+ bottles of wine, but the reality is that even if you could, this is a tiny market. Catering to it and out-of-touch wine writers does not solve the bigger problem of making wine a more popular food companion for the general public.

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Tastes Great! No, Less Filling!

by Jim Lapsley

GOVERNMENT WARNING: IT MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH TO OPERATE A MOTOR VEHICLE OR ATTEMPT TO BECOME PREGNANT WHILE READING THIS PIECE OF PURE OPINION BY JIM LAPSLEY, WHICH SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS EITHER AN OFFICIAL OR UNOFFICIAL RESPONSE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VITICULTURE AND ENOLOGY AT UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS.

Clark Smith's opinion piece, *Does UC-Davis Have a Theory of Deliciousness*, was apparently intended as an entertaining and provocative broadside that would spark a dialogue between Davis and the wine industry and result in Davis changing its curriculum to teach the art of winemaking. Unfortunately, rather than state his points simply, Clark raised the emotional tenor by using words such as "crisis" and bringing out the specter of the dreaded *paradigm shift*, which has sent former heavyweights to their academic graves. Clark's article, with its references to music and painting, its poke at Ann Noble's Aroma Wheel, and its homage to France is amusing, (although perhaps not always for the reasons intended), yet by the end I am reminded of Buttercup's caution to the Captain of the H.M.S. Pinafore: "Things are seldom what they seem, skim milk masquerades as cream." But I forget, according to Clark in France, lowfat milk tastes like cream.

Since Clark didn't summarize his key points, let me try. Let's see. Hmm. . .

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Butzke's Response . . .

Nowhere in the world do you have viticulture and enology, teaching and research and cooperative extension together under one (leaky) roof. But maybe we suffer from not having a perky PR department and from being modest about our contributions to the American wine industry. The academic and industrial success of leading private universities like Stanford or MIT is largely due to the unconditional contributions of their proud alumni, who have, because of the initial education they received there, become equally successful in their jobs or with their own companies. On the other hand, alumnus Clark's rambling and largely unconstructive criticism, although refreshing, is of very limited help.

"Department's . . . obsession with preventing spoilage." Well, I am pretty sure the next time a winemaker calls Clark he will not respond that the high V.A. in his/her wine is not spoilage, but that it is the mark of variety, of original typicity, the winemaker's signature. Obviously somebody who has been a winemaker once, and is now a wine spoilage remover, has to be preoccupied by "clean" wines. And yes, at UC Davis we are trying to work out the principles and reasons for acetic acid formation. Spoilage of any sort is reproducible anywhere in world, but regional typicity resulting in a clear and varietally and stylistically distinct character of a wine, due to what you may very well call terroir, is not. It is true finesse and it is what we want in California to distinguish our wines from those we are competing with.

So why is it so hard for a wine writer today to place an article in a big newspaper or magazine?—because the generation with the most buying power does not want to

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Lapsley's Response . . .

- Great wine exists, primarily in France, and
- Teaching Davis students how to recognize and, after graduation, create such great wines, should be Davis's primary purpose, and
- In order to accomplish this we should first abandon our perceived obsession with wine spoilage and graft a holistic scion, which will include a new wine vocabulary, onto the rootstock of science. There, I think that covers it, and we can be thankful that we only have to graft-over, rather than replant.

I am making light of the above, but I also appreciate the seriousness of it, since I have heard similar, if not as distilled, comments from a few other Davis graduates. What concerns me the most about the individuals who utter such comments is their seeming lack of appreciation for any context external to their own immediate reality. They do not appreciate that the wine they aspire to produce represents perhaps 2% of all wine sold in the United States (and about 11% of total dollar value.) They know they have grown as individuals and yet they assume that instruction at Davis is the same as it was 15 years ago. And they totally fail to acknowledge that the Davis faculty are members of a major research University first and supporters of the California wine industry second.

I, too, admire French culture, and one of my favorite French expressions roughly translates: To know all is to forgive all. I take that to mean that the more we learn about a situation, the more we can transcend a parochial or judgmental position. Such understanding is crucial for implementing change. In the remainder of this article I hope to supply a bit of the context that Clark seems to have missed or forgotten.

Old Expectations And New Realities

Point 1: Davis Cannot Do Everything

In one sense, Davis is a victim of its past success. Following Repeal, as the only California educational institution conducting research in grapegrowing and winemaking, the University of California was expected to address and solve all of the educational and research needs of the California wine industry. Although generally unarticulated, that expectation still remains. When it is openly stated, most of us realize that the expectation is unreasonable and unobtainable. Confronted with this, industry members then retreat to the position that Davis should work on the most important issues, but the unspoken assumption is that the most important issues are those of interest to the particular speaker. Few industry members stop to consider how such work will be funded, or whether such research or teaching really fits into the research and teaching mission of a modern research university. The reality is that in the past quarter century, the California wine industry has become more diverse and complex, evolving into a series of niches and segments, each with its own needs and expectations. During that same 25 years, resources have remained static at Davis (or declined), and the culture of the research university, to which the Department is inexorably linked, has moved towards a greater valuing of basic as opposed to problem solving research.

