West Side Wine Club

December 2014

Monthly Rant

Scheduled Meetings

January 10, 2015
Annual Gala – Archer Winery

January 21, 2015
Crush Talk / Planning

February 18, 2015
Bordeaux Tasting

March 18, 2015
Speaker: ?

April 15, 2015
2013 Barrel / Carboy Sample Tasting

April ?, 2015
Tour: ?

May 20, 2015
Speaker:

June 17, 2015
"Best Practices of Amateur Winemakers"

July ?, 2015
Annual Picnic

August 19, 2015
All Whites Tasting

September 16, 2015
Other Reds Tasting

October 21, 2015
Pinot Noir Tasting

November
No Meeting

December 2, 2015
Planning, Tours, Speakers, Events, Elections

Drink Responsibly.
Drive Responsibly.

Information & Trivia

• **Newport Wine Competition:** If you plan to enter this year's Newport Seafood & Wine Festival Amateur competition you need to have your entries at the Newport Chamber of Commerce by 5:00 PM Jan. 23, 2015 or at Steinbarts no later than Jan. 16th 2015. Details at seafoodandwine.com

• **Roger Boulton, UC Davis Enology Department, On *Concrete Tanks;*** "If a winemaker had a tank of fermenting Pinot Noir and tried to run around it in a counter-clockwise direction each day for exercise, he might conclude that his exercise program had something to do with the Pinot Noir turning out delicious. He would run counter-clockwise around his Pinot Noir tanks each year after that trying to duplicate his success. Now, it may be that it does have an effect on quality; but until we do some extensive testing and research, there is no way to know."

• ***Rural Mexicans,*** *particularly young people, are leaving farm work, just as U.S. workers did in the last century. The end of farm labor abundance means long term changes for wine producers. Increasingly, being competitive in the wine industry will require mechanizing the most labor-intensive tasks and taking steps to secure access to a smaller, more loyal and more skilled workforce.*

• **If con** is the opposite of pro, then what is the opposite of progress?

The next WSWC event is scheduled for Saturday, January 10 at 7:00 p.m. at Archer Winery. See additional information on page 3.
The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 21 at 7:00 p.m. at Oak Knoll Winery. Agenda : Planning for 2015, crush Talk. We also need suggestions for speakers and winery/vineyard tours or special places we might visit. Bring a bottle for us to share. How are your 2014 wines doing so far?

1.) Snacks: This will be another potluck; bring a small snack to share.
2.) Waivers will be present at the meeting. If you have not previously signed a waiver please do so at the meeting. You may also pay your 2014 dues if you have not already done so.
3.) Bring wine glasses for tasting member wines.
4.) The meeting will begin at 7 pm and end by 9 pm. If you can, get there a little early to help set up. Please help put away chairs and tables at the end of the meeting.

WSWC Website: http://www.westsidewineclub.com/
Message Board: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Westsidewineclub/

December 3, Meeting Minutes

Members present = 23

- Marlene Grant reminded us that the annual Gala will be held on January 10th starting at 4:00 PM at Archer Winery (see page 3).
- Phil Bard said he may prepare a slide show to run on a loop throughout the evening.
- Marlene passed around a signup sheet for people to bring major protein dishes for the Gala the cost of which will be reimbursed by the club.
- Marlene said that the cost for the Gala is $15 per person.
- Also due at the Gala will be membership dues at $15 per member plus a new signed waiver for 2015. Any non-member attending will also need to fill out a waver.
- Treasurer Barb Thomson reported that the club has a balance of $1626.54.
- Barb Stinger presented Marge with a gift certificate to "Moxies", her favorite hairdresser, and a large Poinsettia for being there all year for us to hold our meetings at Oak Knoll.
- Bill Brown said he has about 10 cases of extra bottles free to anyone who wants them. Jim Ourada and Paul Rogers said they would take them.
- Bob Hatt said that he has 25 cases of Champagne bottles and about 40 - 45 cases of Burgundy bottles free to anyone who wants them.
- Jim Ourada is looking for other members to partner with him & Paul Rogers for the "Jfred'" vineyard grapes on Keizer Road in 2015. This is about 1200 pounds of a combination of Riesling & Pinot Noir.
- Marge said that our February meeting could be held at Oak Knoll this year since she would not be going to Mexico.
- Phil Bard said he is working with Rick Kipper to find another domain for our website.
- The question was raised again if the club should work to take over the Amateur wine competition at the Washington County Fair.
- Bill Brown suggested that we arrange our tours for earlier in the year during slack time in order to get a more favorable response from winery & Vineyard owners.
- Phil Bard opened the meeting to nominations for the 2015 officers and chairman seats. All nominations were unanimously approved by those members present.

