



Italian Wine Society Newsletter

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Dear Members of L'Ordine Della Vite,

The famous Italian physicist, astronomer and philosopher Galileo was born 446 years ago this past February. At the age of 48, after studying the solar system through his improved telescope, he began to proclaim that the sun was at the center of the universe. The church was quick to denounce his claims and in 1616, after a lengthy inquisition, he was banished to house arrest where he spent the remaining 26 years of his life. It was Galileo who said, "Wine is sunlight held together by water." As winter gives way to spring, we look forward to longer, warmer days filled with sunlight and delicious Italian wines.

Events: Our spring dinner event will be held on Sunday, April 11, 2010, at Fred's Restaurant, 60 Main Street, Stamford, NY. Please see the Upcoming Events page for information.

L'Ordine Della Vite ushered in the new year with a Jan. 24 dinner hosted by Howie Gelbsman and Carl Lusins at the Italian Kitchen Restaurant, 60 Church Street in Oneonta. The mouth watering menu, prepared by Chef Antoine Pepaj, received rave reviews from all who attended for exceptional creativity in pairing seafood, lamb and veal with a unique variety of flavored sauces, garnishes and cheeses.

LDV served a clean fruity Zonin Presecco, a 2007 Vigneto Giaddino and a 2007 Lugano Zenato, and members each brought bottles of their favorite Italian wines to share.

The meal began with a nicely balanced combination of prosciutto and melon garnished with blackberry sauce. This was followed by ricotta smoked gnocchi with sage, roasted shallots and reggiano cheese. A refreshing Tuscan style salad prepared with tomato, roasted peppers, heart of palm and mozzarella was garnished with a light cucumber sauce that complemented its freshness. Three seafood courses followed: seared tuna with pickled ginger and wasabe cream, followed by shrimp stuffed with crab and gouda, then garnished with lime Dijonaise and finally grilled scallops in creamy saffron sauce.

Rack of Lamb prepared in an herb Dijon crust was delicious and done to melt-in-your-mouth perfection. This was followed by grilled swordfish in a mango beurre blanc. The last course of veal medallions in wild mushroom Bordelaise was deliciously moist and tender. A dessert platter and mousse, with espresso, coffee and sambuca completed the meal.

Chef Pepaj's experience, expertise and savory dishes have made him a well respected presence in the restaurant industry. According to Anna Marie Lusins-McLachlan, the entire meal was an incredible culinary experience. Comments ranged from "fantastic" and "lovely" to "simply amazing, excellent and out of this world!" "Everything was fresh and done to perfection as the comments state. We were so impressed, we have reserved Chef Antoine Pepaj for our annual Garabaldi Day celebration at Flying Changes Farm on July 17th - so save the date!"

Wine Focus:

CHIANTI: A GREAT WINE WITH A SPLIT PERSONALITY by Terry Robards

Chianti has the dual distinction of being both Italy's most improved red wine and its most misunderstood.

The Chiantis of today are often lush with ripe berry fruit, generous, friendly and appropriate with many kinds of foods, including all meats, poultry, game and most pasta. Moreover, consumers need not spend large sums for good bottles: many excellent Chiantis are available at retail for less than \$10.

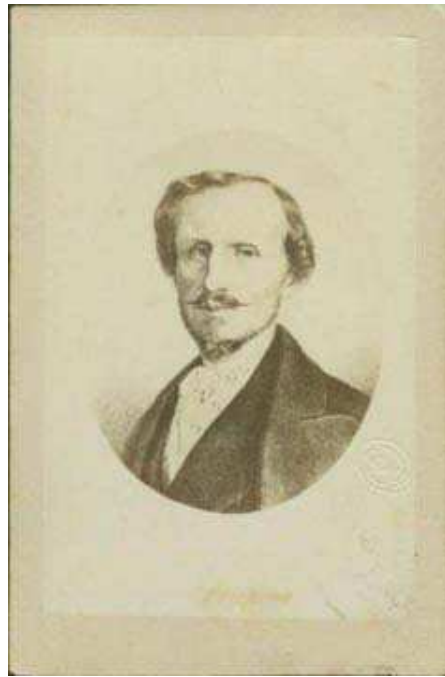


Chianti Fiasco – the straw flask that makes this the most recognizable of Italian wines

Yet Chianti has an image problem. Many consumers recall the Chiantis of 20 and 30 years ago, which were often tannic, thin, high in acidity, made with unripe fruit and lacking in generous flavor qualities. The classic Chianti image of those days was the straw-covered bottle, or fiasco (flask), placed on a red checkered tablecloth and used as a candle holder once the wine was consumed. How could any such wine ever be taken seriously?

