

Society of Medical Friends of Wine



NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2020

A Letter from the President

December 6, 2020

Dear Members,

I hope that you and your families are doing well.

My year as president of our society has not been as expected and yet has been positive in many ways. As a fellow member of the Executive Committee said during a recent meeting, we've gotten to know one another better. We've had a number of splendid and instructive virtual wine tastings; my thanks to Jim Gallagher and Maynard Johnston for arranging them. Janet Fletcher and Bob Blumberg led our Zoom wine & cheese tasting, an event which was as excellent as in prior years. The added benefit in 2020 was having leftover cheese to enjoy after the tasting!

On January 23, 2021 at 5:00 PM, we'll be closing the society's year with a virtual Lodi Wine Tour, which will replace the visit to Lodi we had originally planned for June, 2020. Details of the event will soon be announced but please hold the date and join this Zoom get-together, during which I'll "pass the gavel" to our incoming president, Jim Gallagher. Jim and his Executive Committee are considering having

monthly virtual tastings next year until in-person gatherings are feasible. We'll hopefully be able to hold an outdoor dinner in July at Poetic Moon, Howell Mountain, Napa Valley. I'm also looking forward to the time that we can have our postponed dinner at Piperade, San Francisco and enjoy the great wine that we'd purchased for the event, which Cellar Master Bob Blumberg has been storing for us.

As I mentioned in our last newsletter, COVID-19 has had significant negative effects on non-profit organizations. Unfortunately, the Society of Medical Friends of Wine has not been immune from the repercussions of the pandemic. Although we were very happy when two members recently renewed their Family Membership, roughly one third of our members still have not rejoined this year, resulting in significant loss of dues income.

Our Executive Committee has taken a number of steps to help maintain our finances. For example, we obtained a forgivable Paycheck Protection Program loan. As of November, Claire's responsibilities and salary have been decreased by 50%. She will continue to receive phone calls and mail sent to her office via the US Postal Service. She will still handle check/Venmo deposits and payments to vendors. Claire will no longer be responsible for sending or receiving email communications. To facilitate others' managing these communications, Claire has set up a new email account for us, societyofmedicalfriendsofwine@gmail.com. Moving forward, should you have any questions or concerns, please send them to the new email address.

The members of the Board of Directors have found being a part of the Society of Medical Friends of Wine educational and enjoyable over the years. The BOD is committed to ensuring the ongoing success of the organization. Toward that end, each member of the board has pledged a donation to the society for a grand total of \$5,750, most of which has already been received. I am grateful to my fellow board members for their contributions and to other members of the society who have made donations this year. Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution of any amount to assist our non-profit organization's finances.

Please stay well and I'll look forward to seeing you when we're able to get together!

Warm regards,

Elizabeth Kass, MD

The Wine 'Til the End of the Tunnel

Robert S. Blumberg, M.D.
Editor and Cellar Master



2020

BEAUJOLAIS NOUVEAU
D'ORIGINE PROTÉGÉE

GEORGES
DUBCEUF

The First Wine of the Harvest

A brief moment of joy. Something to look forward to. How precious. How missed.

In normal times we could look forward to dinner at the new restaurant everyone is raving about, a visit to a new winery, a night out at the movies, a gathering of family. We could spend weeks or months planning a new travel adventure. The planning itself could be as exciting as the trip. In normal times.

Nowadays brief interludes of pleasure or excitement are all the more important and unfortunately, all the more rare.

I had one the other day. While in the socially distanced checkout line at our local Mollie Stone's I saw a display of Beaujolais Nouveau. I did a double take. My heart fluttered. And I excitedly picked up a bottle.

There you have it. A bottle of wine substituting for the trip to Europe that isn't going to occur.

Well, you might think he's either very easy to please or he's gone off his rocker. And you might be right in both regards. But for me there is something special about this simple bottle of wine. Yes, I like the aesthetic pleasure of the bright purple color, the aroma of fresh crushed grapes, and the intensity of fruit on the palate. Even the slight tingling effervescence of the young wine is somehow tantalizing. But most likely I am drawn by the memories of similar bottles in happy times in simple bistros and cafes of the past.

