



... WHEN THE CONVERSATION IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE WINE

SPRING 2013

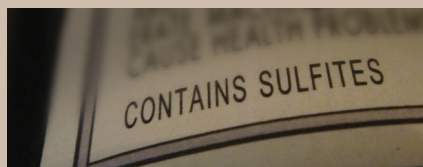
EUROPEAN WINE FACT OR FICTION?

We've all noticed the warning label "Contains Sulfites" on bottles of wine purchased in America. Yet there is no mention of sulfites on wine purchased in Europe. Does that mean they don't contain sulfites?

That's the assumption many folks make, especially if they have had wine in Europe without getting headaches. The truth is that European wines typically contain the same sulfite levels as American wines. The difference is that Europe doesn't have a law requiring wineries to place a sulfite warning on their labels. Who knew?!

So what explains the headache-free European wine drinking experience? It might be related to alcohol levels – European wines usually have less alcohol than American wines.

So enjoy your wine whether you're home or abroad, and rest assured that it's the sulfites that keep your wine happy, healthy and delicious.



IDYLLWILD

As most Middle Ridge fans know, Winemaker Chris is often referred to as the Mad Scientist of Idyllwild because of all the innovative tinkering he does in his lab. Our writer recently caught up with Mad Scientist Chris and, after convincing him to put down his bubbling test tubes for a moment, had a great chat about a very important winemaking component.

Q: *Some people who enjoy wine worry about sulfites. Is this a concern when you make your wine?*

Chris: First of all, it's important to know that sulfites are used commonly and widely in all sorts of products. For example, sodium disulfide, which is a cousin to what's used in the wine industry, is used in preserving dried fruits. That's because sodium disulfide serves two purposes – it's an antioxidant and it's anti-microbial. In other words, it attenuates – inhibits – the formation of mold, bacteria and other "bugs". Folks may be surprised to know that one ounce of dried apricots can contain twice as many sulfites as a typical bottle of red wine.

The important thing to know about wine is that there's no way to avoid sulfites – yeast is used to ferment grape juice and turn it into wine, and sulfur dioxides are a natural by-product of the fermentation process. Now, with that being said, additional sulfites need to be added to the wine to help protect the wine and its aromas and flavors while it's being made and stored. One thing you don't want to do, though,

is add too much sulfite. If too much is added, the wine will smell like burnt matchsticks and just be stinky – definitely not desirable! I add just enough to keep the wine safe and no more than that. I always say, "Keep the wine healthy and keep it happy."

Q: *Are there more sulfites in red wine than white? A lot of people say they get headaches after drinking red wines and blame it on the higher sulfite content.*

Chris: Actually, there can be more sulfites in white wines than there are in red wines. That's because reds have tannins (the component in wine that makes your tongue feel dry). Sulfites bind with the tannins over time and, therefore, become less and less recognizable by your body as "free sulfites" (the kind that may have uncomfortable side effects). The longer wine ages in the bottle, the fewer free sulfites there are.

If you are truly allergic to sulfites, you aren't likely to get a headache. Instead, you will have a reaction that is more typically associated with allergies like hives, itching, flushing, swelling, and nausea. If you get a headache from drinking red wine, it might be because of histamines. They naturally occur in higher levels in red wine than in white. Also, if you drink wines with higher alcohol content, there's more of a chance you'll get a headache.

Q: *So in other words, I can't blame my morning-after headaches on sulfites?*

Chris: You can blame hangover headaches on a lot of things, but sulfites probably aren't one of them!



Wine in the Lines

O V E R H E A R D

@MIDDLE RIDGE

The Wine Lifestyle

...AT HOME

We absolutely love these wine stoppers formed from Manzanita wood. No matter what wine you're drinking (though we hope it's from Middle Ridge!) top it with one of these stoppers, and you'll have an instant conversation piece.

Made by Idyllwild artist Gary Kuscher, the stoppers are a graceful combination of form and function. And Gary doesn't just create art – he's also instrumental in making Idyllwild a haven for other artists. He currently serves as President of the Art Alliance of Idyllwild, and for many years has played a key role in building the size and popularity of its events.

"I love working with manzanita wood," Gary told us. "And I love going to Idyll Awhile Wine Shoppe, so when people started bringing in their own wine bottle stoppers, I decided to make my own and sell them." What a great idea!

Wine... Art... Idyllwild... It's a lifestyle we love!



