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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

- WHITE WINE VALUE OF THE YEAR
- PRE-ARRIVAL 2002 ZIND-HUMBRECHT

OPEN • TUESDAY-SATURDAY 11 A.M. to 6 P.M.    CLOSED • SUNDAY & MONDAY

MAY 2004

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## WHITE WINE VALUE OF THE YEAR

### 2003 BORDEAUX *BLANC* CHÂTEAU DUCASSE

I don't care which country you go to for wine, you are not going to find such a delicious, classy dry white at anywhere near our price for the 2003 Ducasse. Guaranteed!

Yet another thing, I received a call from a customer the other day who reported finding a couple of bottles of the 1982 in his wine cellar. "The fill was kind of low," he said, "but the wine is still good." So, believe it or not, you can stock up some cases (10% discount) for future drinking pleasure, too.

The 2003 is particularly fresh and aromatic, the Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc obviously well ripened. It looks, smells, and tastes golden, not green. The palate has good fleshy (unfiltered) body and a nicely enveloped nervosity. Because it is all virtue and no flaws, it is highly recommended.

**\$12.50** PER BOTTLE      **\$135.00** PER CASE

## NEW ARRIVALS

### 2002 PIC SAINT LOUP *ROUGE* CHÂTEAU LA ROQUE

Mmm, Jack Boutin's 2002 is just so yummy. Last summer he sent a case to me in Provence, and my wife and I kept bottles in the fridge during the notorious, deadly heat wave. It is a red that works cooled down, too.

The nose is pretty and civilized, the palate light, luscious, and tasty, the after-taste mild and endlessly delicious. You will have a hard time finding a better "old reliable."

**\$14.95** PER BOTTLE      **\$161.46** PER CASE

### 2002 RIESLING • KUENTZ-BAS

In their Alsatian sections, wine books have been known to advise that Kuentz-Bas wines are closed early on and need time to blossom. However, as we have seen with their 2002 Pinot Blanc and Gewurztraminer, you can drink 'em or you can

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hold 'em. The 2002 vintage at Kuentz-Bas is marked by purity and charm, as you will see when you pour this Riesling.

And how about this quote from *The Wines of the Loire, Alsace, and Champagne*: “Kuentz-Bas wines are generally discreet and elegant with a distinctly fresh character. I find the Kuentz-Bas Rieslings superb; indeed, you could hardly discover better ones in the whole of Alsace.”

**\$14.95** PER BOTTLE      **\$161.46** PER CASE

## IMPÉRIAL PRÉFÉRENCE CHAMPAGNE J. LASSALLE

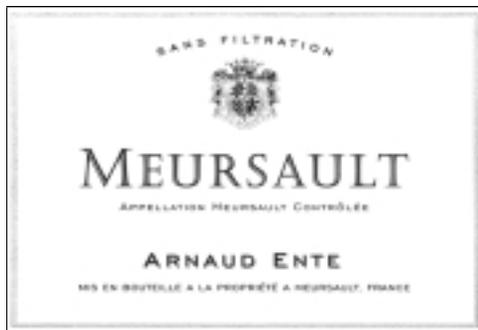
Here are two of the reasons Lassalle outdoes other non-vintage Champagnes. Most are released before the age of two. Mere fizzy toddlers. Lassalle waits five years. Those three years make an enormous difference, as any parent will tell you. And most houses block the wine's malolactic fermentation. Heaven forbid! Lassalle, following the lead of the great white Burgundies, completes its malolactic. Not only is it more natural, it gives more breadth and depth.

If it were a person, you might describe this Champagne as wise, mellow, pensive. The palate is dry, elegant, winy. The texture is lush at the finish. The *pétillance*, the perfect bead, gives it a fine liveliness.

**\$35.00** PER BOTTLE      **\$378.00** PER CASE

## 2001 MEURSAULT • DOMAINE ENTE

While testing this at Panisse as an apéritif and then with a showcase platter of raviolis and fresh fava beans, I had an imaginary conversation with someone asking me to explain the difference between the 2002 and 2001 Meursault vintages. I love such explorations, although the deductions are rarely precise. Such questions do, however, permit us to zoom in a little closer to a wine's or vintage's style.