The vast majority of today's Chiantis come in Bordeaux-shaped bottles with no straw covering and merit places in any serious wine cellar. Chiantis made from low-yielding hillside vineyards, stored in French oak barriques and bearing the riserva notation on labels can be surprisingly ageworthy, sometimes requiring 15 or 20 years to reach full maturity.

Chianti has benefited not only from modern techniques of vineyard management and winemaking, but also from changes in grape composition. Whereas once the Chianti formula called rigidly for about 70 to 90 percent sangiovese grapes, 10 to 15 percent canaiolo nero, and 10 to 15 percent trebbiano and malvasia, many of today's Chiantis contain portions of cabernet sauvignon and other non-traditional grapes familiar to sophisticated enophiles.



Bettino Ricasoli was an Italian Statesman who developed the Sangiovese based formula for Chianti wine in the mid 1800s

The requirement for white grapes (trebbiano and malvasia) was based more on politics than wine quality. When the Chianti formula was devised and articulated centuries ago, the growers of white grapes would have been economically impacted if their vineyards had been excluded, so their grapes became part of the formula.

A number of leading producers quietly ignored the white grape requirement as well as some of the other stipulations of the formula for years before the formula was officially upgraded in more recent times. Their rationale was that ignoring the formula could be justified in the interests of producing superior wines.



Chiantis bearing the black rooster neck label come from the Classico zone between Florence and Sienna.

The Chianti region is an important part of Tuscany in northern Italy, where the main cities are Florence and Siena. Chiantis bearing the black rooster neck label come from the Classico zone between Florence and Siena and for many years were promoted as being superior to other Chiantis from outside the zone. Today their superiority can no longer be assumed, for standards have been raised throughout Tuscany.

At one time the Chianti Classico Consortium had all of the major producers, including Ricasoli, Antinori, Frescobaldi, Banfi, Melini, Bertolli, Badia al Coltibuono, Castello di Gabbiano and others, but top producers began dropping out of the consortium decades ago because they declined to abide by the consortium's rules and also because they felt they were financing their smaller competitors, since the dues structure was based on bottle sales: the more you sold, the more you paid. So there is much Chianti today that does not carry the black rooster label.

Just as there is no uniform style or flavor composition in Bordeaux and Burgundy, to name two important non-Italian regions, Chiantis offer a range of styles and qualities, reflecting the expertise and techniques of the winemakers as well as grape composition. Consumers should experiment to determine their own preferences.



Terry Robards Best Buy Chianti Recommendations

One excellent buy today is the Castello di Gabbiano 2007 Chianti at \$7.99. This is not a big and powerful wine, but it is round, generous and food-friendly, ready to drink with tonight's meal. Consumers interested in experimenting might comparison-taste Gabbiano's Chianti, Chianti Classico (\$12-\$14) and Chianti Classico Riserva (about \$20) to discover the nuances and complexities available in the more costly wines from the same producer.

Other good buys are the Chianti 2008 of Cecchi (\$10-\$11), the Melini Chianti Borghi d'Elsa 2008, the Frescobaldi Castiglioni Chianti 2007 (\$14-\$15), the Ricasoli Chianti del Barone 2007 (\$13-\$15) and the Tiziano Chianti 2008 (\$9-\$10). All of these Chiantis would benefit from more aging, but all can be consumed with pleasure now, and all are a far cry from those inferior Chiantis of yesteryear.

Feature:

A Toast to the Corkscrew - Julie Robards

It has been said, "Wine makes every meal an occasion, every table more elegant, every day more civilized."

In his autobiography Robert Mondavi writes, '*Wine is art. It's culture. It's the essence of civilization and the art of living. Wine is passion, warmth of heart and generosity of spirit.*'

Indeed wine is passion, for we celebrate love and romance with it - and it is warmth of heart and generosity of spirit, especially when we enjoy it with family and friends. The art of living is most certainly enhanced because of the art and culture of wine.

To fully embrace the art of wine, there are a myriad of accoutrements that enhance the enjoyment of serving and drinking it. For the Oenophile, it's not just the enjoyment of accumulating a cellar full of bottles - it's liquidating the collection at the table !

Wine lovers often have beautiful decanters and glassware for serving, special funnels for filtering and decanting, and coasters to protect linens. But before these can be enjoyed, the corkscrew must first be employed.

For as long as corks have been used to plug wine bottles - there have been corkscrews to extract them. As a result, it is easy to assemble a collection that represents all the various types that have been mass produced since the mid 19th century. There is great beauty in this simple yet essential tool.



