



Rick's Grape Skinny



June 2012

“Wine rejoices the heart of man,
And joy is the mother of all virtues.”
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1771

American Wine Society Join & Learn a Bunch!

If I've heard folks offer these sentiments once, I've heard it a thousand times -- “*Boy, do I wish I knew more about wine!*” “*I am totally confused and overwhelmed every time I look at a Wine List or go to buy wines...even in a grocery store!*” “*I just wish I could find a wine that didn't make me pucker up!*” “*I only drink one old standby because I hate the process of going out and trying to find new wines that I might like.*” “*I would buy more wine, but I need to try them first.*” “*Every time I go out to buy wine, I see dozens of new choices, and that just confuses me to no end!*” “*I'd love to learn how to enjoy and appreciate wine.*” Hold those thoughts dear wineau wannabes...for boy do I have the answer for your all-too-common concerns! *The American Wine Society!*

The *American Wine Society* was founded nearly 45 years ago by people just like “us”...folks who enjoy wine and who are also interested in learning about all aspects of wine. Dedicated to promoting the appreciation of wine through education, the *American Wine Society* is formally organized as a consumer-oriented “non-profit” educational organization. Imagine that, going to classes where it's perfectly OK to drink wine!

Founded in part by Finger Lakes wine legend, Dr. Konstantin Frank...who also founded and owns the widely acclaimed Vinifera Vineyards of Hammondsport, New York...AWS has grown from two hundred or so like-minded growers, vintners, retailers, and enthusiasts to a burgeoning union of more than 4000 wine lovers in 45 states. With 120 + chapters across the country, there is quite likely an AWS chapter near you that you could consider joining.

So Why Join AWS?

You know...somehow I just knew you were going to ask that! So let me get on with the merits of membership. First and foremost, AWS is the nation's largest consumer-based wine education organization...and it is organized and operated in a manner that perpetuates its educational focus. AWS is not a business or social networking organization...and...it is not a drinking club! Conversely, AWS is an alliance of wine enthusiasts which is dedicated to identifying and fulfilling the evolving wine related interests of those who share a desire to expand their knowledge and appreciation of wine. Most chapters host a monthly educational event and tasting – the topics and wines for which are determined by chapter members.

Not that you might need any more reasons to join...but there is the Annual Conference (in Portland, Oregon this November), the AWS Journal and News, the hugely popular AWS Certified Wine Judge Program, the AWS Wine School, amateur winemaking materials, annual competitions for both amateur and commercial wines, the AWS Education Foundation that awards college level research scholarships, the National Tasting Project, discounts for wineries and professional services, professional memberships, sponsorships and advertising opportunities...and...a new and improved feature-rich AWS website!

Oh...and it goes without saying that AWS members get to hang out with some of the world's nicest people, they get to learn more about wine and to taste more wines than 99% of the rest of the world...and within just a few months of joining...members no longer have anxiety attacks and tremble with fear when they go into a wine shop or start reading a 10 page Wine List! Best of all...in no time, members will be able to tell those pushy, know-it-all retailers what they can do with those bottles of plonk they try to pour down our throats! Hey, I'll toast to that! So where do you sign up? Glad you asked!

Here's the link to the AWS website -- <http://www.americanwinesociety.org/> and don't hesitate to call Diane Chappell, the AWS Member Services Manager if you have any questions! She is the best! 888-297-9070



Toast of the Month



*“To the grandest nation earth can boast;
I love each state from coast to coast;
I love thee for thy freedom most;
My Country 'Tis of Thee I toast!”*

(Fred Emerson Brooks)

**Don't Forget Flag Day !
June 14th !**



The Monthly Cluster!

Reds

Grignolino

Le Nocche 2010 Grignolino d'Asti
Light, Elegant and Floral...it's Bottled Heaven!
(Piemonte Region Italy – Asti DOC)...\$16-\$20
Wow...what an incredible and irresistible expression of this rarely seen varietal from northern Italy's famed Piemonte Region. Known more for its big bad brothers, Barolo and Barbaresco, Piemonte is also notorious for hiding and holding onto a number of its stellar siblings...one of which is this exquisitely shy and delicate damsel of delight, Grignolino (Green-yo-leen-oh)! The widely acclaimed artisans from Vinchio-Vaglio Serra have kindly seen fit to grace our shores with this darling of a wine...and believe you me, she's destined to steal a lot of hearts! With a crystal clear and intriguingly distinctive burnt crimson color, its delicate dry nature is beautifully enhanced by an evolving palate of aromatics and flavors that ranges from strawberries and tart Bing cherries to allspice and vanilla. In brief, it's nothing short of bliss in a bottle and it makes a perfect date for cheeses, *pâtés and cured meats...as well as fare that might feature veal, pork or fowl!* This is a versatile wine whose concurrently fruity and floral nature is as distinctive as it is delicious.

www.vinchio.com/newsite/eng/home.php

Pinot Noir

Acacia Carneros 2009 Fruit-forward, Rich & Excellent! (Carneros Appellation – Napa, CA)/\$16-\$22 – This wonderfully luscious wine from the “heartbreak grape” is in a class with

considerably more expensive Pinot Noirs...and it's as elegant and supple as they come. Winemaker Matthew Glynn crafted this beautifully structured wine from 100% Pinot Noir grapes – 90% of which were taken from vineyards in the Acacia Estate and the balance from nearby and highly controlled vines. Aged in a combination of 70% French and Hungarian oak (30% new) for only 7 months – the fruit from this vintage is an exceptional expression and it's a marvelous and wonderful example of perfecting a wine from the fickle and very hard-to-tame Pinot Noir grape. www.acaciavineyard.com

Red Blend

Hedges CMS 2009 Chewy, Fruity & Awesome!
(Columbia Valley – Benton City, WA)/\$15-\$18 – This fantastic blend of 45% Merlot, 39% Cabernet Sauvignon and 19% Syrah is probably the single best Washington State red blends under \$20 I've tasted in a good long while. To boot, if this incredibly rich and silky smooth delicacy is a harbinger of things to come from the Pacific Northwest, then California better look out! Its definitive richness is achieved through “minimal intervention and filtering” – a winemaking approach characterized by allowing Mother Nature to work her magic. For under \$20, it's a bargain bonanza of taste...and it's worth hunting down!
www.hedgescellars.com/

Rosés

Frias Rosé 2009 Fresh, Crisp, Fruity, & Fun!
(Spring Mountain District – Napa, CA)/\$12-\$17
Talk about a perfect wine to enjoy on a hot Spring afternoon...look no further! Frias Family Vineyards Rosé is fruity, fun, fresh, & feisty...and it's one of those “pinkies” that is likely to please even those “macho” palates! The Frias family – and their head winemaker, Todd Heth, have applied the enviable amount of talent and creativity in crafting a truly superb Rosé. With the kind of care and attention to detail that is more often associated with the making of artisanal varietal wines, this light ruby jewel resulted from a careful blending of juices taken from red varietals across the harvest period. It was fermented at very low temperatures – an approach that serves to preserve and highlight its fruit-forward character – and it was then allowed to rest for 5 months in an unspecified combination of oak and stainless steel. The result is a succulent and delicately floral in nature Rosé that is sure to become a favorite! www.friasfamilyvineyard.com/