Consider the following. In 1970 Sonoma, Napa and Mendocino counties totaled fewer than 100 wineries, and bearing grape acreage encompassed less than 30,000 acres. Monterey was just beginning to be planted, the South Central Coast had no acreage to speak of, and the Department had 14 faculty or Cooperative Extension specialists focused on winegrape growing and winemaking. Today in 1995, the North Coast possesses almost 400 wineries, its vineyards cover over 100,000 acres, the Central and South

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Butzke's Response . . .

read about charming and austere, graceful and flamboyant wines, written in the all so obnoxiously eloquent, yet intimidating, old-fashioned style—a style and attitude that has in the past kept many people from drinking wine in the first place, and which forces many winemakers to make wine not in their own style but to match the influential critics' palates. Admittedly, you don't have to know about winemaking to be a wine critic, same as you don't need a college degree in enology to become a winemaker. But of course it does not exactly hurt, either. Studying art does not make you an artist, studying enology does not make you a winemaker. However, not studying the principles and practices of winemaking, not knowing about the options, dangers and opportunities of all winemaking styles and techniques, will keep you from rising above day-to-day production worries and from concentrating on greatness and deliciousness.

I was surprised to observe a communality between the wines of Chile and Bordeaux, which the Californian and Australian wines lacked—finesse. This is not only in an amazing insult to all California winemakers, but it also credits our Department with an influence and attitude it does not possess.

Indeed, our Department does not turn out winemakers, it turns out dedicated, enthusiastic people who are better educated, more open-minded than in any other place in the world. All of them have several internships or years of work experience in the wine industry under their belt, many have been overseas to learn different approaches and winemaking philosophies and have been inspired by working in the international atmosphere at our Department. One of my grad students just left to work the crush at Chateau Lafite. I am not sure if it will teach him how to make the perfect wine, but it will without doubt further encourage his desire to make great wines. And even though the graduates from UC Davis come educated and trained at no fee to the industry, do not underestimate them either: they know very well when somebody really has something to say or some new idea to offer at our VEN 198 winemaker seminars or is just BSing. By talking winemaking philosophy you might impress people who can afford those \$50-bottles of wine at a winemaker's dinner, but it's much more challenging to share your personal views and experiences in front of open-minded but critical winemakers-to-be.

And there is one big difference between making music and wine: buying a Strad won't make you a Paganini, but getting some first growth grapes from the Medoc would allow many of us to make a pretty delicious wine.

Which raises the following questions: has all the technology and expertise available, and the importance of grape quality over winemaking techniques, made the winemaker's position become obsolete? Has UC Davis been starting to make itself obsolete since 1880 by educating the winemaking community to the highest level worldwide and solving most of the worst spoilage and production problems? The questions stretch the imagination, of course, but it has to be considered, and it brings us to the next point: all of us would like to be great winemakers, superb viticulturist, excellent enologists (wine scientists that is!) and sales & marketing geniuses—all four at the same time. Unfortunately, even the best in any country would probably only score 1.5 out of 4. Therefore wholeness itself may be an interesting concept only in the sense that it goes with a certain fuzziness from which snake oil salesmen recruit their clientele.

continued on p. 60, column 2

Lapsley's Response . . .

Coast regions have become well established viticultural areas, and the Department of Viticulture and Enology has two fewer faculty members. It is time that we recognize that not all research, education, and outreach can be done at Davis; that not all types of research, education and outreach are appropriate activities for Davis; and that the growth of other institutions such as CSU Fresno, or community colleges such as Santa Rosa or Napa are the results of evolutionary growth of segments of the California wine industry(ies), and that they represent progress for the entire industry rather than a failure on the part of Davis to meet industry needs.

Quality And Style, Or "A Paradigm shift Won't Buy You A Cup of Coffee"

Point 2: Quality (or deliciousness) is not absolute

One of Clark's major points is that a paradigm shift has occurred and that Davis is perceived as having been left behind, warning California's winemakers that if they don't use sulfur dioxide (or commercial yeast) they will sail off the edge of a flat vineyard, to be consumed by the dragons of spoilage. Davis, according to Clark, not only does not teach students how to make wine with soul but refuses to recognize that wine can have soul. He seems to believe that quality (deliciousness in his lexicon) is an absolute and thus it can and should be studied in a department that focuses on natural science. Since the study of humans is an appropriate field for scientific research, he concludes that work on human preferences can also fit within a natural science department.

Unfortunately, (or perhaps fortunately, depending upon your viewpoint) quality is not absolute. A concept of deliciousness is not coded somewhere in the genes. Rather it is an individual judgment that involves likes and dislikes and generally requires a social and personal context that is most often learned. Ask yourself: Did you like your first taste of beer or did you find it unpleasantly bitter? Do you like beer now? Well, your frame of reference has changed (and perhaps your taste buds too). Although we can recognize wine styles, the assessment of relative quality between wines of two different styles or within one particular style is ultimately a personal or hedonic judgment. Put somewhat differently, we may open the same bottle of wine with the identical desire of experiencing soul, but whether or not we achieve our goal has as much to do with our individual definitions of soul as it does with the wine in the bottle. I think Clark and other winemakers who agree with him are confusing their own personal frame of reference with absolute quality.

This is not to say that there has not been an ongoing shift in how wine quality is assessed in our society. As I put it in my Vit. 3 class, we used to define wine quality by the absence of spoilage. Today we define wine quality by the presence of attributes. Historically this was valid because so much of California wine, even into the 1950s, derived its major attributes from spoilage or oxidation. As improved technology in the form of stainless steel and refrigeration was coupled with varietal grapes grown in cooler regions, more flavorful wine resulted, and wine quality began to be evaluated as the presence (and integration) of attributes. The interaction of such attributes helps define style and the ultimate judge of quality for a particular wine in a particular price category is the consumer, not the winemaker. Personally I don't see this movement in definition of wine quality as a paradigm shift, but rather as a gradual and on-going evolution. Davis certainly recognizes this evolution and indeed has encour-

continued on p. 60, column 3

Butzke's Response . . .

