

Society of Medical Friends of Wine



A Non-Profit 501(c)(3) Corporation, FEIN 94-6088159

www.medicalfriendsofwine.org

4460 Redwood Highway, Suite #16-110, San Rafael, CA 94903

Email: societyofmedicalfriendsofwine@gmail.com

President Maynard Johnston, M.D. Secretary Susan Schwartz, Immediate Past President David Schwartz, M.D. Event Manager Jim Gallagher Ph.D., Finance Manager Jack McElroy, D.V.M. Editor and Cellar Master Robert Blumberg, M.D. Web Master Elizabeth Kass, M.D.

Founding Executive Secretary Leon Adams 1905-1995 Counsel Thomas Gump, Pillsbury Law

Basque Reflections

296th Dinner of the Society of Medical Friends of Wine

By David Schwartz, M.D.

On a clear Friday evening on April 19, 2024, thirty-two SMFW members and guests wined and dined in a private banquet room at the **Basque Cultural Center**, a large white building located in a South San Francisco neighborhood. This “heart of the Bay Area Basque community” boasts a restaurant, pelota court and banquet halls for business events and special celebrations. While a physician at Kaiser South San Francisco, I had enjoyed memorable lunches and a medical staff dinner at the Basque Cultural Center (BCC). Reflecting on the November 2023 closure of Piperade in San Francisco, I suggested to the executive committee that the Society continue to explore unique Basque wines and cuisine. Additionally inspired by the January 2024 San Francisco Chronicle’s Basque food feature article by Danielle Echeverria, we determined that the timing was right for a Basque themed event.

Former BCC executive chef Michel Veron had established the French Basque banquet menu options that we further tailored to our interests in featuring Basque regional wines. With input from Cellarmaster Dr. Bob Blumberg and Dr. Jim Gallagher, I endeavored to select wines from both French Basque and nearby Spanish winemaking regions that we tasted before the

dinner (see menu and wines below). I visited Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant in Berkeley and K&L Wine Merchants in San Francisco and found both staffs to be knowledgeable on Basque wines. The Basque Cultural Center event staff were very accommodating during our planning process, including their advice that the soup course be served family style, as is the tradition. On the night of our event, the restaurant's cuisine did not disappoint. We received many positive comments on the congenial and proficient wait staff assigned to our group. Member and guest contributions during the wine reviews enlivened our discussions throughout the evening. Dr. Maynard Johnston, President, also donated a 2007 red from the island of Sardinia for our wine comparisons and enjoyment with the foods. Overall, it was broadening to learn about wineries located in southwestern France and northern Spain, bordered by the western Pyrenees Mountain range and cooled by the Atlantic Ocean – a virtual Basque visit.

We began the evening with the **2021 Raventós i Blanc "Blanc de Blancs" Brut Conca del Riu Anoia** from Catalonia, Spain, near Barcelona. Raventos I Blanc is the producer. This sparkling wine is composed of a blend of 40% Xarel-lo, 35% Macaque, 10% Parellada and 5% Malvasia de Sitges grapes from the Catalonia region. It was aged for eighteen months on its fine lees prior to disgorgement.

Raventós is considered to be one of the most exciting contemporary Spanish sparkling wine producers. This *Raventós Blanc de Blancs* paired well with the shrimp/avocado, smoked duck/tapenade and spinach pastry appetizers. Tasting descriptions confirmed strong minerality and pleasant yeastiness on the palate with a background of citrus fruit and a moderate long finish. In 2012, Pepe Raventós, current generations producer, trained with Didier Dageaneu from the Loire Valley and with Huberty Lavny in Burgundy before returning to Raventós. He formed a new appellation, Conca del Riu Anoia, where only indigenous, biodynamic grapes are estate produced. He withdrew from the Cava region in 2012.

Proceeding to our tables for the traditional Basque soup and salad courses, we experienced the **2021 Irouleguy Blanc Hexgoxuri** from producer Domaine Arretxea in Southwestern France. The name Irouleguy refers to a Basque wine region in the foothills of the French Pyrenees. The official Irouleguy viticultural area covers a landscape from green rolling hills to rocky elevations and low-lying shrub. Domaine Arretxea in "Le Pay Basque" produces full-bodied white wines known for bright acidity, tropical fruit flavors and a lingering finish that result from proximity to the cool breezy ocean climate. This flagship white is blended from three local white grapes - 60% Gros Manseng, 35% Petit Manseng, 5% Petit Courbu - then fermented in a combination of *demi-muids* (600-liter capacity oak barrels), *foudres* (large wooden vats that hold more than a 1000 liters) and stainless steel. Wine with salad is often a difficult choice, yet this particular white enhanced the creamy tarragon dressing on our mixed greens. The *Irouleguy Blanc's* tart acidic backbone and flavors of citrus, caramel and ginger also paired well with the hearty Basque split pea vegetarian soup.