It seems to me Beaujolais Nouveau was more popular in the United States a number of years ago than it is now, but it still is widely anticipated and enjoyed by many. When you think about it the wine is an amazing marketing hype and a potential financial boom for the producers and the region. The Gamay grapes of Beaujolais are fermented whole in large closed containers, allowing the weight of the grapes above to gently crush those below. Fermentation occurs inside the berries in a process called carbonic maceration. The result is very little tannin is extracted from the skins and pips, and the fruitiness of the wine is preserved. The wine is quickly bottled and by French law cannot be sold before the third Thursday of November. So, the wine is sold just weeks after harvest. No need for expensive oak. No need to tie up your inventory for years. Everyone knows it is

meant to be consumed very young. So, the check is in the bank and there is nothing more to worry about until next harvest. Talk about a cash flow wine.

As much as all this may sound like a marketing plan developed by a modern-day M.B.A., the practice of sending a portion of each new vintage off to cafés when only a few weeks to months old dates back several hundred years in Beaujolais. Originally entire barrels of newly fermented wine were taken by horse cart or boat to nearby Lyon to be drunk and enjoyed and allow people to forecast the quality of the vintage for the more serious and traditionally fermented wines to follow. As the tradition grew and expanded to other markets, most notably Paris, but also international markets in Europe, Asia, and the United States, the percentage of each year's crop devoted to Nouveau wines increased and the mode of transportation changed to truck, rail, and plane. And with the growth in the market came growth in fanfare and publicity, including abundant free press coverage that is indeed a marketer's delight.

The wine is fun, but certainly not great. The tradition is now well established and today is probably most about a feeling of renewal. A new vintage is at hand. Life goes on. Exactly what the doctor ordered for today's world.

The holidays will soon be here, followed by the new and better year. Thank you for reading this. Thank you for being part of Medical Friends of Wine. Each and every one of you is greatly missed. As I write this the skies are dark but the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel is starting to glow. I wish you all your very own bottle of Beaujolais Nouveau to help fortify you along the way.

In addition to wine another passion of mine is bird watching. I recently came across this wonderful poem by Oliver Herford that I would like to share with you now

**"I heard a bird sing
in the dark of December.
A magical thing.
And sweet to remember.
We are nearer to Spring
than we were in September.**

I heard a bird sing
in the dark of December.”

Oliver Herford (1860-1935)

May you stay healthy. May you enjoy your holidays. And may we all be together again soon.

Bob Blumberg

Recently tasted wine

Jim Gallagher, Ph.d.



How long a wine should be aged is one of the issues addressed early in the career of those interested in the finer aspects of understanding and using wine.

The question often stems from conversations with winemakers and winery representatives. Subsequent to harvest, wine making begins with the destemming, crushing and fermentation of the grapes. Almost immediately, highly attractive odors are emitted from the fermenting grapes. But for most reds and many whites the wine making process continues with quarantining the juice in wine barrels for at least six months and in some case as long as four years depending on the varietal and strategies of wine makers and in some cases appellation requirements.

Wine then is bottled, shipped, and sold to customers who can open the bottle at any point. Most agents and critics recommend a minimum time that should lapse from point of sale to pouring. Further, for many wines, an optimal drinking window is provided by the vintner, retailer and critics. Some vintners express recommended periods on their label, although this is rare. Unfortunately, not all provide such guidance, and when it is offered it tends to be a conservative estimate. In any case, it is a general view that patience and planning will increase the likelihood of optimal enjoyment.



This section of the newsletter will describe wines that I have recently had at mealtime, with my comments on the benefit of aging.

1987 was considered to be an excellent vintage for Cabernet Sauvignon in the Napa Valley, and the **1987 Beringer 'Reserve'** was a representative sample of such quality. When released it showed remarkable and vibrant character, namely rich red/purple hue, clarity, a compelling cherry-plum aroma and moderate toast bouquet. On the palate it showed a medium body, balanced acidity, and a delightful finish—highly drinkable back

then.

Thirty-three years later I would not suggest that the wine needed to be aged that long; rather I am pointing to the quality that exists now. In the 33 years it has

been cellared it has taken on additional complexity, showing more chocolate and exotic tea flavors, and a somewhat weighty mouth feel. I found this wine excellent on release and it has improved nicely with age. My surmise is that not many will be surprised that a California Cabernet Sauvignon would survive for 33 years, but some would question that the wine would still show such high quality. The **1987 Beringer Cabernet Sauvignon 'Private Reserve'** would stand as an example of a quality wine in December 2020 and did not suggest that it was nearing an end point.

What a pleasant surprise I found in the superb bottle of **1978 Pinot Noir** from **Carneros Creek**. The color showed signs of age in the lemniscus, not unexpected in a 42-year-old wine. The bouquet was the beginning of the realization this was a very special bottle of wine. The Strawberry/cherry aromas had melded nicely with a milk chocolate overtone for the fruit; the mouth feel was elegant and lingering. While not robust, neither flavors nor bouquet was wanting. Hats off to **Francis Mahoney** (winemaker) and his assistant **Bill Bishop** in their mastery of crafting high quality Pinot Noir as exhibited in this wine.