And since Clark's column mentioned ethylcarbamate, there is a sincere threat to the American wine industry that FDA will in the future severely regulate winemaking practices in order to comply with what officials consider low-EC, good winemaking practices. It will not help to argue with bureaucrats that Burgundians have made wines for a thousand years and did not harm anybody, in fact prolonged their life expectancy. Reverse osmosis or ion exchange will not help here either. Such regulations may indeed lead to dull wines, and that's where an outcry is appropriate instead of biting the hand that has fed you with knowledge and is always reaching out and ready to help.

UC Davis is not the almighty alumnus that you can expect to carry all the basic teaching load, do all the fundamental and applied research, and on top turn out not only commercially successful winemakers but also wine artists. The holistic responsibility lies in great part with the industry and especially with the experienced alumni in it, i.e. those who have the opportunity to share their knowledge and philosophy by lecturing in our VEN and Extension classes.

UC Davis today is Linda and Doug, Roger and Ann, Andy and Andy, the two Jims, Pete, Nick and Larry, Mark, Carole, Sue and Christian. We are dedicated to our industry 52 weeks a year, an average 60 hours a week, and we take pride in that. Anyone who feels obligated to ridicule our efforts is challenged to try harder and do better. That's why I believe Clark must have had something in mind when he wrote his manifesto. If he thinks he is holding the key to another more complete dimension of winemaking and wine wellness, please let him open the gate: promise big, deliver big, as it says in Life's Little Instruction Book. If he thinks his education at UC Davis has kept him and you from making those delicious wines for all of these years, well, then maybe because it's much easier to contemplate abstract concepts and to make a living by removing V.A. from spoiled wines (which are of course the "grand exception") instead.

I think finesse and greatness is not something you can teach in a class, anyway. It's something that you might slowly acquire with the constant motivation to do so, during years of experience. You may still never reach it. But there have to be a lot more Salieris out there than Mozarts in the world of wine and music, otherwise we could not appreciate

continued on p. 62, column 1

Lapsley's Response . . .

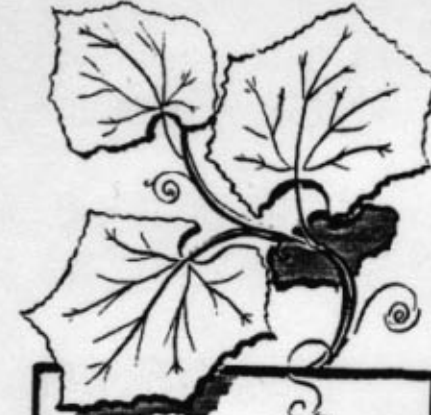
aged such a transition. Our students learn how variables in grapegrowing and winemaking affect wine attributes and how these attributes can be controlled to achieve wine styles. We do not ignore that spoilage exists (and neither does Clark—after all he makes his living removing acetic acid from spoiled wines), but neither do we teach that the first test of any winemaking technique is, Does it reduce or increase the risk of spoilage? Rather we encourage students to consider the potential costs/risks and benefits of production techniques and how these techniques can be used to achieve success in a given market niche. In her wine production class, Linda Bisson holds up black and white Xerox copies of a Monet and a Van Gogh and asks the class which is higher quality? After some discussion the group usually come to the conclusion that both represent quality, but are different styles. Linda then defaces one of the copies and asks which is higher quality? The class rather easily replies that it is the one that is not spoiled.

It is human nature to universalize one's own experience, to forget that there is a broader reality external to your own set of values and beliefs. Clark comments that his Davis training caused him to make clean wines that were boring, but this begs the obvious question, Boring to whom? His R.H. Phillips wines may have indeed been boring to him. Perhaps also to other winemakers who are in a constant quest for new tastes and styles and whose experience base separates them from the average consumer of inexpensive 1.5 L wine. (Clark won enough medals at Orange County to make me jealous). Yet I am sure that the R.H. Phillips wine that Clark produced delivered (and still delivers) pleasure and value to hundreds of thousands of consumers—and yes, in some cases some of these consumers may have experienced soul. Without belaboring the point, Clark's wines represented quality to a specific group of consumers, and one of the most important things Davis can really teach its students is not just how grapegrowing and winemaking factors influence the resulting wine style, but that the perception of quality lies ultimately in the marketplace, not in the winery.

Point 3: Wine is a large collective noun and includes many types and price points. Even if a winemaker can ignore other segments, Davis can't.

I have said above that Clark and

continued on p. 62, column 2



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Butzke's Response . . .

the difference. This is true in France, where they make 1.7 billion gallons of wine each year, as well as in California. But here we are not burdened by tradition-for-its-own-sake and enstrangling regulations. This is the state of unlimited creativity, spontaneity and pioneering spirit. Bordeaux might be the Camelot for many but I think the holy grail of winemaking is kept somewhere in California. Let's join forces to find it! I invite everybody in the industry to propose concrete projects and viable new concepts that can embrace great science to make great wines. You can reach me at 1-916-752-9312.

