

## Marvin and Me

I could say it was a late summer day when it happened, but the iron-cold fact of the matter was that autumn had come. The first scents of Fall crept in with a cold Labor Day rain, provoking an oddly sad, remorseful contemplation; a song on the radio, a plaintive, “Hard times, hard times, come again no more” struck me with a dissonant, strangely resonant chord. It began with an ache.

I wasn't quite ready for the fainting couch, but I was indeed in a funk; prolonged exposure to dismay was working to sad effect. Mere alcohol didn't thrill me at all... (Really – no joke, I tried). I was isolated from that which gives me glee (by a seeming perpetuity of repetitive dulling obligation and a strident national dialogue among other things) and again it fueled a desire to get to the throbbing beating heart of the matter. It set me to thoughts of journeying. My Day-to-Day you see, had worn me low.

Once the idea of a journey enters the mind, it's not easily shaken. It's an itch, a pest, an internal rebellion. You can't swat it away. The body craves what it needs before the conscious mind gets the marching orders. It's the nut of all great narrative; protagonist encounters obstacle(s), goes journeying in search of clarity, lightness and resolution. The need to be away was upon me.

As September wore on I didn't want to leave. I was even a little afraid to go. Fear is deceptive after all. Routine and Imagined Obligation duped me into thinking that September in Utah was heaven on earth. There was no end of excuses to stay; a need to “catch up” (to what?), a need to ride the Colnago and make up for lost mileage, a need to sit in the garden beneath my allemanda, dozing, surrounded by the aromas of lavender and basil and smoke rolling in off the hills.

My brilliant subconscious instincts for self sabotage, meticulous in their slow-reveal assault on my weaknesses, accounted for the noteworthy dearth of willing women in my apartment by veering from a libidinal appeal to oral fixations; a bottle of **Caymus' “Special Selection” Cabernet Sauvignon 2005 (\$135)** kept me company while packing. Describing the wine is pointless; it needs a better picture, let's say the opening mwah-wah-wah-bassnote-cymbal-crash from Marvin Gaye's “Let's Get it On” ...while smearing the wine into your skin. “I've been really trying baby, trying to hold back this feeling for sooooo long”...sing along...you know the words. I've never claimed to be a “strong” man, just a self indulgent one. Lets just say fighting off this lotus “jones” was difficult (its an “Odyssey” thing).

Lashing myself to the Prius, I left Salt Lake City on a quiet sunny Sunday. I pointed the car west, stopping for a quick hangover catnap outside the pulsing neon landfill known as Wendover before forging on. There is not much to see between Here and There, only daydreams populate the landscape ~ prisons and nuclear waste are a natural for western Nevada. For long hours of desert I scolded myself, congratulated myself, regretted things done and not done, I penned a sentence or two, conducted a symphony, I even convinced myself that I would thereafter be a paragon of virtue, and occasionally, I let go with a roar of encouragement to my beloved flailing Yankees. They flailed, I roared. The road went on.

I entered the Sierra Nevadas by moonlight and a sigh (brought on by the perfume of sun-baked pine and cool night air). Good God it just felt easy all of a sudden, floating, a welcome kiss on the cheek, and by the time I broke through the Cloverdale fog at 4 am, some 14 hours of road time later, the sweet smells of harvest flooded the car.

It was a crisp clean autumn night and the house felt that deep-sigh kind of safe (much the way a small part of me is always glad to return home to where my stuff is) with only the chirp of crickets and the odd bray of a goat on the near hillside punctuating the evening's calm.

Dismay doesn't reside in Mendocino, not for me, nosirree; it's a Brigadoon where such things are not allowed. All the necessary proof was in stepping barefoot on to the mulch between the rows of an old organic Pinot Noir block, eating sweet sunbaked grapes and sipping an ethereally tingly bubbly (the house brew, **Jeriko Brut 2005 ~ \$22**) while staring up at a smattering of stars.

I don't know if it was the absorbing expanse of the night sky, the sweet grapes or the crisp night air but I confess that I welled up. I was exhausted, wrung out, missing people, places and things long gone and never been, then suddenly it passed, exhaled into the spray of stars above; and then? it came easy. Happy, smiling, floating, humming ~ “I've been really trying baby, trying to hold back this feeling for sooooo long”. Sing along ~ you know the words.

---

**S**ubscription to **E-Libation** is voluntary & free. Let me know if you no longer wish to receive it OR feel free to pass it along. All I need is an email to add friends to the broadcast!

