

mike's notes, observations, and ramblings about this week's wine list...



first off, we are moving to a more free-form set of notes. i have thankfully self-edited myself and the insanely repetitive & hard-to-manage tasting notes. i'd rather talk about the wines in a column here, following the way my mind rambles, than to constantly spin the fruit/aroma wheel to "wow" you with my keen sense of tasting notes. i instead want to talk more about the wineries, the grapes, the regions, etc., than to try to come up with a euphemism for "cherry."

this is a pretty killer list. ryan, who works for me on fridays and is the resident magician, what with three card tricks, said that we need "more white wine." noted.

let's start off this list of summer whites with something you might not have tried -- gruner veltliner. no, it's not a german bus company -- it's a grape native to austria. in this case, the **2009 leth gruner veltliner** from wagram, which is incidentally a village where that short french guy came and picked a fight with the song loving austria. one of the things i dig about gruner is that there's always a little visible effervescence in the glass. the other thing that i love is the weightiness of the wine in your mouth. reminds me of the excellent pinot blanc wines of alsace france. if you are a lover of pinot grigio, then you need to pimp your ride and check this out.

debuting at #2 on the charts this week (and displacing kings of leon) is the **kato (not katlin) sauvignon blanc** from everybody's favorite place for this tangy varietal: marlborough, new zealand. the name kato means "harvest" in maori. i'm not sure what maori is, but i'm guessing it has something to do with snowboarding indians. this wine is tangy and tart, full of a bag of grass on the nose. no, not that grass, you stoner. this is a great wine for people who love long walks on the beach & reruns of three's company.

moving on, the **morgan metallico chardonnay** from monterey is a chardonnay for people who claim to not like chardonnay. the metallico moniker refers to the total absence and nearly 100% non-use of oak barrels. the resultant wine is fresh & full of tropical fruits instead of being "oaky" and "buttery." sorry oak fans :(

lastly on the white side of things, we have the “kitchen sink” wine – the **2008 clayhouse adobe white** from paso robles. that is, if you ask what grape is in there, chances are it is. the primary grape is viognier, at a whopping 22%, with nearly equal parts of sauv. blanc, grenache blanc, roussanne, chardonnay, and chenin blanc. there’s also a grape in there called “princess” that isn’t on the label because the government hasn’t yet acknowledged its existence. this is a fresh & lively wine, perfect for wasting an afternoon on facebook.



on last entry in the chilled section – and it’s pink! don’t be afraid of pink wines. unless they have “white” in the name somewhere. this dry & amazingly feminine wine is from provence, in the south of france, where they mostly make pink wines. the **2009 chateau routas rosé** (i hate special characters) is a blend of grenache & syrah, with the lion’s share of the juice being from the most rhone of red grapes, cabernet sauvignon. huh? have the person next to you explain it to you. this wine goes best with wasting an afternoon reading facebook, while on a hammock.

let’s start off the reds with the incredible **calera pinot noir**. i once read the book “pinot noir of north america” which might be longer than the illiad, btw. one of the most often mentioned names for excellent pinot noir producers was this cat josh jensen. he is pretty famous for seeking out “soil” rather than simply “climate” when planting his pinot noir. he found the limestone rich soils he was looking for in the hills west of san benito county in central california. how did he know to look for limestone? let’s go back to the beginning. he graduated in the sixties from yale with a degree in history, eventually to become a masters in anthropology at oxford. while at oxford, he was the heaviest member of the rowing team that defeated cambridge in “the boat race” on the thames. then, he worked four harvest in france, including a stint at DRC. that’s where he learned about limestone’s love affair with pinot. he came back to the states and sought out limestone. he found it! the name calera comes from the spanish word for “limekiln.” i won’t even describe this amazing wine here, but to say “ask mike how he offended josh at a recent wine tasting.”

we have a bunch of italian wines and italian varietals on the menu this week. how come? well, let’s just say i got a visit from moose & rocco and they were very persuasive in their sales pitch. the first of the italian reds is the **2008 colosi rosso nero d’avola**.

