



## Speaking of Wine

by Duane Bowman

### What's in a Number...

We love numbers. As consumers, studies reveal that those numbers we believe reflect wine "quality" are nearly impossible to ignore as we browse wine shop shelves.

Many may criticize putting a number on something as complex as a wine and many will extol the virtue of trusting their "own palate" over some number assigned by some critic. They'll say it's like putting a number on the Mona Lisa so you can compare her with another work of art. But no matter how hard you try, you're going to find wines you've never heard of or tried on those shelves. That's when studies show we consumers pay attention to the numbers. Having these numbers is like bargain shopping with a cheat sheet. The game is to buy the highest number for the cheapest price. And we love the game.

Some of us even memorize wine ratings like baseball fans memorize batting statistics. Always on the lookout for the odd bargain. We even have apps in our cell phones that can access the internet to tell us when we've found some rare nugget. All based on someone's rating – and we might not even know who that someone is. Did we find it on CellarTracker or Wine.com? Did Snooth or WineMcGee give us the tip?

We may not even know or care how the rating is arrived at, but we know 92 is higher than 91. Far less confusing than descriptive ratings like outstanding, extraordinary, jaw-dropping, overwhelming, rocking, or classic that our European cousins seem to prefer. To us, those are as confusing as our own National Threat Advisory level. Now, is Elevated worse than Guarded? Is Orange worse or better than Yellow? I give up. Maybe they should have a "just kiss the wife goodbye now 'cause you're going to get bombed today" rating. Yes, it's so much easier to apply a number – and we Americans like nothing more than simple.

So what's wrong with this American approach to buying wines by the numbers?

Well, for one thing it's known to be biased. In a classic example, two very famous and respected wine critics Jancis Robinson and Robert Parker clashed in 2004 over their widely divergent ratings for the new 2003 Chateau Pavie. Parker

awarded the wine a huge 95 while Robinson's assessment was that it was "unbalanced and faulty". She called the wine "ridiculous". And these were two highly skilled wine professionals! So what are we to make of Parker's claim when he says, "... wine is no different from any consumer product. There are specific standards of quality that full-time wine professionals recognize, and there are benchmark wines against which others can be judged." Really? Then how does something like this happen?

Well, we might as well resolve ourselves to the fact that numerical ratings will exist and they will influence our purchase behavior. We might as well also admit that wine critics aren't robots, they aren't even consistent with themselves – making "find and follow a critic whose palate matches your own", somewhat suspect advice.

There's even nothing wrong with the occasional fun game of high score – low price, but if you really want to understand wines you need to spend time tasting their variety – including those unrated, or maybe better described as "undiscovered," by wine critics.

Yes, you'll find wines you don't care for, wines that confuse, wines you love and wines you just can't decide about. But they'll all contribute to your appreciation of this amazing drink. And most surprising, I can guarantee one thing about you. Your palate will change and you will appreciate, maybe even prefer wines in the future that you might even find offensive today. It happens with everyone who embarks on the journey of discovering wines and it will happen to you.

So relish the change and sample the variety of wines you're lucky enough to have right here on your doorstep. Jacksonville is right beside the largest concentration of wineries in this area, the Applegate wine country, and the spring season is about to make wine tasting in that scenic environment even more pleasurable. So take advantage of being here, grab a friend and get on with your journey of wine discovery.

*Duane Bowman is a Director of Applegate Valley Oregon Vintners Association and winemaker at Cricket Hill Winery located at the 2 mile marker on Little Applegate Rd. Find him at [www.crickethillwinery.com](http://www.crickethillwinery.com) or email [duane@crickethillwinery.com](mailto:duane@crickethillwinery.com)*



## Sociability

by Linda DeWald

### Ideas About Forming a Book Club

Why do it? One of many reasons to form a book club is the opportunity for sociability. If you crave congenial companionship with people who share your interests, forming a book club can make your desire a reality.

Without the structure of a club, good intentions to get together with acquaintances can slip by into weeks, months, years, or into the land of "never-happened."

A club spin-off is gathering with members outside of meetings. That will further enliven your social calendar.

So rather than lament the lack of sociability in your life, give this idea a go!

#### Which books?

Many book clubs are set up so members all read the same book. Another format to consider is to select one topic per meeting with members choosing any book of their liking on that topic.

Topic examples are: southern Oregon history; artists' biographies; seasonal themes; or people who made an impact in a specific time period. You will learn a lot as you explore various topics!