President – Phil Bard
Secretary – Ken Stinger
Treasurer – Barb Thomson
Group purchases chair – Jonathon Brown (Bob Hatt, understudy)
Winery/Vineyard Tours – Bill Brown
Club Meeting Tastings – Ted Johnson
Education – Mike Smolak
Website Manager – Rick Kipper
Social Events – Marlene Grant
Competitions – Don Robinson

WSWC Annual Gala

Saturday January 10th 2015
4:00pm—9:00 pm
Archer Winery

32230 NE Old Parrett MTN Rd.
Newberg Oregon 97132

Bring your own wine glass and favorite wines to share.

If your last name starts with:

A - O please bring Side Dish
P – Z please bring Dessert

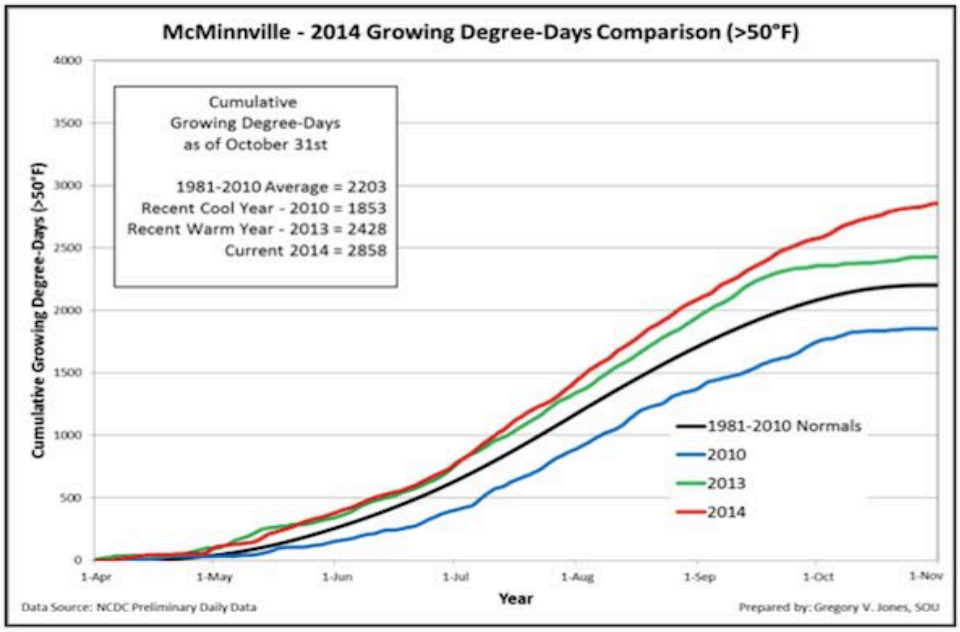
Come for great food, and
"of course" the great wine!

$15.00 per person

Pay at the door also renew your membership

From Portland, Archer Winery is off Hwy 99W before entering the town of Newberg, Turn Left on Parrett Mountain Rd. It is 300 yards on right.

Record number of heat units for Oregon Pinot Noir growers



The chart for Pinot Noir country in the Willamette Valley showed McMinnville finished with 2,858 GDD, which easily surpassed the 2,428 from the 2013 vintage that was slowed only by the rainy remnants of a September typhoon that crossed the Pacific Ocean.

Twenty years ago author Mireille Guiliano interviewed **Julia Child**, and asked about her favorite appetizer. She got up, went to the refrigerator, pulled out a large platter, and said “oysters, of course,” and proceeded to bring out a host of oyster tools, and said “shuck.” Mireille panicked. “You prefer,” Julia said, “to ‘consider the oyster’ from afar,” saying it with mocking disdain. Hands on hips, she gave me one of her stares that proclaimed I was pathetic. Seeing, however, that I brought her a bottle of Krug, her favorite Champagne, she gave one of those high toned Julia Child laughs, and said “Krug and oysters; oh, good. I’ll shuck.”

Bordeaux consultant to test oak influence on wine aroma

Thursday 4 December 2014 by Jane Anson in Bordeaux

Winemakers may gain more influence over aromas in their wines if a new research project led by trained perfumer and winery consultant Alexandre Schmitt goes to plan.

