

The Review *of* **BEERS, SPIRITS, & WINES**



Reviews Include:
Brews from the U.K., Latvia, & Poland

Vodkas & Flavored Vodkas

Wines for Drinking & Cellaring

The Review of
BEERS, SPIRITS, & WINES

FEBRUARY 2002

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The Review of Beers, Spirits, & Wines

AlcoholReviews.com Inc.

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In the News...2

New to the Market...3

Beers...4

F. Sot Fitzgerald Tastes Beers from Latvia and Poland

Peter Millar on English Winter Warmer Ales

The Staff Examines Full Sail Ales

Spirits...6

Bruichladdich Single Malt Scotches

Emanor and Quotes Polish Vodkas

Flavored Vodkas by Burnett's, OP, and Van Gogh

Tiger Gin

Wines...9

White Wines & Red Wines to Drink Now

Red Wines to Cellar

Cocktails...11

Books...12

Interview: Stuart J. Fleming, author of VINUM, The Story of Roman Wine

Other Books of Interest

Rating System:

*Horrid- Won't drink unless threatened with violence.

Tolerable- Will drink if it is free. *Good- Will drink and even pay for.

****Very Good- Will seek out for purchase. *****Superb- Will walk miles to acquire.

In the News

But Why?

Coors has gobbled up the U.K.'s Carling for a reported \$1.7 billion. In light of current economic climate big acquisitions seem risky, unless one can snatch up a firm that at a low price. That's not the case here, as Coors had to outbid other suitors. Coors claims it does not intend to utilize Carling to increase the distribution of Coors in the U.K. or vice versa. Investors responded by pummeling Coors' stock and Moody's is pondering lowering its rating of the Colorado mega-brewer.

Chuck Says Drink Rural

Speaking of the U.K., Prince Charles recently popped by a country pub for a pint in mid-December. He was lending his support to a campaign by the British Beer and Pub Association to preserve these establishments. The overt message was, 'Come to the country and drink a pint,' thus, the rather silly photo op with Charles (really, now, does one think that Charles often heads out to the Green Gryphon for a pint of Brackspear?). However, there was a more fundamental message to the pubs: diversify your revenue streams. Sell stamps and other things folks might need, become more like a general store. An interesting idea, but it begs the question- will doing this bring new business or merely beggar dollars from other small businesses?

Corsica: The Mouse That Roared?

According to Reuters, Corsica is trying to get into the global wine game. Winemaking is nothing new in Corsica- some three decades back they received AOC wine classification. Yet, Corsican wine remain little known outside, Corsica. So, they are cranking up a PR campaign and hoping to leap first into Europe. As with Coors, we wish them luck. The wine market is already crowded, there is much talk of a wine glut, and Corsica's choice wines are white dessert and aperitif wines, notoriously difficult products to move.

Porfidio No Mas?

In September AlcoholReviews.com ran a piece noting that Porfidio was charged with adding non-blue agave to their tequila. A flack for Porfidio sent us an angry email in

denying the allegation. Word from Mexico has it that Porfidio has been closed by the government, which explains why Porfidio now is so hard to find in the U.S.

The TV Advertising Hoopla

Much hay has been made over NBC's agreement to show liquor commercials. Of course, these commercials aren't really commercials, yet. The first ad was a 'don't drink and drive' spot. One didn't know who the sponsor was until the commercial's end (it was Smirnoff). And, the commercial ran after 11 PM on a Saturday night, a time, one might conjecture, when drinkers were out on the town, not at home in front of Saturday Night Live. Still, some are excited over this, calling it the camel's nose. Other networks, feeling the economic pinch and fearing that NBC will yank more ad dollars in than them, will drop their self-restrictions and go for the hooch ad money. Probably, and in time the commercials will become sexier and product centered. So be it.

Some ask what this will mean for magazines- will they lose ad dollars to the tube? Perhaps, but any loss will be slight; a small percentage of the many spirits have the budget to afford TV's astronomical rates. Moreover, all this chatter about ads on TV ignores the 800 pound gorilla in the room: the Internet. Technology is advancing incredibly and we already have web-television stations. Over a year ago Georges Duboeuf had the opening of his Beaujolais Nouveau in France broadcast live over the web. Over 125,000 people viewed parts of the program. Late this autumn Playboy.com showed visitors a commercial of Hugh Hefner hocking their Old No. 7.

Web-TV holds many advantages over regular television, cable or not: there are no content restrictions on web-tv; web-tv programs have eternal availability (i.e., a web-tv program sits on the web waiting for a viewer to click and watch it when it is convenient for the individual, instead of when a network shows it; and web-tv is vastly less expensive. And don't forget the new TV technology which allows viewers to edit out commercials; not so with the web. You heard it here- soon the web-tv ad bonanza will begin. *TRBSW*

New to the Market



ROCK HILL RETURNS

After hitting us with their fancy Eagle Rare and Weller whiskies, Buffalo Trace has seen fit to bring another coveted bourbon to market. After being unavailable for nine months, Rock Hill single barrel has returned. Rock Hill whiskey ran out because of a sudden and inexplicable "spike in sales" said

Brand Director Chris McCrory. We've yet to try it, but if we get a sample, we'll promptly report back to readers.

