



# **Message from the Chair - Kevin Campbell**

We started this year off with a few goals. We wanted to find additional venues for tastings, and we wanted to get additional members involved in hosting tastings. Based on the success of the **Tompkins'** S. Africa tasting at The Trappe Door, I believe we have found a new venue. The space worked out well, there was plenty of parking, no steps, food was great, price was reasonable, and our hosts seemed to appreciate having us. On March 21, we will be trying out another new venue with a BYOB at **Delizioso's**. We are then planning to have the May Italy vs. France tasting there. **Delizioso's** has a nice separate room inside and then also a very nice covered outdoor space, with each being plenty large enough to accommodate even a three-bottle tasting. We are planning the BYOB to be inside and then take advantage of the outdoor space for the May tasting.

Last month, I mentioned that we had five months left to fill this year for tastings. We now may be down to just one or two, or maybe even full for the year. We have the Breloff's for March, Geoff Harrington for April, Joe Pugliese and I in May and we will now be at **Vynecrest** for June. At the S. Africa tasting, Bill and Melissa Yenkevich volunteered for July, Dean Scott has August and Dean has also arranged for us to be at **Stony Run Vineyard** in September. That leaves just October and November, and it looks like Alicia Ruiz- Orbin is going to take one of those months and possibly Mali Kline will take the other.

Please also welcome six new members: Mark and Cara Lasko, John and Julie Schmoyer, **Sheri Weaver and Robert Nye.** We look forward to meeting you at a future BYOB or tasting!

I'm really looking forward to the **Breloff's** tasting on March 10. This will be the third time they have hosted, and they do an awesome job. Like the S. Africa tasting, this will also be completely blind. This time, the tasters will be challenged to determine which of the two wines is the more expensive. I understand that in some of the pairings, the cost difference is 4-5X. Going to be a very interesting and a lot of fun.

#### Cheers,

## Kevin Chair of the Lehigh Valley Chapter of the American Wine Society

# Follow Us on Social Media!

There is no need to wait for the monthly newsletter to find out what is happening in our LVAWS. You can keep up to date with information and event pictures on our website and on Facebook and Instagram social media.

Nancy Parker (Facebook), Shannon Tompkins (Instagram) and Mike Parker (website) keep you informed.



Website: lehighvallevaws.org

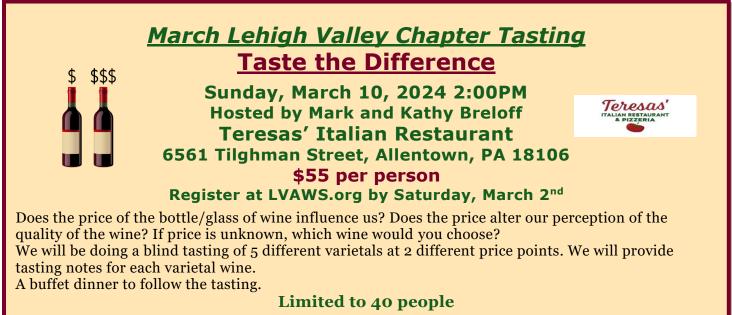


Facebook Group: American Wine Society- Lehigh Valley Chapter



Instagram Group: aws lehighvalley

#### Press the Icon - follow and like us today!



Remember to bring 2 wine glasses and a bottle of wine to share.

# <u>Wine Education – Expensive vs Inexpensive Wines</u> <u>Suzanne Laverick-Stone</u>

## "Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do." Benjamin Spock

Wine is complex, and there's always more to absorb, so a blind tasting of expensive and inexpensive wines in brown paper bags tests our mettle. Looking to wine experts can help, but wow, some of their tasting notes can be obtuse. How are we at identifying notes of (I am not making these up) Linzer torte, wet stone, forest floor, peach kernel, vanilla Devon custard, pixelated (??) tannins, and the elusive lychee (which, according to the Internet, tastes like strawberries, pears, citrus, and flowers - you're welcome). Prior to the tasting, it's a good idea to think about norms. How much do we pay for expensive or inexpensive wine because frankly, those in the Forbes 400 and regular folks like us probably have different ideas about that? What factors contribute to making a wine more expensive and are they legitimate? Can a wine's uniqueness and cost be smelled or tasted? Does it all come down to what we like? If you think that I have an answer to these questions, that would be a no, but we do have resources. As perpetual learners, we can use what we already know, what fellow wine lovers know, and what experts say. Let's examine our assumptions while looking to the experts, including Mr. Google, to prepare for our blind tasting.

