

LFW G r a p e v i n e

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LFW Festivities Launch 2007

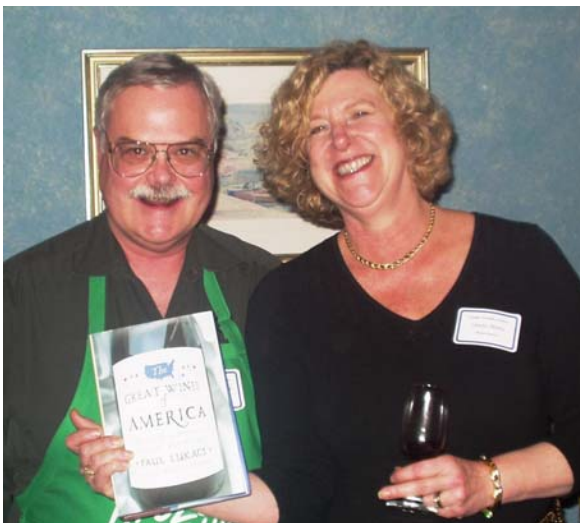
By Christopher Blunden

Great weather, friends and wine combined to get 2007 off to a great start at our annual Winter Follies event in the home of Ellen and Paul Gutierrez.

This was also my second attempt to provide an organized approach to our Lawyer Friends of Wine contest (in contrast to our former sip-and-scream-approval approach).

No one committed crimes of moral slurpitude with deep pours, and everyone had a chance to blind taste and vote on all competing wines; there were even numerous tastes of the winners available.

As usual, Cellar Master Steve Pitcher was right on target identifying his winning choice before I even had it unwrapped: a [Robert Stemmler](#) 2001 Carneros (Napa Valley) Pinot Noir brought by Linda Ross.



Linda has consistently brought wines in the past that nearly won, and she provided our unique red Cellar Master winner this time.

For the third year in a row (including a sip-and-scream contest) a Zinfandel placed first in the red wine People's Choice awards. This year it was a 2002 [Truchard](#) Zin, (also Carneros, Napa Valley).



In fact, Alan Goldfarb and Alice Wolfson arrived together carrying both the red and the white People's Choice awards. How's that for knowing the crowd?

The White Alice brought was a 2004 [Proidl](#) Riesling Vom Urgestein, Senftenberger Reserve from Austria's Kremstal region. Cellar Master Steve did an appropriately wonderful job of pronouncing it and also gave it his first place award in this blind tasting. (The Proidl family winemaking history goes back to 1738, but records show grapes have been cultivated on the slopes above this village since the 11th century.)

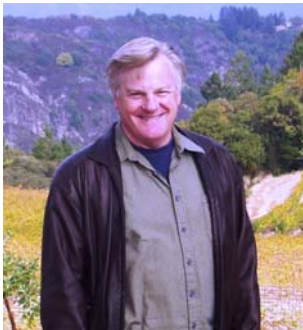
As noted in my article on last year's event, it is particularly gratifying to see how our tastes match Steve's. Ray Bergez was among those acknowledging how fun the blind tasting competition was, "Even though I didn't win."

A People's Choice Honorable Mention went to a [Tantara](#) 2004 Pino Noir, La Colline Vineyard brought by David Anderson which was also admired by Cellar Master Steve.



Special thanks are owed to Ellen and Paul who have gone far beyond the call of duty year after year volunteering their home as the Follies venue. Next year, we're going to have a different venue which has already been volunteered.

Wine Country Tour Tip



I had never visited the Wine Country during an October harvest to experience the crush, so I went on three daytrips midweek in October.

Our most spectacular tasting and tour experience (\$5 each) was the [Pride Mountain Vineyards](#) Winery Tour. Straddling Napa and Sonoma counties in the Spring Mountain District, this gorgeous setting with stunning wines by Bob Foley is what to me the "Wine Country" is all about.



Our excellent tasting and tour guide Russell provided sample tastings and insights about the wines and vines and shared a taste of the grapes directly from the vines.

We even met the Belgian draft horses who work where machines shouldn't. (Russell said, "The shoe allowance for these horses is \$1,200 a month." I couldn't resist; I turned to my date Judi and said, "Hey, just like you.")

There are wonderful surprise highlights about this special wine country experience that you'll discover for yourselves when you arrive that shall go unmentioned here. Note:

appointments are mandatory – call a few weeks ahead.

If you visit wineries other than Pride during the crush, be prepared to share your tasting with a bevy of fruit flies in the air.

Between visits to the various wineries on Spring Mountain, you'll thank yourself for having picnic foods and water. Bring your camera for this visit!

Jeroboam Surprise: \$150 Corkage on a Single Bottle

I've had good luck negotiating corkage to below half or sometimes zero simply by sharing tastes with the server (and manager if present) and putting it right back into the tip; this never fails with my monthly dinner group where we walk in with 8 or more bottles. Try it; you'll see.

But a corkage disaster happened to an acquaintance who brought a jeroboam into a well-known restaurant for a very special meal. He told me the restaurant charged him a \$25 corkage per bottle equivalent which totaled \$150. Although the diners used the same original wine glasses, and the waiter rarely got around to help pour, the restaurant refused to budge on the full corkage. Needless to say, that tip was based on the price of the food before tax and before corkage.

New Members – Welcome!

Nancy E. O'Malley, sponsored by Eric Behrens

Ronald G. Sproat, sponsored by Bill Smith

LFW Board Elections

Please watch your mail in the next two weeks for your ballot coming from [Denise Malatesta](#). Four positions on the board are at stake. In our small organization, your vote makes all the difference. Support one or more of the candidates by voting or lose the benefits they offer.

Save the Date!

Our annual Black Tie Optional / Fancy Gown / Wear Your Tastevin dinner will be **Friday, March 2, 2007** at the St. Francis Yacht Club. Prepare those dancin' shoes!