



Adventures in California Living...Usually Involving Wine



Thursday, November 17, 2011

An Amazing Discovery in Healdsburg - JCB and the Barrel

It was a tough decision, trying to figure out where to taste wine around the village square of one Sonoma County's coolest towns, Healdsburg. I already knew where I was going to eat lunch, since I was craving Mexican food, missing So Cal a little apparently.

There it was - a little out of place - a little over the top - gleaming, stylish, sophisticated - adorned with black, gold, mirrors and chandeliers - in the little hamlet of [Healdsburg](#) - the [JCB Tasting Room](#). The staff was friendly enough, welcoming even. Happy to pour generously (and complimentary) once it was learned we were wine club members at Buena Vista. At JCB - short for Jean-Charles Boisset - they pour some wonderful high end wines; a collection of rare numbered wines "composed" by Jean-Charles himself. I can't even tell you what we tasted, but number 11 was good...I think. Or was it 7? Actually, they were all very nice and elegantly presented by Jess in the tasting room. This is something you are just going to have to experience yourself. Besides, I was totally preoccupied with the idea of having my own barrel and now I've got one.



My Very Own Barrel!

It turns out that JCB owns about twenty vineyards and is quite the innovator. [Buena Vista](#) in Sonoma, [Raymond](#) in Santa Helena and [Deloach](#) in Santa Rosa are all owned by JCB. I am a huge Buena Vista fan - so JCB was good for me from the get go. When I saw the little oak barrel in the corner and learned I could take it home with me - I was enamored.

The concept is called "[barrel to barrel](#)." Please don't call it box wine, but in reality, that's exactly what it is. High end - direct from the barrel - wine in a box, tapped out of little barrel that becomes the centerpiece of any party. The barrel is fun and best of all - the wine is excellent. So far, the 3 liter recyclable eco-pouches (that's four bottles) are being offered by Raymond and Deloach. It's part of JCB's commitment to the environment.

The 3 liter barrel runs about \$220. The wines are lightly filtered and truly deliver a "from the cellar" texture and taste. The eco-bag protects against oxidation, reduces packaging and the carbon footprint. Once opened, the wine stays fresh for six to eight weeks. At a party, you can expect to "reload the barrel" after 30 minutes as your enthralled guests won't be able to stay away from it.

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At a party - this barrel gets action!

So far, I've enjoyed the Deloach 2009 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir and the 2009 Raymond Cabernet Sauvignon. Both were very enjoyable and if you drink wines on a regular basis (like nightly) the barrel is quite convenient as well. I'm told that a Zin and another Pinot are on the way right now. Jeffrey Colton of the JCB team has provided an amazing level of personal service.

We love our barrel.

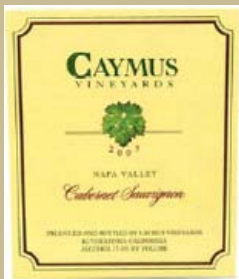
By the way - when it was time for lunch - I had three Carne Asada Tacos that were nothing less than a Mexican flavor explosion. The only difference between this place on the edge of the Healdsburg square and the best Mexican food places in LA - El Sombrero serves wine. They also feature a flaming selection of salsas which along with the complimentary chips - it's not a bad way to "tweak your palate" for more trips to the tasting rooms.



The view from my sidewalk table...

In reality, El Sombrero was the perfect contrast after the highly stylized tasting room at JCB. Both worthy of visiting again.

Wine and Food Pairing of the Week: Caymus Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2009 and the new Porcini Rubbed Filet Mignon from [Flemings Prime Steakhouse and Wine Bar](#). The notes from wine.com: "Supple and creamy-textured, with mocha, ripe plum and cherry flavors that show touches of tobacco, espresso and underbrush. Full-bodied, gaining tannic traction on the finish, elegant and readily approachable. Drink now through 2018."



As for the Porcini Rubbed Filet Mignon from Flemings Prime Steakhouse and Wine Bar. It's Delicious. The usual fine Flemings prime beef, aged up to four weeks, expertly prepared. The Porcini rub only brings out the flavor of the juicy, center cut filet mignon.

The Caymus Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2009 is available from our friends at Bevmo, Total Wine and Wine.com. It is consistently good, one vintage after another.

Wine Value of the Week: Lake Sonoma Zinfandel '08. Nice and Jammy like any good Zin. Bevmo has it under \$10 right now - which is unbelievable.



A Steal at Bevmo!

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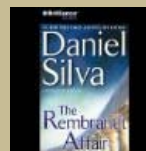
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About Me



Bob Tullio

If you are like me, you enjoy living well; splurge when you can, but without throwing money away. Residing in Los Angeles, with an inherent need to write, I'm a lover of and frequent visitor to Napa, Sonoma, San Francisco, Paso Robles, Laguna Beach, La Jolla, Palm Springs, Santa Barbara and Mammoth...all great places to enjoy wine, thoughtfully prepared food and gourmet coffee. LA is also a fine town for such luxuries, but there's something special about a road trip and the adventures that are part of the ride.

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