You can purchase Gary's wine stoppers at Idyll Awhile Wine Shoppe & Bistro, 54245 N. Circle Drive, Idyllwild, CA 92549 951.659.9463

Believe it or not, we had never held a Tapas with Chris event in Idyllwild ... so this past September, we decided it was high time to bring the party to our home town. It was a huge success with almost 150 wine and tapas lovers in attendance. Some folks were locals, some were semi-locals (with second homes in Idyllwild) and the rest came from "off the hill." But wherever people hailed from, they all had a great time tasting delicious tapas, sipping our fabulous new sparkling beverage called The Mule, and listening to feel-good tunes from The Counterfeits. Here's what people had to say:



Russ Harvey

"This is the first tapas event my wife and I have attended anywhere. The offerings were exquisitely paired, and Idyllwild is charming and inviting. And [Winemaker] Chris is so easy to talk with. Spend five minutes with him, and you'll feel like you've known each other forever."



Lisa Isaacson

"It was a great afternoon full of friends and family, tasty servings of food, and a wonderful selection of wines from Middle Ridge. The tapas plates were served by a delightful staff, and I really enjoyed the live music. Keep me on the invite list!"



Keith Harrison

"The drive up to Idyllwild and the forest is just beautiful. My wife Jaymece and I had a wonderful time. The food was great and so was the music and, of course, the wine! We met some new friends and now we hang out with them from time to time. Just tell us when the next event will be, and we'll be there!"



Eric Childress

"What can I say? I love ALL of Middle Ridge's wines, even their whites -- which says a lot for me because I don't typically like white wine. Chris knows what he's doing!"

Katiana Jam

"I agree! One of my favorites was The Mule. I never imagined that a mixed drink normally served in a large copper mug could be transformed into a simple yet elegant delicious, bubbly, ginger-infused bottled cocktail!"

Recipes

Spotlight On...

STRAWBERRY CREEK INN

MARINATED STEAK With Pomegranate Sauce

Serves 2

For the Steak

- 2 small, good-quality steaks
- ¼ cup of a good, full-bodied red wine (cabernet or merlot, for example)
- ¼ cup of brewed strong coffee
- 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary, finely chopped
- ¼ cup olive oil
- Salt & Pepper



For the Sauce

- Juice of 3 pomegranates (or about 2 cups of juice)
- About ¼ cup of heavy cream

Steak

- Whisk together wine, coffee, rosemary, olive oil, and salt & pepper in a casserole dish big enough to hold both steaks. Marinate steak in this mixture, turning periodically, for at least 30 minutes and up to 2 hours.
- Preheat a grill or grill pan to high heat (smoking hot is good).
- Preheat an oven to 325 degrees (only if you like your steak done more than medium-rare).
- Lift each steak out of marinade and let excess drip into dish, until nothing else is dripping from the steak.
- Place steaks on hot grill (or pan) and cook for about 4 minutes on each side, until browned and there are prominent grill marks.
- Remove from grill and test for doneness with an instant read thermometer. (Rodney's recommendation is medium-rare, which is 130-135°.) If desired doneness has not been reached, place the steaks in the preheated oven until desired temperature/doneness is achieved. Let steaks rest at room temperature for 10 to 15 minutes, covered with foil, before serving/cutting.

Sauce

- Pour pomegranate juice into a saucepan and turn heat to medium-high. Reduce to almost a syrup, whisking often, until bubbles start to become large and are slow to burst.
- Whisk in enough heavy cream to turn the sauce a dark pink color, continue cooking for a minute or so, and remove from heat.
- Serve sauce over the steaks or on the side, with eggs and a few ripe fresh strawberries.

If you want to get away from it all but don't want to travel too far, hop in the car and head to Idyllwild. It may only be a couple hours from San Diego and Los Angeles, but it's an entirely different – and idyllic – world. Step out of the car, take a breath of the fresh mountain air, and you'll feel rejuvenated! And whether you're hiking the mountain trails or exploring the art gallery lined streets, you'll discover that Idyllwild is meant to be enjoyed at a leisurely pace.

So go ahead – plan on staying a night or two here “on the hill.” To make your stay even more memorable, check into Strawberry Creek Inn, one of Idyllwild's three wonderful B &B's, and enjoy a delicious breakfast in the morning. You'll be charmed by the inn's eclectic décor and comfortable rooms but, more than that, co-owner Rodney Williams is an amazing chef who focuses on the natural and organic. Rodney and fellow owner Ian Scott purchase their produce locally or grow it themselves – and their flock of chickens keeps guests happy with a daily supply of uber-fresh eggs.