#### Who to include?

Your club could just be you and one friend, but a larger group keeps the meetings vibrant, especially when some members are occasionally absent. More than ten members will stretch the average person's attention span to the limit.

Members with a positive attitude who are eager to expand their horizons will contribute to the club's success.

#### When to meet?

Once a month is a good interval to find and finish a book. More frequent meetings can be a burden. You don't want your club to feel like assigned reading in school.

Prior to the initial gathering of the group, think about what week of the month, day of the week, and start time might be best for your members and why. Consider the routine of your busiest members. Then present a few choices, describing your rationale. Your forethought will help the group reach consensus.

#### Where to meet?

Of the myriad choices on where to meet, my vote is to rotate to the homes of each member. This may be nervous-making for some people because they feel

they will be judged that their home is not ready for prime-time.

Often people say they will have you to their home "after": after their remodel; or after they conjure up the perfect home-made refreshments to offer guests; or after they straighten up so everything is perfectly tidy.

One measure of hospitality is to invite people into your home anytime. If you wait for completion of all the "afters" in your life, you may never open your home. The reality is most people don't really care if everything is perfect. They care about forming community, and they feel close to those who share their homes.

As host, it's hospitable to offer coffee, tea, and a modest snack to your guests. Here's a tip: don't serve sticky or cumbersome snacks and give members table space to set drinks and food so they can hold their books when they report.

#### How long to meet?

While an unstructured atmosphere is a lovely thought, some people don't get an equal amount of "air-time" to talk about their book unless a time limit is set for all members. A goal of five minutes for each person to present a summation, with a few comments from other members, works well.

Almost any meeting requiring focused attention is optimal if it lasts no more than one hour. Set the duration of your club meetings to accommodate socializing at the start and a little cushion for enthusiastic members who take a bit longer to report.

It is best if members monitor themselves to keep on time. If that doesn't work, someone can volunteer to provide gentle reminders to keep things flowing, perhaps utilizing a visible hourglass timer.

#### What to record?

Your club will benefit if one member captures information such as upcoming meeting dates, locations and topics, plus book titles and authors for the current month. They can email the data to everyone before each meeting. This method is less fuss than each member writing it all down at the meeting.

Encourage members to mark their own calendars to automatically email their book information to the record-keeper in advance of each meeting. Effective

Book Club - Cont'd. on Page 25

## Sanctuary One at Double Oak Farm

by Robert Casserly

Summers in the Applegate Valley are wonderfully warm, dry, and sunny. In autumn, the valley is bathed in heavenly light as the oak groves and grapevines turn from green to gold. Winter is nice, too, because the long nights and cold air make the stars shine even brighter in the Applegate's dark, unpolluted skies.

But in our opinion, the Applegate Valley's most glorious season is spring. As the days grow longer and warmer, more and more life-giving energy flows from the sun into the awakening earth, and the resulting transformation is truly something to behold.

In spring, the grass in the valley's hayfields turns as emerald green as anything found in Ireland. There are flowers everywhere you look and songbirds chirping in the trees. Steelhead trout gather in the Applegate River, having swum upstream hundreds of miles, all the way from the Pacific Ocean, to meet their mates. Rainstorms bathe the forests of Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine, leaving behind the pleasant scent of evergreens and fresh earth. In cool, damp places in the forest, magical plants like ground cone and Indian pipe suddenly appear out of nowhere. And all the wild creatures who live in the Applegate Valley's miles and miles of Rogue River National Forest, from ants so small you can barely see them to bears so big you think for a second you just saw Bigfoot having breakfast in the blackberry bushes,

shake off their winter sluggishness and get on with the busy work of survival.

One of the best ways to experience the beauty and life-giving energy of an Applegate spring is to combine an educational tour of Double Oak Farm with another popular Applegate outing, such as a trip to an Applegate vineyard, the historic McKee Covered



Bridge, pristine Applegate Lake, or a hike up the Mule Mountain Trail. Just like the rest of the Applegate Valley, Double Oak Farm is especially pleasant in the spring. The abundant sunshine turns our spacious pastures a deep, rich green as Timothy

grass, alfalfa, and barley reach for the sky. Our apple trees come back to life and dance in the breeze. Our rescued farm animals graze peacefully in the fields, happy as can be now that fresh grass is back on the menu after eating hay all winter long. More and different kinds of wild birds join our tame ducks and geese for a swim around the pond and fountain we've built for them.

The Sanctuary's tours include an introduction to how nonprofit care farms like ours promote health and well-being for people, animals, and the earth by studying and respecting the physical and spiritual value of all living beings. Visitors get to meet some of the Sanctuary's staff, interns, and volunteers, then take a walk around our 55-acre farm with us, seeing and learning about lots of different things.