THE LIMONCILLO TIDAL WAVE

Grab your loved ones and head for the hills- a tidal wave of sweet, super tart limoncillos are pounding America's shores. Recently, **Villa Massa** released a snazzy holiday package, with a fifth of their limoncillo and two frosted glasses... **Giori** is hitting America with its own limoncillo and a cream version thereof...A bottle of **Pellegrini** limoncillo appeared at a recent staff gathering as did a few other brands whose names have slipped our memories. Keep your eyes peeled for an omnibus limoncillo review coming in The Review and AlcoholReviews.com.

THE BLACK VODKA COMETH

Blavod vodka, called the "Black Vodka" for its black packaging and color (the result of the herb catachu being added to it), has reached an agreement with Branca Products of New York City for distribution in the U.S. Branca, as you likely know, distributes a number of fabulous liqueurs, including Fernet Branca, Branca Menta, and our female writer's absolute favorite, Borghetti Caffè Sport Espresso liqueur. Blavod was cooked up by Mark Dorman, a former ad executive in the U.K. back in 1997. We've yet to try Blavod but hope to receive a sample shortly and will report back to readers in our next issue.

BEOWULF WOULD BE THRILLED

Word from Colorado has it that "there's a need for mead." No argument here. Even in New York City, the veritable cornucopia of beverages, finding mead is difficult. One Irish pub in Brooklyn serves it, and gadzooks, a couple little glasses of it can set the tongue a flapping and the arms gesticulating. Potent stuff, for certain.

So with great joy we report that Redstone mead winery has opened in Boulder. At present, they have a Nectar line of meads (available only in kegs), Mountain Honey Wine (bottled), and Vintage Reserve (bottled). Redstone boasts that they do not use sulfites and only pasteurize the honey instead of boiling it. We hope to report to you on the quality of these meads in the next issue.

HOW SWEET IT IS...

Limoncillo, honey wines, and now yet another late harvest vino. **Concha y Toro**, the hulking Chilean winery that has wowed us with their Don Melchor Cabernet Sauvignon and their Almaviva announced their Late Harvest 1999 Sauvignon Blanc, which retails for about \$15. This comes on the heels of another South American winery's sweet white: **Santa Julia** of Argentina showed off their late-harvest Torrontes to the press in September, who seemed most impressed. Elsewhere, **Banfi**, who imports Concha y Toro's 1999 Late Harvest Sauvignon Blanc to the U.S., has a 1998 Late Harvest Moscadello that we're just itching to open, and **Santa Barbara** of California, whose wines always surprise and wow us, have their own 1998 late harvest Sauvignon Blanc.

EXCITING NEWS FROM POLAND

Two terrific vodkas from Lancut distillery (pronounced "wine-soot") have landed in New York. Quotes, a triple distilled potato vodka, we rated very highly some time back. Emanor Prestige Vodka, which we'll soon rate here and online, is a delicious rye vodka. Both will retail for around \$25 a fifth and both are worth every penny. Contact Bill Channels for availability at aceten1@mindspring.com and surf to <http://www.polishvodkas.com/emanor-vodka.htm>. **TRBWS**

Beer

Riga Original, Riga Strong & Perla Pilsner

by F. S. Fitzgerald



Writing is rarely a lucrative craft. Stephen King and Michael Jackson are the extreme exceptions. Still, though, writing is not without its perks. Most obviously, it provides the opportunity to be part of THE PRESS, which can get one in to places and events that wouldn't normally even allow one through the front door. Then there's the free stuff, in this case, I got three bottles of beer handed to me for the promise of a couple hundred words. Maybe I'm a fool, but twenty minutes of work for three brews isn't a bad deal.

And the writing is all the more interesting when you consider that I am doing it on Latvian and Polish beers. How many American can claim to have tasted beers from either country? How many can even name a brand from Latvia or Poland? Beyond this, all three beers were good, good enough that I wouldn't turn them down if they were offered to me. Riga Original (4.2% Alcohol by volume) is a product of Rigas Alus and is imported by

Henninger Inc. of Brooklyn, New York. Drink in this gold brew and the word "wacky" quickly comes to mind. The flavor is big with cereal, nuts, lots of sweetness then it clobbers you with a burnt taste. A little out of control, but enjoyable still (Rating ***1/4). Riga Strong is just that- a hefty 7.0% ABV. It is gold tinted with red. It floods with mouth with caramel, malt, and is generally smoother, richer and more subtle than Riga Original. Well done (Rating ****).