Our discussions focused on the surprising reactions to this French Basque white wine that had rich complexity and full-bodied fruit flavor in contrast to the Spanish Basque wine counterparts that are lighter, less complex and possibly more commonly tasted by the glass in a café. As stated by Cellarmaster Bob Blumberg, “this Irouleguy can be enjoyed similarly to more familiar wines from the Loire region - Vouvray, Sancerre, or Rhone style whites.” Irouleguy is also known to improve with age!

The main course selections included Rack of Lamb, Duck Confit or Salmon with Champagne Sauce. Our first red wine from Maison Arretxea, the **2020 Irouleguy Rouge Cuvee Haitza** has been described as “opaque, dense, deep, and noble.” This wine is a blend of 70% Tannat and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon. In France, the Tannat grape is mainly grown near the French Pyrenees and yields full-bodied, fruity flavors.

Our second red wine, donated from President Maynard Johnston’s cellar, was the **2007 Barrua Isola Dei Nuraghi Red Wine**, a blend of 85% Carignano, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Merlot from southwest Sardinia. The Isola Dei Nuraghi, or Island of Nuraghi name refers to the prehistoric round stone towers located around the island. Also named a “Super Sardinian,” this modern blend was aged for about 18 months in French oak barrels, then rested in cement tanks before bottling.

Our active discussion following the main course included proponents on both sides of this particular enological fence – there were strong advocates of the older red wine with a depth and complexity not usually associated with Carignan, a grape with a reputation as a blending grape. The complexity may be attributed to old vines planted on their own roots in the sandy soil vineyards surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea, leading to a smaller yield with more intense flavor, along with the Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot additions.

The richness and full-bodied finish of the Irouleguy Rouge paired especially well with the rack of lamb, notably a staple meat in Basque cuisine. This Basque red clearly had aging potential based on its acidity and tannins, which leads into my closing notes for those who may wish to purchase Basque wines.

The reference for several of the wine descriptions in this report were taken from website commentary on Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant and K&L Wine Merchants and a Wine Searcher editorial (*View over Irouleguy*, January 2022). One can purchase the *Raventós Blanc de Blancs* for \$22.00. The *Irouleguy Blanc* and *Rouge* wines typically sell for \$54.00 and are sometimes on sale. Donated fine wines for our dinners and educational events are always welcomed from members of the Society.

With appreciation to all who joined this adventure to the Basque Cultural Center dinner!
– David

Society of Medical Friends of Wine 296th Dinner
April 19, 2024 – 6:00pm



RECEPTION Hors D'Oeuvres:

Spinach Puff Pastry

Smoked Duck Breast with Black Olive Tapenade

Feuillette with Shrimp & Avacado

2021 Raventos i Blanc: Blanc de Blancs

DINNER

Traditional Basque Vegetable Soup, and

Mixed Green Salad with Creamy Tarragon Dressing

2021 Irouleguy Blanc "Hegoxuri," Domaine Arretxea

MAIN COURSE

Rack of Lamb, or Duck Legs Confit, or

Salmon with Champagne Sauce

2020 Irouleguy Rouge "Cuvee Haitza," Arretxea, &

2007 Barrua Isola Dei Nuraghi Red Wine

DESSERT

Basque Burnt Cheesecake or Chocolate Mousse

Coffee or Tea





ABC

by Robert Blumberg, M.D.

Do you remember those days not that long ago when ABC was a popular chant among wine aficionados? ABC was anything but Chardonnay (or Cabernet). Our two most popular wine grape varieties responsible for some of California's most renowned wines had generated palate fatigue, or perhaps marketing fatigue, for many.

Chardonnay and Cabernet were everywhere. Unsophisticated wine drinkers would order a glass of Chardonnay instead of a glass of white, attempting to show that they had become sophisticated. The dichotomy between the size of the market consuming these wines and the backlash among other drinkers was striking.