During your tour, you might learn a little about Applegate Valley history, including about the Da-Ku-Be-Te-De (pronounced Daw-Kew-Bee-Tee-Dee) people who lived in the Applegate Valley for 10,000 years until being decimated by white settlers; how our permaculture program is converting a former cattle ranch into an organic food forest; how our education program tries to enlighten and inspire children of all ages; and how a small group of committed citizens can create a more humane community, one rescued farm animal and house pet at a time.

The chance to meet the rescued animals we work with is a very popular part of our care farm tours. The Sanctuary is not a petting zoo, and we never force any animal to engage with people if they don't want to, but luckily for us most of the animals genuinely enjoy and benefit from meeting new human friends. On any given day, you might meet some friendly horses, cows, llamas, sheep, goats, pigs, ducks, geese, chickens, or other kinds of farm animals. And the Sanctuary's newly constructed cottages for rescued dogs and cats

Sanctuary - Cont'd. on Page 32

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## Tax Tips You Can Use

by Kathleen Crawford  
Enrolled Agent

This time of year many taxpayers are confused about adding dependents onto their tax returns. Having dependents on a tax return plays a major role in many tax deductions and credits and can reduce tax or even create additional refunds. There are specific rules about who can be a dependent for tax purposes. A few years ago, the IRS issued new definitions that tightened and equalized the rules for dependents throughout the tax return. For 2010 and beyond, there are just two types of dependents. The first is a "qualifying child" and is the magic key to many deductions and tax lowering credits. The second type of dependent is called "qualifying relative" although the person does not have to be related to you.

Both types of dependents must pass each of six tests to be considered a dependent. The first four tests are fairly simple by IRS standards. The last two are the major ones. The first test asks "Is the individual unmarried?" The answer must be yes, except for certain situations. The second test asks "Is the individual a citizen?" The answer must be yes. For tax purposes, the citizens of our NAFTA partners, Mexico and Canada, can answer yes to this question. The third test asks "Can the taxpayer be claimed as a dependent by someone else?" The answer must be no because a taxpayer cannot claim a dependent if he himself is already a dependent.

If an individual passes these tests, then the question becomes which type of dependent she is classified as. To be a "qualifying child", the individual must be the taxpayer's natural or adopted child, grandchild, stepchild, sibling, or state placed foster child. This means that an unmarried man who is supporting his girlfriend's son, can no longer claim her son as a qualifying child. In addition,

the dependent must younger than the taxpayer and be under age 19 on 12/31 of the tax year or, if a full time student, under 24. Anyone who does not meet these definitions must be classified as a qualifying relative, even an older child.

The fourth test concerns where the dependent lived. To be a qualifying child, the individual must have lived in the taxpayer's household over half the year or 183 days. A person related to the taxpayer by blood or marriage, does not need to reside with the taxpayer to be a qualifying relative. An unrelated person must live in the taxpayer's home all 365 days of the year to meet the test as a qualifying relative.

The last two tests are the critical ones. The first is the income test. A qualifying child has no income test, so even a child with a million dollar internet business in her dorm room can pass this test. All other dependents can make no more than \$3650 during the tax year to pass this test.

The last test is the support test. No individual can be claimed as a dependent unless the taxpayer has paid more than half of the support for the year. This is what can disqualify teenagers with good summer jobs, children getting social security, the internet tycoon college student, or a parent with a small pension, from being a dependent.

This article has outlined the basic rules. There are enough exceptions and special circumstances in the law to write a book. If you have questions, see a professional.

*The fine print: This article is for information only. Please see your tax professional for questions about your individual tax situation.*

*The Jacksonville Tax Lady is located in beautiful, historic Jacksonville at 610 N. Fifth Street across from the Pony Espresso. Kathleen and Angela can be reached at 541-899-7926.*

### Sanctuary - Cont'd. from Page 23

are opening soon, which will give visitors a chance to meet the lucky cats and dogs who will call the cottages home sweet home.

All tours must be booked in advance and we request a minimum \$5 per person donation to help cover expenses. Children are warmly welcome if they are reasonably well

behaved and are supervised by a parent or guardian. Group tours for schools, churches, retirement homes, community service volunteers, and the like are welcome, too. Parking for buses and several vehicles is available.

*For more information, visit us on the Web at [www.SanctuaryOne.org](http://www.SanctuaryOne.org) or call 541.899.8627.*

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