Last up is Perla Chmielowa, also none as Hop Pearl. This pilsner comes from Browary Lubelskie in Lublin, Poland. It is quite popular there, purportedly accounting for a quarter of all bottle sales. Perla is fair gold in color and has a big, fat head, unlike the two Riga brews. "9.16 Inches of Premium Beer," the cardboard card on the bottle's neck reads, making one wonder who is the comedian is at Stanley Stawski Distributing, Perla's Chicago importer and distributor. Perla is dry, bisquity, and clean in the mouth. It's a solid pilsner and my guess is that if you put it in consumers hands, they'll like it (Rating ****).

BeerBooks.com
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Beer

English Winter Warmers

by Peter Millar, U.K. Financial Times

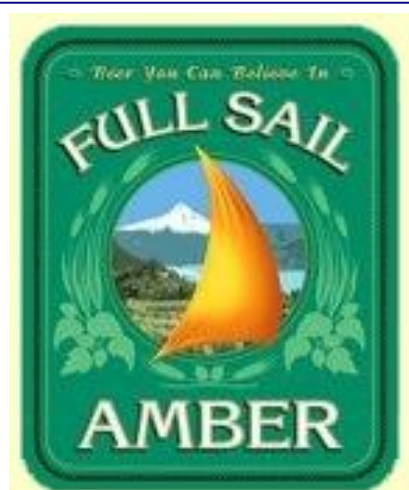
The old European tradition of strong beers to keep our spirits up in the winter season crosses borders. Germans have Bockbier, traditionally produced around Christmas time. The Belgians and northern French do "bière de Noël", often as fantastically strong as 7.5 per cent. The British equivalent is "winter warmers" - what we used to call our overcoats, the idea being that these beers serve the same purpose.

The most generically typical comes from London brewer **Young's**, whose rich, dark-red to crimson ale simply entitled Winter Warmer - hey, if it tastes good, it doesn't need a fancy name! - is a classic start or finish to any chilly December pub session. At 5.0% alcohol by volume with a toasted nutty flavor, it is meaty but not mind-bending and is particularly favored by young women (drunk in halves), while their drunken other halves consume pints.

Young's rival, **Fuller's**, has undergone a midwinter identity crisis, ditching its Old Winter (4.5%ABV) in English pubs for the more faddish Jack Frost, which has a similar strength but is almost scarlet in color and flavored with blackberries. Unusual and not cloying, but two sweet for me beyond a pint. More of a new age gimmick than a new classic.

That title goes to Twelve Days (as the Christmas song famed for lords-a-leaping, ladies dancing and other seasonal shenanigans), produced by the little Oxfordshire brewery of **Hook Norton**. Rich, deep, dark and spicy (though not because of any additions) this clocks in at 5.5% in theory, but I can testify that two pints in the pub at midday on December 25 is enough to incapacitate any parent from the chore of building complex Lego models afterwards. It also works on in the barrel. Head brewer James Clarke has been known to preserve some specially for the local charity beer festival in mid-July, by which time it is virtually explosive. Seek out and destroy (preferably by drinking) before it gets you!

As a foreign correspondent for Reuters, The Sunday Times and The Sunday Telegraph, Peter Millar toured the bars of central and eastern Europe (finding time to win Foreign Correspondent of the Year award for his coverage of the fall of the Berlin Wall). He lives in Oxfordshire and London.



Full Sail Pale & Amber Ales

by AlcoholReviews.com Staff

A short time back, we wrote glowingly of Full Sail's Wassail winter brew. It was the first Full Sail beer we had tasted and we were impressed. But one had to wonder- how good were their other beers? Did they just get lucky with the Wassail?

Well, any questions we had were put to rest on tipping their Pale and Amber ales. The Amber is a lovely amber-rust color and in the mouth it is rich, a little sweet, and closed with crisp floral hops. Swish it in your mouth and it has great feel. (Rating ****) The Pale Ale is only slightly less excellent. It is a robust beer, a real boomer that

floods your mouth with caramel and roasty malts. (Rating ***3/4) Full Sail's slogan is "Beer you can believe in." That's almost rather religious sounding... but you know what, we're converts. Bravo. For more info about Full Sail Brewing of Oregon and their beers, surf to <http://www.fullsailbrewing.com/>.

Spirits



Bruichladdich 10-, 15-, & 20-Year Single Malts

by Kevin R. Kosar

No doubt many readers have already heard about Bruichladdich, what with *Malt Advocate* magazine naming it distillery of the year in 2001. But for those not familiar with the story, here it is in a nut: Bruichladdich (pronounced brook-laddie, meaning shore bank) began making scotch in 1881. Until 1960, it made huge, peaty whiskies. Thereafter it switched to a making more subtle scotches. By 1994, though, the distillery was near death. Workers had been let go and no whisky was being made. In December of 2000 Gordon Wright, Mark Reynier, and Simon Coughlin of the bottler, Murray-McDavid, bought Bruichladdich (the Wright family, you might recall, runs Springbank distillery). On May 29, 2001, the first spirit of the reinvigorated distillery flowed.

Now, many folks are very excited (us included) that Jim McEwan, who made the whiskies at Bowmore for many years, took the helm at the reborn Bruichladdich. That means, obviously, that none of the scotches tasted here are strictly Jim's product. Somebody else distilled them and casked them. However, it was Jim who went into the barrel house and separated the superb from the less than superb, and co-mingled them to create these whiskies. And boy did he do a fine job.

