



# OPTIMIAN NEWS

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**SABOR DE VINO:  
DISCOVERY TOUR  
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### JANINE AND DARYL KOROLUK

Daryl and Janine Koroluk have been the Area Representatives for the Saskatoon Chapter of Opimian for three years. They enjoy sharing their love of wine with other wine enthusiasts from North/Central Saskatchewan. Having travelled the world extensively, the Koroluks always include a wine tasting region in their itinerary and have appreciated fine cuisine and culinary experiences along the way. They relish and enjoy planning events for their membership; organizing and hosting the tour of Chile and Argentina was second to none.



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### JANE MASTERS MW

Jane joined Opimian in 2010. She tastes, selects and writes about all the wines featured in Opimian's Cellar Offerings. Based between France and London, UK, Jane personally knows the winemakers and visits every region offered. She passed the Master of Wine exams in 1997 and is now Chairman of the Institute of Masters of Wine.

# COMING SOON: THE 2018-2019 WINE ORDERING SEASON



Summertime has wrapped up. The kids are back in school, the office is back to its familiar grind, and the weather is cooling down. For the rest of the country, this means the holiday seasons will soon be upon us. For Opimians, there's one great thing that starts first: our new wine ordering season. This year promises to add old favourites and new gems to your cellar. Keep an eye out for the first of the bunch, Cellar Offering 262, in the coming weeks!



## ABOUT THE COVER

Opimian's relationship with our suppliers is unique; there isn't another club in Canada that is as in touch with the wine producers as Opimian. We consider them family, and they love to host members all year round. Opimian wine tours give us those special memories that we can cherish the rest of our lives. Those memories that come back to us every time we uncork a bottle from that producer. Flip to page 6, where Janine and Daryl Koroluk, Saskatoon Area Representatives, share the story of their tour of Argentina and Chile.



# CELEBRATE WINE AT THESE FESTIVALS ACROSS CANADA

Canada has a lot to offer wine lovers – including organizations like Opimian that bring Canadians together to experience new adventures, be it in their cellars or around the world. The Canadian wine industry's incredible growth over the last 45 years deserves its own celebration. Which is probably why the following festivals were created. Head out to one this month to celebrate Canadian wine in all its glory!

## NIAGARA GRAPE & WINE FESTIVAL

**September 15 – 30, 2018**

"In Niagara, we celebrate the harvest by throwing the largest wine festival & street parade in Canada! Enjoy 100+ events at the 67th Niagara Grape and Wine Festival."

## VICTORIA WINE FESTIVAL

**September 20 – 22, 2018**

"Victoria's first exclusive international wine tasting festival, the VICWF focuses on showcasing wines from around the world."

## FESTIVAL OF THE GRAPES

**September 30, 2018**

"Taste the various wines that are on display, enjoy the music played on the grandstand, and either compete in, or watch competitors in the Grape Stomp."

**Not big on festivals?** That's eh-ok. One of the reasons why Opimian's Area Representatives host tastings is to help our members meet other wine lovers, and taste new wines of course. Everyone at an Opimian event is a member, or knows a member, which means you will definitely have at least one thing in common with most (if not all) the guests! For the complete calendar of events, visit: <https://www.opim.ca/upcoming-events> (you'll have to sign in first).



## OUR AUTUMN WINE - PAIRING MENU

When the weather starts cooling off, we reach for more comfortable foods – warmer dishes with a bit of heft to them. Our wine pairing habits start to switch from the fruity, refreshing, lighter summer wines to the medium-bodied, fruity-but-in-a-different-way, fuller fall wines. If you're stuck in the space between summer and winter wines, and don't know what to grab, try our autumn wine-pairing menu.

### Risotto + Sauvignon Blanc

The silky, thick texture of a risotto is elevated from stodgy winter dish to hearty autumn dinner by the lively acidity and clean finish of a Sauvignon Blanc. Look for a Sauv Blanc with citrus and/or tropical fruit, like Lot 9614 Saint-Bris Sauvignon, AOC, 2016 from Lamblin & Fils (Cellar Offering 256). Jane described it as: "soft and broad... with ripe mango flavours and crisp acidity."

