Society of Medical Friends of Wine

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NEWSLETTER

June 2026

A Return to Napa

By Bob Blumberg

It had been a while since I had gone wine tasting in Napa. Perhaps the high volume of traffic and tourists kept me away. Perhaps the luxurious castles and high-end art galleries doubling as wineries deterred me. Whatever the reason, I was long overdue and the Society's spring winery visit came at the right time.

On Wednesday May 15, a full house of members and guests set out for a mid-morning visit to the new tasting room of Neyers Vineyards on Highway 29 in Oakville, followed by lunch and a brief drive to ZD Wines on the Silverado Trail.

While I really have no reason to think badly of the affluent who have earned their money elsewhere and then decided to acquire a property in California's most prestigious wine region to put their name on a label of product made by a celebrity wine maker, I must admit it was good to go back to the roots of an enterprise founded by an individual or family that are not multi zillionaires and have accomplished so much in the world of wine by their own dedication and hard work.

Neyers Vineyards

Bruce Neyers, of Neyers Vineyards, is a longtime friend going back more than 50 years. Bruce moved to San Francisco after a stint in the U.S. Army, and taught me to appreciate German wines. His start at a winery involved being a cellar rat and all-around apprentice for Bob Travers at Mayacamas Vineyards. From there he went on to a long-term tenure in marketing for Joseph Phelps, and also learned about French wines from many years with the famed importer Kermit Lynch. Scrimping, saving, and borrowing, Bruce and his wife Barbara were able to purchase property in the Conn Valley region of eastern Napa, planted vineyards, and had their first harvest in 1991.

At our tasting visit we sampled wines introduced by Bruce and his winemaker Tadeo Borchardt.

Chardonnays in two styles were presented. The first, a 2023 Chardonnay 304 sees no oak and is produced in a cool, crisp, steely fruit style reminiscent of Chablis. The second, also a 2023, does see oak, time on the lees, and has an oak blessed nose and palate with creamy lusciousness balanced by good acidity. The grapes for the Chardonnay come from select vineyards in Carneros.

The Neyers home vineyard is planted to Cabernet and Merlot, which make their way into a wine called Left Bank Red, a very drinkable and subtle wine showing the influence of Merlot, and to Cabernet Sauvignon bottlings, of which we tasted the 2019 and the 2020 AME. The 2019 was outstanding with lovely flavors and balance, and was so enticing it managed to make its way into my already overstocked cellar. The reserve AME bottling is black purple in color with an intense cassis scented aroma and a brooding youthfulness that says age me.

To supplement and expand on the production of the home vineyard, Bruce and Tadeo have sought out grapes such as Zinfandel, Mourvedre, and Carignane, from heritage vineyards around the state. Bruce's Kermit Lynch experience, with his extensive travels to the south of France and his love of wines from that area made from very old vineyards has clearly influenced the other red wines in the portfolio.

The 2021 Mourvedre from 130-year-old vines in the Evangelho Vineyard in Contra Costa is a prime example. With a lovely berry nose, balance and finesse and a raspberry finish, this wine followed me home so I can include it in my wine group's next mystery red tasting.
Ventures to find great vineyards of old vines has also taken them to El Dorado County for their 2021 Zinfandel, Vista Notre. I found the restrained alcohol of 13.8% compared to the not

uncommon 15% or more of many block buster Zins to be refreshing, and the outpouring of fruit to be Beaujolais like. I know I am being too nostalgic in this piece, but the wine left me reminiscent and appreciative of some of the great, lower alcohol fruit forward Zins of my wine youth.

Our whole visit was greatly enhanced by Bruce's stories from over 50 years in the wine business and by Tadeo's straight forward and educational comments about the selection and cultivation of vineyards and pearls on wine production techniques. A big thank you to Neyers Vineyards for their hospitality.

Bruce and Barbara Neyers and our President, David Schwartz, M.D,

Winemaker Tadeo Borchardt addresses our group

After lunch, it was off to another historic and family-owned property in Napa, ZD Wines.

Z-D Wines

A short drive eastward brought us to our second destination for the day, Z-D Wines, whose lovely facility is located on the Silverado Trail in Rutherford. This is another family-owned winery now in the third generation. Our trip was facilitated by our member Jim Gallagher, PhD whose association with the deLeuze family goes back decades. Our host for the day, winery president Brett deLeuze, was a frequent taster with Jim at Jim's wine seminars several decades back, and thus we received a warm and friendly welcome.

This trip was also nostalgic for me. Much like my association with Bruce Neyers, my first encounters with Z-D Wines go back to the early 1970's. The winery was founded by two engineers from Aerojet, Normal deLeuze and Gino Zepponi, in 1969. I went back to the second and third editions of the Fine Wines of California that I wrote with Hurst Hannum to refresh my memories of these early days.