## Mere Mortals vs Artificial Intelligence

In 2011, *Watson*, an artificial intelligence program, made mincemeat of human *Jeopardy* champions, whereupon Ken Jennings, current game show moderator, stated, perhaps facetiously, "I for one welcome our computer overlords." That's good because, guess what? They're here. Today, AI is starting to have a huge presence in vineyards. Winemakers, especially those in large enterprises, are using AI's seemingly unlimited capacity for canopy management, irrigation, grape harvesting, and winemaking precision, but can it identify wines? As it happens, AI is very good at it, and it can write about them too. As reported in *Communications Chemistry* in 2023, the results from over 50 trials by university professor Dr. Alexandre Pouget proved conclusively that AI, using vaporized wine, a learning algorithm, chromatography, and mass spectrometry, was able to identify the estates, and therefore *terroir*, of 80 Bordeaux wines with *100%* accuracy. Although none of us are able to meet the challenge 100% of the time, the good news is that we don't have to vaporize our wines, and it is possible to recognize what we're drinking with training and practice. Sommeliers and wine masters study the art and science of wines, vintages, and terroir, and jokes aside ("Tasting wine all day; tough job, but somebody has to do it, ha ha."), the training is grueling and their knowledge admirable (think licking limestone, cheese rinds, and Band-Aids, smelling weird stuff like barnyard, new plastic, and pencil lead, and taking really hard tests). And it doesn't hurt if they're able to taste the most expensive wines in the world, such

as a \$25,000 Domaine de la Rominée Conti Grand Cru from Côtes de Nuits or even a \$7,000 bottle of Chateau Petrus, something that most of us will never experience. Suspecting that robotic sommeliers and writers are probably in our not-too-distant future, we can still happily continue our lifelong quest to improve our decidedly mortal palates, and blind tastings are a great way to do it.

#### "Blind tasting meet-ups are the poker nights of cork dorks." Lisa Parotti-Brown

In a blind tasting, participants are unaware of the wine's identity. Depending on the purpose, the tasters may have no information (a double-blind tasting), or they might know that they are comparing say Cabernets or wines from France (single-blind). If we really want to test our ability to identify wines by regions, terroir, and of course, plonk versus expensive, blind tastings can meet our needs. This is important because robo-somms do not have to avoid prejudices, but we humans do. When we taste wine, we are using our noses, tongues, and brains to identify and judge it; knowing a wine's geography, reputation, color, temperature, and, pertinent to this article, price, all influence our judgment. Wines are Veblen goods, named for economist Thorstein Veblen in 1899, meaning that, as an inverse to supply and demand, wines often increase in demand based on higher cost. The research has shown that when people are told that wine is \$100 a bottle whether true or not, they score it higher than a bottle they think costs \$20.00. Hundreds of studies of regular drinkers and wine experts have found that most people in blind tastings do not recognize expensive from inexpensive wines at least 50% of the time, so basically, they are guessing. Other studies indicate that people do not "enjoy" an expensive wine more if they are unaware of the price. In 2001, Frederic Brochet, a doctoral student at the University of Bordeaux, labeled two bottles of the same wine as grand cru or table wine, and, you guessed it, the grand cru was described as complex and round, and the table wine as light and even faulty. His research also showed that sometimes people cannot differentiate a red from a white when blind tasting, describing a white wine dyed red with "red wine" descriptors. There are at least three things that potentially make wine expensive: oak, time, and terroir. Oak aging tends to soften tannins and lower acidity, and can be done with new, expensive French oak, used barrels, wood chips, staves, or dust, but new oak barrels especially will add to the cost as only two barrels can be made from a mature oak tree. The factor of time can be expensive the longer wines age. Terroir, that is, the soil, climate, and geography, greatly impacts price. Soils, temperature, rain and other climate factors are paramount to making great wine, and the right access to the sea, mountains, or rivers is extremely valuable and costly. Smaller vineyards mean less grapes, therefore less wine, and they may need to up the price because it's the only way to make the vineyard economically viable. Wine may be automatically more expensive from a region that is very costly such as Burgundy or Napa, or a better deal for comparable wine from a not-as-wellknown region such as Chile or South Africa. Wineries more interested in quality over quantity impact cost by using extra care such as hand-picking grapes or hiring the best winemakers. Shorter fermentation results in less expensive, sweeter wines, which can taste "richer" and disguise the true cost of the wine. All of these characteristics and many more can be critical in our judgement of cut-rate vs costly.