---

Your feedback is welcome and wanted - any thoughts on how I might improve this newsletter are welcome. I want to hear it all — the good, the bad and the ugly. Questions, concerns, thoughts, experiences, both fair and foul, [francis.fecteau@gmail.com](mailto:francis.fecteau@gmail.com)

# e-libation

A Salt Lake City guide to all things juicy  
and delicious in the world of wine.

## Bailing You Out



JUDD'S HILL  
NAPA VALLEY

Washington might be populated with wan faces demanding handouts without question and without end, but in the land of small family owned business, the impulse is to trickle up. For family owned operators, wine is life, wine is living and it shouldn't go by the wayside. The first two volunteers taking a price cut to maintain their place on your tables? **Caymus Vineyards** and **Judd's Hill**. **Mer Soleil "Silver" Chardonnay 2006 is now \$21, this is approximately 50% below national retail.** This is an opulent, vibrantly fruited wine. Santa Lucia's finest highland Chardonnay goes through primary fermentation and no Malolactic Fermentation (so, none of those buttery BS flavors that plague so much of California Chardonnay). It never sees a stitch of oak. This is loaded with bright beautiful ripe citrus and granny apple snap; California White Burgundy.

**Judd's Hill Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa 2004** is perhaps the greatest release yet of this opulent Napa stalwart. **Utah's Small Winery Exemption drops this wine from \$42 to \$33; Judd's Hill authorized me to bring it down to \$26.** This is a stunning wine, loaded with ripe generous black fruits. The family style, use of open-top fermentation creates an immediately accessible yet plush wine, the lengthy finish owes its sweetness to an impeccable selection of perfectly ripe fruit. Much to their credit, oak use is minimal and sweetly french. Brilliant stuff.

## Stick it to the Man



It occurred to me that the cure for a fearful populace is generosity; with ourselves and with others, but let it begin with our palates. Nothing good ever came from fear, and generosity resounds 'round and round. These are tough times, but at some point if you repeat the phrase "tough times" enough, this bit of self deceiving skullduggery makes you believe that ALL times are indeed tough and that somehow ALL deprivation is necessary. This bitterness radiates outward, confining the soul and spirit. It becomes an iron gray set of blinders, always narrowing the focus and perpetuating dour and sullen impulses better left undone. It doesn't cost a lot to eat well, or drink well, nor should it. What's the old investment wisdom? "Be fearful when others are greedy; be greedy when others are fearful"? These are adaptable notions ~ don't be afraid to swim upstream, don't be afraid to indulge and don't be afraid to share. Generosity is a sustainable resource.

I want people to think of Caputo's not as a specialty store, but as a necessity store, a place as essential as eggs and milk and flour, a daily stop, a daily thought. A little research by the ever intrepid Matt Caputo brought this conclusion closer than you might think. Thanks to their direct source connections, shopping at Caputo's is a brilliant surprise. Not only is the quality level stratospherically higher, but prices on necessary flavors; parmesan both grana padano and parmiggiano reggiano, feta, gruyere, manchego etc are 30 to 40% lower. **Let me repeat that; CAPUTOS IS 30 to 40% CHEAPER THAN SMITHS, ALBERTSONS, DAN'S, HARMONS AND WHOLE FOODS.**

## Someone is giving back



**Adami "Garbel 13" Prosecco NV (\$14)** manufactures the finest Prosecco in the appellation. Attention to detail is paramount here; like Saracco, fresh juice is kept at very low temps under a layer of nitrogen until fermentation is to take place. The resulting wine is thrillingly grapes-off-the-vine fresh and bright without any of the murky oxidized flavors that plague so much of this appellation. A small dollop of Chardonnay is added, creating a much lengthier and finesseful wine, again, in contrast to the Alka Seltzer roughness of their competitors. Best batch yet!



**You've heard me rave on about Paolo Saracco's Moscato D'Asti (\$17) before. The new release, 2007, is in my humble opinion, his finest.** His style, press the juice and keep it at very low temperatures under a layer of nitrogen, shows a concern for freshness of expression that makes his THE reference point for this type of wine. The 2007 shows exactly why; a radiant array of limes, pears, fresh cut flowers and a surprising minerality, all buttressed and framed by flawless balance and acidity. A wine with a sunny disposition and a must for the holiday table.

## Just Wow...



**W**ine Spectator lies (as they often do). It's a lie when you tell me that you had 22 wines better than this one in a year, (much less for the duration of their lives). **Avignonesi Grand Annati VINO NOBILE DI MONTEPULCIANO Riserva 2004 (\$62).** There are few, precious few, bottles of this around. And yes, I would do (and have done) shameful things for it. A wine of historic proportions.