Christian Butzke,
Extension Enologist,
University of California, Davis

Lapsley's Response . . .

some other winemakers have confused their own personal frame of reference with absolute quality, and that the California wine industry has evolved into a series of niches and segments. This conjunction has created some very real problems for Davis in determining who speaks for the wine industry(ies), who we should listen and respond to. In my VEN 130 class on wine marketing I generally start the first lecture by telling my students that the California wine industry does not exist. I do it for shock value, to make them realize that what may seem a monolithic industry is really a grouping of segments and that success in different segments and niches requires different strategies. I then introduce them to Jon Fredrikson's Wine Pyramid which graphically shows volume by price segment. I have reproduced its essence in the following table:

Retail Price	% of Volume	% of Dollars
under \$3	60	33
\$3 - \$7	31	34
\$7 - \$14	7	22
above \$14	2	11

It is an interesting table, made more interesting if we try to estimate how many wineries are competing in each segment and what proportion of California's approximately 4000 vineyard owners sell grapes that end up in which price segment. The nature of the pyramid is that the majority of California's grapes go into wine that retails for under \$3 a 750ml equivalent (most is sold as bag-in-the-box) and that a handful of very large wineries dominate this price-and production-efficiency sensitive market. At the other extreme are wines retailing at above \$14. Most of California's 800 or so wineries aspire to this category and with reason. It is a small and crowded category, and successful producers must find ways to differentiate their product from their competitors. It is in this category that winemakers attempt to become artists and struggle to achieve subtle (and not so subtle) differences in their wines as they try to convince consumers, wine writers and retailers that their style actually represents ultimate quality.

So whose notion of quality should Davis validate? Whose research needs should we meet? As a public University benefiting from taxpayer dollars as well as industry research funds, we owe a responsibility to the public, to the grape grower in the southern San Joaquin Valley, to the handful of large wineries that buy the

majority of the grapes grown in California, and to the numerous fine wine producers throughout the state. Should we enshrine one particular niche in our teaching program and inform the public that its desire for White Zinfandel is pedestrian? That consumers should instead be purchasing barrel-fermented Chardonnay (with a prescribed toast level)? I hope that answer is obvious: NO—that quality is determined by the individual consumer, that no absolute or abstract definition of quality exists, and that notions of what attributes are desirable in wine vary by consumer and price point.

Well, I had planned to write a bit more about Clark's allusions to the European models of teaching excellence in winemaking, on the unique situation where UC Davis combines as a research and teaching unit, on the difficulties in teaching art, and to follow-up on Clark's parallels with dance, but I suppose I should save that for another day. I would leave the reader with two thoughts and a suggestion. The first, and I have alluded to it in a number of places, is that Europe is a much older culture. Much of the integration of wine science with an aesthetic notion of fine wine will come as our industry evolves and articulates our own ideas of the interaction of quality and locale, as wine finds a place in American culture. However, if our tradition is innovation, we will never achieve a final truth. The second thought is a reminder that Davis is evolving too, along with the industry. Don't ask us to abandon a basic science orientation which has served so well, and don't swallow the notion that our program has remained static, that we are giving the same lectures delivered 15 years ago. If you believe that, come back and sit in on a class. Finally, the suggestion is that anyone who wants to gain insight into the 2000 year old culture that was Gaul and today is called France should get Volumes I and II of Fernand Braudel's *The Identity of France*. You will find that Burgundy and Bordeaux were not built in a day. *Bon Appetite!*

James Lapsley
Extension Outreach Specialist
University of California, Davis

Editor's note: Clark Smith's article generated a large number of enthusiastically opposed opinions. Not all could be printed. We thank all who took the time to respond. We also note that it was necessary to edit out a substantial portion of Lapsley's response because of space limitation.

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On Metaphysics and Deliciousness

(and teaching our progeny to have no
faith
in swordsmanship and wooden armor)

by Don Blackburn

Some years ago, a Texas winery owner told several Californians, "You boys out here are fine tuning this wine thing. Back in Texas, we can still use that big ol' knob."

The truth is, the entire New World is still spinning that big knob. We've been evolving rapidly, and the trends pendulum as we make real progress. After prohibition, we began by making "sound" wine, then during the wine boom of the 60s and early 70s we made "varietal" wines. Today we are looking beyond that, and finding ourselves enmeshed in a debate: *What is beyond that?* How do we compete in an open market with wines from the world at large? Will alcohol prove to be wine's fatal flaw in a politically correct America? Is quality so inherently subjective that discussing it should be left to consumers?

My viti-vinicultural training was in France, and my mind set is a product of that approach. I have been watching the evolution of wine thought in California since my arrival in 1978,

and I am reassured by the degree to which developments have been understandable and sensible. Our progress has been directed by human nature and the reality of wine. I believe that, at this point, we as a group need to proceed more deliberately and think our way through this difficult time.

Fear is a powerful thing. There is much of it in the industry today. It has always been a factor in human endeavor. The following historical example is, I feel, quite relevant to us. Soon after the Chinese invented gun powder, firearms began to appear in Japan. The Samurai warriors who controlled this very martial society were immediately aware of the threat that this new invention posed to their power. Their swordsmanship and wooden armor would be rendered useless by gunfire, so they outlawed gunpowder and rounded up all firearms. This worked for a century, but Japan ended up following the example of the rest of the world.

For our industry, the gunpowder

equivalent is the "Old World approach to wine-growing." We think of it as French, but analogous ideas exist in other European countries.