### Pork tenderloin + Chardonnay

Pork is a softer protein than beef, with a bit more strength than chicken. It calls for a light, zesty white that has enough acidity to balance the slightly cloying nature of the meat, with a creamy texture that won't leave your lips puckering. One of the wines from Lot 9620 on Cellar Offering 256 - the

Chablis Premier Cru, Vaillon, AOC Chablis Premier Cru Contrôlée, 2016 – fits the bill for pork tenderloin quite well. "Complex with a mineral, leafy character. It is soft and smooth with citrus lemon and lime flavours, and a long flinty finish."

### Chicken pot pie + Merlot

Merlot's medium-weight and typical subtle flavours make this a great complement for pastry-based dishes, like chicken pot pie. The refreshing red will wash down the pastry with ease. Look for a Merlot with herbal aromas if you can, since that scent pairs well with sage and thyme; and try for ripe dark fruit, vanilla and oak-warmth to match the medium-weight chicken. If you have it, Lot 9649 Montblanc 362 Merlot, DO Conca de Barberà, 2015 by Bodegas Concavins (Cellar Offering

257) is described with "ripe dark fruits and black cherry aromas ... youthful and medium-bodied with a linear structure. ... mellow oak notes with a long savoury and smoky finish complemented by fresh sour fruits."

### Steak + full-bodied red

For as long as wine has been paired with food, steak has been paired with red. Not just any red – a full-bodied red. While you could reach for the typical full-bodied varietals, we suggest trying a red blend, like a Meritage or even Lot 9585 Amarone Della Valpolicella Classico, DOCg, 2015, Ca' La Bionda from Avenue SRL (offered on Cellar Offering 256), which has "vanilla, raisins, kirsch with a hint of sweet tobacco. It is medium to full-bodied with a smooth, rich texture and flavours of bitter cherry and vanilla."



# DIY: WINE CORK BIRD FEEDER

A bird feeder is kind of like a water cooler, but for birds. Our feathered friends love to have a place to go to fill their bellies and gossip with their friends. Ok, maybe not the second one, but it's fun to pretend. Give the birds in your neighbourhood a place to gather by transforming your corks into a bird feed. It's easy! Here's how.



## What you need:

145 corks  
Hot glue gun (with 3 10-inch glue sticks)  
Board, 9 1/2 x 8 inches

## How it's done:

The short version – you hot glue gun all the corks together in the shape of a house. Build a base atop the board with about 40 corks; add a railing, followed by the four corner posts and two side walls; then construct the roof. You can use your imagination and create whatever you want! Or, follow these more in-depth instructions to get something similar to the photo.

### Base

Glue corks to the base as snug together as you can make them. Use your glue gun to seal the cracks. Make your base two rows deep (so 20 corks go down, then 20 more on top of those).

### Rail

This takes about 18 corks and holds the birdseed on the feeder. Glue corks to the base so that they are on their side, and affix them end to end to each other. Line all four sides. Pretend you're putting a railing up on a deck, only it's small and made of corks. If they don't fit properly, find ones that do or cut the final cork down so it will fit.

### Corner Posts & Walls

Glue two corks together to make a post. Repeat to make six of posts. Glue one into each corner (so you have the four corner posts) and the other two one to a side (so put the first one on the right-most edge, inside the railing, in the middle of the two corner posts; and the other one on the left-most edge directly across from the first). To make walls instead of posts, make additional two-cork posts and glue them, upright, between the four corners.

### Roof

Glue 10 corks together side to side. Repeat five times, so you have six "lines" of 10 corks. One side of the roof will be three of these "lines" – glue the tops of one line to the bottoms of another (you'll have a rectangle with three "lines" glued together). Repeat with the other three lines. These will be your roof panels.

Create a line of corks for the roof peak – this will be five corks glued end to end. Glue a roof panel to the roof peak at a 45 degree angle. Then do the same for the other side. This will give you a peaked roof. Take your glue gun and put a heavy bead of glue on the top of each roof post support on the base of your bird feeder. Lower the roof gently to these six posts and hold it there until glue dries.

Let the glue set overnight. Turn it over and add extra glue to the supports and roof. Place in your yard on top of a flat wood surface and enjoy the gossip of your local flock!