The original facility was a tiny building in Vineburg, a small Sonoma hamlet near Carneros. Interestingly enough, their first white wines included Riesling, which we thought was one of the finest dry Rieslings then produced in California, along with Gewurztraminer and Flora. This latter grape is a hybrid of Gewurztraminer and Semillon, developed by Professor Harold Olmo at U.C. Davis, and today extremely rare in California. Their first red was Pinot Noir from Carneros vines.

The winery succeeded thanks to the quality of the wines and welcoming personalities of Gino and Norman, and Norman's wife Rosa. In 1979 they moved to their current location and planted a small vineyard there, while they continued to use grapes from estate own property in Carneros, as well as from Monterey and Santa Barbara. Winemaking focused on Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, and gradually Cabernet Sauvignon was added.

Z-D Chardonnay has consistently been well made and well balanced, and this was true of the 2024 we tasted. The appellation is California, as grapes are sourced from Napa, Sonoma, Monterey and Santa Barbara. A reserve bottling with the Carneros appellation is also offered.

Pinot Noir has been a consistent product since its introduction with the 1969 vintage. It is sourced from Carneros fruit and the current release 2023 shows abundant Carneros fruit and is a fine wine that promises abundant enjoyment with food.

Cabernet Sauvignon comes from Napa fruit, including the small vineyard that is adjacent to the winery. It also shows the winery tradition for being a nicely balanced, food friendly wine and a nice contrast to some of the highly acclaimed modern cabernets, that to my palate can be

overly extracted and overly alcoholic. When you think of Z-D wines, think of enjoyment with meals.

A very unique version of Cabernet Sauvignon, at least in my experience, is a solera blend of reserve Cabernets called Abacus. This contains wine from every vintage going back to 1992. Each year a small amount is bottled and sold, and an equal amount of three-year-old Reserve Cabernet is added to refresh the blend. The solera style of aging is reminiscent of what is done in Sherry. It is unique, rare, and curious, although I must admit I think I prefer solera Sherry to solera red wine.

We also had the great fortune to sample their Petit Verdot, a wine produced in small quantity and available only at the winery. Peit Verdot is of course one of the grapes grown in Bordeaux, where very small amounts are sometimes blended with the dominant Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Z-D's version is three quarters Petit Verdot, with the remainder equal blends of Malbec and interestingly, Zinfandel. Petit Verdot is a later ripening grape, and is suited to Napa climates, especially given our overall climate warming trend. Another example of a bottle to take back for a mystery red tasting!

Our group with host Brett de Leuze

Thanks to all of you who were able to participate in our adventure. As mentioned, the trip was a sellout and the level of interest and enthusiasm was well appreciated by our hosts.

For those of you who were unable to make it, perhaps you too will decide it is time to revisit Napa. Both of these wineries would make excellent destinations. You can taste fine wines and will be impressed by the hospitality of your hosts. And from my perspective, it is great to reward people who have worked so hard for so many years to make their businesses successful and to keep them in the family.

Review of a Scientific Article

Editor's Note: We continue to monitor the press for articles regarding wine and health. As you are aware, this has become an increasingly contested and polarizing area, and dramatic comments or headlines are not uncommon in the lay press. One of the founding tenets of our organization was to promote the healthy aspects of the use of wine in moderation.

In today's world we recognize the need to be scientific, rather than biased, in this pursuit. Our medical and scientific expert, Dr. Dan Bikle, has written below his review of a recent article. What was important about this particular publication was its focus on wine as opposed to alcoholic beverages in general.

As Dr. Bike points out in his final sentence of the review, this study supports those who feel wine should be considered separately from other alcoholic beverages, but is not a definitive answer. As a Society we will continue to monitor the question and provide our readers with updates that may be appropriate and helpful to know.

Association between wine consumption and cancer: a systematic review and the meta-analysis

Luceron-Lucas-Torres, M et al. Frontiers in Nutrition September 4, 2023

Review by Daniel Bikle, MD, PhD

Methods. In this study the authors searched databases of Medline, Scopus, Cochrane and Web of Science for articles published between 1986-2021relating to wine consumption and various cancers. They specifically excluded articles that did not separate wine from other forms of alcohol consumption. Tests for consistency, heterogeneity and bias were applied. 73 studies were included in the systemic review, of which 26 were included in the meta-analyses. The individual studies were a mix of both case-control (42) and cohort (31) with the cohort studies generally much larger than the case-control studies. In total 4,346,504 subjects aged between 18-103 years were included. The studies came from 19 different countries with the bulk (30) from the US. The target population for most studies was the general population middle aged and older. Follow-up years ranged widely from 2yrs to 24yrs. The cancers studied included those of the breast (11), prostate (14), kidney (4), pancreas (5), ovary (10), oral cavity (8), skin (2), lung (1), colon and rectum (11), brain (glioma) (4). The amount of wine was stated to vary from study to study and was not recorded in this analysis. The studies relied on subject reports of cancer outcomes, which were not validated, apparently.