When I began my study of wine, I quickly became a fan of the **Beaulieu Vineyards (BV) Cabernet Sauvignon**. My first ventures were with the Estate bottling as, at that time, the **BV George de Latour, Private Reserve** was a couple dollars more than the Estate. In the early 1960s that difference was roughly a 40% increase—not a modest jump for a young man.

When the **1964 BV Private Reserve** was released, I was overwhelmed by the wine and began to collect despite the increased cost. The early BV wines produced by legendary winemaker Andre Tchelistcheff were crafted to be drunk when released thanks in no small part to their near perfect balance. But as the wines aged, they tended to gain added character, particularly, a greater body and lushness in the aftertaste.





The attached picture is of a bottle of **1969 BV Private Reserve**, which when tasted a few weeks ago, was a stunning wine. The bouquet remains a robust bright cherry, light chocolate, light leather and sweet oak delight; the body is medium and there is perfect balance; with a long-lasting luscious aftertaste—wonderful!!

Thanksgiving Wines

For Thanksgiving dinner, we started with two wines, a **2017 Chardonnay, Rochioli 'Sweetwater'**—simply as good as it gets for California Chardonnay. The Second, a **1991 Cabernet Sauvignon, Silver Oak Cellars 'Napa'**. Both wines received equal raves and served well the Roasted Turkey accompanied with roasted root

vegetables: Yukon potatoes, parsnips, rutabagas, turnips, carrots and red peppers for some color; a second side was sauteed Swiss Chard with shaved Almonds,

Shiitake mushrooms & prosciutto.



The Chardonnay was a perfect match, the apple/pear flavors melded well, the richness of the fruit amplified the flavors the turkey gained during the roasting. The Silver Oak Cellars, Napa Cabernet Sauvignon was also a splendid pairing, the more robust cherry-raspberry flavors were the frosting to top the garlic infused tender white meat that celebrated the meal.

Our small “bubble” dinner group included some enthusiastic wine lovers, so this called for a second red wine—the **2003 Cabernet Sauvignon, EMH ‘Black Cat Cabernet’**, a rare wine from a tiny Calistoga vineyard. The black Cat being the youngest of the red varietals not surprisingly showed a darker red color with considerably more purple on the edge, even though it is now 17 years old. Following suit, the bouquet was strong with lovely scents of darker fruits—blackberry and blueberry with a pleasant raspberry note couched within a mild toasty overtone. The body was medium, the balance good, and the superb aftertaste long, lingering and luscious.



A Patio Dinner with Chef Thom Fox and Susan Patton-Fox

12/6/20

(1st)



Menu: Eggplant, Olive, Roasted Pepper Caponata Salad with Chicory dressed with Seka Hill 2020 Olio Nuovo press olive oil from Capay Valley Yoche Dehe Wintun Nation Tribe—available at **Rainbow Grocery** or **Birite Market**). We tasted three wines with this awesome salad. It was remarkable how wine friendly this dish was for the three wines:

2015 Chardonnay, **Aubert** ‘Sugar Shack’ (15.0% al.), the 1999 Shiraz, **Grant Burge** “Barossa Valley—Filsell” (14.5%al.), and 1985 Merlot, **Duckhorn Vineyards** ‘Napa Valley’ (13.3% al.)

Entrée: Braised Grass Pastured Beef Brisket, Red Wine, Fresh Bay, Thyme, Turnips & Carrots. With a second side of Roasted root vegetables- Parsnips,



Rutabaga, Turnips & Red Pepper. Again, the wines were seamlessly supportive to the food. The Aubert Chardonnay, a powerfully flavored white wine held its own and was a delight with the braised beef and red wine sauce; the Grant Burge Shiraz, clearly showed the greatest tannin, but also has a great fruit base that paired well; while the Duckhorn Merlot offered the greatest elegance and its sweet fruit flavors brought the dish to

a regal state.

We completed our meal with a wonderful cheese course prepared by Susan Patton-Fox. We had Ossau-Iraty, a sheep’s milk cheese from the Basque area, a French Comte, a Gorgonzola, house made Membrillo and dried Bing cherries. What a treat! Again, the three wines served as tailored pairings

Editor’s Note: Chef Tom Fox has been a chef at many of San Francisco’s noted restaurants, including Fog City Diner, China Moon Café, Eddie Jack’s where he opened the kitchen, and Le Colonial. He recently retired as an executive with Bon Appetit. His wife Susan is also recently retired after a similarly long and successful career in marketing Italian foods and fine cheeses.