The **10-year** is finished in sherry and bourbon casks. It's a light bodied malt and noses of hazelnut, honey, raspberries, cinnamon, orange and apple. In the mouth it is easy, offering apple, cinnamon, oloroso, soft peat, and honey. Very nice. (Rating ***3/4).

The mostly bourbon (and a little sherry) finished **15-year** is a different animal. As my notes indicate, "in came iodine." It's a more robust whisky, with a dry banana and ginger nose and a scrumptious mouthfeel and notes of caramel, roast grain, peach and more. Gutsy and complex, and a great deal of fun (Rating****1/4).

Last up for this review is Bruichladdich **20-year**, which is finished only in bourbon. It's a thick dram and its own creature. One can take in oak, peat, cranberry, toffee, chocolate, and caramel, and it is remarkably soft and almost velvety. Delightful (Rating ****1/2). For more information about Bruichladdich Single Malt Scotch Whiskies, surf to <http://www.bruichladdich.com>.

Spirits



Emanor Prestige Vodka

by Kevin R. Kosar

The American market continues to be flooded with vodkas, some domestic, some imported. It is, to be sure, a happy time for the consumer, who has more selection than, quite probably, ever.

Emanor Prestige Vodka (80 proof) from Poland is a triple distilled rye vodka that arrived in the United States just as 2001 became 2002.

Hallelujah- after a rotten year it is nice to start the next with something good, and Emanor is very good.

Emanor is produced by the constantly impressive Lancut (pronounced Wine-soot) Distillery of Lancut, Poland and named for the champion Arabian horse, Emanor. EPV, as it is called, is a viscous vodka. Chill a bottle in the freezer, pour a couple ounces in a fat rocks glass and swirl it; you'll see thick, tightly packed legs. The nose is sweet and grainy, and in the mouth it is rich, oily thick, grainy, and incredibly smooth. Like Lancut's wonderful Quotes potato vodka (see below), Emanor is superb; it's a vodka that any vodka lover must taste. Bravo. (Rating **** 1/2)

For more information about Emanor Prestige Vodka, please contact the importer, Bill Channels, at aceten1@mindspring.com and surf to <http://www.polishvodkas.com/emanor-vodka.htm>.

Quotes Potato Vodka

by Kevin R. Kosar

Quotes (40% ABV) is a luxury vodka that just landed in the U.S. It is the result of a collaboration between Q Projects (a Polish vodka web consulting firm) and Lancut Distillery of Lancut, Poland.

Sharply packaged, this triple distilled potato vodka is viscous and complex on the nose and palate. It is quite crisp, leading with a near amalgam of mineral and spearmint notes. As it finishes it rolls out a slow blooming toffee note that is quite pleasant. Highly recommended. (Rating **** 1/2). For more information about Quotes Vodka, please contact Bill Channels at aceten1@mindspring.com.



Spirits

Flavored Vodkas: Burnett's, OP, & Van Gogh

by AlcoholReviews.com Staff

Burnett's vodkas are made in Kentucky by Heaven Hill, the hulking distiller of classic bourbons like Evan Williams single barrel and Elijah Craig. They cost about \$10 a bottle. Burnett's Orange was a bit of a disappointment. In the mouth it was hot, the orange tasted artificial, almost Tang like, and closed sharply bitter (Rating **3/4). However, the Citrus and Raspberry flavors were markedly better. The Citrus had a full lemon nose and tasted of both lemon and lemon peel. There was a nip of heat, but it was minimal. Well done. BEST BUY (Rating ***1/2). The Raspberry was a pleasure to sniff- it reminded us of a framboise lambic: fresh, fruity, and soft, like real fresh crushed raspberries. In the mouth it was sweet and great fun to swish about. A fantastic bargain. BEST BUY (Rating ***3/4).

Next up is OP, a 70 proof Swedish vodka flavored with ginger, orange, and peach. As advertised, it noses and tastes of ginger, a little orange, and a touch more of peach. Interestingly, it also dishes out a nutty note on the close, perhaps the result of OP being spiced with anise, fennel, and caraway. Just a touch of heat, and quite smooth. Super chill it in the freezer, serve on the rocks, or try mixing it. Regardless, it is smooth and unique (Rating ***1/2). For more information on OP, surf to <http://www.op-up.com>.

Vincent Van Gogh Citroen Vodka (80 proof) is the Cadillac of the bunch, running between \$34 and \$42 a bottle. It is made by Dirkzwager Distillery of Holland and made with Spanish lemons and Mediterranean limes. Vincent Citroen noses of Gatorade, strangely enough, and in the mouth it also tastes of Gatorade, bitter lime peel, and lemon peel. The flavors linger long and leave one masticating. Odd and impressive (Rating ****). For more information on Van Gogh Citroen Vodka, surf to <http://www.vangoghgin.com>.