The ABC crowd would decry the monotony and lack of diversity among many California bottles. After all, part of the joy of wine collecting and drinking is the huge variety of taste experiences one can have in the world of wine. Were many wineries and many wine drinkers trying to tell us that other types of wine did not matter?

One result of this backlash is the increasing awareness and availability in this country of other wines. Well known varietals like Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir are successful on the wine list and the wine shop. White varieties originally from Italy and Spain like Arneis, Albarino, Fiano, Vermentino and Ribolla Gialia, to name just a few, are now being sought out and consumed often.

There has been quite a movement towards appreciation of “Rhone style reds”, usually a blend of Syrah, Mourvedre, and Grenache, along with Sangiovese from Italy, Tempranillo and Granacha from Spain, and a number of reds unique to Sicily. And this barely touches the totality of lesser known and unique varietals popping up in our wine shops.

Our recent dinner at the Basque Cultural Center was perhaps a noted flag waver of response to the ABC movement. As nicely detailed in David’s article above, we served the following wines:

2021 Raventos Blanc de Blancs Brut, a sparkling wine from Catalonia which was a blend of Xarel-o, Macaque, Parellada, and Malvasia de Stiges grapes.

2021 Irouleguy Blanc Hexgoxuri, Domaine Arretxea, a Basque white made from three local grapes, Gros Manseng, Petit Manseng, and Petit Courbu.

2020 Irouleguy Rouge Cuvee Haitza, also from Domaine Arretxea. This wine was a blend of 70% Tannat, the typical red grape of the Basque region, and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon.

2008 Barrua Isola Dei Nuraghi, a Sardinian red with a blend of 85% Carignane (Carignano) along with 10% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Merlot.

In one evening, our members and guests were exposed to 9 different grape varietals they were not familiar with. A purist would remark however that two of the wines had small amounts of Cabernet included in their *cepage (composition)*. And this is true elsewhere in the wine world, with perhaps the super Tuscans being the best example, where Cabernet Sauvignon and Franc and Merlot are included along with grapes more traditional to the appellation, while in the Jura region of France it is not unusual nowadays to find Chardonnay added to the traditional Savagnin and Poulsard.

Perhaps this is a way for certain winemakers to say, attention to unusual and local varietals is fine, but there is a role for a dollop of royalty in the blend.

My Friday night wine tasting group has had an **ABC** bent for years, and we are always seeking out new and unusual wines to taste. But that does not mean that is to everyone’s taste. This past week we attended a memorial service for a dear friend who was a founding member of

our group, but who in later years came only infrequently. He would tell me “you guys can taste all these other wines, but let me know when you’ll be tasting great Cabernet or Chardonnay”.

At Medical Friends of Wine, we hope to continue to pour many a glass of great Cabernet and Chardonnay at future events. But we also hope to introduce you to some of the lesser known, yet charming and delicious wines from all around the world. Come join us as we do so.

Back to School at UC Davis, and a Unique Winery Tour in West Sacramento

Report by Susan Schwartz with contributions from Drs. Elizabeth Kass and Maynard Johnston

Gathering on a Spring Semester weekday morning on May 7, 2024, Society of Medical Friends of Wine members convened at the UC Davis campus for a classroom presentation and tour of the UCD Winery & Research Facility, led by former UCD winemaker/winery manager Charles “Chik” Brenneman and colleagues. The tour was followed by a lunchtime visit to Baker Family Wines in West Sacramento where Brenneman presides as Winemaker and Partner with noted MLB former player and manager Dusty Baker. For both of these events, we were joined by members of SMFW President Maynard Johnston’s winetasting group from the El Dorado Hills area.

Taking our seats in the classroom adjoining the environmentally designed research winery, we were greeted by Mr. Brenneman and by Leticia Chacon-Rodriguez, current UCD winemaker/winery manager. Ms. Chacon-Rodriguez used the whiteboard at the front of the classroom to review some basics of grape fermentation. She previewed that we would soon see a 4-foot-high stationary module in the winery known as a Brix Monitor that provides real time Brix and temperature data transmitted wirelessly from the fermentation tanks to the classroom and the lab.



Chik Brenneman and Leticia Chacon-Rodriguez

Instructors Brenneman and Chacon-Rodriguez informed our group about the Department of Viticulture and Enology curriculum that includes supervised fieldwork to prepare students for careers and advanced study in the wine industry.