# SABOR DE VINO: DISCOVERY TOUR OF CHILE AND ARGENTINA

These words resonated beautifully as our Opimian tour group embarked on a 12-day wine journey through Chile and Argentina this past February. We toured lush, ripe vineyards bursting with their precious juices. Wine, food, fantastic weather and new friendships were in abundant supply. Rich engaging winemaker personalities were the consistent backdrop our daily wine, culinary and cultural experiences served up in fine Latin flavour and hospitality.

On the first day, we visited Villard in the Casablanca Valley and were treated to an inspiring welcome of the 2017 Sauvignon Blanc from Cellar Offering 255. It was poured for us under a massive tree overlooking acres of the lush ripe vineyard. "We had a small disaster in that part of the vineyard last year because of a rabbit attack, they eat the bark of the vines, and without the bark the vine dies," shared Thierry Villard. "We had to replant 60 hectares". This start made it clear our tour would get up-close and personal with the winemakers. Without a doubt, the tour as it unfolded captured the hearts and palates of its members.

Our stop at Antiyal in the Maipo Valley (they first appeared in Cellar Offering 255) introduced us to the charismatic

*"Drink it, and remember in every drop of gold, in every topaz glass, in every purple ladle, that autumn labored - to fill the vessel with wine."*

*~ Pablo Neruda, of Chilean Nobel Laureate in Literature*

winemaker, Alvaro Espinoza. In his engaging manner, Alvaro declared: "what you have from this place is the pure expression of terroir that seduced me about biodynamic farming." He, his lovely wife, Marina, and their

hooligan Bull Mastif dogs made us feel right at home with exquisite tastings of Kuyen 2015 and Antiyal Signature 2015 wines, paired with authentic Chilean tapas from their kitchen. The experience was made even more special by the noisy distraction of the vineyard staff harvesting ripe almonds from nearby trees by laying down tarps and hammering the trees to lighten them of their small treasures.

During our visit to Viña Echeverría, the close Opimian relationship was on full display; we were treated to a six-hour experience that left us feeling like members of the Echeverría family. Roberto Sr., Roberto Jr. and Diego fêted us in fine fashion. Roberto Sr. presented on sparkling wines, served with the most recent bottling of their Luminos Brut. We also had an expansive alfresco tasting of every single wine from Cellar Offering 255, served alongside tasty appetizers, culminating in a mouth-watering BBQ, served of course, with some of Echeverría's best wines. Then, we were invited into their beautiful home to have Roberto Jr., with great panache, sabrage a bottle of bubbly.



The next day, our journey took us to Viña La Rosa (one of Chile's oldest wineries) in the Cachapoal Valley. Cynthia and Eugenio hosted a very informative overview and vertical tasting of the Carménère grape, provided an intimate tour of the lush Cornellana vineyards high in the hills, and followed up with another exquisite meal. The highlight wine of the lunch was an outstanding "Don Reca" Limited Release Cuvée, 2014 (named after the winery founder) that is sadly not available through Opimian.

A special experience was the chance to better appreciate the connections between Chilean food and wine. Uncorked - Santiago accommodated our group for a special hands-on cooking experience. Starting with a personal tour of the Mercado Central (Top 10 Food Markets in the World), we explored colourful and aromatic collections of fish, meats and produce. Then it was off to the kitchen to whip up an assortment of Chilean delicacies. With much gusto and merriment, we helped craft an enjoyable lunch paired with fine wines from the Uncorked cellar. We celebrated our final night in Santiago, before leaving for Mendoza, Argentina, with a goodbye toast to Neruda's Chile by dining at Meson Nerudiano in the vibrant Bellavista neighborhood.

A short flight over the snow-capped Andes Mountains brought us to Mendoza. The team at Bodega Mauricio Lorca, including Gabriella, Sebastien and Santiago, gave us a winery facilities tour that was informative and interesting. They explained the presences of extensive netting around the grape vines (hail is a constant summer threat in Mendoza; the netting protects the maturing grape clusters). Our tasting consisted of several wines, including a 2017 Sauvignon Blanc, a 2017 Malbec-Syrah, a 2016 Opalo Malbec and a 2014 Tematico Cab Franc. Gabriella, the winemaker, took great care to highlight the preferred

approach in bringing out the freshness of the wines. Our visit was celebrated with a marvelous BBQ. It would seem that, like Canadians, when the weather is hot, and the sun is high, South Americans break out the grill for a feast!

