

Dan Berger's Vintage Experiences

The Weekly Wine Commentary

Volume XIV, Issue 8

April 2, 2009

Love Your Decanter

The wine was a bit on the weird side, a little “funky”—which is an official wine term, from what I hear wine makers say.

I asked the waitress if she had a decanter. She'd never heard the word. And when I explained it, she offered a plastic water pitcher. And the rough splashing I did of that young Pinot Noir helped make the wine a lot more drinkable.

I have praised decanting before. Now I'm prepared to suggest that the tactic works for an even wider range of wines than even I had any idea.

This has come about slowly over the last two years as I have either decanted young wines, or allowed them to have sufficient air by opening wines and trying them, then judging them again the following day without refrigeration.

For decades, wine makers have displayed a near-paranoid reaction regarding air in wine. It has long been known that too much air can easily kill a wine. Thus most wine makers have gone to extreme lengths to protect a wine. And that's a good idea. Sloppy wine making that allows air to infect a wine before bottling can have a truly deleterious effect.

As wine making has changed, a number of factors have crept into the cellar that has changed the way wine is now treated. In the past, it was nearly impossible to avoid some air contact with either juice or wine, so a bit of oxidation was routine.

Today's wines are made a lot more under anaerobic conditions than in

the past, resulting in wines so well protected from air that it may be said that far too many are actually *deficient* in oxygen that can allow a wine to open up and show its true flavors.

Take, for example, Sauvignon Blanc. It's generally thought of as a drink-young white wine. But wine makers also know that after the youthful, blossom-y, spicy aromatics of youth are gone, the next best way to consume an SB is when it has had a chance to gain depth in the bottle.

This is little more than slow, controlled oxidation, and a process that the consumer can control.

I have had numerous examples of old, and very old, Sauvignon Blancs that display this amazing patina of age underneath the subtle (or even aggressive) layer of green herbal aromas that add measurably to the wine's complexity.

Frequently I taste a very young Sauvignon Blanc that lacks the herb components, but after an hour of swirling the wine, it finally gets enough air to show a trace of the herbs that are so fascinating.

The same can work with Cabernet, which can be big, full, and rather potent when young. Only after an hour in a decanter and perhaps with a lot of splashing around, the wine finally gets sufficient oxygen to reveal some of the subtle herbal nuances that I prefer in Cabernet of a high order.

We can extend this to Syrah, a wine that is easy to make with

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Blog v. Journalism

The vast majority of wine blogging these days is pretty much a lot of blather based on opinion and few facts.

The best of the bloggers are people with journalism credentials such as Eric Asimov of *The New York Times* and Mike Dunne, former wine and food editor of the *Sacramento Bee*.

Friends regularly pass along blogger comments that seem to be drawn from fuzzy thinking illogic, some serious bad-mouthing, and occasional observations that have long ago been observed by others.

So it was refreshing to see a blog the other day from a man who seems to use his brain for cogent purpose.

I don't know much about Arthur Z. Przebinda (see Page 4), but his web site hits on a number of fascinating wine topics.

Arthur can be read at his web site, <http://www.redwinebuzz.com>.

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