We also heard from Aaran Rumbaugh, who completed her PhD at UCD in 2022 and has subsequently been employed with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service in Davis. Aaran reported on her USDA sponsored research on smoke tainted grapes (due to wildfire) and identification of mitigation strategies in wine production.



Aaran Rumbaugh, Ph.D.

Proceeding to the winery tour, we learned that the Robert Mondavi Institute Winery, Brewery and Food Pilot Facility and Jackson Sustainable Winery Building was newly constructed in 2010 with private funding from the wine industry and philanthropy. Chik Brenneman was involved in planning the LEED Platinum Teaching and Research Winery that opened in the same year. T.J. Rodgers, founder and CEO of Cypress Semiconductor and Clos de la Tech Winery partnered with UCD to design and build dozens of state-of-the-art stainless steel research fermenters. Subsequently, Mr. Brenneman played a role in co-designing several 500-gallon fermenters controlled by Cypress programmable chips. Names of California winery donors emblazoned on these tanks include J. Lohr, Cakebread, Wente, Charles Krug, Heitz and other notable industry pioneers. While we did not taste any of the wines in production, we were informed that the UCD winery does produce, bottle and label wines for limited consumption related to the program. The tour concluded with an overview of the Teaching Vineyard that grows numerous grape varieties in sample soil plots that students must identify on exams in order to demonstrate their viticulture mastery.



UC Davis Research Winery



UCD Teaching Vineyard

As we exited the winery, we viewed a classroom full of younger students who were receiving a lecture on vineyard management. Observing the school in real time gave us a lasting impression of the contributions of the people and places that embody the UC Davis Department of Viticulture and Enology.

Departing from the UCD campus for a 15-minute drive to the industrial Port of West Sacramento, we were greeted again by Chik Brenneman and his wife Polly, who co-manage Baker Family Wines. Both began their scientific careers in clinical labs and progressed to commercial winemaking at BFW. The comfortable tasting room was emblazoned with images and memorabilia that embody Dusty Baker's tagline for this enterprise: *From the Dugout to the*

Vineyard. The tasting room also shares indoor and outdoor table space with craft brewers Bike Dog Brewing Co. While seated at indoor picnic tables and munching on sandwiches, we sampled a crisp, fruity 2022 Rose of Pinot Noir, a blend from two vineyards of 100% Pinot Noir harvested both early and later in the growing season.



Baseball Stitching on Poster Can Also Be Found on Labels and Corks for Baker Family Wines



Experienced vintner Chik Brenneman described the European and California influences that have informed his approach to winemaking.



Chik and Polly Brenneman



Chik Brenneman Discussing Wines

We proceeded to taste these additional Baker Family Wines:

- The 2022 Proprietary White Wine blended from 52% Sauvignon Blanc, 35% Semillon and 13% Chenin Blanc, with hints of citrus, lemon and green apple with a clean, pleasant finish
- The 2022 Sauvignon Blanc California Fume style popularized by Robert Mondavi was lightly oaked with crisp acidity and tropical aromas that could pair with creamy salad dressings and other light foods
- The 2021 Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands combines rich berry aromas with earthy tannic flavors for a lingering finish
- The 2020 Zinfandel was produced from 100% organic Zinfandel grapes grown in the Fair Play AVA in the Sierra Foothills, with fruity notes of clove and vanilla, and
- 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon Hammerin' Hank's - a tribute to the late Hank Aaron with robust black currant and licorice flavors and a velvety finish



Continuing to the temperature-controlled barrel room, Chik pointed out the European oak barrels and stainless-steel tanks that fit compactly into the winery's light industrial building. It's obvious that Chik and Polly Brenneman are very passionate about their business and the limited-edition wines that they produce. They hand bottle and filter their wines, very much like a home winemaker. Their wines are skillfully crafted and reasonably priced for a small, boutique urban winery. If your travels take you to Sacramento, this winery is worth a visit. From the beginnings of his winemaking career including an academic role and a multi-year partnership with Dusty Baker, it was clear to see that Chik Brenneman's talents are thriving in this *field of dreams* Baker Family Winery.



The Society of Medical Friends of Wine expresses our appreciation to Leticia Chacon-Rodriguez at the University of California, Davis Department of Viticulture and Enology, and to Dr. Aaran Rumbaugh from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and to Chik and Polly Brenneman for

providing an educational and immersive experience at the UCD Winery & Research Facility and at Baker Family Wines. We also thank our members and guests for your active participation!