#### Wine Grapes 101

What do experts use to help them identify wines in their really hard tests? They study for years in preparation, and it starts with a basic knowledge of typicity of the grapes used. For our edification, here are some essential wine/grape profiles, albeit incomplete information without knowing the terroir or aging, but in general:

- *Pinot Noir* is a red wine grape, and wines are light to medium-bodied with cherry and raspberry notes, and sometimes farmyard aromas as in a traditional Burgundy.
- *Cabernet Sauvignon* is a thick-skinned red wine grape, and the wine is full-bodied with high tannins, acidity, and notes of black current and even green pepper in cool climates, and black cherry and current flavors in warmer climates.
- *Merlot* is a dark blue red wine grape and produces purple, full-bodied wines with high alcohol, smooth tannins, and flavors of plum and blackberry, or raspberries and strawberries in more moderate alcohol levels.
- *Malbec* is a thin-skinned, purple red wine grape, used in blends and varietals, known for its very deep color and plenty of tannins with flavors of plum, tobacco, and raisin depending on where it is grown.
- *Zinfandel* (aka Primitivo) is a red wine grape that packs a wallop with wines that are dry with blue/black color, savory and spicy, with notes of dark, ripe fruits.
- *Syrah* (aka Shiraz) is a black-skinned grape. The wines are full-bodied, with high tannins and acidity, and tastes of blackberry and chocolate, and even espresso and spice in warmer climates.
- *Chardonnay* is a green-skinned grape with a very neutral taste that takes on its terroir in flavor. The white wines are light to medium-bodied depending on where they are grown, with noticeable acidity and flavors of citrus, peach, and melon, to tropical fruit in warmer regions.

- **Sauvignon Blanc** is a green-skinned white wine variety with detectable acidity and green flavors ranging from grassy and green pepper to peachy and grapefruit depending on the climate.
- *Pinot Gris* is a pinkish gray white wine grape with multiple profiles depending on place and climate. It has moderate acidity and can be fruit-forward, spicy, and full-bodied with notes of melon and mango to more neutral notes.
- *Pinot Blanc* is a white wine grape with notes of citrus, apple, stone fruits, and floral, with high acidity and minerality.
- *Riesling* is a white wine grape with notes of apple and tree fruit and high acidity, or citrus and peach notes in warmer climates. As it ages, it has smokey, honey, and sometimes petrol notes.