No one will be able to resist the charm, deliciousness, and completeness of the 2002s, but people (like me) who are daffy about white Burgundy will find more intellectual interest in the 2001s. Hedonism versus intellection? No, not versus,

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really. It is a matter of degree, weight, tendency. One sweeps you off your feet, and the other pulls you inside where you roam the various components: the stoniness, the flesh, the acidity, the crispness, the elusive fruit, the naked Meursault character.

Ente's domaine is petite; we have nineteen cases. He is one of Meursault's best.

**\$57.00** PER BOTTLE      **\$615.60** PER CASE

**2002 SANTENAY ROUGE "LES GRAVIÈRES"  
PREMIER CRU • DOMAINE VINCENT**

Try this large-scale red Burgundy. With smoky, toasty Pinot Noir fruit and a rich, even chewy palate, it really makes an impression. Show it off to wine pals and see them react.

Domaine Vincent is proving to be quite a find. We here are all convinced by their reds and whites, and the fact that they are not in one of the glory appellations keeps the price interesting. In fact, imagine if this bottle wore an Oregon or California Pinot Noir label. It would cost twice as much or more. I was amazed by a *New York Times* report on domestic Pinot Noirs the other day quoting per-bottle prices between \$40 and \$110.

**\$29.95** PER BOTTLE      **\$323.46** PER CASE

**2001 PINOT GRIS "HEIMBOURG"  
DOMAINE ZIND-HUMBRECHT**

If you have never tasted a ZH wine and have wondered what all the fuss is about—he's been called the greatest winemaker on the planet—try this revved-up Pinot Gris. It could only come from ZH. There is a grandness to its unctuousness, its depth, and what we will refer to as its posture. It is loaded with flavor interest: the Pinot Gris fruit, obviously from low yields, the steep, stony vineyard site, the complex, exotic botrytis character, and the impression it gives of a "finished" wine after having been raised in an oak *foudre*.

And for ZH fans or Pinot Gris fans who missed this one, it is a great one. Drink it now, oh yes!, or twenty years from now.

**\$46.00** PER BOTTLE      **\$496.80** PER CASE

**1999 CHÂTEAU ANEY • HAUT-MÉDOC**

I am surprised to report finding some exciting red Bordeaux recently, two of them this year. Something may be going on at Bordeaux, the pendulum finally swinging back in the other direction, perhaps, away from the assembly-line jobs,

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away from those faceless oaky fruitbombs that all taste alike and taste nothing like classic claret. Most of the classified Bordeaux don't even taste French anymore.

What I'm finding are wines of character, wines that taste like they were made by an individual, a human being, and from a piece of earth that imparts a certain style. This is from Haut Médoc and tastes like it. Next month a beauty arrives from *Lalande-de-Pomerol*, a very different wine.

Château Aney reminds me of the great Médocs I was drinking in the late sixties. That something so true and valuable from the past exists today is a thrill. And it should have a lot of success in restaurants because their vintage 1999 is forward and irresistible.

Zero in on the aftertaste. There is an amazing reminder of good grapes eaten off the vine at harvest, the seeds and skins, the sweet ripe juice, the crunchy acid/tannin combo, and the sharp wild flavor of tiny berries. It really struts its stuff.

**\$19.95** PER BOTTLE      **\$215.46** PER CASE

## 2001 CÔTE RÔTIE • GUY BERNARD

And here, my friends, you descend into the *noir*. Plus, it is what we wine folk call fleshy, so we're on our way to a rather sexy crime film from the forties. Susan Hayward spilling out of dark shadows, for example. And what is that great perfume she's wearing?

Here is a Côte Rôtie that lives up to the name.