Some technicians (any production person) admit to opposing the acceptance of French methods because "we shouldn't copy the French or anyone else." This fear is understandable but unfounded: we don't have the same soil or climate. Moreover, we give our decision-making a very un-French flavor because we think and feel differently.

It is more to the point that some French methods cause trouble here. This is why French methods should be adapted not merely adopted. Sometimes, by respecting the wisdom of a given method we should adapt it to our needs by doing the opposite.

For example, a neighbor of mine planted his vine rows across the wind line. I followed the same wisdom by doing the opposite. This was because my site was different and I thus saw the wind differently. So, why should we study the French wine growers, and examine in detail their achievements and practices? I submit that it is because they have the best track record.

The simplest way, the crudest way, and ultimately the best way to define wine quality is by looking in the consumer's cellar. There is nothing undignified about looking at an existing model for inspiration. Isaac Newton explained his scope of vision by referring to his study of predecessors. "If I see farther than other men it is because I stand on the shoulders of giants."

Of all the French regions, for several reasons, Bordeaux is the most instructive for us. The Bordelais took the lead in the 17th century in creating the notion of "Cru" as a wine known by the name of its vineyard source. Haut Brion was the first. Between 1680 and 1725 the notion of "Grand vin" came to include a cru and a production method yielding a wine with agreeable uniqueness. The Bordelais and their British clients developed a holistic wine tasting terminology intended to facilitate wine production by describing wine as an experience rather than a sum of dismembered parts.

During the 19th century, wine education and research in Bordeaux was a catalyst to the development of the region. In the 20th century, the Institute of Enology in Bordeaux devel-

oped a format that the rest of France has sought to emulate. It maintained very close links with the wine producers carrying out highly relevant research into issues identified by wine

growers. Young postdoctoral students spent many years wrestling with real life winemaking, consulting with selected chateaux. The best enologists with superior teaching ability were chosen to be professors. The Institute insured that they keep current by requiring the faculty members to recruit their own grants individually.

My study of Bordeaux and other re-

gions has led me to make several conclusions that serve me as guidelines.

- 1) Winegrowing does not start with the grapes. It starts with people. Whether you start with bare land or a

comes from the ability of a person to see through a wine and picture it in its context. It is the ability to make a wine a cogent representation of an experience, rather than a composite score on a 20 point scale.

Some of the world's finest viticulturists and enologists put their wine in jugs. In a way, jug wines have an extra need for soul, because they lack the dimension that *terroir* authenticity often furnishes to high end wines.

- 5) Each region needs to have a high seat of technical learning. This institution must maintain a database on the wisdom of the ages, as this applies to winegrowing. It must teach the pedestrian issues while keeping them in their place. It must unite the mundane and the metaphysical. To this end, the faculty must have an exemplary depth and breadth of knowledge, a skepticism about easy solutions, and more than that, a sense of humor. Most of all, those who would reside in the highest seat of learning and train technicians for the future, our future, these people should have a burning infatuation with this glorious thing called wine, and no faith in swordsmanship or wooden armor.

- 6) The discussion of wine quality should be considered to be without final outcome. The benefit is from the process itself. It is one of postulating, listening to responses, rethinking and repostulating. If we agonize about being wrong or foolish, we become paralyzed. The pursuit of quality is an indelible part of the way our minds work. If we refuse to discuss it, it remains latent, and it continues to be influential on our decision-making anyway.

All the important decisions in winegrowing are subjective. They can, therefore, be difficult to defend. Technicians need to be trained to be comfortable in the quality debate, because even entry level cellar workers must periodically defend things they have done on a gut feeling. This process gets more and more challenging as one gains career seniority and makes decisions with greater influence.

The learning curve is fastest in those who were given an enlightened education when young and impressionable. That is why we want to hire university trained technicians when possible. If we are to be their major employer, their education should focus on best equipping them to fulfill the role that we identify and explain to the university faculties.

Most of all, those who would reside in the highest seat of learning and train technicians for the future, our future, these people should have a burning infatuation with this glorious thing called wine, and no faith in swordsmanship or wooden armor.

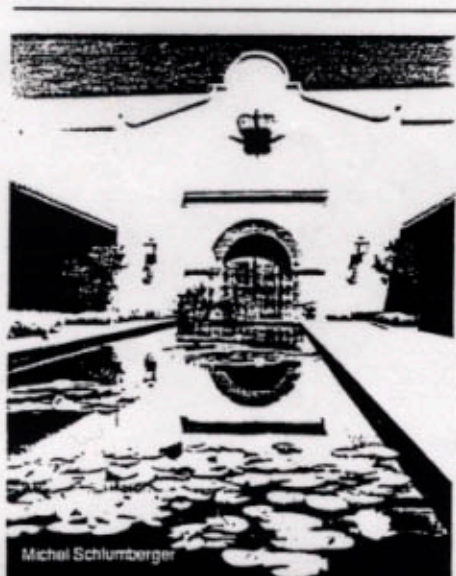
proven vineyard or finished wine or a labeled product, the wrong people will screw it up every time. If you have the right people, you can fix anything, even if that means selling land and finding a better location. This is why the emergence of any region is dependent on the existence of one or more persons whose vision, dedication, and charisma inspire their colleagues. Such a person is called a "grand monsieur" or a "grand dame." They are needed in each generation.

- 2) Wine is inherently good. If we take a negative approach, presuming that any given trait is more likely to be bad than good, guessing that consumers will reject a wine with character, the real problem is in our own attitude. Enological training should be based on fostering quality, not ferreting out flaws. Technicians err in saying "I serve wine at a temperature above normal to better identify its shortcomings." Organoleptic flaws not apparent at service temperature are only theoretical flaws.