Schmitt, whose perfume training and subsequent re-invention in wine has earned him the nickname 'nose of Bordeaux', has started a three-year experiment with barrel maker **Charlois** on different oak treatments for wine.

Together with Charlois, which owns Berthomieu, Saury and Leroi cooperages, he will conduct tests in the cellar of an unnamed Bordeaux chateau, ensuring all the wine is kept in the same base conditions.

If successful, the project may help winemaker to exert more control over certain aromas already linked to oak treatment, such as vanilla, cloves, burnt almonds and smoky notes.

'This is the first time globally that such a detailed test has been carried out, looking not just at the taste but the specific aroma molecules transferred to wine by barrels.’ Schmitt, counts **Opus One** and **Petrus** among his clients.

Sylvain Charlois, group president, added, ‘The molecules transmitted to wine by oak are known, but how they are affected by how the barrel is made, the width of the grain, the method and level of toasting, or the provenance of the oak is less known.’

'We want to develop a molecular reference so our clients can choose exactly the barrels best suited to them.’ A spokesperson said the tests would costs hundreds of thousands of euros.

Initial tests will be on 40 barrels of **Merlot** 2014, rising to 60 or 80 barrels for the 2015 and 2016 vintages. ‘This is not micro-fermentation but a significant study,’ said Schmitt.

All wine will be tested first in an oenology lab to ensure that it has no faults, and a group led by Schmitt and including oenologists, coopers and scientific researchers will taste samples every three months.

For balance, they will also test the same wine in stainless steel, as well as in vats containing wood derivatives from staves to chips.

Experimental winemaking is good winemaking.

Curtis Philli

MOST WINEMAKING IS PRETTY empirical rather than theoretical. Most winemakers rely on experience, either their own or gleaned from others. Sometimes the best, or at least the most informing, experiences are accidental. Usually, however, winemakers learn by trying new things. There is a lot of trial and error in winemaking. Most of it is pretty informal and relatively small-scale.

The Ambiguities of Tradition

One of the memes I'm seeing these days is an unattributed variant of a quote from computing pioneer, the late Rear Admiral Grace Hopper, which states that, "The most dangerous phrase in the language is, 'We've always done it this way.'" (1) The point isn't to be an iconoclast merely for the sake of busting a few idols. Sometimes there are very good reasons for old traditions. Some traditions make sense in their original context but are nonsensical outside their place of origin. Sometimes a dearly held tradition never made any sense.

Why Bother With Winemaking Trials?

Sometimes an old tradition or technique gets appropriated thoughtlessly or for the wrong reasons. Just because a technique has a proven track record in a different winemaking region, or with different varietals, doesn't mean that it is the best choice. My personal epiphany occurred years ago during a conversation with Christian Roguenant. We were discussing Chardonnay production in Chablis versus California. I've long been impressed by Roguenant's wines and was a bit surprised to learn that he wasn't sending his Chardonnay through malolactic fermentation (MLF). This was a bit before "naked" Chardonnay was a thing. At the time, I was experimenting with making Chardonnays with no oak but an otherwise conventional *sur lie aging and MLF. Roguenant's point was that the main purpose for* MLF is to reduce acidity, something that is usually desirable in Chablis, but Californian Chardonnays generally have too little acidity rather than too much. The buttery (diacetyl) and oaky notes associated with California Chardonnay, an acquired taste, are a byproduct of appropriating the Chablis solution for high acidity.

Of course this appropriation led to something different, and the resulting butter-and-oak California Chardonnays have developed into an overwhelming stylistic juggernaut. Something like half of all varietally designated wine sold in the United States is Chardonnay, but California-style Chardonnay remains stylistically distinct from Chablis due to the use of the same techniques in a completely different winemaking context. Put another way, the "what" (barrel fermentation, malolactic fermentation) was appropriated with little consideration as to "why" (reduction of acidity) winemakers in Chablis were sending their wines through MLF in the first place. I remain convinced that this was an unconscious and probably unrepeatable success. I think that sometimes the "way we've always done things" doesn't really make sense in the current context. Each step in winemaking should be rethought from time to time.

Five Things to Improve Winemaking Trials

I view winemaking trials as an embodiment of the winemaker's pursuit of quality. Even winemaking trials that aren't a success in the conventional sense are informative, even if the main conclusion is nothing more than "this approach is not worth pursuing." Even a result of "there was no difference between the experiment and the control" is worth knowing. The only real failure is when you have no idea what happened or if there was a difference or not. I have five general tips for making more meaningful winemaking trials.