A Review of a Scientific Article

“Regular supplementation with resveratrol improves bone mineral density in postmenopausal women: a randomized, placebo-controlled trial” RHX Wong, JJT Zaw, CJ ian, PRC Howe. J Bone Min Res 35: 2121-2131, 2020

By Daniel Bikle, MD, Ph.d.

In the ongoing quest to identify potential health promoting aspects to moderate wine consumption, I came across this recently published report from the Resveratrol for Healthy Aging in Women (RESHAW) trial in New South Wales Australia. The center of the trial is in Hunter Valley, one of the top wine growing regions in Australia. This trial evaluated 75mg resveratrol twice a day for 12 months followed by a crossover for an additional 12 months in 125 women aged 45-85 (mean age 65) who were at least 1 year from last menses (average duration 15yrs). The focus of the report is on changes in bone mineral density (BMD) at the lumbar spine and hip as assessed by DXA. Although some of the women were taking calcium or vitamin D or both, most were not. At least some of the women were taking the antiresorptive risedonate, but the number doing so was not provided, nor was it factored into the analysis. The RESHAW trial in addition to assessing bone health also measured the effect of resveratrol on cognition, cerebrovascular function, cardiometabolic markers, and well-being. These results are separately reported.

This paper goes into my category of promising more than is delivered despite its publication in the top journal in the bone field. In the first year resveratrol increased BMD in the lumbar spine by 1.3%, with no significant effect on BMD in the hip. However, when combining the results from both portions of the crossover study the net increase in BMD in the lumbar spine was 1.5%, and the increase at the femoral neck was 0.56%, now significant. The bone resorption marker CTX was reduced by 7.2%, but no change was seen in bone formation markers. These changes in BMD did make a modest difference in the 10-year fracture risk assessment, but not one that would lead me to recommend resveratrol to my osteoporotic patients. Moreover, it remains unclear why they failed to factor in the use of the antiresorptive, as this would be expected to blunt the ability of an anabolic agent to increase BMD. However, on a more positive note they observed that subjects who were also taking both calcium and vitamin D (but not one or the other) had a 2.6% increase in BMD in both the spine and

hip. But only 13 of the 125 subjects were doing so, and significance of the results was not provided and likely not obtained.