Tiger Gin

by Charles Westbrook

Tiger Gin comes from Manor Brewery in Burnt Wood, England and is handled by Formula Brands. Tiger Gin is made with 11 botanicals- Angelica Root, Cardamom, Cassia Bark, Cinnamon Quills, Coriander, Juniper Berries, Lemon Peel, Licorice Root, Nutmeg, Orange Peel, and Orris Root. Tiger Gin is so named because a portion of the proceeds from each sale of Tiger Gin goes to the Born Free Foundation, a group involved in wildlife conservation. So it's a product with an environmental conscience.

But is it any good? It did win a Gold Medal at the World Spirits Challenge 2001, San Francisco, USA. It's a good crisp gin, but with enough viscosity to keep it soft. The herbs are present but not over the top, and so I can with no reservations give this gin a very, very high rating (Rating ****1/2). For more information surf to <http://www.TigerGin.com>.

Wine

Whites

Barton & Guestier Vouvray Tradition 2000 (\$9)
Pale straw color, noses of grass, must, and litchi. Sweet tasting, with some grass and woody-herbal notes (Rating ***). A solid Chenin Blanc wine, straight up or with mild foods.

Brancott "B" Estate Sauvignon Blanc 1999 (\$24)
Nose booms with passion fruit and sour apple. Wow. In the mouth the passion fruit is more restrained, likewise the sour apple. Toast joins the fray. A wild ride, and a fun one. (Rating ***3/4)

Laurel Lake Vineyard Chardonnay Reserve 1997 (\$12)
One from our cellar that we misracked and forgot about. Time hasn't hurt this Long Island wine. A little vegetal, but then fruit and toast. Not a California boomer, more modest and French. Solid (Rating ***1/2).



Niebaum-Coppola Diamond Label Chardonnay 1999 (\$14)
We're beginning to wonder whether we ought just reprint our reviews of Coppola's Diamond Chardonnay each year, changing only the vintage. Once again, it's a good one. Buttery, nutty, a little grassy and finishing toasty. A perennial pleasure, that we must declare to be **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** (Rating ****).

Peconic Bay Rolling Ridge 1996 (\$12)
Another misracked but recently rediscovered wine (time to give Manolo the wine inventory worker at *TRBSW* his walking papers). A very interesting Chardonnay. Drier than most we taste, dishes fruit, oak, and closes with a sour pear taste. Sufficiently intriguing that we'll have to pencil in a trip to this Long Island winery for this spring (Rating ****).

Santa Julia Chardonnay 2000 (\$7)
Argentina's economy may be in shambles but its vineyards are in good shape. Buttery, oaky, very new world. Was just delightful with grilled Blue Fish. **BEST BUY** (Rating ***3/4).

Sterling Vineyards Chardonnay Reserve 1999 (\$40)
A pricey Chardonnay, but unbelievably good. Buttery, nutty, vegetal, toasty...need we go on? Close to perfect, if not perfect. **VERY HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** (Rating ****3/4).

Te Kairanga Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2000 (\$16)
An enormous nose, almost made our heads jerk backward. Wow, what is in New Zealand's soil? Noses of honeysuckle, peach, wet hay, and loads of passion fruit. In the mouth the passion fruit is immense. It's tart and formidable enough to stand up to the spiciest Thai foods (Rating ***1/4).

Te Kairanga Martinborough Sauvignon Blanc 2000 (\$16)
Like the Marlborough, the nose is potent and passion fruit shows big. Yet the nose and taste is softer, not so violent and intense. The wet hay note is stronger and seems to temper the passion fruit. Allow this one to warm to 60 degrees or more and it grows more creamy and delicious. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** (Rating ****).

Trimbach Pinot Gris Reserve 1999 (\$15)
Pale gold color and noses of light fruit. In the mouth its a little sweet: apple, caramel, then a touch of toast. A mild, enjoyable wine, not a boomer like the Brancott mentioned above (Rating ***1/2).

Trimbach Pinot Gris Reserve Personelle 1997 (\$28.50)
Deeper in color than the 1999 Reserve, more viscous. More nuanced, more robust, tasting of apple, pear, and vanilla. Quite good (Rating ****).

Wyndham Estate Bin 222 Chardonnay 2000 (\$10)
A big white, nosing and tasting of apricot, grapefruit, and toast. Potent and pleasing. **BEST BUY** (Rating ***3/4).