• LIMIT THE VARIABLES

An experiment that tests too many things really tests nothing. Too many variables make it hard to figure out which ones were significant. The most useful winemaking trials change just a single variable.

• MEASURE WHAT CAN BE MEASURED

Proper sensory analysis is fine, but comparable numbers are better. Too often what passes for sensory analysis in too many wineries is the subjective hedonic preferences of one to three individuals.

• WORK IN TRIPLICATE (OR BETTER)

One of the things that drives me crazy in my consulting business is the number of wineries that make business and branding decisions based on an experimental group of one.

• ASSUME YOU ARE BIASED (BECAUSE YOU ARE)

Confirmation bias is the bane of good experimentation. In a nutshell, the problem is that when you expect difference, you perceive difference. This is why one entire approach to sensory analysis is based on the perception of difference.

• GET (OUTSIDE) HELP

Familiarity breeds contempt or complacency. Outside help can be a possible antidote to confirmation bias.

(1) The actual quote is from *The Wit and Wisdom of Grace Hopper, "Humans are* allergic to change. They love to say, 'We've always done it this way.' I try to fight that. That's why I have a clock on my wall that runs counter-clockwise."

Bacteria in Wine May Bring Health Benefits

By **Agata Blaszczak Boxe**

There are bacteria in wine that may be beneficial for people's health, new research finds.

In the study, researchers in Spain isolated 11 strains of bacteria from wine, including strains of *Lactobacillus*, which are also found in yogurt, as well as *Oenococcus* and *Pediococcus* bacteria, which are associated with the wine-making process.

"Up to now, many studies have reported that the best foods to deliver probiotics are dairy fermented products, so that the probiotic properties of wine-related *Lactobacillus* were hardly studied," said study author Dolores González de Llano of Universidad Autónoma de Madrid in Spain.

But "nowadays, there is a need for novel and non-dairy probiotics, from the increasing number of lactose-intolerance cases occurring in the world population, coupled with the unfavorable effect of cholesterol contained in fermented dairy products," González de Llano told Live Science.

Probiotics are live organisms that can bring health benefits when consumed in the right amounts, González de Llano said. Consuming probiotics may be beneficial primarily for maintaining a healthy community of gut bacteria and bowel function, she said, adding that probiotics have also been reported to possibly have anti-cancer and cholesterol-lowering properties.

In the study, the researchers examined the ability of the bacteria they isolated from wine to survive in conditions similar to those found in the human gastrointestinal system. Bacteria in any food product must to be able to survive in the hostile environment of the gastrointestinal tract in order to have an impact on human health.

The researchers looked to see whether the bacteria in wine could survive when exposed to simulated gastric juice, bile and lysozyme, an enzyme that is highly concentrated in human saliva that can damage bacterial cell walls.

They found that the bacteria could survive in such conditions, and their survival was comparable to or even better than the survival of several strains of bacteria known to be beneficial to human health.

The investigators also looked at how well the bacteria in wine might stick to the walls of the human intestine by growing human intestine cells in a lab dish. They found the bacteria did stick, and therefore, the bacteria "may provide beneficial effects, such as the exclusion of pathogens," or harmful bacteria, from the intestine, they wrote in the study.

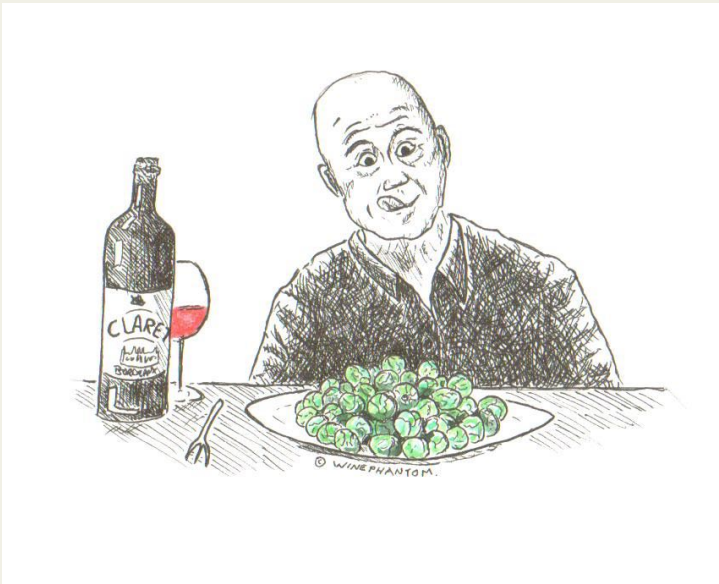
In particular, one strain of bacteria found in wine, called *P. pentosaceus* CIAL-86, had an "excellent" ability to stick to the intestinal wall and "good" activity against *E. coli,* the researchers said.