in case you're wondering what that all means, colosi is the name of the producer, and nero d'avola is the name of the grape. actually, it translates to "black of avola," avola being the city of avola in sicily. it's a grape kind of like shiraz -- peppery red fruit with round tannins.

staying in italy, but moving up to the main land from the island of sicily, the **cantele riserva negroamaro/malvasia nera blend** comes from the town of salice salentino in the puglia region. this is one of those interesting italian wines named after the town in which its made. if the last wine was peppery & full of bright red fruits, this one is more sophisticated, with a bit of time in neutral french oak. it's a blazer & jeans to the colosi's bermuda shorts & t-shirt.



a duo of wines from tilia in argentina are next. the **tilia malbec** and the **cabernet sauvignon**. both of these wines are part of the tilia brand of wine owned by nicholas catena -- one of the largest producers of malbec in the world. remember when i said 2010 was going to be malbec-free? i couldn't sustain it. 1/2 of my standup act is about malbec. i feel lost without its stunningly consistent above averageness. i actually prefer the cab to the malbec (surprise, surprise). both are good, and full of argentinean fruitiness.

the last italian red is the **viticcio bere rosso** from tuscany. this is what is affectionately known as a "super tuscan." that is, a wine from tuscany which includes other international varietals blended with the native sangiovese. in this case, it's 1/2 sangio and equal parts cabernet sauvignon and merlot. the result with this wine is a more well rounded wine tannin-wise with deep plum & black berry flavors framing sangio's tart black cherry.

we have a new zin that just arrived in the form of the **wine guerrilla zinfandel** from sonoma county. their mission is to bring premium sonoma zinfandels to you at affordable prices. in fact, zin is all they do. their other stated mission is to remove the final barrier to instant wine gratification -- bottling the zins with screw caps! we carried their dry creek zin not too long ago, and at \$13/glass, we sold a ton of it. we got a nice end of vintage discount on this one and are able to bring it to you at \$4 cheaper/glass! this is an excellent example of the sweet raspberry meets nutmeg & sage character of central sonoma fruit. there is a touch of petite sirah here to add backbone.

let's drive down the 101 from sonoma to paso robles for this next one. the **clayhouse adobe red** is a kitchen sink of grapes, with zinfandel being the most prominent component. the other grapes present in this blend include syrah, petite sirah, malbec, grenache, and mourvedre. clayhouse is the name of the adobe house dating to the 1800s on the family property, and is a symbol to the owners of the time when grapes were originally planted in this part of the state. this is just an easy drinking full bodied red with loads of spice & fruit.



let's drive back up the 101 to sonoma, but this time we'll stop in santa cruz to take a ride on the giant dipper & have a corn dog first. ok, time to get up to muscardini cellars in sonoma. michael muscardini planted his first vines in 2000 and with the help of neighboring winemakers and some classes at sonoma state & uc davis managed to quickly perfect winemaking. the **muscardini sangiovese** & the **muscardini syrah** share a common quality -- their texture -- it's so elegant & round. the wines have similar weight in the mouth, so your choice between them would be more strawberry/cherry fruit (sangio) or more spicy raspberry (syrah). both are excellent -- you might even want to put together a little flight of 1/2 glass of each! tiny production on both, with the syrah only having 200 cases.

2005 was one of the vintages of the century in bordeaux. well, one of them, because there have been about 10. at any rate, when the '05's started arriving, everyone ignored the remaining 04's like the kid eating paste during dodgeball team selection. the great thing for me, and for you, is that the 04's have started to age nicely, and the snobby importers have had to cut their prices in half to make room for the '06 vintage. in this case, the **chateau belle-vue** from haut médoc. this region is on the left bank of the gironde river and actually borders one of the most famous regions in the world -- margaux. left bank wines are typically cab dominated, and this one is. it contains about 56% cab, with the balance being merlot, cab. franc, and carmenere. smells like gravel, cherry, tobacco, and currant. an absolute steal at \$11/glass. if we'd bought it on release it would have been over \$20/glass.

lastly, the excellent **cadence coda** from red mountain, washington. i would say this is my favorite wine on the list, and as i'm running out of space, you have to trust me on it. it's a pretty even blend of cab, merlot, and cab franc. so deep & elegant! 790 cases.