Wine

Reds

Condesa de Leganza Crianza 1998 (\$9)

One hundred percent Tempranillo, but softened with American oak barrel aging. Garnet colored, rich with fruit and vanilla. Get a case or two of it. BEST BUY (Rating ***3/4)

Carmen Cabernet Sauvignon 2000 (\$8)

Bright ruby in color and showing smoke, green pepper, and fruit. Pair with light cheese or mild meats, or quaff straight- it's modest and balanced enough for either (Rating***1/4)

Kenwood Jack London Zinfandel 1999 (\$20)

A wine named after Jack London, a mediocre writer who so poisoned his body with booze and drugs that he became incontinent? Interesting, but we were skeptical. Turns out we were wrong: this is a good Zinfandel. It is thick with fruit and raspberries, and has a stiff Zin spine to it that made it a pleasure to swirl and sip. One of the few bottles we not only enjoyed, but finished. (Rating *****)

Luna Di Luna (\$8)

Undated and in a bright red bottle- does this mean its cheap and lousy? Nope. This Italian Merlot (60%) Cabernet Sauvignon (40%) blend is sweet, jammy, and has flickers of Cabernet muscle. Quaff with pasta and red sauce- it's enjoyable. (Rating ***1/4)

Viansa Winery Pacomio 1999 (\$12)

Something unusual from California, a super light, floral Aleatic blend. Not able to stand up to food, but lovely with fruit. It's delicate, perfumey, with some honeysuckle and fruit (Rating ***1/2).

Sterling Vineyards Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$24)

Chalk another good one up for Sterling. It's a sweet Cabernet, yet has a burnt rubber note,

which is balanced against plum, and leather (Rating ****).

Reds for the Cellar

Carmen Syrah-Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve 1999 (\$17)

One half Syrah, one half Cab-Sauv in this Chilean red. Intense with fruit, cherries, plums, and spice. Enjoyable at present, but not quite ready. Give it another year and you'll find it was worth it.

Concha y Toro Don Melchor 1998 (\$41)

A while back we tasted about a decade's worth of Don Melchor and announced that this Chilean had hit stride. El Nino wreaked havoc in 1998, but it seems they pulled out some good grapes nonetheless. Noses of green pepper, black pepper, and black cherry. In the mouth it offers cassis and smoke. Already enjoyable, but do the right thing: save this one for 2-4 years. (Rating ****)



SummuS

Castello Banfi SummuS 1996, 1997 & ExcelsuS 1997 (\$50-\$70)

With mixed feeling we include the 1996 under the cellar category. This wine is terrific. We tasted it two years back and saw great promise. Who would have thought it would be so elegant already? This Brunello, Cabernet, Syrah blend is

rich and delicious. We finished the bottle greedily and now miss it dearly (Rating ****3/4). As for the 1997's, It pains to think we opened the 1997's and don't have them to age. The 1997 SummuS is hard, only letting us peak at plum and coffee flavors thus far. It may take five years before unfolding. ExcelsuS 1997, a Cabernet-Merlot amalgam, is also hard, but is offering more leg: cassis, plum, barrel. *TRBSW*

Cocktails

Recipes of the Month

The AlcoholReviews.com Absente Chiller

This one's easy. Pour two shots of Absente liqueur (it's a legal version of Absinthe, but still a potent 110 proof) into a cocktail shaker, add two fat icecubes and 6 ounces of cool water. Cap the shaker and shake furiously until the ice is no more. Pour through a strainer into a fat rocks glass. This drink is cool, crisp, and will get you loopy in a hurry.



The AlcoholReviews.com Borghetti Shake

Borghetti Caffè Sport Espresso liqueur is a favorite of ours. It's an inky black, sweet, Italian liqueur that can be taken straight and chilled, but we prefer to use it as a mixer. It is sufficiently intense and flavorful that it goes great with milk, be it skim or heavier versions like Vitamin D milk.

This drink is a huge hit with the ladies: 3 ounces of Borghetti, 3 ounces of milk. Dump them all in a shaker with a fat icecube. Cap it, shake until the ice is no more, then pour through the strainer into a double martini glass. Layer the foam, and sprinkle the top with cinnamon.

One can also make flavored variants of this drink:

The AlcoholReviews.com Italian Cabana Boy

2 shots of Borghetti, 1 shot of Cabana Boy Vanilla rum, 3 ounces of milk. Dump them all in a shaker with a fat icecube. Cap it, shake until the ice is no more, then pour through the strainer into a double martini glass. Layer the foam, and sprinkle the top with cinnamon.

AlcoholReviews.com Borghetti Raspberry Shake

2 shots of Borghetti, 1 shot of Mathilde Framboise (raspberry) liqueur, 3 ounces of milk. Dump them all in a shaker with a fat icecube. Cap it, shake until the ice is no more, then pour through the strainer into a double martini glass. Layer the foam.

*For more cocktail recipes and reviews, please visit our online super site at <http://www.AlcoholReviews.com>, where you also can read about and **SHOP** for beers, spirits, wines, wine racks, books and more!*