The probiotic properties of the lactic-acid bacteria isolated from wine are similar to those of probiotics that come from foods like dairy products such as fermented milk or yogurt and dry sausages, and foods of plant origin such as sauerkraut and olives, fruits, cereals, meat or fish, she said.

The new findings do not mean, however, that drinking a couple glasses of wine a day will provide the same health benefits as eating a food like yogurt, she said.

Even though the moderate consumption of wine, which she defined as two glasses per day, may confer certain health benefits, wine does not currently provide a sufficient amount of probiotics to be beneficial, because many of the bacteria are eliminated during a process called sulfating, which stabilizes wine, she said. (Sulfating is the process of adding sulfites, which are preservatives commonly used in winemaking.)

However, probiotics "could be isolated from wine in order to be commercialized as probiotics, or added to functional foods," she said.



Mezcal: Tequila's wild, artisanal cousin

Arthur Black May 27, 2014

A ten-hour drive southeast of the historic town of Tequila in the Mexican state of Jalisco, you arrive in Oaxaca, the primary source of truly amazing beverage, mezcal. Few outside of the beverage community have heard of mezcal. Even fewer know anything about it. Yet everyone has heard of tequila; and yet again, few people actually know anything about it, besides taking shots the "cowboy way" at pool halls, pubs and drinking holes. Most people do not realize that all tequila is technically mezcal, yet not all mezcal is tequila. Furthermore, mezcal has been becoming particularly popular amongst the best bartenders in the country. It is far from a bottom-shelf item, nor is it a stepchild of tequila proper. Actually, mezcal*s* that are commercially relevant are considerably more artisanal in nature than the bulk of popular tequila brands imported into the U.S.


Tobalá in Sola de Vega

Most simply defined, mezcal is a blanket genre of various distillates made from any number of species of agave coming from Mexico that are not restricted by the legislation regulating geographic and production parameters that govern tequila. But there is nothing remotely simple about quality mezcal. For the record, I love tequila, but when I lecture on mezcal, think about mezcal*,* and drink mezcal, it is most easily described to the inquisitive layperson as "tequila on steroids, with a tattooed back-piece and a real bad attitude."

Tequila on the rise

The best way to start is to identify what mezcal is not, or better yet, by addressing how mezcal and "tequila proper" are different. As mentioned earlier, tequila technically falls into the mezcal, or mescal wine family. Mezcal wine is an old name used for agave-based spirits by the early Spaniards that brought the art of distillation to 16th century Mexico. For a few hundred years mezcal *wine* was being produced throughout much of Mexico. The town of Tequila became known for mezcal wine production because of the concentration of emerging mescal wine distillers. The word "tequila" itself actually comes from Nahuatl, meaning "a place of work." Tequila became so famous for its mezcal wines that the term "tequila wine" came to replace the term mescal wine*,* eventually becoming *tequila* in common vernacular.

Eventually tequila's identity distanced itself from other agave-based spirits produced elsewhere in the country. In the middle of the 20th century, the amount of production coming from approximately 90 distilleries operating in the state of Jalisco, in and around the town of Tequila, necessitated the development of organizations to regulate, organize and advance the "tequila" industry. In 1949, a division was established within the Mexican government known as *Norma Ofical Mexicana* (NOM) to regulate producers, delimit agricultural areas and establish production criteria. Tequila acquired its own appellation status, or DOT (*Denominación de Origen Tequila*), in 1994 in agreement with the European Union.
Tequilerías, or tequila distillers, branded themselves well over the past several decades and are largely attributed with driving premium spirits sales in the U.S. over the past 10 years. According to the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS), in 2008, in spite of the recession, the super-premium category of tequila continued to grow 10.6% and by the following year Americans positioned tequila as the fifth largest spirits revenue category at a value of about $1.65 billion. Here is one for competitive Americans; in 2007 the U.S. surpassed Mexico in tequila consumption! That would be like Mexico drinking more bourbon than the U.S. – something not likely to happen.

