



February 2020

Dear Members:

Open That Bottle Night



Dorothy Gaiter and her husband John Brecher used to write a weekly wine column for the Wall Street Journal. When Dorothy and John first started writing their column, they were impressed with the number of people who wrote them describing a special bottle of wine that they were saving for "a special occasion." All too often that special occasion never came or, when it did, the wine was spoiled because it was kept too long under unsatisfactory conditions. Consequently, Dottie and John decreed that the last Saturday in February was that special occasion and christened the event "Open That Bottle Night." On February 29, 2020, for the twenty-first year, people from all over the world will gather with good friends, eat good food and open that special bottle of wine to enjoy and share with their friends.

In keeping with this wonderful tradition each year, we have encouraged all members of the RWAF to hold their own "Open That Bottle Night" and then share some of their experiences with us.

R.I. Convention in Honolulu, Hawaii, USA (June 7-10 2020)

Assuming there is no convention cancellation due to the Coronavirus (and, no, it is not caused by drinking a certain Mexican beer!), we are planning two wine dinners in Honolulu.

On Sunday night, we will hold our typically fabulous "Lifetime Members Only Dinner" at VINO, a highly rated restaurant serving Italian Fusion dishes, 500 Ala Mona Boulevard, Honolulu. The owner is one of only two master Sommeliers in Hawaii and they feature a fabulous wine list. Liz Kane is working on the special menus and wine selections now. We anticipate, since this is our upscale venue, that the cost will be in the \$150-\$160 USD range, inclusive of wine, food, tax and gratuity. We will have the whole restaurant and will have room for about 140 people. We are not taking reservations now since we don't have menus or prices yet.



On Wednesday night, we will dine in the main dining room at the Pacific Club. As above, we are working on the menus and wines and will let you know more when we know.



Please note that we now have over 4,500 members in 68 countries and these seats tend to sell out quickly once the convention starts. Our existing members will be able to make reservations and pay in advance. I anticipate we will have all the arrangements settled within a couple of weeks and will be included in the March newsletter.

House of Friendship: We will also host a booth in the House of Friendship. Liz Kane and the members of the D-5000 RWA Local Chapter will organize the staffing of the booth. As those of us who have done this in past conventions know well, manning the booth is a wonderful experience – you get the opportunity to meet the neatest people from all over the world – and they share your interest in Rotary, great wine and good food. **Anyone wishing to join us in the booth should come by the booth when the House of Friendship first opens on Saturday morning or as soon as you can.**

The booth is not only fun, it is a most important part of our Fellowship. We get a chance to meet other RWA members who we may not have seen in awhile (or ever) and we gain membership. You can also pick up pins there if you have lost yours or want to purchase one for your spouse. Exhibitor's Badges will be available at the registration desk.

Expect Rock Bottom Wine Prices in 2020 – “Too many grapes, too little demand.”

by Eve Batey



Just a few years ago, vineyards in Northern California were hustling to scare up enough usable grapes to appease their winery clients. But for the 2020 season, they're dealing with the opposite problem: too many good grapes, and too efficient a process to pick them, which means a harvest so bountiful that wine prices could hit their lowest point in decades.

It isn't a situation one might have expected in 2017, when wildfires in Sonoma County had a negative impact on grapes grown in the area. Longstanding vineyards like Bucklin's Old Hill Ranch had their crops rejected by big wine brands, the SF Chronicle reported at the time, as thick smoke from the nearby blazes left chemical compounds quaiacol and 4-methylquaiacol on the fruit

and their vines. Both chemicals are what makes things taste or smell smoky, which can be great when you're talking hot sauce or barbecue.

The same is not always so for wine, vineyard owner Will Bucklin told the *Chron*, which is why wine empire Constellation (which owns ubiquitous brands like Ravenswood and Robert Mondavi) turned down his 2017 crop. Smoke taint remained a problem in 2018's season, the North Bay Business Journal reported at the time, with crop after crop rejected after that year's wave of North Bay fires. The same was true for wineries in Lake County, as a survey from the region's Winegrape Commission estimated that area wineries lost \$37.1 million in grapes that had to be dumped due to smoke taint.

Now growers are facing a new issue, [the San Francisco Business Times reports](#). Speaking at the [Unified Wine & Grape Symposium](#), a confab for the worldwide wine industry, Jeff Bitter of Fresno-based Allied Grape Growers says that California is “in a very difficult grape situation” — a sentiment echoed by several Napa and Sonoma-based growers at the event.

The difficulty isn't too few grapes, however. It's too many: According to Bitter, the issue has its roots in 2016, when NorCal vineyards started to add acreage by the thousand and planted loads of new vines. Meanwhile, growers continued to refine methods used to pick grapes, leading to more efficient harvests.

