



Rick's Grape Skinny

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*"A meal without wine...is called breakfast!!"
(Mysterious funny fella)*

YWHMFTBOW?!

(You want how much for that bottle of wine?!)

Forgitaboutit!!

**Why Are Restaurant Wine Prices
So Flippin' High?!**

Yeah...wassupwiddat?

Well, the unfiltered, unfinned, and unfortunate truth is -- restaurants typically enjoy a huge margin and make a tidy sum from their sales of liquor, beer and wine. So, the bottom line is that they're just stickin' it to us all -- for all we're worth! There are exceptions of course although they seem to be few and far between in my experience. In any case, and from my spot on the bench, restaurant wine prices in general and across the board -- are too high...and to a degree that they don't make good business sense in my view. They should be priced in a way that might actually encourage patrons to enjoy a bottle of wine with a meal...rather than turn up their noses at such a notion. And some are even priced unfairly high. I actually know a restaurateur who will not stock any wines that patrons might see in a grocery store or wine shop...because he doesn't want them to know how badly they're getting stuck! Honest! Furthering the insult, he will not purchase any wines that cost him more than \$4 a bottle wholesale...so he can charge \$20 to \$30 and the unwitting customer will think they're getting a great deal. I can think of no other product or commodity that could get away with that kind of chicanery in pricing. Thankfully, this example is an exception, but hey - caveat emptor!!

Why do they charge so much?

Well...if you listen to most restaurateurs, they'll tell you it's because there are a number of costly elements involved in maintaining a diverse

inventory of quality wines. As reasons they have to charge so much, a good many like to cite the need for them to maintain temperature and humidity controlled storage space, the need to "over-stock" stemware to ensure there is an inventory of proper styles and sizes of stemware, the need for extra stemware handling and washing techniques to prevent the build-up of offensive odors and flavors, the need for special staff training, the frequency of need to print new wine lists, and the difficulty in obtaining preferred wines. Some or all of that might apply to high end destination restaurants and to wine-centric brands like Fleming's, Ruth's Chris, Capital Grille, Sullivan's, Shula's, Del Frisco's, etc.. But for the preponderance of venues where folks eat out, I would suggest that none of those reasons apply! And the other truth is, it costs far more to maintain, prepare and serve food than wine!

The main reason restaurants "in general" mark up their wines so much is mostly because "they can!" And if you don't choose to pay the high price, it doesn't bother them one bit. That's because they rely a lot on two commonplace realities: 1) that a good percentage of diners are enjoying a special occasion and couldn't care less about what a bottle of wine costs; and 2) that another good many folks are business people who are entertaining clients and who actually prefer an expensive bottle of wine.

What is the norm?

The customary mark-up for pricing wine is two and half to three times the wholesale cost. The lower the wholesale cost, the higher the mark-up tends to be...while the mark-up for wines that command higher wholesale prices will be less. But hold that thought...there's actually some good news! Cell phone apps have created a new order of consumers that is far more price-savvy than ever before. And that reality has helped drive a general trend within the restaurant industry to reduce wine prices. And surprise, surprise...those lower prices are beginning to drive an uptick in the amount of wine sold! Duh! Why it has taken the industry so long to jump on the sell-wine-for-less-bandwagon I don't know...but hopefully the trend will continue. There has also been an increase in the percentage of patrons who take their own wine to restaurants and who choose to pay a reasonable corkage fee versus pay through the nose for that bottle of wine. Could it be that market pressures and common sense are beginning to prevail? Imagine that fellow wineaux!! Prosit!

Toast of the Month



*“Here’s to those who wish us well
And all the rest can go to...
Well, you know the rest!”
(Anonymous)*

The Monthly Bunch!

White

Blend

Borealis Northern Whites 2014

Fruity, Simply Sweet & Spectacularly Delicious

(Willamette Valley – Forest Grove, Oregon)/\$12-\$14

This is one of my favorite white wines of the Summer. This beautifully aromatic, ultra-flavorful and unique blend of four very distinctive white varietals hails from the small, boutique and family owned *Montinore Estate Vineyards and Winery*. Noted for their Demeter certified and standard setting organic and biodynamic farming practices, founder Rudy Marchesi and his daughter Kristin are the brains, heart and soul of Montinore Estate...and boy do they ever deliver! Inspired by the zest and character of Spain’s Albariño and Argentina’s zippy Torrontes, this incredibly delicious blend is a carefully crafted union of 39% *Gewürztraminer*, 37% *Müller-Thurgau*, 19% *Riesling*, and 5% *Pinot Gris* (aka *Pinot Grigio*). I found it really amazing that despite these grapes being blended, the nature and character of each varietal still managed to sneak through as I patiently let each scrumptious sip slip and slide its way to a conclusion of absolute delight. If my “you know who” weren’t so uncompromisingly observant, I could easily drink an entire bottle at a single sitting. And yes, it’s really that good! It’s not made every year...so get it while you can! www.montinore.com/index.html

Monte Velho 2014 Crisp, Lip Smacking Delight!

(Alentejo, Portugal)/\$10-\$13 – This is a very unique and distinctive wine...and trust me...it’s nothing short of *pure bottled pleasure!* From *Herdade do Esporão*, a former *Company of the Year in Portugal*, this is a blended wine made from three white grape varietals of which I’d never heard. Imagine that...he said with tongue firmly planted in cheek! Made from 35% *Roupeiro*, 35% *Antão Vaz* and 30% *Perrum*, I’ve since learned that all three of these grapes are pretty much limited to being grown in the Alentejo Region of Portugal. This über-delicious blend was made by

winemakers David Baverstock and Sandra Alves...and it beautifully illustrates how well some of these “little guys” can stand up to the more prominently known competition. This is a superbly balanced, fruit-forward and tropical-in-nature wine that will tickle your tongue and bring a smile to your face. Drink it alone or with typical lighter fare and I’m betting that you, like me, will be anxious to get that next bottle!

www-en.esporao.com/Pages/index.aspx

Rosé

Barnard Griffin Rosé of Sangiovese 2015

Oh, Just Your Basic Explosion of Yum!

(Columbia Valley -- Richland, WA)/\$10-12

What?! You’ve never heard of a rosé made from *Sangiovese*...the famous Italian grape from which the great Chianti wines are made? Well, you can’t say that anymore! And let me tell you, this is one food-friendly, dry rosé that you absolutely do not want to miss! Hunt this baby down and I promise...you’ll be very glad you did! Barnard Griffin Winery was founded by “virtual” renegade winemaker Rob Griffin and his very understanding and supportive wife Deborah Barnard. When Rob first arrived in Washington to make wine in 1977...against the advice of his UC Davis Professors...and against all odds...he simply proceeded to produce the Best in Show at his first competition. This vintage won the Sweepstakes Award at the 2016 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition – America’s largest wine competition.

www.barnardgriffin.com/

Red

Cabernet Sauvignon

Carnivor 2014 Luscious and Velvety Smooth!
(Lodi AVA – Modesto, CA)/\$10-\$13

This is a bona fide consumer-centric wine whose every attribute is the result of researching consumer preferences. This EJ Gallo gem is comprised of mostly *Cabernet Sauvignon* with just enough inky dark *Petite Sirah* added to make this a “3D wine” – **Deep, Dark and Delicious**. Enthusiasts, critics and wine writers alike all are in synch with their unified praise of this modestly priced fruit-forward jewel of a wine. The name of this tooth-staining Cab is an homage of sorts to both the King of Wines and the King of the Food Chain. There are many Cabs whose characters are only revealed when paired with food...but not this beauty. Wines this good ought to be outlawed!

www.carnivorcabernet.com/