One of Rodney's favorite cooking ingredients is wine. “The flavor that wine gives food – there's just no substitute for it,” said Rodney. “Marinating steak in red wine and coffee – it complements and rounds out the flavor of the meat. I also like to make cream sauces by reducing a half bottle of wine over heat and then adding heavy cream to it.” And yes, he definitely cooks with Middle Ridge wine!

In fact, Rodney is as big a fan of Middle Ridge as we are of his inn. We met when Rodney called us



after reading an article about Middle Ridge in the paper. “I called because they are a local winery, and the idea that it was local was amazing to me,” said Rodney. “Then I tried their wines and immediately saw that the passion, caring and expertise that goes into making them is phenomenal. I knew we had to find a way to work together because it was one of those combinations that I knew would be magic.”

When Rodney's cookbook debuted, we were thrilled to help with the celebratory party where we paired our wine with foods featured in the book. The guests loved it, and we all had a great time. So we have to agree... Middle Ridge wine and Strawberry Creek Inn are a magical combination indeed!



Memorable Mornings from the Strawberry Creek Inn is available for purchase at the inn or through www.strawberrycreekinn.com.

On the Town

IDYLLWILD ART WALK & WINE TASTING

October 2012



You know it's fall in Idyllwild with the invigorating, crisp, cool days . . . the smell of wood burning in fireplaces . . . and the annual Idyllwild Art Walk & Wine Tasting. This year was the largest Art Walk ever with over 1100 wine and art lovers strolling the streets and enjoying the live music and one-of-a-kind art exhibits. The Art Alliance of Idyllwild always does a fantastic job organizing the event and all the proceeds benefit art education. As the sponsor of the event, we had the honor of sharing a lot of Middle Ridge wine and making hundreds of new friends. See you there next year!

ANNUAL BARREL TASTING



November 2012



Wine club members and their guests previewed fabulous Paso Robles reds – a Malbec, Petite Verdot, and Cabernet Sauvignon – that had been camping out in barrels since 2010. They were perfect pairings with the plates of decadent gourmet appetizers that were served under a canopy of twinkling lights. To everyone's delight, two new Paso Robles reserve wines were also released that night – a 2009 Merlot (only 44 cases produced) and a 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon (46 cases) – all of which found its way into eagerly awaiting wine glasses. The evening's feast for the senses included art to admire and purchase from Idyllwild's Acorn Gallery and our signature aroma table with its

interactive, smell-able display of 30 wine aromas. The evening really was a barrel of fun!

LINKS

-  **Middle Ridge Website**
www.middleridge.com
-  **Facebook:**
www.facebook.com/middleridgewine
www.facebook.com/cocktailssurlie
-  **Twitter:**
twitter.com/middleridgewine
-  **YouTube:**
www.youtube.com/user/MiddleRidgeWinery#p/u

Come taste Middle Ridge wines at Crush & Brew in Old Town Temecula, which serves as our tasting room, and at special events in Idyllwild.



Crush & Brew
28544 Old Town Front Street
Temecula, CA 92590



www.middleridge.com

SAN DIEGO BAY WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL

November 2012



Also in November, San Diego hosts THE event to “taste the love of the craft” with 200 wineries, breweries and spirits producers from around the globe, along with 70 of San Diego's top chefs and restaurants. In other words, this is Southern California's largest celebration of wine and food, so of course we jumped right in. We made a big splash at three amazing events. First came *SWISH: Serious Sips & Urban Eats* which featured the “edgiest wineries”, so we fit right in. Next, we poured at *The Vault: Reserve Wine Experience* for serious collectors of fine wine. We made our last appearance at the *Grand Tasting Event* –

the huge finale of the spectacular five-day festival. The entire experience was exhilarating, exhausting, and a whole lotta fun!

CAFÉ AROMA WINTER CLASSIC

December 2012



In December, Idyllwild's Café Aroma welcomed renowned flautist Tim Weisberg, who performed with guitarist/vocalist Chuck Alvarez, local keyboardist Barnaby Finch, acclaimed drummer David Derge, and bassist David Hughes, who is currently playing with Dave Benoit. It was a very intimate setting, with only 30 guests squeezing into the coziest place in town for an evening of world-class jazz. We had the pleasure of serving our new beverage, The Mule, along with a special menu of Middle Ridge wines. It was a fantastic way to wrap up 2012!