**\$44.00** PER BOTTLE      **\$475.20** PER CASE

## 2000 SAUTERNES CHÂTEAU ROUMIEU-LACOSTE

In last year's *Guide Hachette* only two Sauternes gained a three-star rating, 1996 Château d'Yquem and 1999 Roumieu-Lacoste. So those of you who purchased some from us scored quite a coup. Now, here comes the 2000!

One advantage: the 2000 is approachable already. You can dip into a case of it during the next fifteen to twenty years.

Lovely bouquet with generous dried apricot-like fruit, loads of noble rot, and plenty of under-the-surface magic. Complete, rich, elegant, complex, a good stock of half bottles could come in handy.

**\$16.95** PER TENTH      **\$366.12** PER CASE

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— PRE-ARRIVAL OFFER —

2002 **DOMAINE  
ZIND-HUMBRECHT**

Here is Olivier Humbrecht on his 2002 vintage:

*Never before have I seen grapes with such high ripeness and acidity combined. The lengthy ripening season allowed perfect physiologically ripe grapes. With the warm October weather, botrytis developed quickly and intensely. The style is quite powerful, elegantly balanced with a crisp acidity. This vintage, more than any other, will benefit from lying down for a few years. As usual, no wines were chaptalized, and all our vineyards were cultivated in bio-dynamie.*

ZH whites age as well as Raveneau, Coche, and Jobard white Burgundies, for example. Pulling out an old one is a great occasion and highly recommended. This week I uncorked a couple of 1996s because the 2002s remind me some-

what of the 1996s (although Olivier points out that the 2002 grapes had more ripeness), and they remain youthful, barely evolved, enjoyable but capable of more down the road. Then a 1989 Riesling Rangen rang my bell so much I rang up Olivier to see if he had any more of it with which to replenish my depleted bin. It reminds me of Leonard Humbrecht's remark: "Consumers can partic-

ipate in the creation of a great wine if they will put aside some bottles of the single-vineyard wines, like Hengst or Clos Windsbuhl, and allow them to evolve further." Do your part for great wines, put down some 2002s.

I have the impression that the conversion to *bio-dynamie* is producing wines with more mineral in the aromas than before. The Muscat grand cru Goldert, for example; there is a radiant ring like gunmetal around the incredibly deep, intense Muscat fruit.



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As for 2002 Zind, their Pinot d'Alsace, here again is Olivier:

*The 2002 shows powerful exotic/fruity aromas in the nose; a rich, lustrous, but well-delineated palate thanks to its excellent acidity. It appears even more aromatic than the 2001 and also shows more weight on the palate.*

I would recommend, if you are going to dive right into these 2002s, that you decant the wine for a couple of hours before serving. The golden color shared by all of them is vivid in a decanter, and the aeration develops the aroma.

## 2002 **DOMAINE ZIND-HUMBRECHT**

	PER CASE
ZIND (PINOT D'ALSACE)*.....	\$297.00
MUSCAT "HERRENWEG DE TURCKHEIM" .....	318.00
MUSCAT "GOLDERT" GRAND CRU .....	498.00
RIESLING "GUEBERSCHWIHR"* .....	339.00
RIESLING "HERRENWEG DE TURCKHEIM"*.....	408.00
RIESLING "CLOS HAUSERER"* .....	558.00
RIESLING "HEIMBOURG" .....	507.00
RIESLING "CLOS WINDSBUHL"* .....	678.00
RIESLING "BRAND" GRAND CRU* .....	795.00
RIESLING "RANGEN" GRAND CRU* .....	975.00
PINOT GRIS "VIEILLES VIGNES" .....	489.00
PINOT GRIS "HERRENWEG DE TURCKHEIM"*.....	417.00
PINOT GRIS "ROTENBERG"*.....	489.00
PINOT GRIS "HEIMBOURG" .....	489.00
PINOT GRIS "CLOS WINDSBUHL"*.....	678.00
PINOT GRIS "RANGEN" GRAND CRU* .....	975.00
GEWURZTRAMINER "TURCKHEIM"* .....	399.00
GEWURZTRAMINER "WINTZENHEIM"* .....	387.00
GEWURZTRAMINER "HERRENWEG DE TURCKHEIM"* .....	477.00
GEWURZTRAMINER "CLOS WINDSBUHL"* .....	678.00
GEWURZTRAMINER "HENGST" GRAND CRU* .....	867.00
GEWURZTRAMINER "RANGEN" GRAND CRU .....	975.00