Bring some of The Cask Room home with you each month!

The Cask Room Wine Club offers you two bottles of artisan wine each month that is guaranteed to expand your palate. Take advantage of our buying power to help stock your “everyday” wine cellar. For \$30/month (plus tax), we’ll have two bottles waiting for you starting on the 3rd Wednesday of the month to take home. Plus, you’ll get a free reusable four bottle tote, just in time to help save the planet, as well as invites to special “Wine Club Only” Events. Cancel at anytime. Simply fill out this form and hand it to one of our wine experts and we’ll get you started for the next available month.

Name: _____

E-mail: _____@.com

Billing Zip: _____

CC#: _____

Expiration: _____/_____

We are proud to use Organic local produce from Suzie's Farm in Chula Vista as well as sustainable meats from Boar's Head Provisions!

<i>vintner's cheese flight</i>	17
...three 2 oz. selections of artisan cheese, with red wine dry salami, marcona almonds, dried turkish plums & apricots, and toasted crostini. this week's cheeses are: red dragon cheddar, abbaye de belloc sheep, and fromager d'affinois double cream.	
<i>the napa panini</i> ✪	12
...medium rare roast beef with vermont cheddar, caramelized onions, arugula, roasted red peppers, and horseradish aioli. <i>w/ chips or small salad</i>	
<i>the avignon panini</i>	12
...oven roasted turkey breast, french brie, arugula, roasted garlic, and chipotle raspberry compote. <i>w/ chips or small salad</i>	
<i>the sonoma panini</i> ✪	12
...grilled portobello mushroom, roasted red peppers, laura chenel chevre goat cheese, roasted garlic, thyme, and caramelized onions. <i>w/ chips or small salad</i>	
<i>cask room trio</i> ✪	12
...olive tapenade, roasted red pepper hummus, and goat cheese peppadews w/ flatbread.	
<i>summer salad</i> ✪	9
...organic spinach, cucumbers, heirloom tomatoes, red onion, gorgonzola, & balsamic vinaigrette.	
<i>stuffed dates</i>	10
...medjool dates stuffed with goat cheese, baked, wrapped in proscuitto.	
<i>stuffed mushrooms</i> ✪	9
...large wild mushrooms stuffed with rosemary breading, aged parmesan, and roasted pepper.	
<i>crostini</i> ✪	9
...toasted rosemary foccacia with either goat cheese & olive tapenade or gorgonzola & agave.	
<i>barcelona chocolate fondue</i>	7
...our house made chocolate fondue, with kahlua and spices, served with seasonal fruit for dipping	

Welcome to The Cask Room! Our wines are available by the **1/2 glass, glass, and bottle**. All bottle prices listed are **retail** for off-site consumption. A **\$9 corkage fee** will be added to any bottle consumed in-house. We feel this offers a great bargain to traditional restaurant pricing!

