

King George Chapter

American Wine Society

February 1998



Vertical Tasting

Presented by Tom Burckell

February's event was special for our chapter. Tom Burckell presented, in vertical format, four decades of Beaulieu Vineyard's premier wine, Georges de Latour Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon.

A vertical tasting allows us to experience a single vineyard's fruit, the craftsmanship of the winemaker, and the effects of age. It is a milestone in our chapter's quest of wine appreciation and education. Wines are normally sampled from oldest to youngest. Younger wines generally have a stronger fruit taste and bouquet, a deep purple/red color, and strong tannin (especially if made to age as are these wines). Older wines are more complex and subtle, with a short lived bouquet and brick red to tawny color.

BV is one of Napa Valley's oldest wineries. Georges de Latour was a Frenchman who immigrated to the US in the late 1800s after his vineyard was struck by phylloxera. He and his wife founded Beaulieu Vineyard (the "beautiful place") in Napa Valley in 1899. He discovered that the red dusty Rutherford soil grew excellent Cabernet Sauvignon. He produced his own French style wine in 1909. During Prohibition he bought all the wine in Napa Valley that he could find and made a living selling it as sacramental or kosher wine. George hired the French trained Russian chemist and winemaker Andre Tchelistcheff. Andre is one of the top wine makers in American history. He revolutionized the California wine industry (ie - 1st to use cold fermentation). Latour finally received national and international acclaim with his 1936 Cabernet.

BV's Private Reserve is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. The grape is small and deep colored with very thick skin. The tannin are found in the

skin. The longer the wine is exposed to the skins, the more tannin, deeper color, and better aging potential.

Decanting aerates the wine and removes sediment. Older wines that are made to age are not filtered and normally have some sediment. The '67, '73, and '82 all required decanting. The sediment does not hurt the wine but you don't want it on your tongue - it's very bitter. A light is held underneath the neck of the bottle as it is continuously poured into a pitcher. As soon as sediment is seen flowing, stop pouring.

We thank Tom B. for his well done presentation, Olga and Bobbie for the food, Tom I. for damaged cork extraction, our decanters and pourers, and our members for \$\$\$ supporting this tasting.

A 1995 BV Rutherford Cabernet Sauvignon was sampled as a warm-up wine. This was to remind us of what a Cab usually tastes like and to give us something to do while Tom covered 100 years of BV history. Rutherford is BV's middle value wine while the Private Reserve is their top line.

#1 1967 BV Georges De Latour Private Reserve

Winemaker: Andre Tchelistcheff
The '67 was fermented in large redwood casks and aged in American oak for 24 months. '67 was a cold year that produced low sugar, higher tannin grapes that resulted in a lighter style cab. Tea brown color, subtle dry fruit taste with low tannin. Very different from the warm-up. "This wine will not gain much complexity with further bottle age." - Tom Selfridge. Average score was 14.4, with a range of 7 - 19.5, and 13 votes for best of the night.

#2 1973 BV Georges De Latour Private Reserve

Winemaker: Andre Tchelistcheff/Theo Rosenbrand

Andre left BV this year due to irreconcilable differences with the new owners (Smirnoff bought vineyard in 1969). He consulted and shared information with other Napa winemakers, much to the dismay of his former employer. The '73 was fermented in large redwood casks and aged in American oak for 24 months. A warm, even temperature growing season resulted in a good harvest and a more typical Reserve. Brick red color, with a dry prune taste. It reminded several members of a Port aftertaste. This wine is probably past it's prime. Average score was 13.2 with a range of 7 - 18, and 7 votes for best of the night.

#3 1982 BV Georges De Latour Private Reserve

Winemaker: Tom Selfridge
Abundant rainfall and a warm summer yielded a large crop harvested at optimum maturity. It was fermented in stainless steel and aged 30 months in American oak. Red/purple in color, with a stronger oak flavor. It was more recognizable as a Cab. This wine is probably near it's peak. Average score was 14.1, with a range of 7 - 20, and 10 votes for best of the night.

#4 1992 BV Georges De Latour Private Reserve

Winemaker: Joel Aiken/Andre Tchelistcheff
The Latour family bought back a share of BV and re-hired Andre at age 89. '92 had an ideal spring, hot summer, and a cool, dry harvest. This wine was fermented in open top stainless steel tanks and aged 24 months in American and new French oak. Familiar purple color with strong fruit and tannin. This one should age a while longer before drinking. Average score was 15.4, with a range of 9 - 20 and 15 votes for best of the night.

Additional information on Beaulieu Vineyard is available at: <http://www.bv-wine.com/index.html> and <http://www.choicemall.com/bwvine>.