- 3) Wine quality is maximized by a judicious combination of normative and metaphysical factors. Great wines have balance. The same balance must exist in the minds of the producers. This is the dualism of the rational versus the empirical, the "yeah but" and the "what if."

- 4) "Blue sky" winemaking, which is exactly what the new samurai fear most, applies equally to expensive wine and inexpensive wine. Some of the proudest vigneronns in France produce wine of modest appellation, or no A.O.C. at all. This status does not diminish the soul that they put into their wines. Soul does not come from new oak or famous vineyard names. It

comes from the ability of a person to see through a wine and picture it in its context. It is the ability to make a wine a cogent representation of an experience, rather than a composite score on a 20 point scale.



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ROMANCE, MATHEMATICS AND THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Commentary by Dan Berger

THE PRESIDENT OF THE LARGE WINERY, sitting across the table from the wine maker, tastes the Chardonnay, winces a little, and slides the glass toward the wine maker.

"It needs more sugar," says the owner, and he leaves, with unstated but most explicit orders: sweeten the Chardonnay. Or else.

☆☆☆

The wine maker is assembling his Cabernet Sauvignon from his 80-odd barrels. He knows that one lot of the wine, amounting to nearly a fourth of his production, is strongly scented with Brettanomyces.

"Ah, this is the stuff," he says to himself, knowing that the owner of the winery only wants "a 95 or better," that the wine will smell a bit odd to some, and would have gotten him a failing grade at UC Davis. But he knows what he wants.

☆☆☆

The Napa Gamay came in very ripe and the wine maker sees a chance to make a powerful, inky dark wine from them. He does so, aging the wine with its near-15% alcohol in oak.

But what to call this odd duck? He decides on Gamay Beaujolais since it seems like the only name that will sell the wine, even though a strobe light held on the other side of it wouldn't be seen from the front.

☆☆☆

These stories are all approximately true. And they illustrate the decisions that can be made by wine makers and winery owners and represent the art of wine making, not the science of it. Decision-making at various stages of a wine's life are options every wine maker has open. Some would argue that decisions of this sort run in the face of what the grapes want to do, a most zenlike concept, but most people in the business see both the art and science as being a part of this discipline. Kind of reminds me of two guys in a beer commercial. One screams, "Wine is art." The other hollers, "Wine is science." Both are right.

We are the referees in this contest. If we buy the wine that is art or the wine that represents little art and mainly science, we cast our vote in the direction of one or the other. As consumers, we generally opt for a style we prefer. But the various decisions that go into making up the style of wine are individual ones, related to the person making the wine. Occasionally, that individuality has more to do with scenario No. 2 above, a purely solipsistic choice.

The odd headline on this article replaced one I discarded: "Wine making by Democracy or Wine Making by Dictatorship." It didn't say very much. This article is about the feeling (romance), the science (math) and the desire of people to make a personal statement. So it is merely a beginning (perhaps this is the beginning of a series of articles, perhaps it's the first chapter to a book, who knows?). This subject really has no boundaries; it's one that touches on the beverage we all love so much, one that seems to magically appear as a gift of nature, a sublime potable emanating from such a simple (eloquent?) thing as the grape.

This article came about in part by spontaneous generation, starting with some articles here that led to a discussion (a series of on-going and unending discussions actually) with a sandy-haired dynamo who has been a wine maker, who has been a gadfly, and who now tries to convey (without much success) the image of businessman in the field of wine.

The Genesis of a Controversy

Clark Smith, a henchman in the company called Vinovation, wrote an article last year for *Vineyard & Winery Management* called "Does UC Davis have a Theory of Deliciousness?" The commentary carried a viewpoint that Smith feels strongly about.

It was (if one can sum up an arcane topic in one sentence) Smith's contention that wine cannot be made in a cultural vacuum—that it is a lot more than the mere science of fermenting a grape-sourced liquid with yeasts and bottling it; that quality (or deliciousness, if you wish) in wine is the ultimate goal, not simply sound, clean, unspoiled wine making, and that, further, wine making is more than the act of merely maintaining sanitary conditions and seeing that the dry wine is actually dry; it requires a good deal of humanification, such as an understanding of good music, art, opera, even rugby, not to mention an understanding of the greatness of "great" wine—and the word "great" in that sentence was listed with quotation marks (by me) since Smith never used the word great in his thesis, and then, more importantly, never defined it, which may prompt you to ask, 'How can you criticize someone for not using a word and then not defining it?,' to which I would reply that you don't know me very well and that I only made this argument to point up the circularity of it, and how it comes back to haunt Smith in ways he never imagined. (And if you think that last sentence was long, try reading Faulkner.)

This argument of Smith's, which challenged the University of California at Davis Department of Viticulture and Enology (hereafter referred to as UCDDVE), irritated the head of that great department, Linda Bisson, who understandably felt that Smith's attack, kind of like biting the hand that fed you, hits at a world-renowned educational institution that not only exists to educate aspiring wine makers, but also is there as a major research arm of the industry. And which performs despite an insufficient budget.

This phrase that Smith used, "theory of deliciousness," is kind of a euphemism, I contend, for a broader notion of what we term style, when that term refers to good wine. (A stylistic terrible wine is not the issue.) It incorporates the idea that a wine that tastes good is perfectly acceptable, irrespective of spoilage elements, irrespective of varietal identity and ignoring of many other facets of quality wine making.