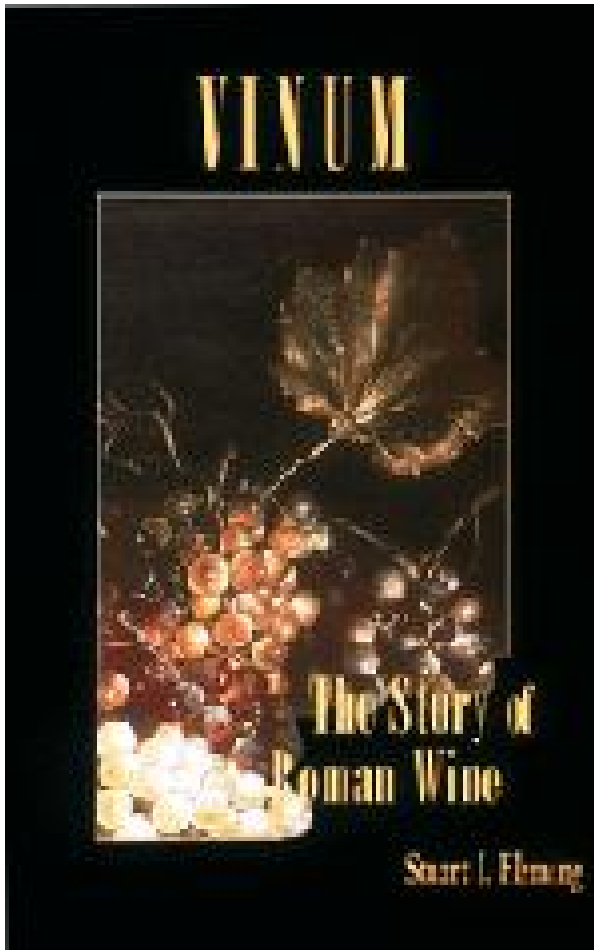
Books

An Interview With Stuart J. Fleming, Author of VINUM, The Story of Roman Wine

by Kevin R. Kosar

"When in Rome..." is a cliché we've all heard too many times, but it does raise the obvious question: what do they do in Rome? The snappy answer to that is, "go to Rome and see." But what of Romans past, say two millennia ago? As the forebears of the Italians, one might assume that the Romans were lovers of the grape; but what is the fact of the matter?

Until recently, what knowledge there was of the Romans and wine was scattered amongst numerous sources. This past year, though, Stuart J. Fleming did us a favor by zipping up all this knowledge into one package. VINUM describes the place of wine in ancient Roman society. To do this, Fleming unearths and marshals an astonishing array of facts about wine in ancient Roman life. Who would have known that the Romans wine of choice was white, not red? Who would have known that wine was utilized in conjunction with herbs to create medicine or that the Romans sold wine to the Celts, some of whom hoarded it for the sake of bolstering their social status? Oenophiles and students of the classics alike will delight in VINUM. It



is well written, beautifully illustrated, and Archeology magazine gave it big billing in their autumn issue. Recently, Dr. Fleming made himself available for a few questions from our editor.

Your beverage of choice is Belgian beer, yet you chose to write a book on Roman wine. Why? And should we expect a Belgian beer book from you in the future?

Fleming: There are several fine books of the history of Belgian beers and, since that is very much a Medieval story rather than a Classical one, I really lack the expertise to do anything more than brew and savor my version of the likes of Orval and Chimay. But there is a lot of common ground between the natural chemistry of fermentation used today in the centuries-long production of Lambic beers of the Payottenland valley west of Brussels and that used by the Romans two thousand years ago. In both instances, no laboratory-prepared yeasts strains are/were involved, only whatever yeast spores (of which there seem to be dozens of kinds) that capricious breezes might carry from surrounding fields into the brewer's and vintner's fermentation vats.

How long was VINUM in the making?

Fleming: Strictly speaking, from the time I first put finger-to-keyboard with the unimaginative words

"I. INTRODUCTION" to finally signing off on the proofs of the manuscript, the creation of VINUM took about 18 months. But I had been mulling over the idea of such a book for several months before that, having published in mid-1999 a catalogue for the University of Pennsylvania Museum's exhibition, *Roman Glass: Reflections on Cultural Change*. During preparation of that exhibition, I had realized that one of the obvious early successes of glass in the Roman World during the reign of Augustus (27 B.C to A.D.14) was its use for wine vessels (beakers and flasks) because glass's translucency allowed people to see what they were drinking. This was something that was not true either of the pottery vessels from which most Romans drank, or of the gold and silver vessels that was so cherished by the patrician classes of Roman society. I realized that so many aspects of the history of Roman wine were excellent "windows" on how Romans thought and felt about themselves and the diverse peoples most obviously, the Greeks and the Celts that they had conquered. As for the urge to write VINUM, I sensed there was a bookshelf niche somewhere between Hugh Johnson's *Vintage: The Story of Wine* and Jancis Robinson's *The Oxford Companion to Wine* which do such a superb job of explaining how viticulture got from there to here, and from then to now. In VINUM I have reversed the perspective, to present the significance of wine in the ancient world through the eyes of the Romans themselves.

Among your numerous findings about Roman wine, which ones do you think will surprise many people?