Results of the meta-analyses: association between wine consumption and specific cancers

Breast: RR 1.02 (1.00-1.04), minimal heterogeneity

Ovary: RR 1.01 (0.9-1.12), substantial heterogeneity

Colorectal: RR 0.92(.82-1.03), substantial heterogeneity

Renal: RR .93 (0.81-1.04), substantial heterogeneity

Insufficient number of studies for the other cancers to perform a meta-analysis although the trend favored wine consumption (RR less than 1).

RR: the relative risk of drinking wine vs not with respect to these different cancers

Conclusions. Contrary to prevailing literature that alcohol consumption is associated with an increase in incidence of a number of cancers such as breast and colorectal, this study would suggest the opposite, or at least no effect. The authors conclude from this that wine, unlike other alcoholic beverages, contains ingredients which protect against cancer, such as the well-known resveratrol and other polyphenols. Maybe.

However, there are a number of limitations to this study. As in essentially all studies with wine and medical outcomes, these are association studies. It would be hard to convince an IRB (Institutional Review Board) to allow a prospective RCT (randomized controlled study) on wine and health.

In this particular review many of the studies were of short duration, less than 5yrs, some only 2 yrs. Most of the studies were conducted in populations less than 65years old, and the distribution of age was not given for studies that included older populations. The ratio of men to women was reported only for some of the studies. But perhaps most troubling is that the amount of wine consumed (which was not reported) and the development of cancer relied on self-reports.

Take home message: Maybe wine consumption does not increase cancer risk, but this study does not prove it.

Upcoming Events

We are excited about our next two events and hope as many of you as possible will be able to join us.

July 12, 2026
A Luncheon Presentation with Dr Marie Burns and a Wine Tasting

We will gather at the lovely Richmond Country Club, site of last year's Cheese and Wine event to hear a talk from Marie Burns, PhD. Dr. Burns is Director for the Center of Neuroscience, University of California, Davis and also co-owner of Collina de Bella Winery, in Winters.

Being a neuroscientist, Dr. Burns is very much aware of the potential negative aspects of alcohol on the nervous system. We have asked her to talk on the dilemma of being a neuroscientist and a wine afficionado, and how she approaches this potential conflict. In some ways this will reflect the challenges many of our physician members may face when dealing with their personal enjoyment of wine versus the need of their patients to know what consequences there

may be for their particular health issues if they consume wine. It should be a very interesting discussion.

Dr. Burns presentation will be followed by luncheon where we will taste some of her wines and she will have the opportunity to present the wines and talk about the Winters appellation. We will also have a few other wine selections with lunch to match the food, as is our tradition.

Following lunch, we will have the unique opportunity of a vertical tasting of Cabernet Sauvignon from a micro vineyard in the Calistoga area of Napa Valley. Thanks to our member Dr. Jim Gallagher, we have obtained a donation of a number of vintages of Black Cat Cabernet. This will give you the chance of tasting historic wines from a very tiny, mailing list only producer, whose vineyard is meticulously managed and every grape bunch handled with love and precision. This should be a very educational opportunity to experience vintage variation and the effect of aging on wine from a particular property and microclimate.

Further information and sign-up opportunity will be coming forth soon.

Annual Dinner Meeting at the French Club

September 4, 2026

We return for our annual dinner at the French club (Cercle de l'Union) on Mason Street in San Francisco for the outstanding French food the club is known for, accompanied by an amazing collection of cellar wines.

This year we are pleased to have with us Dr. Gregory Marcus from the Cardiology Service of the University of California, San Francisco. Dr. Marcus is an expert on cardiac arrhythmias and he will speak to us on wine and atrial fibrillation. Atrial fibrillation is a common heart arrhythmia whose incidence increases with age, and this subject should be of great interest.

Please mark your calendars. You will not want to miss this evening of great food, great wine, and great science. Further information and sign up will be forthcoming as the date approaches.

Welcome New Member!

We are pleased to welcome Philip Brodey, M.D., a former member who recently re-joined the Society. A retired UCSF Radiologist, Phil established his family owned, high elevation *Philary Vineyards in* the Atlas Peak AVA where he grows Syrah fruit exclusively. Phil serves on the Board of Directors of the Atlas Peak Appellation Association (APAA) and brings a wealth of personal viticultural knowledge which we look forward to learning more about. Please introduce yourself to Phil at the upcoming 2026 events.