*\*also available in tenths*

*Pre-arrival terms: Half-payment due with order,  
balance due upon arrival.*

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*This is what noble rot looks like.*

*Photograph © Kermit Lynch*

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# GEGGIANO SAMPLER

Used as a location for the Bertolucci film *Stealing Beauty*, the beautiful Villa di Geggiano near Siena has become my favorite visit. What a place! Built in the thirteenth century and home of the Bandinelli family since 1527, it has been declared a national monument. Inside, nothing has changed. The walls and ceilings are covered with murals and tapestries, and all the furniture is original. As Andrea Bandinelli explains it, in 1815 the son who lived there was disinherited by his father, and since then the descendants never had the wherewithal to redecorate, thank goodness. It is like a time machine. Next year they will offer two rooms to rent to vacationers, if you are interested.

The grounds are lovely, too, with centuries-old cypresses, an open-air theater, and organic fruits and vegetables. I cannot forget the family cook. Last time she served us a cardoon risotto followed by a stew of wild boar. It was below freezing outside, and the meal was not only delicious, it was practical.

And the wines, of course. To show them off I have created a six-bottle sampler. You will get to know their Chianti Classico, their Riserva, and their delightful *Vino da Tavola* labeled Geggianello. There is an authentic-tasting Chianti, the real thing. You drink one when your mood or cuisine requires Chianti. Their 1990 at lunch was a gem, and more recently Andrea visited me at my humble abode (compared to Geggiano) in Provence. We uncorked a 2000 Geggiano and a Tempier Bandol from the same vintage. I did not prefer the Tempier. That's how good Geggiano is. Here is your six-bottle sampler:

Two bottles 1998 Chianti Classico  
Two bottles 1998 Chianti Classico Riserva  
Two bottles 2001 Geggianello

*Normally \$ 111.80*

SPECIAL SAMPLER PRICE

**\$84.00**

## CELEBRATE WITH US

Andrea Bandinelli of Geggiano is coming to town, and Christopher Lee has just opened his Italian restaurant, *Eccolo*, down on Berkeley's Fourth Street, so we have two reasons to celebrate. Christopher will prepare a special meal expressly for the Geggiano wines, and Andrea says he will try to bring a few older vintages in his suitcase. The date: Thursday evening, May 27. Phone: 510.644.0444 for reservations.

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*Harvest scene from Geggiano's interior.*

*Photograph © Gail Skoff*



*More from the farm cycle on the walls at Geggiano.*

*Photograph © Gail Skoff*



*Geggiano's outdoor stage for concerts and theater.*

*Photograph © Gail Skoff*

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In anticipation of the upcoming offerings and arrivals of our 2002 red Burgundies:

**TWENTY PERCENT DISCOUNT  
ALL RED BURGUNDY IN STOCK**

CURRENT BOTTLE PRICE

*Domaine Ballot-Millot*

1999 VOLNAY 1ER CRU TAILLES-PIEDS ..... \$47.00

*Domaine Bertheau*

2001 CHAMBOLLE MUSIGNY ..... 49.00

2001 CHAMBOLLE MUSIGNY 1ER CRU ..... 56.00

*Domaine Maume*

1994 MAZIS-CHAMBERTIN GRAND CRU ..... 120.00

1998 MAZIS-CHAMBERTIN GRAND CRU ..... 89.95

1998 GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN 1ER CRU ..... 57.95

1998 GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN 1ER CRU "CHAMPEAUX" ..... 46.95

2000 MAZIS-CHAMBERTIN GRAND CRU ..... 110.00

2000 GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN 1ER CRU "LAVAUX ST. JACQUES" 78.00

2000 GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN 1ER CRU ..... 64.00

2000 GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN "AUX ETELOIS" ..... 41.00

2000 GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN "EN PALLUD" ..... 43.00

*Domaine Roulot*

2000 MONTHELIE ..... 29.00

2000 BOURGOGNE ROUGE ..... 19.95

*Domaine François Jobard*

2000 BLAGNY "LA PIÈCE SOUS LE BOIS" ..... 56.00

*Domaine Lucien Boillot et Fils*

1998 VOLNAY 1ER CRU "LES BROUILLARDS" ..... 44.95

1999 VOLNAY 1ER CRU "LES BROUILLARDS" ..... 44.95

1999 VOLNAY 1ER CRU "LES ANGLES" ..... 44.95

*Domaine Méo-Camuzet*

1998 CLOS DE VOUGEOT GRAND CRU ..... 125.00

2000 CLOS DE VOUGEOT GRAND CRU ..... 144.00

2001 MARSANNAY ..... 36.00

2001 BOURGOGNE ROUGE ..... 29.00

*Domaine Robert Chevillon*

1993 NUITS-SAINT-GEORGES 1ER CRU "LES BOUSSELOTS" ..... 97.00

1994 NUITS-SAINT-GEORGES 1ER CRU "LES CHAIGNOTS" ..... 60.00

2001 NUITS-SAINT-GEORGES 1ER CRU "LES CHAIGNOTS" ..... 58.00

2001 BOURGOGNE PASSETOUTGRAIN ..... 16.00

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# WINE CRITICISM and LITERARY CRITICISM (Part II)

*by Jim Harrison*

**I**N MY FIRST installment on wine and literary criticism, “Odious Comparisons,” I became a bit strident in these contentious arenas, and a small portion of the feedback was aggrieved. The reaction brought to mind the children’s story of “The Emperor’s New Clothes.” Depending on your religion only Jesus, Mohammed, and the Buddha are faultless. All other mortals betimes lack certain articles of clothing. Once as a child fishing with my father he told me to my consternation that the Queen of England had to go to the toilet the same as the rest of us. There is evidence that Einstein was on occasion an unfaithful husband and I recall an article that said “Picasso was insensitive to the needs of women.” Even so awesome a creature as the President of the United States is occasionally wrong-headed. Earlier in my career my collection of novellas called “Legends of the Fall” was virulently attacked in the London press by the renowned C. P. Snow. I yawned and wandered down to the bank to make yet another deposit. We fear the negative but without it there’s no positive.

My main point in both wine and literature was to insist on the primacy of creation over comment. I take as bedrock Benjamin Franklin’s statement, “Good wine is a constant reminder that God loves us and wants us to be happy.” We must remember that we’re not dealing with proud death or the fate of nations, or the dozens of fatal asteroids whirling in our direction. Tastes in wine and literature are as personal as dogs. I can’t quite imagine my response if someone referred to my beloved English setter Rose as a “nit-wit flea bag.” If a guest doesn’t like the Domaine Tempier Bandol I serve them they’re no longer welcome in my home. Two years ago I broke off a nascent friendship when the gentleman, a Yale graduate, attacked the work of my adoptive uncle, Henry Miller.

Wine and literature affections are not a science but a matter of taste and emotion. I revere Emile Peynaud, Gerald Asher, Clive Coates, Jancis Robinson, Simon Loftus, and yes, Robert Parker himself in the major books, and Kermit Lynch has also established himself in this austere group of ultra-worthies. I also have five personal friends, Peter Lewis, Guy de la Valdene, Will Hearst, Gerard Oberle, and Michael Butler, whose personal taste in wine I consider more exacting and elevated than my own. I’m what you call an Ace Consumer in the area of food and wine and a producer in the literary field. This is a disclaimer of expertise in wine but not intelligence.