Fleming: The three most common questions I get asked are: {i} Q.: What did Roman wine taste like? A.: Almost all the respected Roman wines were white and quite sweet. {ii} Q.: Was alcoholism a problem in the Roman World? A.: Almost certainly, Roman literature is rich in tales of prodigious drinkers. and {iii} Q.: Didn't Romans drink beer as well? A.: In general no, though it is likely that Roman soldiers stationed on the Rhine frontier of the Empire picked up the habit of doing so from the local Gauls. I address these topics in much greater detail in the FAQ section of my website www.romanwine.com. For my part, during my research for VINUM, I was surprised by the success of Roman vintners in

limiting the spoilage of wine--*acor*-- (albeit sometimes with actions based more on folklore than science), a problem that beleaguered the wine industries of France and the U.S. until the 18th century A.D. And I was fascinated by the wonderful echo of the Victorian era that one gets when reading about the Roman attitude to drunkenness among women, in its emphasis on morality and its blatant hypocrisy.

Relatedly, did you dispel any long standing theories or myths about Roman wine?

Fleming: I'm not sure I actually knock down long-standing theories or discount any present-day myths about Roman wine, but I do believe that several aspects of VINUM will catch its reader's imagination because of the sharp contrasts I draw with the place of wine in the modern world. There are several pieces of Roman literature which make it quite clear that wine was truly a central element of Roman everyday life. It was not just something which enhanced a meal or gave zest to a party. Rather, it was central to Roman overseas trade policies and political interactions with the peoples of their provinces; and it was an integral part of health care practices, of religious practices (initially pagan and cultic, but later on, Christian as well) both in life and in death. In Roman times wine was something with huge social overtones, in the sense that the quality of wine consumed was such an immediate reflection of status, senator to slave. I also would make the point that, though some Roman vintners and traders did make a great deal of money out of wine production, profit was by no means their only motivation. Truth is, the Roman psyche was locked into Rome's origins among Italy's sturdy agricultural stock, so any kind of investment in farming, including viticulture, had a special meaning and a special virtue far beyond any we can instinctively imagine today.

Is there more to investigated on the subject of Roman wine? Or have you exhausted most known existent sources of information?

Fleming: Though scholars continue to sift through the subtleties of the 2nd to 6th century A.D. papyrii from Romano-Egypt that are our primary source for how the production and trade of wine was organized in those times, I would not expect any dramatic changes in our understanding of such matters. On

the other hand, excavation of 1st-to-3rd century A.D. Roman villas and their surrounding estates in Italy itself and in central France and along the course of the Rhine (in what were then the provinces Gallia and Germania, respectively) hold out promise of a far greater understanding of the wine productive process, both in terms of scale and efficiency. There are mysteries to be solved by such excavations, not least what caused the decline of so many Italian estates during the mid 2nd century A.D., at a time when so many other sectors of the Roman economy were booming. Meanwhile, we should not forget that so much of what we know about the Roman wine industry, and what caused changes in it over the centuries, has come to us from the investigation of the underwater sites of amphorae-laden ships which came to grief at many a treacherous spot along the Mediterranean coastline. It seems like every few months yet another wreck is found and new patterns in the Roman wine trade are defined. The second edition of VINUM could well read rather differently from the first...

To learn more about VINUM surf to <http://www.RomanWine.com>.

Other Books of Interest

The Little Book of Whiskey
By Thierry B nitah
Flammarion, 2001, 120 pages, \$12.95

A slim pocket, paper back English version of the French version that was published in 1996. A very useful introduction to the subject of whisk(e)y what with history, the basics on what whisk(e)y is, how it is made, and the dictionary of any and all terms whiskey. Particularly clever are the inside covers, which fold out into maps of distillery locations in Scotland and the U.S. On the downside, there does seem to be occasional editorial slippage. At one point Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey is referred to as bourbon, and sometimes the definitions of key terms are not as clear as one might hope. Still, this is quibbling, it's a fine text and the price is right.

A Short History of Wine
By Rod Phillips
HarperCollins, 2001, 370 pages, \$28.00

From the Fertile Crescent to the year 2000, all in one volume. This volume is, as the title indicates, a history of wine- so don't expect snappy little vintage charts, ratings, or tips on how to talk with a sommelier. This is a book for those who love wine, love history, but want their wine history dished out in light, lively prose.

The Art of Wine
By Babs Harrison
Courage Books/Running Press, 2001, 120 pages

The Art of Wine might be well paired with the aforementioned *A Short History of Wine* by Rod Phillips. Harrison's volume is a collection of color photographs of wine collectibles. Thus, chapters are titled, wine vessels, corkscrews, decanting, wineglasses, and so forth. It's an intriguing look at the blurry intersection of the scholarly passion for historical artifacts, fetishism, and the craving for material goods that mark one as upper class.

Ceviche
By Guillermo Pernot with Aliza Green
Running Press, 2001, 208 pages

Here we get an introduction to "seafoods, salads, and cocktails wit a Latin twist" by Guillermo Pernot, co-owner and executive chef at Pasion in Philadelphia. The recipes are beautifully photographed and look just delicious. But the cocktails are what made this one worth mention. Ever had a watermelon margarita? How about a Presidente Menocal or a Mulata Del Fuego? Next time we're in Philadelphia, we'll be swinging by Pernot's place to try some of these out.