One of UC Davis' key roles is to educate, which means to teach basics, and that means that students must be taught what is spoilage and what is not. This is a critical function of a university, for if a 19-year-old kid comes out of nowhere, having consumed little if any wine to that point (he or she isn't even allowed by law to sip it until age 21!), he or she might feel that acetaldehyde or some other chemical problem in wine is perfectly fine.

Tasting a sound, well-made wine is like hearing the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields (directed by Neville Mariner, of course) during a dress rehearsal. Tasting a truly great wine is like hearing that same orchestra playing in Albert Hall, from the Royal box. While sipping Taittinger.

It is walking around Winged Victory, not seeing it in a photo: it is seeing Ken Griffey Jr. leaping to catch a ball headed for your seat. It is the difference between your old Atwater-Kent and your new Carver with Bose surround-sound speakers. It is the broadest view of a wine, incorporating all the possibilities inherent in the grape and the region, not the narrow, limited spectrum.

So it means Chardonnay that smells more like Chardonnay than a barrel; a Rutherford Cabernet Sauvignon that has Rutherford stamped all over it, and all with the highest quality, even if the wine is not "big, bold, brassy and loaded with gobs of hedonistic depth."

Where Clark Smith and I part company is when he appeals for the University to take this humanism thing and run with it. Here, I go back to my old teacher of English from my freshman year in college, Dr. Richardson, who would put on Khovanchina or Franck while he read passages from Walt Whitman, and who told me I needed to go to the Lake Country and sit on some cold grey stones. (He was right. I did need that. I still long to go.) Clark suggests someone do the teaching, and doesn't acknowledge that perhaps the student must take ultimate responsibility, and that those who do will ultimately be rewarded.

The Zen Approach

Smith alludes to this zenlike sort of approach to wine in a speech he gave at the Unified Wine Symposium in Sacramento in March in which he stated, "Tibetan Buddhists spend a lot of time cultivating the skill of simultaneous assimilation of contradictory points of view," as he began a discussion of looking at Chardonnay holistically.

Let's get down to real terms here: a conversation I had with a man the other day. I had never met him before: we met at a tasting of some white Burgundies that was staged by a Los Angeles retail shop for some of its best customers.

He smelled the most expensive wine at the tasting, selling for \$85 a bottle. "It's got a terrible aroma," he said. "You like it?" he asked me.

"Well, it's a style thing," said I. "Some people like it. It's usually a part of those \$200 bottles of Montrachet, and people score these wines in the high 90s."

He looked at me funny. He wanted to know if I liked the aroma or not. I said it wasn't awful, but, no, I was not enamored of it, but I understood it. It's the kind of mercaptan-y note in a wine that can overtake the entire bottle if too strong, but as a "complexing" note, well, I can live with it. (No, I do not alibi for hydrogen sulfide in wine, but in this life you live with some things...)

There is a kind of roasted nut or oniony sort of character to this element, and I know pretty much what Clark Smith would say about mercaptan—at least in the context of his argument. He would say that if it fits the wine, well then, it's fine, if not dandy.

It is this sort of thinking that causes me to wrinkle my brow, my nose and other parts of my facial anatomy. For one thing, mercaptan would be a different thing in a Chardonnay than it would be in a Riesling. OK in the former, not in the latter. So Smith's phrase (the one I put in his mouth in the last paragraph) of "if it fits the wine," that is most appropriate.

What is a fit? Well, if a wine typically has a particular character, year after year, then the word typicity is used to tell potential buyers it has an expected style. Nothing wrong with that, is there?

A Case Example: A Wine That Is Spoiled—or Not

So let's assume for a moment that there is a Cabernet Sauvignon-based wine that in every year of its existence has a certain definable component. Let's say, just for the sake of this argument, that that component is *Brettanomyces*, the spoilage element that can (not always) leave a wine smelling leathery, or worse like manure, wet horse blankets, wet dog in a phone booth, and any number of other phrases.

Let us further assume that this wine is liked by some influential persons (such as, for instance, a wine writer or a major retailer), and the issue of the *Brettanomyces* smell is not mentioned by anyone as spoilage. It is called "complexity," in the manner of classic euphemistic speech as it affects wine. The fact that UC Davis would characterize this wine as spoiled, and thus relegate it to unacceptable as a beverage would drive Clark Smith crazy.

He would argue that if the wine is "delicious," then the element should not be targeted by the clean freaks at Davis as a loser. But what Clark misses is that in this case (and in probably millions of others), what is delicious to me and what is delicious to you are wildly differing things, and the components of delicious wine can be both positive and negative elements. And degrees of each.

Some of the best Zinfandels I have had in my life were wines whose volatile acidity was elevated. The clean freaks (many of the most opinionated wine makers) would downgrade such wines and talk about the elements of greatness starting out with clean wine making, and that to have a wine that you can enjoy, it can't have a major flaw.

Well, here we go again: we must define the word "major." In most of the old Zinfandels that had elevated VA, on a linear scale, I would say that such VA was perhaps half way to spoiled. They would be technically sound, but not enjoyable to me. Is this major? There is no question that a trained wine taster would spot it in an instant.

I will never forget a tasting of old Petite Sirahs I participated in about a decade ago. Participants were asked to bring a bottle of old Petite Sirah, to be served blind. The wine I brought, 7374 Cuvaison (a blend of the two vintages) was pretty high in VA, which I knew, but I also knew that the wine had outrageous fruit and was really tasty.