Both book and wine reviewing, however, bring to mind my memories of the

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wonderful old comedian Pigmeat Markham and his routine “here come da judge.” Among we mortals even the most profound spiritual experiences are freely marketed. Witness the television evangelists. On a lesser level you can buy a star and name it after yourself. In wine and literary reviewing and criticism we have the questionable relationship with the wine industry and the book industry. The rich, squeaky wheels tend to get all of the grease and one’s credibility feels tampered with. How often in literature have I noted that fine works are basically ignored if not published by the mainstream companies. The lesser, off-brand publishers do not contribute to the advertising revenue of the large reviewing mediums and cynicism becomes freely nurtured in the savagery of the marketplace. The concept of a level playing field is as laughable as peace in our time.

I’m fairly sure that the numerical system of rating wines was not devised as a marketing tool but that’s what it has become. The truly great Russian writer Dostoevsky insisted that “Two plus two is the beginning of death.” Aesthetic values are decidedly non-digital and can no more fairly be applied to wines than a thousand or so “top” books a year. I could rather freely trust Parker in most areas but I would prefer a comment to a number. After Parker, however, the food chain descends toward the protozoic. Since this isn’t a science, how does a judge become qualified? In my years in Hollywood I watched hundreds of cads pass themselves off as “producers” to young starlets. In both the press and on television news there are hundreds of pundits who assume that talking is thinking. Evidently pundits are pundits because they say they are, and the same with many creatures in the wine press.

In a Paris restaurant last November I had a mildly irritating but comic experience. I was seated near an American couple in their mid-30’s and the man was driving the sommelier batshit by looking up the numbered ratings in a book for the wines on the “carte.” By the time the customer finished, his wife looked like she wanted to run for it and the sommelier was searching for a club or at least a riding crop. I’ve seen versions of this before but not to an extent that became so transcendently silly. I could imagine this dweeb going in a bookstore and wondering why the stock didn’t have spine stickers with ratings. French magazines run cartoons about such American “wine lovers.”

While driving through France with Peter Lewis and Guy de la Valdene I sensed a number of times from the backseat that I was driving them crazy with some of my peculiar wine questions but they willingly answered because the option was to have me start singing songs like “Shrimp Boats are Coming” or my Wilson Pickett or Sons of the Pioneers medleys. Peter, who is expert in both wine and literature, made the point that it would be helpful if there was a way to contextualize the judgments of wine critics. Good literary critics like Edmund Wilson, George Steiner, or F. K. Lewis clearly establish where they stand. It would be useful indeed to have a specific idea of the tastes of wine reviewers and critics. You

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would then know what particular direction they were coming from in their virtually thousands of judgments.

Science does offer us a detailed consolation in the matter of taste, but it won't fit into any ballpark. In January there was an item in the *New York Times* Science section published on Tuesdays that at the same time clarified and clouded the issue. The fact is that taste buds in the human mouth can be quantified. "About 25% of the population are supertasters, blessed or cursed with a heightened sensitivity because the concentration of their tastebuds can be 100 times as great as the concentration in nontasters, who also make up about 25% of the world. Regular tasters, about half of all people, fall somewhere in between."

These facts raised some troubling considerations. Should all of those who judge wine be forced to troop off to Mayo Clinic in Minnesota to have their taste buds counted? Minnesota is a good idea as a California clinic couldn't very well be trusted in this matter. Literary reviewers could be given a simple diagnostic test of world literature and many would flunk outright. Imagine giving members of Congress a test on American or world history! But in the arena of wine this is explicit evidence that there are a large number of possible supertasters. In our population at large that means there are about seventy million people with this potential.

Last night I awoke at 4 a.m. brooding about these matters. The old saying "you shouldn't lose sleep over it" came immediately to mind as I stared at the waning moon, the same moon on which one of our astronauts had swung a blasphemous golf club. We Americans are extraordinarily proud of our pragmatism though this xenophobic pride often borders on the fungoid. I said in my memoirs that we seem better at everything than the French except how to live life which included food and wine. I have met French oenophiles who are scornfully amused by our numerical systems but these same people are irrationally attached to their Michelin Guides.