Part of the fallout of tequila's success is the public's perception that agave-based spirit not labeled "tequila" is of lesser quality, which couldn't be further from the truth. I concede that there are crappy mezcal*s* (largely consumed in Mexico) and that there is also crappy tequila (largely consumed in Mexico AND the U.S.). But quality mezcal*s* are not labeled tequila because of inferior quality; they are just made with different agave species and grown outside the geographic delimitations that qualify a spirit to be labeled "tequila".

Beyond the blue


Agave Mexicano

So, in regards to tequila vs. mezcal, it is *Agave tequilana Weber var. Azul,* or "blue agave", that must make up at least 51% of any agave based spirit hoping to be labeled "tequila". This is not the case with mezcal, which are largely made from *agave espadin*, the actual parent plant of Azul. All agave species are amazing plants that very much resemble cacti, though they are in a separate family, the amaryllis family. Different species of agave vary in size, shape, yield, and flavor. They also respond differently to climatic conditions, altitudes, ambient yeast, and cultivation vs. wild plantings, on and on. The blue agave has approximately 200 razor sharp, blade-like leaves known as *pincas* (seriously, I speak from experience, razor sharp and should not be tackled in a street fight unless you have a sword). They are ready to be harvested between every 8 to 12 years and can grow well over seven feet tall. Upon harvest, *azul* plants can weigh between 80 to more than 200 pounds. The center of the plant beneath the pointy leaf exterior is known as the *piña* and looks very similar to a very large pineapple.

Agave *espadin* is responsible for about 95% of mezcal. It's a relatively similar in size to agave *azul*, growing up to approximately 160 lbs., but it only needs 7 years to harvest. *Espadin* is widely cultivated in Oaxaca, the epicenter of mezcal production, and is easily transplantable and cultivated with healthy yields and quality flavor for mezcal.
There are many other species of agave used for mezcal. Many of the "wild" species are just that, unable to be cultivated and only found in their own little indigenous pockets. Not too dissimilar from wild mushrooms, varieties of agave like *Tobalá* are sought out by *fábricas* or *palenques* (mezcal producers). Tobalá is by far the scarcest species of agave and scarcity means sticker shock for the would-be collector. It's a particularly small agave plant at around 25 kilograms (50 lbs.) and small plants make small yields. Tobalá plants also need about 12 years to grow into maturity. All things considered, *tobalá*mezcal*s* tend to retail over $100.


Arroqueño in Barro

Another "wild agave" is also *arrequeño*, which is slightly more abundant than *tobalá*, and some consider the most regal of the wild agaves. It too is a non-cultivated agave, but a bit easier to spot in the landscape as they grow to a whopping 360 pounds. In Oaxaca, there are three primary valleys whose northern ends converge on the city of Oaxaca itself and *arrequeño* is typically found centrally in the valleys. The juice extracted from *arrequeño* is considered the sweetest and the best.

Sierrudo is an enormous agave that takes 16 to 20 years to harvest and can grow upwards of 1,000 lbs! At such size, *Sierrudo* is prized for its yields and its juice is sweet, but does tend to have a sour element. *Mexicano* is another species but it's about one-fifth the size of *sierrudo* and takes about half as long to reach maturity for harvest. *Mexicano* also tends to have a bitter element. Neither *sierrudo* nor *mexicano* can be cultivated.

Mezcal and tequila are classified differently by the government. There are two primary ways of classifying tequila: by category and by aging regimen. Both are regulated in order to achieve their DOT status. You have tequila labeled, "100% Blue Agave" which must be made from… 100% blue agave. Then there is "mixto", which only has to meet the minimum criteria of 51% blue agave; the other 49% could be juice extracted from other agave species or more likely a hodge-podge of sweetening agents, older "mixtos" from previous distillations or God-knows-what. Whether "100% Blue Agave" or "mixto", both fit into an aging criteria: "silver", or tequila aged no longer than 60 days, "reposado", which has been aged between 60 days and 1 year, "añejo", which has been aged over a year and most recently, "extra añejo" which have been aged at least 3 years.