In the blind portion of the tasting, seven of the 16 tasters (all wine makers) ranked the wine dead last. There was one second-place vote. Among the kindest things a wine maker had to say about the wine was, "How could they release such a thing?"

Dinner was then cooked and we all helped ourselves to the buffet. All the bottles from the tasting were on a side table for dinner, and the first bottle emptied was the Cuvaison. And who had grabbed that bottle? The wine makers.

Said one of them, "It tastes great." Yet in the overall: scoring of the wine when it was blind, the winemakers disliked the wine. Academically.

It is this sort of wine that Smith argues for in his call for a theory of deliciousness to enter the discussions at UCDDVE. Clearly, Smith is right about making more human the wine by making more human and worldly the wine maker. But is this practical?

Shortly after Smith's comments on deliciousness were published, there appeared a rebuttal, sort of, by Dr. James Lapsley (I know Jim will be very pleased to see his name

in this article with the "Dr." appendage; he just received his doctorate in wine history, which even Smith feels qualifies him "to provide undergraduate instruction in the traditions of wine quality evaluation."). Lapsley answered Smith in a number of ways. One of them is in the practical: how can UC Davis alter its course with no additional funding?

I acknowledge that a context, a frame of reference, is essential for wine makers to make the wines that Smith feels ought to be made, and that this area of "instruction" takes at least two forms. One is the experience of fine wine from many regions, to include many different examples of each so that (for instance) even flawed samples of very expensive Montrachet (which may well be delicious) are sampled along side squeaky-clean examples of Montrachet (which may well be soulless).

Smith pleads for more wines with soul, but if such a tasting as I proposed in the previous paragraph were to be staged, a number of things would have to occur. First, someone would have to pay for these wines. Second, someone with sufficient understanding of the technology of Montrachet would have to be present to say how these wines got to this state, and then there should be a context of other vintages of Montrachet as well as a followup on the same wines to see how they aged.

Moreover, the second part of this education setup requires the famed "liberal arts" education that was so popular in the 1960s and 1970s, producing a broad personality and real cultural literacy. If you read Castiglione's "The Courtier," supposedly, you gain insight into what it took to be a man in society hundreds of years ago, and by translation and extrapolation, you could well adopt some of the same concepts into today's lifestyle to make yourself a complete person, a courtier. (Falconry aside, of course. Not much call for falconers these days.)

The Liberal Arts Education

Problem is, this broad-based education is really only learned by exposure, by experience, by example, not from books and travelogues. And this, indeed, is one of the rebuttal points made by another person to take on the Smith argument, Christian Butzke, an extension enologist at Davis. His point is that Davis' faculty of 14 comes from all over the world and can offer the inquisitive student a broad range of raw data that may be processed by the student. To rigidly give doctrine is something both he and Smith say is bad, and both agree that the ability to be creative must reside in the individual.

What Smith says should happen is that Davis should take responsibility for it; what the rebutters say should happen is for the University to broaden its research capabilities to make better wines on a broader scale and allow greatness to come out as a result of better technologies, i.e., better grapes from better trellises, etc.

What is missing in all of this is that Smith's plea for more personification in wine terms (charming, austere, brutish are visceral terms), and this takes a less-than-scientific view, one that is not the charge of a university program such as Davis. I believe this task might better be handled by a group like the American Institute for Wine and Food, or even American Society for Enology and Viticulture.

From a practical perspective, this would be asking an outside organization to sponsor on-campus seminars that tie in with fermentation science. (To do such programs after graduation, when wine makers scatter to various jobs, is

clearly impractical.) And since these organizations are not set up to do such "courses," it leaves one more option.

The wine industry itself should develop and fund a serious, hard-core series of courses investigating the greatness in wine, the deliciousness, in a carefully designed program that brings wine out of the laboratory and into the music hall, the art gallery, and even to the track and field meet (figuratively speaking, of course).

I propose that various venues would be scheduled for these events that comprise the course. There could be blind tastings with various forms of music; there could be dinners with carefully selected wines and foods, and a discussion of Hegel and Kant; there could be bike trips, hikes, picnics, art gallery tours, helicopter rides.

Of course, I see this as an option for upper-class students, the costs of which would be partially offset by the industry. Students might have to pay \$20 per person for their dinner at a fine restaurant periodically, but I see the remainder of the program as being all but free to qualified students. (Participation would require a certain grade point average on the part of a student who is working toward a degree in fermentation science or a related field).

Smith is right: programs such as this are vital for wine makers to see their role as making more than simply bug-free wine. But Davis already has its hands full, trying to teach students what is a sound wine and what is not, all in a country that prohibits most college freshmen from even taking a single sip of the product they are learning about.

The nice thing is that in all these years, without a program like the one Smith suggests, California has made world-class wines for some 20 years or more. These are wines that show the wine maker to have been a virtuoso not unlike Wynton Marsalis triple-tonguing some Russian melodies on cornet.

I doubt these wines were made in a sterile vacuum. There is an interchange of ideas among wine makers, and they do get together socially to chat about style and technique. Those who desire to get the broadness he suggests will do so. On their own.

And those who do not do so will either sink or swim based on the perceptions of the marketplace. Is this so wrong?

The foregoing is the beginning. Any thoughts on this? Address them to Dan Berger, 6030 Montecito Blvd., Santa Rosa, CA 95409.



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