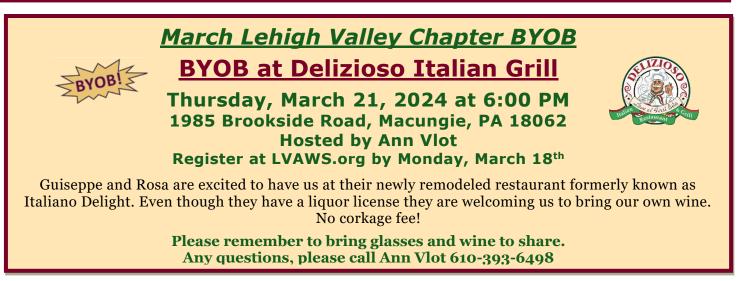
#### Practice Makes Perfect-ish

We are all familiar with the "life's too short to drink bad wine" adage, and we often assume that a higher price means better quality, but most of us have a budget, so the question remains, is expensive wine worth it? Like anything, you often get what you pay for, but not always. In general, it's probably not worth a lot of money if mass produced, and *perhaps* worth it if it's not. Keep in mind that price may have more to do with advertising and selling than intrinsic qualities. Recognizing grapes, vintages, places, vintners, and cost requires a vast amount of knowledge and practice, which means we should drink more wine more attentively to gain confidence. The impression that there is no discernible difference between cheap and expensive is not true, according to many experts, although not easily discernible in a blind tasting. Cheaper wines often have lighter bottles and there may not be a region listed on the label, meaning that grapes can come from anywhere. They may lack balance in acidity, tannins, body, and alcohol, and taste watered down with a shorter finish. Labels of more expensive wines will usually show a region where the grapes are grown and harvested; acids, tannin, body, and alcohol are more balanced, and the finish is longer and pleasant. It's important to note that sweet wines can be expensive, screw caps are fine, and blends are not all jug wines. There is some great advice from experts for those like me, who is and always will be an amateur. Since place is so important, it's helpful to try wines of the same grape from different regions to notice commonalities and variations. It's also helpful to start out with cheaper wines and practice, practice, then gradually move to higher price points, which often will give the "student" more complex knowledge. There is research that indicates that wine "noobs" will often prefer a cheaper wine than a more expensive one because wine from lower quality grapes may have more residual sugar, and this fact plays out in blind tastings among people without wine training.

## "Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known." Carl Sagan

Unlike learning your times tables or mastering an instrument, wine knowledge practice is fun! You might find that you are a "supertaster," a person with one hundred more taste buds per square inch on your tongue than most of us who are average tasters. Because of their genetic makeup, supertasters are more prone to enjoying an expensive wine than the average joe (and they are probably a pickier eater and a woman). There are even non-tasters, those who find most food bland. But you don't need to be a supertaster to discover, explore, savor, and value wine, whatever the price point. In the end, I believe we will find that not all "inexpensive" wines are bad and not all "expensive" wines are good and according to research, we may not be able to tell the difference in a blind tasting. C'est la vie. Yet because we're "practicing" a lot, we deserve to find what we like and freely imbibe whatever the impact on the wallet. Drink well, my friends.

See Sources for Wines of South Africa Wine Education Article at end of Newsletter.





## <u>April Lehigh Valley Chapter BYOB</u> BYOB at Anatolian Kitchen

## Wednesday, April 24, 2024 at 6:00 PM 3016 Linden Street, Bethlehem 18017 Hosted by Ann Vlot



## Register at LVAWS.org by Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup>

Let's go back to a Turkish favorite. Nice atmosphere serving authentic mediterranean food and Turkish kebobs. They have many vegetarian options.

Please remember to bring glasses and wine to share.

## <u>April Lehigh Valley Chapter Tasting</u> <u>Malbec: Mendoza vs. The World!</u>

## Location & Date TBD

Many believe that the thick-skinned Malbec grape has found its ultimate expression in the dark-hued and richly flavored wines of Mendoza, Argentina, but Malbec had its origins in France and powers great wines in Cahors. It has also produced some memorable bottles in California and Washington. Let your palate decide!

Special thanks to Kevin Campbell for his guidance in wine pairings.

**Limited to 40 people** Remember to bring 2 wine glasses and a bottle of wine to share.

## May Lehigh Valley Chapter Tasting Italy vs France







Tuesday, May 21, 2024 at 6:00PM Hosted by Joe Pugliese and Kevin Campbell Delizioso Italian Grill 1985 Brookside Road, Macungie, PA 18062 \$60 per person Register at LVAWS.org

Because of the high quality of wines, well at least from France 😋 , the cost of the tasting will be \$60 per person and limited to 40 people.