Slow, steady, and smoked

Historically, there was no legislated criterion for mezcal and production was no holds barred. There still isn't much regulation, but in 1997, mezcal did receive its own *Norma* as tequila did almost 50 years earlier. According to the *Norma* established for mezcal in 1997, legitimate mezcal is broken down into two categories: Tipo 1 is 100% agave (whatever species, though 90% of mezcal is agave *espadin*) and Tipo 2**,** which must be at least 80% agave.
Some quick notes on some areas of production that deserve to be highlighted: the vast majority of blue agaves destined to become tequila are "cooked" (using a heating process facilitating the conversion of inulininto fermentable sugars) in steam autoclaves that fast forward (6 to 14 hours) the slow, oven roasting process (upwards of three days) only utilized by ultra premium tequila marks. After cooking, the brown, caramelized *piñas* are shredded apart and water is poured over this pulping matter known at *begazo* to leach out the sugar, creating *aguamiel*, or "honeyed water". The honeyed water will be moved to vats, cultured yeasts will be added and a low proof beer-like liquid known as *tepache* is born in stainless steel vats. This eventually makes its way into a still for spirit production. Tequila has to be distilled at least two times; the first distillation takes a couple hours and yields *ordinario*, a spirit at 20% and the second distillation takes about twice as long, yielding a spirit at 55% alcohol, which is later diluted down with water. Tequila has to be bottled at a minimum alcohol level of 35% ABV for domestic distribution or minimum 40% ABV for USA distribution.


Slowly fermenting tepache

Mezcal production is completely different and considerably more laborious. The agaves are roasted rather slowly underground in fire pits for several days to upwards of a month. Imagine earthen, mound-like fire pits that are filled with scorching hot rocks and covered in various ways. Depending on the resources of the artist or the customs of the village, a single village may have a number of *palenques* that share resources like a still or a *tahona,* the traditional grinding stone pulled by a donkey to mash the agave. This village may cover the roasting agave with earth, compost, *pinca* leaves from the agave, or perhaps a tarp woven from the *pincas*. This lengthy and intense process of converting inulin into glucose and fructose in these pits is where mezcal gets its considerably smoky and pungent aroma.

After the *piñas* are roasted they are then mashed, traditionally in the *tahona (*assuming the village has that luxury). Some *palenques* without access to a *tahona* simply bludgeon the *pinas* to a pulpy mess with a baseball bat or club. Try to imagine the therapeutic value of sipping mezcal and then laying into a 100 pound roasted agave with a baseball bat; sounds way better than working a heavy punching bag if you ask me.

When fermenting, the brown, sugary agave are moved to small open-top wooden vats known as *tinas* and ambient yeast get to work in a slow, lengthy fermentation. Remember, in tequila production, they are spraying water over crushed agave to leach out the honey water. Here, only a tiny amount of water is added to the smashed, sugary agave (approximately a ratio of 10-15% added water to pulp). The fermenting mash is more reminiscent of some crude, thick brown stew served to you in prison than the *tepache* produced in tequila production.

Finally, the low-proof brew is moved to a still for one, two, or three distillations depending on the preferences of the craftsman. Stills for mezcal production are generally rather small and put together with considerable MacGyver-like resourcefulness. On the luxurious side, a distiller may have the good fortune of a small copper still, while others may be using ceramic stills or even clay pots with bamboo shoots as their condensers – seriously, bamboo for condensers. In all cases, production and distillation for quality mezcal is an extremely laborious and lengthy process.

Oak? Gracias, pero no.