Direct Pull Corkscrews

Building a corkscrew collection begins with understanding the many styles that are available. *Straight* or *Direct Pull* corkscrews are generally "T" shaped and consist of a simple screw (also called a worm) and a handle for grasping. To uncork a bottle, one must twist the worm into the center of the cork and pull to extract it. There are two types of worms, the Archimedian screw and the helix: The Archimedian screw is a worm that has a center shaft wrapped with a tapered, sharp edged grooved screw. The helix is a thin, gently spiraled,

smooth round wire that tapers to a point.

There are lots of variations on direct pull corkscrews including loop and folding handles however the principle is still the same - it takes muscle to remove the cork.



Williamson & Walker Bell - Assisted Pull Corkscrews

A variation of the direct pull corkscrew is the *Assisted Pull* - this is a "T" shaped tool that has a button or bell attached to the worm that fits against the lip of the bottle and helps to twist the cork, thereby breaking the seal between it and the bottle neck. The Walker Bell and Williamson Bell are two such examples that were patented by American inventors in the 1890s.



Spring Assist Corkscrew

A *Spring Assist* corkscrew is constructed so that the worm passes through the center of a spring fitted between the handle and a cylindrical frame. The spring assists in the pulling effort of extracting a cork. Spring corkscrews date to 1883 when the design was first patented in Germany by Dunisch & Schoeler.



Single & Double Torque Corkscrews

Torque Corkscrews can be found with both single and double action. Each consists of a "T" shaped corkscrew with a loosely attached cylindrical frame that fits over the neck of the bottle. Single action torque screws require continual turning of the handle in one direction to remove the cork. Double action torque corkscrews have a second handle - or toggle - that is turned in the opposite direction once the worm is inserted into the cork.



Screwpull

The modern Screwpull is a fine example of a single action torque corkscrew with a helix that is suited to extracting old and fragile corks. It was designed in the 1970s by Herbert Allen, a

Houston space and oil industry engineer who employed the use of a frame that helped center the helix and a continuous turn design that extracted the cork smoothly. The use of Teflon to coat the spiral helix assured that the Screw Pull would enter even the oldest cork effortlessly - and for this reason it is most often used on fragile corks. Screwpull holds the Guinness World Record title for most bottles of wine opened in one minute.



Waiter's Corkscrews

Lever corkscrews are among the easiest types to use because they employ the principle of leverage to extract a cork. The popular *Waiter's Corkscrew*, also called a wine key, opens like a jackknife. It has a small blade on one end to cut the foil that protects the cork, a wire helix that opens from the center and a hinged bar on the opposite end that rests against the lip of the bottle to create leverage. Waiter's corkscrews are often collected for the advertising that can be found on them - there are literally hundreds of thousands of examples available.



Double Lever Corkscrews

Double lever corkscrews are often called *Wing Corkscrews* because they have arms that raise up when the worm is screwed into the center of a cork. Wing corkscrews have a rack and pinion that connect the levers to the framework. The frame fits against the bottle neck and as the worm is twisted into the cork, the levers raise. Pressing the levers downward extracts the cork in one smooth, easy action. Wing corkscrews can be plain or fancy with filigree arms decorated with grape and foliage motifs and a handle that doubles as a bottle opener. One of the most novel variations of the double lever style is *Pierre the Sommelier* - designed in 1984 by Italian artist Aldo Colombo.



ZigZag Compound Lever

Compound lever corkscrews are often called *Concertina*, *Lazy Tongs* or *Hinged Lattice Corkscrews*. They feature a worm that passes through the center of a series of levers that are riveted together, so that when pulled, the levers expand and the cork is extracted. The ZigZag is the most widely recognized example - it was developed in France in 1920 and is still in production today. Over time there have been some slight changes to the design that will help the novice collector with dating. The earliest ZigZag is nickel plated steel with an archimedean screw. Models dating after 1928 are similar in design except there is the addition of two bottle cap lifter hooks flanking the oval medallion on the uppermost component. Late 20th century ZigZags are of much lighter construction and are fitted with a wire helix as opposed to the much heavier and thicker Archimedean screw. Because they have been manufactured for 90 years, ZigZags are relatively easy to find. A new reproduction of the 1920s, ZigZag can be had for about \$50.



Novelty Corkscrew - Petit Julien

20th century figural and novelty corkscrews are a fun sub-category of this interesting area of collecting. They range from whimsical to naughty, with handles that often resemble animals or people, and screws that opens to create a tail, or suggestive anatomical part as in this novelty corkscrew of a small boy peeing, which is modeled after the famous Brussels, Belgium fountain known as Petit Julien. Who knew getting into a bottle of wine could be so much fun!

To submit recipes, news and photographs for inclusion in the LDV newsletter please contact Julie Robards at lordinedellavite@frontiernet.net.

Non Basta Una Vita,

Julie Robards - LDV Newsletter Editor