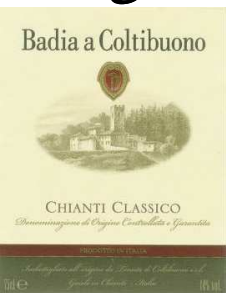
# e-libation

A Salt Lake City guide to all things juicy  
and delicious in the world of wine.

## Palomar, Shalomar, Swanee Shore...

I've always wanted to be Cab Calloway cool. Who hasn't wanted to be that rhythmically perfect, musical and articulate all at once? The crafting of a wine follows a similarly careful path; there's a whole lotta mess going on that just happens to require some deft footwork, timing and grace (and ridiculous attention to detail) ~ think Cab Calloway "Jumping Jive" with the Nicholas Brothers (see Youtube.com). There aren't many wines that bring this sense of lightness and brightness to mind; articulation of elements is a bitch and when you find one that hits, it's a thrill. First thing? **I look for a sense of "lightness"**, this does not refer to a wine that is either light in color or body, but one that possesses acidity to balance its texture and delivers lingering flavors without the artificiality of sugar, excessive oak or shoddily managed malolactic fermentation. Second, **I look for a sense of place or "terroir"**, well made wine expresses aromas and characters unique to its vineyard of origin; **Bucklin's "Old Hill Ranch Zinfandel"** smells like a flower farm on a hot summer day; Wine Spectator's #1 Wine, on the other hand, Clos Apalta from Chile does not show any character; it's a generic, faceless, competently made wine at best. Third, **I need balance**. This is simple. One element in the wine should not outshine another, nor should any of those elements be overbearing i.e. Oak shouldn't be scorching my gumline while washed-out fruit meekly finishes down the dead center of my tongue.

## "Lightness"



The new release of **Badia a Coltibuono Chianti Classico 2006 (\$26)** was just awarded "**Tre Bicchieri**" (Wine's Oscars) for type. I spent three days with it, it dazzled every second with a thrilling show of character; new leather (think expensive Italian shoes), fresh red cherries, roses and asian spices. No excess of oak treatments, no use of overripe fruit, no candied characters; just flawless fruit allowed to shine through

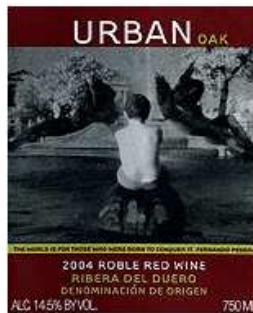


**Louis Latour, Marsannay 2006 (\$20)**, is dazzling Pinot Noir from Burgundy's coolest (as in average temp) Village. Minimal resting time in stainless steel and a touch of sweet french oak frame the earthy black fruit and racy acidity, putting the expressiveness of the fruit foremost.

## "Place"



The **Quinto do Crasto Douro Red 2006 (\$15)** a blend of Touriga Nacional and Tinta Roriz (Port Grapes) is a powerfully rich bone dry red. The hillside is steep and hot and dotted with olive and sage. These spice elements show from beneath an overlay of black fruit. Oak is minimal. The **Fournier Urban Ribera del Duero (\$15)** again, minimal oak, but this powerhouse red reveals the terroir of the Duero with scents of wet clay (the base layer of the Duero) that overlay the natural espresso and black fruit aromatics of the region.



The **Mer Soleil Ranch** is surrounded by a grove of Meyer Lemons. **Mer Soleil Chardonnay 2006 (\$29)** is a stunner. Oak and Malolactic treatments have been gradually scaled down and each year the vibrancy of the ranch fruit shows more and more esp so in the fresh lemon oil scents that emanate from the glass. Vineyards really do speak in the glass.



Gewurtztraminer is notorious for its narrow window of perfect balance in the vineyard. The tiny peach colored berries are terrifically sensitive to the slightest spikes in temperature and humidity. **Londer Vineyards Gewurtztraminer 2007 (\$18)** captures lighting in a bottle. At best, these are more often than not gooey fruit cocktail with the charm of bathwater (dirty). Londer's makes me eat my words with an exotic peepshow of rosepetals, lychee fruit, peach pie, baking spice and a bright racy citrus inflected acidity.