## Limited to 40 people

Remember to bring 2 wine glasses and a bottle of wine to share.

## January BYOB at Ayat



## February BYOB at Ecco Domani



# South African Wine Tasting – Kevin Campbell

On Sunday, February 18, 2024, the **Shannon and David Tompkins** hosted a South African wine tasting at **The Trappe Door** in Emmaus. **Shannon**, who I'm sure had a lot to do with the planning, was feeling ill with flu-like symptoms, so **David** was left to handle it by himself. Based on all his sales experience, he was able to "wing it" for **Shannon's** parts and he did an awesome job.



This was a completely blind tasting, and it really made a difference with



respect to the level of focus during the tasting. The wines were tasted in pairs, with the two wines being different varietals. The two varietals were announced, and it was up to the tasters to try to correctly identify each varietal. The effort the **Tompkins** made in preparing tasting sheets for each varietal really helped, although it was still quite challenging. Of the five paired wines, only a few of the 40 people in attendance were correct on all five.

The table below gives a list of the wines, their prices, average score, standard deviation of the scores and a final ranking of the top 5 wines. As you can see below, apart from the *Pinot Noir*, the wines were all reasonably priced. The scores were fairly consistent, with no wine scoring very low and no clear standout winner. I know for me personally; I was more focused on identifying the varietal than I was in scoring the wines. I suspect that might have been the case for many of us.

It was interesting to see the many varietals being produced in S. Africa. I had never tasted a 100% *Cinsault* wine and never had a *Pinotage*, both of which were very interesting to try.

	Wine	Price	Avg	Std Dev	Rank
1	2021 Mulderbosch Stellenbosch Chenin Blanc	\$18	15.4	1.90	
2	2022 Paul Cluver Elgin Sauvignon Blanc	\$20	16.2	1.59	3
3	2022 Lubanzi Capetown Chenin Blanc	\$19	15.6	1.71	
4	2021 Glenelly Stellenbosch Chardonnay	\$23	15.7	1.62	
5	2021 Natte Valleij Paarl Cinsault	\$20	15.4	1.94	
6	2021 Hamilton Russell Walker Bay Pinot Noir	\$52	15.8	1.96	5
7	2020 Kanonkop Stellenbosch Pinotage	\$20	16.1	1.86	4
8	2019 Rupert & Rothschild Capetown Red Blend	\$23	15.6	1.88	
9	2019 Tokara Stellenbosch Syrah	\$25	16.5	1.88	2
10	2017 Ken Forrester W. Cape Cab. Sauv.	\$14	16.9	1.51	1

In addition to the wonderful wine, the venue really worked out well. Our hosts were excited to have us, the food was great, and the room was spacious with decent acoustics.

Great job and congratulations **David and Shannon** on a great tasting!

See photos of South African Wine Tasting at end of Newsletter

# Chairman's Selection – Kathy & Mark Breloff

We chose 3 different wines varietals for this month's tasting. Happy to say, we enjoyed them all Cheers!

## Silver Totem Red Blend 2019

VARIETY/STYLE: Blend-Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec
COUNTRY: USA REGION: Columbia Valley, Washington
RATING: PRODUCT CODE: 100021804
\$9.99 (quoted at \$16 )

The deep color reflects wild berries, tobacco leaf, and toasted oak aromas. Round tannins provide the structure and support for the core of sweet fruit and vanilla finish. Pair with grilled meats and hard cheeses.

## -Winemaker's notes

A nice mix of cherry, red and dark berry fruits on the nose with hints of smoked herbs and just a touch of cocoa and vanilla in the background. Medium bodied with great balance and well-integrated tannins and acidity. Very easy drinking with a great depth at this price. -Josh Hull, Chairman's Selection wine buyer.

## **Breloff** Notes:

We enjoyed this wine, all by itself. Nice aromas of Cherry and Chocolate, on the palate, cherry with a hint of pepper. Medium tannins.