But in 2018, when those new vines started producing, something unexpected occurred: The demand for wine actually dropped. In [their State of the Wine Industry report for 2018](#), Silicon Valley Bank admits that they expected a sales growth of 10 to 14 percent, but that the number was closer to 0.3 percent. By [their 2019 report](#), SVB was predicting “roughly flat sales growth” for the year. In [a January report](#), beverage industry tracker IWSR said that the volume of wine consumption in the United States decreased 0.9 percent in 2019, the first time [this number has dropped since 1994](#), something analysts attribute to “changing generational habits.”

For 2020, [SVB says](#), wine consumers should expect “the best wine values in 20 years,” as grape and bulk wine prices drop to their lowest since 2015. Those price drops mean that grapes are literally rotting on NorCal vines, Bitter says, as there's no reason to pick what can't be sold for a reasonable price.

“This year there were more grapes left on the vine than I've ever seen in my lifetime,” Bitter tells the *Business Times*, saying that the only solution is to get rid of about 30,000 vineyard acres. Those extra 30,000 acres lead to — based on this season's surplus — about 200,000 unnecessary tons of grapes. It's an excess that will continue if growers don't cut their acreage, Bitter says. “We're going to be 200,000 tons long each year if we don't make this correction,” he said, a number that could be even higher if the demand for wine continues its current downward slump.

How A Woman Saved Portugal's Wine Industry

By Pedro C. Garcia

People have been making wine in the rolling hills of the Douro Valley since a few thousand years B.C.E., if wine pips found in archaeological sites are any indication. Centuries later, it became the world's first regulated wine region, which in 1756 was demarcated for the creation of port. As of 2018, Portugal was the 11th-largest [wine-producing country in the world](#), though it still produced only about 161 million gallons of wine a year (compared to over a billion each from Spain, France and Italy).



The Douro Valley is a UNESCO World Heritage Site for good reason: it's gorgeous, made so by the steep slopes heavily terraced with grape vines, dotted with olive trees and wineries and the Douro River.

The Douro Valley could as easily be called the enchanted valley, such is the beauty and magic that its landscapes offer.

The Douro River and the Douro Valley are known primarily for [Port](#), a sweet wine that has been produced here for two thousand years, along with less well-known red and white table wines. The Alto (upper) Douro, also known as the *Douro Vinhateiro* is dominated by big placards on the hillsides bearing the

names of famous Port producers such as *Cockburns*, *Taylors* and *Sandeman*. The spectacular landscape is characterised by improbably steep terraces covered in vines and dotted with wine-producing farms called quintas (where it is often possible to get a bed for the night). Hills fall steeply to the water's edge and the region becomes more and more sparsely populated as it travels inland from the coast.

But that long history hasn't been without its valleys. Less than 200 years ago, the country's entire wine industry was on the brink of extinction. But in a business historically hostile to women, one female entrepreneur not only made it through — she also sustained the entire industry.



Antónia Ferreira, or *Dona* (Lady) Antónia, as she was known, was born in 1811 into a country wracked by political crisis. The Napoleonic Wars hadn't been kind to Portugal, and the royal family had fled French aggressions for Brazil, temporarily relocating Portugal's capital to Rio de Janeiro. Antónia's family was wealthy — a fortune made in wine shipping — and she was known as *Ferreirinha*, aka "the little Ferreira." While her wealth and position gave her an advantage, her rise to the top of the [wine world](#) was hardly assured.

"She had to summon all her strength to compete in a man-led world," says historian Natália Fauvrelle, a coordinator at the Douro Museum in Peso da Régua. "We can't say she was born with an inclination to do all that. Her life made her be that way."

Ferreira was married off at the age of 23 to her own cousin, in what was widely seen as little more than an economic match. They were both only children, and the marriage consolidated the family fortune. But her husband had his flaws: He spent money lavishly and drank to excess. Just 10 years later, he died, having contracted first syphilis and then typhus. Antónia was alone against the world, but she was well-equipped.

"She had an unusual sense of management for her time," says biographer Gaspar Martins Pereira — who penned *Dona Antónia* along with wine producer (and Ferreira descendant) Maria Olazábal. "Her condition as a widow forced her to take care of the family's estate." Just 33, Antónia set about defending her fortune from her largest competitors: English wine exporters who had set up shop in Porto.

She sold off her husband's most extravagant assets (like horses and chandeliers), settled their debts and took to the wine fields, learning about the process from the soil up. "She wanted to know how things were going, she oversaw the works [and] she was present at a time landowners were mostly absent," says Fauvrelle. In 1856, she married again — this time to a wealthy man who understood and supported her attachment to the Douro region. Aside from her business, she attempted to support the people of Douro with generous financial donations — which, given that [Portugal was then one of Europe's poorest countries](#), earned her a saintly reputation.