Thanks to Dr. Maynard Johnston, SMFW President, for coordinating these tours.

Thanks also to Webmaster Dr. Elizabeth Kass and guest Ronald Rick who took the tour photos that are included in this report and are also posted on the SMFW website's 2023-24 photo tab:
www.medicalfriendsofwine.org

REVIEW OF A MEDICAL ARTICLE

Dan Bikle, M.D., PhD.

Margarita sunburn: cautionary tale for the summer

Editor's note: Dr. Bikle takes a step away from his usual scientific review of wine and health to give you a head's up to keep you safe and happy this summer

From an article by Cochran BL, Jallo J, Coican A, Hurst K, Sagasser J, Greenfield MF.
Phytophotodermatitis from lime margaritas on a Mexico vacation. *Cureus*16: e59674, 2024.

If you are planning a vacation to Mexico or the beach or just hanging out on your deck, watch out for those lime margaritas. The problem is that certain chemicals, furocoumarins, found in a wide variety of foods including those of the Umbelliferae family, such as celery, wild parsnip, parsley and of the Rutaceae family, such as citrus fruits lime, lemon, grapefruit, oranges when exposed to UVA cause a photosensitivity reaction that damages cellular DNA and membranes resulting in some individuals developing an erythematous or edematous vesicular skin rash within hours or days after exposure. Generally, the rash resolves spontaneously but can evolve into a hyperpigmented skin lesion that lasts for months. This is a clinical diagnosis, and other causes of contact dermatitis or photosensitivity should be ruled out.

What is the take home message? Just be careful where and when you drink your citrus flavored beverages—this does NOT include New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. But if you forget—relax, it is not fatal and you are on vacation.

***Correction to my previous report on red wine headaches.** I made an important omission in the metabolism of alcohol. Alcohol is first converted into acetaldehyde by alcohol dehydrogenase (ADH) and cytochrome p450 2E1 (CYP2E1) via oxidative degradation, and the acetaldehyde is then oxidized to non-toxic **acetate** by acetaldehyde dehydrogenase (ALDH) and

the coenzyme NAD or NADP. The key point of the article is that some folks have an isoenzyme of ALDH that slows this second step when exposed to certain phenols in red wine leading to an accumulation of acetaldehyde, the cause of the headache.

THE FUTURE: SAVE THE DATES

**Dinner at the French Club - Cercle de l'Union
San Francisco
September 27, 2024
(please note date change from Sept. 20 mentioned in last newsletter)**

The Society has been featuring wonderful events at the French Club for decades. In this era when many of us dine out less often and many venues are overwhelmed with noise and informality, a step back into the classic French cuisine, outstanding service, and quiet elegant décor of the French Club is not to be missed. Look for menu details from Chef Leonel Balbastre as we get closer to the event, and you can be assured that Marcus Garcia and his staff will provide you the best of service. Members will be invited to bring special wines from their cellars to share with other members and guests—your editor and cellar master is planning on bringing a Bordeaux first growth—mark this date on your calendars now!!!

**14th Annual Cheese and Wine Event with Janet Fletcher
Mill Valley Community Center
Sunday, December 8, 2024**

AND FROM THE PAST

With 80 years of history to draw on, our archives have a rich collection from the past. It is fun to look back at past events, and as a new feature for the newsletter we will highlight such events in future editions.

**JUNE 1, 1981
THE STANFORD COURT HOTEL, SAN FRANCISCO**

Dinner Committee Chair
Stanton Schwartz, M.D,

Wine Chair
Stanley Burton, M.D,

Speaker for the Evening
Edmund Friedrich
Winemaster at San Martin Winery
“How ripe is ripe?”

LE DINER

Caviar en Pommes Nouvelles
Crème Doria

Quenelles de Saumon
Sauce Cardinal

Poitrine de Canard aux Poivre Rouge
Bouquetiere des Legumes

Julienne des Endives et Betteraves

Brie Panee

Les Framboises en Nid de Glacee

LES VINS

Shadow Creek Blanc de Blancs 1979

Bollinger Champagne N.V. Cuvee Corti

Sausal Chardonnay 1979

Beaulieu Vineyard Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 1974

Hermitage 1977, Cuvee Andre Passat

San Martin Santa Clara 1979 Late Harvest Johannisberg Riesling