2008 clayhouse wines adobe white viognier blend (paso robles, ca)	8/glass 17/retail ★
2009 leth gruner veltliner (steinagrund, austria)	11/glass 22/retail
2008 kato sauvignon blanc (marlborough, new zealand)	7/glass 16/retail ★
2008 morgan "metallico" chardonnay (monterey, ca)	12/glass 21/retail ★
2009 chateau routas rosé (provence, france)	8/glass 17/retail ★
2007 calera pinot noir (central coast, ca)	14.5/glass 32/retail
2008 colosi rosso nero d'avola (sicilia, italy)	7/glass 14/retail ★
2006 cantele risevera negroamaro/malvasia nera (salice salentino, italy)	8/glass 16/retail ★
2008 tilia cabernet sauvignon (mendoza, argentina)	7/glass 17/retail ★
2008 tilia malbec (mendoza, argentina)	7/glass 17/retail ★
2007 viticcio bere super tuscan cab/sangio (tuscany, italy)	9/glass 18/retail
2008 wine guerrilla zinfandel (sonoma county, ca)	9/glass 20/retail ★
2008 clayhouse wines adobe red zin blend (paso robles, ca)	8/glass 17/retail ★
2008 muscardini cellars sangiovese (sonoma valley, ca)	13/glass 30/retail
2004 chateau belle-vue cab/merlot (haut-medoc/bordeaux, france)	11/glass 22/retail
2008 cadence coda cab/merlot/petite verdot (red mtn, washington)	13/glass 30/retail
2007 muscardini cellars syrah (sonoma, ca)	12/glass 29/retail
2009 che gaucho chardonnay (mendoza, argentina)	15/1.5l retail
2006 salerno pinot noir (ramona, ca)	16/retail
2007 fleur pinot noir (carneros, ca)	20/retail
2008 domaine de la chanteleuserie cab. franc (bourgueil, france)	22/retail
2007 domaine de montine caprices syrah (cotes du rhone villages, france)	18/retail
2008 che gaucho malbec (mendoza, argentina)	15/1.5l retail
2008 bodegas venta morales tempranillo (la mancha, spain)	13/retail
2007 laurel glen "chevere" cabernet sauvignon (valle central, chile)	15/retail
2008 che gaucho cabernet sauvignon (mendoza, argentina)	15/1.5l retail
2007 frescobaldi remole sangiovese (tuscany, italy)	16/retail
2006 domaine de montine seduction syrah (coteaux du tricastin/rhone, france)	18/retail
2005 argiano sangiovese (brunello di montalcino, italy)	45/retail
2006 perrin et fils la gille grenache/syrah (gigondas, france)	30/retail
2005 salerno petite sirah (paso robles, ca)	16/retail
2007 fleur petite sirah (north coast, ca)	18/retail

nv schramsberg mirabelle brut (north coast, ca)	12/glass 29/retail
nv carnard duchene brut (champagne, france)	52/retail
nv bouvet rosé (loire, france)	9/glass 20/retail ★
fonseca 10 year old tawny (porto, portugal)	14/glass
taylor fladgate 20 year old tawny (porto, portugal)	21/glass
porto calem "old friends" 10 year tawny (porto, portugal)	16/187 ml
king estate vin glace ice wine (willamette valley, oregon)	12/glass
airdale brewing co. horizon hefeweizen (san diego, ca)	6/imperial pint ★
airdale brewing co. bombshell golden belgian-style ale (san diego, ca)	6/imperial pint ★
victory prima pils (downington, pa)	6/bottle
duvel golden ale (belgium)	16/750ml
stone brewing co. pale ale (escondido, ca)	6/bottle
alesmith ipa (san diego, ca)	10/22oz
alesmith anvil esb (san diego, ca)	9/22oz
alesmith grand cru (san diego, ca)	14/750ml
alesmith speedway stout (san diego, ca)	14/750ml
brewery ommegang rare vos belgian-style amber (cooperstown, ny)	12/750ml
brasserie d'achouffe mcchouffe brown ale (belgium)	17/750ml
koningshoeven la trappe isid'or amber (holland)	17/750ml
brewdog twisted merciless stout (scotland)	11/22oz
baird brewing rising sun ipa (japan)	5.50/bottle
baird brewing angry boy brown ale (japan)	5.50/bottle
baird brewing kurofone porter (japan)	5.50/bottle
iso kayoda sinto pale ale (japan)	9/500ml
iso kayoda triple hop ale (japan)	9/500ml
iso kayoda stout (japan)	9/500ml
vignette soda (pinot noir, rosé, chardonnay) n/alcohol	3/bottle
perrier sparkling water (france)	3/bottle