Female workers step barefoot through fermenting wine at the Quinta do Noval winery in the Douro Valley.

In the 1850s, wine researchers collected specimens of American grape vines and brought them back to Europe. With them, they brought phylloxera, a vine-destroying insect that was behind the great European wine blight that devastated viticulture across the continent. Portugal didn't escape unscathed: In the 1870s, the Douro region saw myriad plantations destroyed and their owners financially ruined.

Antónia wasn't one of them. Instead, she drew on international know-how — such as ordering sulfur from Britain to apply to the decaying plants — so she, by trial and error, could learn exactly how they'd dealt with the blight. Despite a naturally cautious nature, she decided to implement new forms to protect Douro's plantations through new grafting techniques imported from other countries. After her, small farmers in the region were inspired to try the same techniques — a wave of regeneration that salvaged the entire region's economy. Wine remained Portugal's primary export until 1930, and Antónia died the richest woman in Portugal. Dona Antónia didn't mess around when it came to port.

After Antónia's death in her mid-80s, her children's profligate spending saw her estate partitioned and sold off. But while some was sold to larger companies, other pieces have stayed in the family: The owners of at least two local vineyards, [Quinta do Vallado](#) and [Quinta do Vale Meão](#), are descended from the Dona herself.

Humor:.

Two whales walk into a bar. The first whale says to the other, "WOOOOOO. WEEEEEEEEEOOOOO. WEEEEEEEEEEEEEOOOOOOOOO." The second whale says, "Shut up Steve, you're drunk."

Wine Quote of the Month:

"Wine pairs nicely with good friends." –Unknown

Calendar of Events:

In this section, we want to publicize any upcoming events that either the RWAf or local chapters are planning. An even quicker, better way is to list them on our Facebook page: Rotarian's Wine Appreciation Fellowship or contact Claire Larson: clarson@mail.telepac.pt

June 7 – 10, 2020: Rotary International Convention in Honolulu, Hawaii. Register early so there will be less chance of a conflict between our dinners and the opening and closing ceremonies. We are planning to have another good convention experience for RWAf members and will keep you posted on the dinners as they are completely planned by Liz Kane. So far, our dinners will be on Sunday and Wednesday evenings.

Recommended Value Wines:

As we continue to do, we will list about ten value wines with each newsletter. These are wines from around the world that are readily available in many markets, are rated by some "expert" as being at least 88 points (out of 100) and which cost \$20 USD or less. We would appreciate any additions suggested by any member. We feel that no matter what type of wine you enjoy, you ought to be able to find a good one at a reasonable price.

Year	Name of Wine	Specific Designation	Type	Cost	Rating	Rater
2015	Vina Haras De Pirque	Maipo Valley Hussonet Gran Reserva	Cabernet Sauvignon	\$15	90	WS
2018	Tania & Vincent Careme	Terre Brûlée Le Blanc, SA	Swartland	\$16	90	WS
2018	FORSTREITER	Kremstal Kremser Kogl	Grüner Veltliner	\$17	90	WS
2017	MAROTTI CAMPI	Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico Superiore	Luzano	\$17	90	WS
2018	FRIEDRICH BECKER	Becker Family, Pinot Blanc	Pfalz	\$18	90	WS
2018	VINCENZO IPPOLITO	Cirò White Mare	Chiaro	\$19	90	WS
2017	HANS WIRSCHING	Franken Iphöfer Kronsberg Alte Reben	Riesling	\$19	90	WS
NV	VEUVE AMBAL	Brut Crémant de Bourgogne Grande Cuvée 0	Sparkling Wine	\$20	90	WS
2015	GÉRARD BERTRAND	Art de Vivre	Languedoc	\$20	90	WS
2016	Marchese di Borgosole	Salentino, Italy	Red Blend	\$11	93	JS

A Few Special Wines:

Year	Name of Wine	Specific Designation	Type	Cost	Rating	Rater
2015	Chateau La Garde	Pessac-Leognan	Bordeaux	\$26	93	JS
2015	Torbreck	The Steading, Barossa, AU	Grenache, Mataro, Shiraz	\$27	92	WS

WS = "Wine Spectator" - WA = "Wine Advocate" (Robert Parker) - WE = "Wine Enthusiast"
 CCH = Not yet rated, my score - V = Vinous

We will always appreciate your comments and suggestions. You are receiving these newsletters because you are members of the RWAF and publishing a newsletter is one of the duties of a Rotary Fellowship. If you would like to discontinue receiving these newsletters, please so indicate by return email and you will be removed from our address list.

Thank you for the continued opportunity to serve.

Conrad C. Heede, PDG
President
RWAF