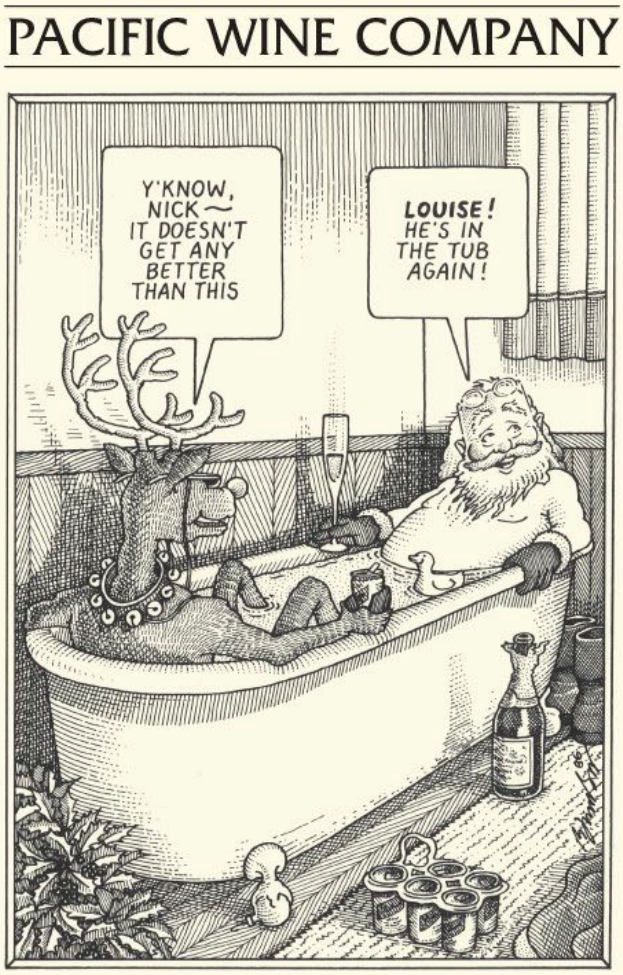

50-liter clay pots used for distillation

Not to be forgotten is the relaxed legislation regulating ingredients and mezcal. I don't mean ingredients like sweetening agents or coloring agents; I mean ingredients like fresh, seasonal fruits, nuts, and spices, etc. There is an unquestionable artistic liberty in the creation of these lovely libations and sometimes that creativity manifests in what some would consider absolute insanity (not me, of course). There are mezcal*s* that will hang game (chicken, venison, rabbits, various pig parts) in the top of their wee stills and percolate their base through said animals carcasses suspended over a evaporating batch of sweet, gooey brew. And yes, from the ones I've had, they are awesome, artisanal and you can genuinely taste the game!

There is the consideration of geographic differences between tequila and mezcal. According to NOM law, there are five states in Mexico that can produce tequila. Nayarit, Michoacan, Tamaulipas and Guanajuato can all legally produce tequila. Collectively they house about five dozen distilleries, but Jalisco has over 100 distilleries and produces about 90% of tequila made in Mexico. *Amatitan* and *Los Altos* are two prominent areas of quality agave cultivation that surround Tequila township.

Well established by now, most mezcal comes from Oaxaca, but with the *Norma* of 1997 there are 8 primary states of mezcal production. Guerrero, Guanajuato, San Luis Potosi, Zacatecas, Durango and a few municipalities in Tamaulipas and Michoacan can make legitimate mezcal*,* though Oaxaca is by and large the dominant source. Within Oaxaca, six counties can use the mezcal appellation – Sola de Vega (world's most famous spot for tobalá), Miahuatlan, Yautepec, Ocotlan, Tlacolua and Ejutla.

Lastly and more interesting than geographic restrictions, mezcal*s* are not subjected to the aging regimens of tequila. Oak regimens are widely considered as flavor distractions to the "soul" of the recipes and boy, do these spirits have soul. If you spent time in the desert mountains of central-southern Mexico, making a beautiful spirit from rare ingredients in itty-bitty amounts, why the hell would you introduce oak and mask all the flavor and identity? Essentially, "we don't need no stinking oak"!



West Side Wine Club
Leadership Team – 2014

• President: **Phil Bard** phil@philbard.com
• Set agenda for the year
• Establish leadership team
• Assure that objectives for the year are met
• Set up agenda and run meetings

Treasurer: **Barb Thomson** bt.grapevine@frontier.com
• Collect dues and fees, update membership list with secretary
• Pay bills

Secretary: **Ken and Barb Stinger** kbstinger@frontier.com
• Communicate regularly about club activities and issues
• Monthly newsletter
• Keep updated list of members, name tags and other data

Chair of Education: **Mike Smolak** Mike@NWRetire.com
• Arrange speakers for our meetings

Chair for Tastings: **Ted Johnson**, tedj52@msn.com
• Conduct club tastings
• Review and improve club tasting procedures

Chair of Winery/Vineyard Tours: **Bill Brown** bbgoldieguy@gmail.com
• Select wineries to visit
• Arrange tours
• Cover logistics (food and money)

Chair of Group Purchases: **Jonathan Brown** jonabrown@gmail.com Bob Hatt & Jim Ourada helpers.
Makes the arrangements to purchase, collect, and distribute
• Grape purchases
• Supplies – These should be passed to the President for distribution.

Chair of Competitions: **Don Robinson** don_robinson_pdx@yahoo.com
• Encourage club participation in all amateur competitions available. Make information known through Newsletter, e-mail and Facebook.

Chairs for Social Events: **Marlene Grant** denmargrant@gmail.net Barbara Stinger & Mindy Bush – Helpers
• Awards Gala / Holliday parties

• Web Content Editor: **Rick Kipper** kips@lycos.com Webmaster: **David Ladd**