## "Balance"

**Jeriko Estate Grenache 2005 (\$16)** is the best \$16 wine to happen in years. This is a blast of jammy boysenberry fruit with hints of earthy varietal spice. Flawless vineyard management and minimal interference in the cellar let the fruit and natural extract shine. A model of balance.

# e-libation

A Salt Lake City guide to all things juicy and delicious in the world of wine.

## Falling in Love again

I may have thought this or said this before, but I must be the only heterosexual male, or American under the age of 70, in Salt Lake City with Marlene Dietrich records. Either way, a great lyric is a great lyric is a great lyric, "Falling in Love again, never wanted to..." and it's a lyric I hear again and again when wines return to market from favored producers. Shopping for a wine is much like satisfying an urge or coloring a mood, it's a pull, a song in the ear that makes my palate (or some nether region) tingle. I haven't been to Spain in over a year but thanks to a spate of new releases I get to return again. It was an adventure, an experience to survive (lack of sleep, fear factor farm food), copious gallons of strange booze and a fever to keep me company on the 22 hour journey home, but like the song says, "Falling in Love again, never wanted to, what am I to do, I can't help it."

Okay, so it is a little more expensive **Bodegas Borsao "Tres Picos" Garnacha 2007 (\$18)**

but for good reason. Juice from this estate's single vineyard wines (which are 3 to 6x the price) made their way to this now superior bottling. This is deeper, richer stuff ~minimal oak and loaded with black fruits and almost surreal expression of Calatayud terroir (an iron/lean pencil minerality on the finish thanks to the poor slate and gravel soils.



The **2007 Bodegas Borsao "Campo de Borja" Borsao (\$8)** is criminally underpriced. This is where all the extra Tres Picos juice went ~ an 80 / 20 blend of Grenache and Tempranillo, this sees almost no oak, but shows mindblowing stuffing of black fruits, leather, cherries and spice. It even comes in a party jug called **Vina Borgia 2007 (\$14 / 1500 ml)** a tank fermented Grenache only version. Again, criminally underpriced.



Not my usual baileywick, but **Wandering Aengus Heirloom Cider (\$9.99)** is utterly brilliant stuff. Made much like wine from organic heirloom variety apples, this Oregon treat captures the season in a glass with a flawless balance of sweet and sour. It's a lot less calories than apple pie (and frankly? Its better). The kids that make it grew up around Pinot Noir and it has a vinous range of expression that makes me happy. Perfect for Apres Ski.



## Eat, Drink, Cook ...Lessons



308 West 300 South  
(801) 531 - TONY

### DECEMBER 4th

#### Focused Tasting: "The Shelves"

Intimidated at the wine store? Make your wine selections in 60 seconds or less? Well...wine, much like sex, is WAY more fun if you take more than 60 seconds. Caputo's for me is much the same way, but again, like sex, its best to let the curiosity take over. Those arcane shapes and colors conceal a world of exotic flavors and textures that will induce late night needs for junkie fixes. Except this time, you get the guided tour with wine to match. Chestnut Puree combined with artisanal honey and chocolate? You bet...truffles packed in jus, or tubes or oil, its a gastronomic Arabian nights with 1001 pleasures. There will be wine to match. Includes \$5 gift certificate. **Class: \$25, Wine: \$15**

### DECEMBER 11th

#### Focused Tasting:

#### Intro to Fine Chocolate Featuring Chocolatier Blue

Become a chocolate snob in two hours; no cooking involved. Sample and discuss some of the world's most innovative and respected chocolates and learn to navigate the vast array of chocolates in our aisles. And as an added bonus, Mr. Blue, America's very best chocolatier, will walk you through his chocolate creations at no extra charge (this is usually a separate class). Includes \$5 chocolate gift certificate. **Class: \$25**

### DECEMBER 13th

#### Focused Tasting: Olive Oil & Balsamic Vinegar

Forget everything you think you know about EVOO & Balsamic Vinegar. Did you know Extra Virgin standards are not enforced in the U.S.? After this class you will not need to rely on anything but your own taste to select the right product for each specific use (cooking, salads, condiments, etc.). Do not miss this class; we only do it twice a year. Includes \$5 gift certificate. **Class: \$25**

#### The best of the best wine stores;

**Park City / 1901 Sidewinder Ave / 435-649-7254**  
**Metro Salt Lake / 255 South 300 East / 801-533-6444**  
**Cottonwood / 1863 East 7000 South / 801-942-2580**  
**The Big Shiny New One / 280 West Harris Avenue**  
**(about 1600 South, 300 West) / 801-412-9972**