My mother, of a 100% Swede derivation, once said to me, "what if everyone was like you?" I admit that might be a sad situation. Why resist a system that so many find helpful? Maybe I have a numbers phobia? By general agreement I'm not allowed a checking account because I've never been able to fill out a stub. I have no talent at dates and can only recapture most incidents of my life by remembering what dogs I owned at the time.

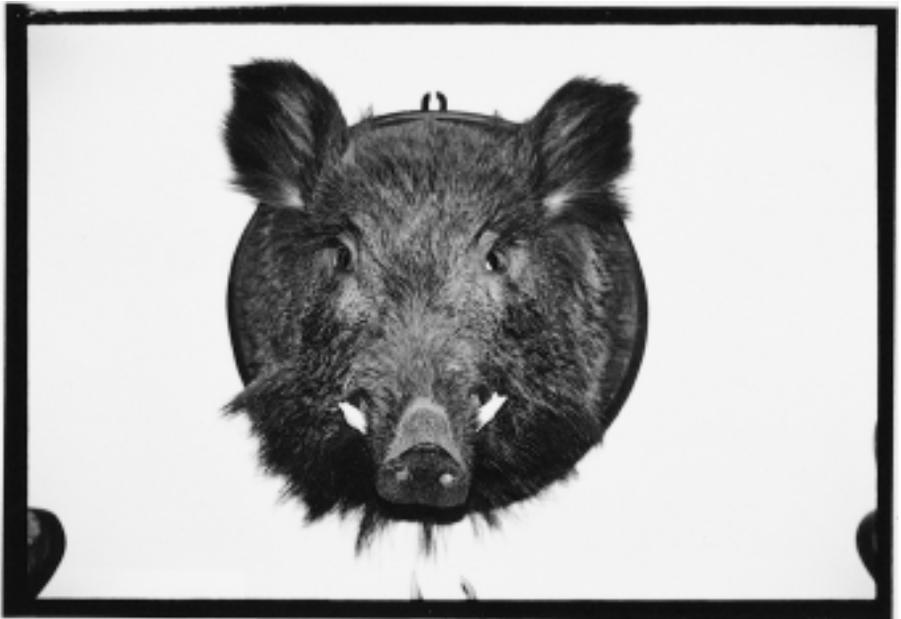
So if I can't accept pragmatism in wine or literature perhaps it's my own problem. I fear the banality of the uniform. Will the wines of the future all adhere to the style of the wines judged to be in the high nineties by certain people? Once in New York City I studied the Racing Form all morning, went out to Aqueduct and lost every bet. I've read about touted wines that on tasting I thought unworthy of a Missouri truckstop, but then how many well reviewed books have I read that carried the scent of limburger cheese? In literature our pragmatism can be

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perversely wrong-headed if you look at the hundred or so MFA programs at universities that hope for a uniform approach in teaching people how to write poetry and fiction. It becomes California cabernet fiction and poetry with only a couple out of a thousand worthy of our attention. Some of these schools yearly outproduce the English Romantic Movement.

I'm cooking guanciale in a pasta sauce this evening. I trust that there will be no overtones or hints of bacon, brisket, shrimp, or tongue. Before dinner I'll give my dog a chunk of the sharp cheddar she loves, pour a twelve-ounce goblet of humble Rasteau or Bandol, and listen to some Brazilian guitar music. In critical terms I won't try to figure out if this pre-dinner experience is commensal or symbiotic or etiolated. This is an after-work hour of humility where I'm free to ponder, if I wish, the memories of the thousand or so bottles of great wine I've drunk in my life. I won't wonder if the Rasteau is an eighty-three or an eighty-five, or if my new novel is a forty-seven or a ninety-one, or if the girl I saw at the coffee shop is a ninety-nine point eight, the same as my body temperature and the evening air in Bahia.



*Photograph © Gail Skoff*

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