# Buck Shack 2020VARIETY/STYLE:Cabernet Sauvignon aged in Bourdon BarrelCOUNTRY: USAREGION: Lake County, CaliforniaRATING:PRODUCT CODE: 79660

## **\$13.99** (quoted at \$35)

Aging cabernet sauvignon in bourdon barrels shows off the natural ripe fruits, softens the tannins, and adds an aged balance to the wine. Each sip resonates with rich hints of bourdon and the result is oh, so delicious!

#### -Winemaker's notes

Darker berry and currant fruits meld with subtle caramel, chocolate, and vanilla, complemented by some toasted spice notes. The palate offers gutsy tannin for structure with integrated acidity lending length on the finish. An incredible value cabernet sauvignon. -Josh Hull Chairman's Selection wine buyer

#### **Breloff notes:**

Have to admit we wanted to try this wine because the shape of the bottle, more of a bourdon bottle than wine bottle. We found this wine delicious, with only a slight hint of bourdon. Cherry, tobacco along with medium tannins.

## Jose Maria Da Fonseca Anticiclone Tinto 2021

VARIETY/STYLE: Blend-Castelao, Aragenez (Tempranillo)
COUNRTY: Portugal REGION: Peninsula De Setubal
RATING: 90 WE PRODUCT CODE: 100021491
\$9.99 (quoted at \$28)

Warm boysenberry and blackberry fruit show flattering hints of licorice twists, eucalyptus, and mocha in this medium-bodied red, backed by light tannins and lively acidity. -90 points Wine spectator, October 2023

Wild, brambly, earthy red berries on the nose with licorice and ground-spice notes. The mediumbodied palate offers subtle savory complexities and terrific balance, with well-integrated tannins and an easily lingering finish. A stunning buy from southern Portugal.

## - Josh Hull, Chairman's Selection wine buyer

#### **Breloff notes:**

Aromas of black cherry, fruit forward on the palate with a hint of black pepper and soft tannins on finish

# Lehigh Valley Chapter Wine Tastings & Events

<u>2024</u>	<u>Hosts</u>
Mar 10	Kathy & Mark Breloff
Mar 21	Ann Vlot
April	Geoff Harrington
April 24	Ann Vlot
May 21	Joe Pugliese/Kevin Campbell
Jun 23	Vynecrest Winery
July	Melissa & Bill Yenkevich
Aug	Dean Scott
Sep 15	Stony Run Vineyard

#### <u>Theme</u>

Taste the Difference BYOB Delizioso Italian Grill Malbec BYOB Anatolian Kitchen Italy vs France Tasting Tasting Tasting Tasting

Promoting wine appreciation through education





# National and Lehigh Valley AWS Dues

#### YOU MUST JOIN BOTH THE NATIONAL AWS & THE LEHIGH VALLEY CHAPTER Both memberships run from January to December.

**National AWS Membership**: To join, you need to register with both the national American Wine Society (AWS) organization and a local AWS chapter. The national organization has a variety of membership plans available, but the most popular are an "individual" membership for \$49/year, and a "household" membership (for two people at the same address) for \$62/year. You can register for one or two local chapters. We ask that you select the Lehigh Valley Chapter as your primary chapter! You can sign up for national membership online at <u>AmericanWineSociety.org</u>.

**Lehigh Valley Chapter AWS Membership**: The Lehigh Valley Chapter has one membership level which is **\$10 per year per person**. To join you can complete the form (below) and <u>mail</u> it (LVAWS Treasurer Joe Pugliese, PO Box 98, East Texas, PA 18046), <u>OR</u> you can individually visit <u>LVAWS.org and pay on-line</u>, <u>OR</u> you can individually go on LVAWS.org, sign in as a member, and then click the <u>Donations Tab</u> to pay dues for a spouse, family member, or friend.

Once you become a Lehigh Valley Chapter member you can register for all of our wine tastings, educational events, and BYOB dinner parties.

Name(s)		
Email Address		
Mailing Address		
Phone #	City	
State	Zip code	

# Pictures of South African Wines Tasting





## Sources for Wine Education Article

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Bob

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