President's Message

Dear Friends,

Springtime in the Napa Valley is truly a delight to behold - hillsides covered with budding grapevines, crisp cool mornings, soft afternoon breezes and endless wine country vistas. On May 13th, 2026, a sizeable group of Society of Medical Friends of Wine members and guests gathered with the founders and winemakers of two highly esteemed wineries - Neyers Vineyards and Z-D Wines - to learn, discuss and sample outstanding wines at two very hospitable settings. These experiences were made possible through Dr's. Bob Blumberg and Jim Gallagher, in collaboration with Bruce and Barbara Neyers of Neyers Vineyards and Brett deLeuze and Chris Musante of Z-D Wines.

This Spring Wine Tour event was also made possible through the efforts of SMFW executive committee members Dr. Jack McElroy, Dr. Elizabeth Kass and Susan Schwartz, in coordination with Lori Lane at Neyers Vineyards and Leah Zanetell at Z-D Wines. The attendance response from members was very robust, making this the largest SMFW wine tour group size in recent years! During the morning tour, we were pleased to introduce a returning member, Dr. Phil Brodey, proprietor of Philary Vineyards, who had recently re-joined the Society, and to welcome all guests, of which one will become a new member in the near future. We are most grateful to Neyers Vineyards and Z-D Wines for providing private tours and wine education experiences customized to our knowledgeable SFMW members. We also thank many participants for your positive feedback in the days following this remarkable wine tour. I invite all SMFW members to share your suggestions for future wine tours and dinner events by sending an e-mail through the SFMW Gmail account. Your message to any member of the executive committee will be forwarded promptly for their reply.

The upcoming July 12th "Lunch and Learn" event at Richmond Golf Club promises to carry on the Society's focus on topics related to wine and health through a presentation from guest speaker Marie Burns, PhD, Director for the Center of Neuroscience at UC Davis. As co-founder of Collina de Bella winery, Dr. Burns will address the complex perspectives of a research scientist with an extracurricular interest in wine, including an introduction to her Winters AVA wines. Once again, we are grateful for Dr. Bob Blumberg's professional relationship with UC Davis and Dr. Burns, and additionally Dr. Jim Gallagher's facilitation of a significant donation of Black Cat Cabernet Sauvignons that we will sample after the luncheon program. This is an optimal event to consider bringing friends and family members to enjoy the cuisine, wines and educational program as well as the ambience of my golf club that offers expansive views of the San Pablo Bay and Marin county's coastal hills.

Finally, with thanks again to Dr. Bob Blumberg, our September 4th dinner at Le Cercle de L'Union (French Club) in downtown San Francisco promises to continue a multi-decade annual food and wine tradition and to also welcome guest speaker Dr. Gregory Marcus from UC San Francisco. This will be the second occasion in the current year that we will have had the privilege of learning about the research interests and perspectives of a clinical cardiologist, both from Dr. Marcus' upcoming talk and also from Dr. Ralph Brindis who spoke earlier this year at the SFMW 87th annual dinner. I invite you to bring your questions to the September 4th forum, and to come away better informed on the

array of wine and health issues related both to individual decision making and population-based policy. This dialogue has always been in the spirit of the SMFW mission.

A final thanks to recent donors who have generously provided gifts of cash and other contributions to support the society's operations and programs. I also thank Dr. Bob Blumberg for his stewardship of the SMFW Newsletter that we all enjoy reading and to Dr. Dan Bikle for contributing his professional reviews of wine and health related studies to the SMFW newsletter!

Wishing You Happy Summer Vacations and Adventures in Wine,

David Schwartz, MD, President

Thank You Donors

We appreciate the following members who have provided cash donations to the Society in recent months. Thank you for your generosity: Barry & Joan Boothe, Dr. Maynard Johnston, Dr. Elizabeth Kass & Lloyd Karger, Dr. Barry Liu, Dr. Gene & Bonnie Moffett, Dr. Jack McElroy and Dr. David Schwartz.

Cash Donations help to support the operating costs of our non-profit organization. Gifts of cash to the *Susan Guerguy Memorial Fund* support educational speakers for member events. Checks may be sent to the Society of Medical Friends of Wine or you may send your donation through *Zelle*. The Society is a qualified 501 (c)(3) organization. FEIN: 94-6088159. Please email the Society for the mailing address of the Finance Manager and/or any donation questions: societyofmedicalfriendsofwine@gmail.com

All cash gifts are acknowledged with a Donor Letter from SMFW for the donor's records.

Thanks also to Dr. Jim Gallagher for facilitating a major wine donation for 2026 SFMW events. Donations of Wine in excellent condition from a member's cellar are always appreciated and can be used for future wine education dinners and events, thereby reducing the overall cost to attendees and providing a focus for educational discussions. These gifts in kind will be acknowledged with a Donor Form for your records. Contact Dr. Bob Blumberg, Cellarmaster, through the Society's Gmail for wine donations: societyofmedicalfriendsofwine@gmail.com