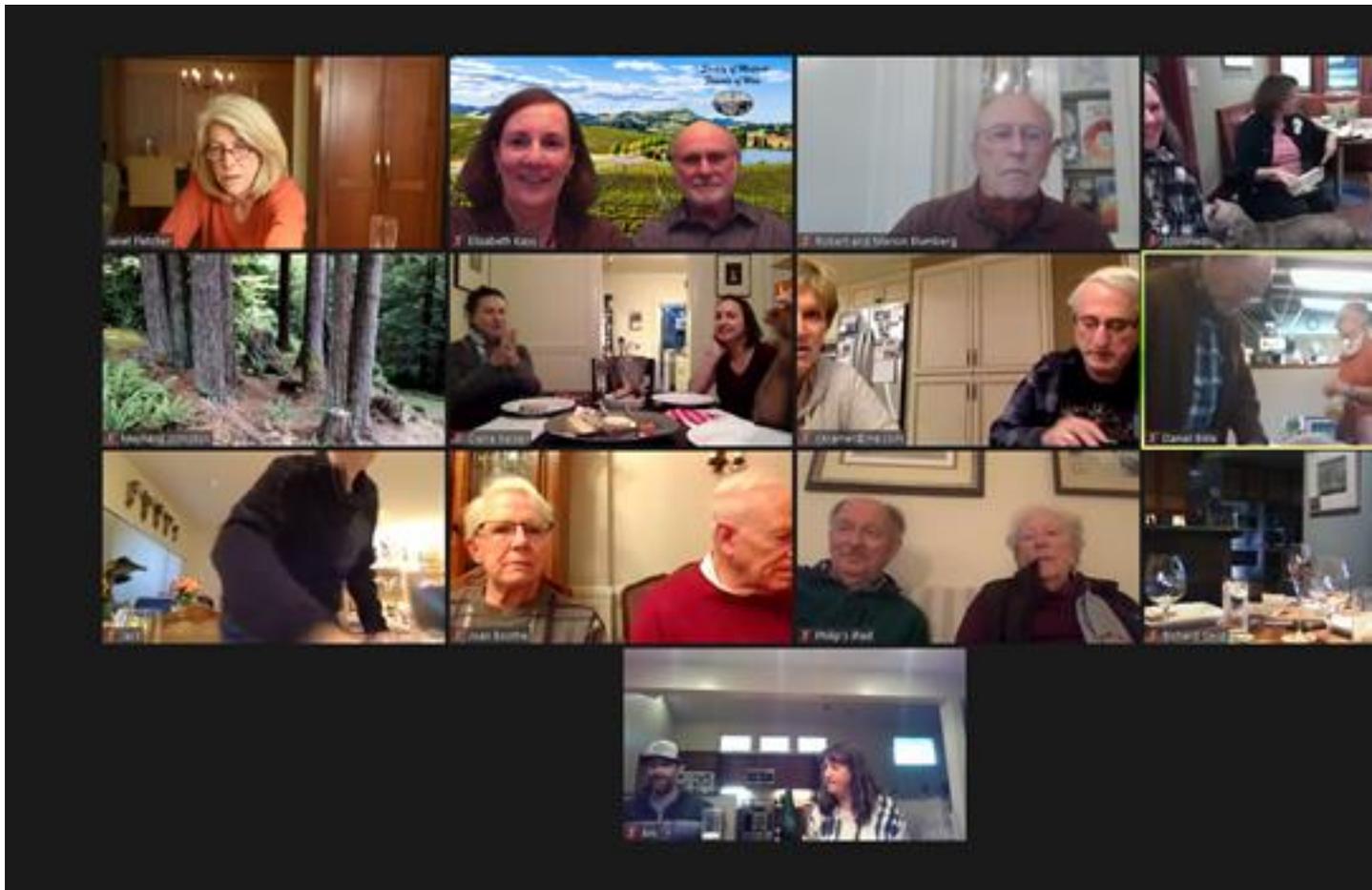
Although I like to find papers which tout the benefits of resveratrol, we all recognize that the pharmacologic benefits of resveratrol cannot be achieved through moderate wine consumption. The authors note the interesting fact that in Spain where nearly all resveratrol in the diet comes from wine drinking, the daily intake amounts to 0.933mg—a considerable distance from the 150mg used in this study. So, as you enjoy your holiday beverages, hopefully safely sheltered in place, be assured that you are not accelerating bone loss even if you are not adding much to what you got. Furthermore, enjoying your wine with calcium enriched cheese seems like a good idea but be sure to pop that vitamin D pill at the same time.

Happy Holidays everybody.

Dan Bikle

2020 – A Virtual Year

Robert Blumberg, M.D.



Necessity they say is the mother of invention, and with the Pandemic closure of all social events the Society of Medical Friends of Wine was left without the quarterly dinner meetings, tastings, and winery tours we have featured and enjoyed throughout our more than 75 years of existence. Could a Vintage Society of largely vintage members adapt to the necessity of doing computer based virtual meetings if we were to sponsor any activity at all? We could and we did.

To date we have had four virtual events on Zoom—three wine tastings and our annual Cheese and Wine event led by Janet Fletcher.

Our first tasting featured a Chardonnay and three Pinot Noirs from Dutton-Goldfield, a winery in the heart of the Russian River district. Jim Gallagher first introduced the Society to wines from this property at our dinner at Poggio Restaurant in Sausalito in 2019. Prior to our tasting Jim revisited the winery and tasted through their entire line of wines to select the four examples for us to try. As Jim said in his introduction to the event **“I have been a fan of Dutton-Goldfield**

for over ten years. The major attractions have been the high quality of their wine showing excellent fruit levels and balance absent high levels of alcohol”.

The wines indeed fit that description and drank nicely with our post tasting dinner chez Blumberg. The other fascinating aspect of the tasting was the ability to compare Pinot Noir wines made from three very different climatic zones—the Devil’s Gulch vineyard in Marin, the Freestone Hill from the heart of the Russian River, and the McDougal from the Fort Ross area of the extreme Sonoma Coast.

Our second tasting was arranged by Maynard Johnston and introduced us to the Palmaz Winery. The Palmaz name is well known to cardiologists, as Dr. Julio Palmaz was the inventor of one of the stents used to open blockages in coronary vessels. Having sold his company to one of the large medical products corporations, the proceeds were obviously generous as not a dollar has been spared in building one of the most modern and technologically advanced wineries one could imagine. The winery is a multilevel series of tunnels and excavations allowing for gravity flow winemaking. During the virtual tour of the inside and outside of the winery our participating members watched in awe and quite a few commented this property would be a fascinating visit when visitation is again allowed. The winery is located in the Coombsville area of southern Napa County, just east of the city of Napa, an appellation that is home to a number of primarily small family wineries. We tasted the 2017 Chardonnay Amalia, the 2017 Cedar Knoll Cabernet, and the 2016 estate Cabernet. Cedar Knoll is the name of a historic winery on the site a century ago and its label used for a modestly priced wine usually sold to restaurants. Our tasters felt it was good value and liked the wine for near term drinking. The estate wine sells for over \$100 the bottle and is very much in the style of high end, modern, prestigious Napa Cabernet.

Our third tasting returned us to Pinot Noir, this time exploring a trio of Elouan Pinot Noirs from Oregon. Elouan is one of a number of labels produced by Joey Wagner, grandson of Chuck Wagner, founder of Caymus Vineyards, a name known to all California Cabernet aficionados. Joey’s focus is on Pinot Noir now, but coming from a family with strong Cabernet heritage is of interest given Maynard’s descriptions of the wines **“The Elouan Pinot Noirs are not what you'd describe as typical. These wines, while having Pinot character, are big, dark, bold and robust. I've been told that these Pinots are made for Cabernet drinkers”.**

The wines were especially atypical for Oregon Pinot Noirs, and as you might expect, generated abundant and lively discussions among our tasters. From comments that I remember, many tasters loved the wines and others had difficulty with them, since they were not at all what they expected from Pinot Noir. Some felt in a blind tasting they might confuse the wines with a Shiraz or Zinfandel. Those who loved the wines for their richness were willing to overlook this and looked forward to their pairing with a steak or roast. Others had difficulty with what they felt were Pinot Noirs on steroids. An educational and fun experience and a great opportunity to exchange thoughts and opinions. And a very interesting contrast with the Dutton Goldfield Pinots from our first virtual event.

Over the past decade one of our most popular events has been the annual Cheese and Wine tasting led by our friend and noted cheese expert, Janet Fletcher. We kept hoping COVID cases would ease off enough for us to be able to again offer an in-person event, but such was not to be. Could we do a virtual event and get perishable cheeses distributed to all? What about wines? And what about cost?

Janet was able to select four cheeses that we were able to order shipped to our homes in vacuum-sealed pouches to preserve quality. For wine, to keep things simple and to keep cost down, we asked people to select their own wine(s) for pairing and at the end of the cheese event we heard from participants what they drank and how their wines paired with the cheese selection.

Our tour of cheeses took us to Vermont, Wisconsin, France, and Switzerland. We started with Cremont from the Vermont Creamery. This was a delicious cheese from a blend of cow and goat's milk, an unusual combination that worked well.

Next on to the Basque Country for Ossau-Iraty Agour, a sheep's milk cheese. Cheese from the Basque country has long been one of my favorites and this one did not disappoint. Memories of white washed farm houses with red tile roofs, free ranging flocks of multi colored chickens, verdant fields dotted with sheep, and all with the backdrop of the craggy Pyrenees mountains came forth with each bite.

Another mountain cheese, but this time from cow's milk, was the Red Witch Kaserei Rislen from Switzerland. A few years back we had a Swiss themed cheese

event with small producer cheeses paired with Swiss wines selected by our members Andy and Susan Anacker. Then, as now, the cheeses were outstanding and a far cry from the processed cheeses with large holes the majority of this country considers “Swiss” cheese.

For the last cheese we returned to the United States for The Blue Jay, a blue cheese from Deer Creek Cheese of Wisconsin. Wisconsin produces much of this country’s mass produced generic cheeses labelled American, Swiss, Cheddar, etc. You need a cheese expert like Janet to go beneath the surface of the very large dairies to find the smaller producers of more interesting products. This was a blue cheese with a zip, and the zip came from juniper berries. On first tasting the dried berries added some crunch and a wild herb nuance. Upon re-tasting, particularly the next day, the green herbal flavors of the juniper dominated what was already a strong flavored blue cheese. A very interesting cheese for small bites. For my palate, not one to reorder or feature as a sole component of a cheese course. Members with foresight did enjoy pairing it with an old vintage Port and a Madeira.

So, a big thank you to Jim Gallagher and Maynard Johnston for getting us started on our virtual wine tasting program and to Janet for preserving the tradition of our annual cheese and wine event. And thank you to our members and their friends who were willing to help us “zoom” into the modern era.