Our last winery on the Opimian Chilean-Argentinian tour did not disappoint. After a 90-minute bus ride from Mendoza to the Uco Valley, we arrived at O. Fournier. The view of the ultra-modern winery nestled in the shadows of the Andes was spectacular. Built into the winery architecture is a natural light cross that provides direct sunlight to a subterranean 10,000-barrel cellar. Punctuated with large brightly coloured original pieces of art, the cellar hosts intimate concerts throughout the year.

We shared a good-bye gastronomic meal at the Urban restaurant (rated as one of the best in Argentina) paired with the very best of Alpha Crux O. Fournier wines: 2017 Sauvignon Blanc BetaCrux, a BetaCrux 2012 red blend, an Alpha Crux Blend 2010, an Alpha Crux 2012 Malbec and finally, a fantastic O. Fournier 2010 Malbec, which is not available outside Argentina. We tasted our wines overlooking the foothills of the towering Andes mountains that, on that special night, were coupled with a delightful thunderstorm sprinkled with intermittent sunset rays basking the landscape. It was the perfect finishing touch to the tour.

I am sure that when the next bottle of Chilean/Argentinian wine is opened by our members, musical echoes of the Chilean Folk group playing in the Santa Cruz Plaza de Armas on a warm fall evening will drift through their mind and bring a grand smile to their faces.





# THE IMPORTANCE OF OXYGEN IN CHAMPAGNE

*"I drink Champagne when I'm happy and when I'm sad. Sometimes I drink it when I'm alone. When I have company, I consider it obligatory. I trifle with it if I'm not hungry and drink it when I am. Otherwise, I never touch it - unless I'm thirsty."*

*~ Lily Bollinger House of Bollinger Champagne*

At the end of March, I attended the launch of Bollinger's latest vintage of RD in London, UK with Cellar Master Giles Descôtes. RD stands for "Réceemment Dégorgé" or Recently Disgorged, with the 2004 the 25th vintage of RD to be released (it is only released in top vintages, with the first vintage 1952 launched by Madame Bollinger in 1967).

As many Opimian members will know, Champagne is produced according to the traditional sparkling method. Grape must is fermented to produce a base wine that is blended, has sugar and yeast added, is bottled and then undergoes a second fermentation in bottle. As the yeast convert sugar into alcohol, carbon dioxide is produced, which is trapped in the bottle creating the sparkle. When the sugar has been used up, there is a high pressure in the bottle (up to 6 atmospheres), which results in the yeast dying off and forming a deposit of lees. Despite no longer being viable, the lees impart flavours as they breakdown – a process called yeast autolysis. This is an important step in Champagne production.

Legally, all Champagnes must spend at least 12 months in contact with the yeast; for vintage champagnes, this period must be a minimum of three years. Disgorgement is the final step in production when the lees are expelled, and the Champagne prepared for shipment, generally with the addition of a "liqueur d'expédition" containing some sugar to balance the high natural acidity.

For Bollinger's RD, the time spent on lees is long. Madame Bollinger or Tante Lily as she was known, was by all accounts a woman ahead of her time (and a real character). She took over the running of the company in the 1940s after the death of her husband. In the 60s, it was almost unknown to launch old vintages and unusual to have such a dry Brut style. At that time, the Champenois believed that the act of disgorgement had little or no impact on the Champagne, since the high pressure combined with the amount of dissolved carbon dioxide would prevent any absorption of oxygen. However, Lily believed that disgorgement dates were important and, when entertaining friends, she would get a bottle directly from the cellar, disgorge it and drink it straight away. Her

view was, if that was what was right for friends, then that's what she should sell. And recent research has shown that oxygen does indeed have an impact.

Giles Descôtes took the opportunity of the launch to demonstrate how, with a bit of oxygenation, aromas and taste sensations evolve. First, we were served two glasses blind and asked to guess the difference. In effect, they were the same Champagne – both RD 2002, both disgorged in May 2017, with one of the glasses poured 15 minutes earlier than the other. Whilst similar on the nose, the glass poured earlier was richer on the palate.

Our next test was to taste another three Champagnes blind (it's a hard life) and we were asked which we preferred. My favourite was the middle glass, which had great balance, depth and a long finish – fortunate, as this is the actual release 2004 RD with a dosage of 3g/l. The other two were exactly the same cuvée produced from 66% Pinot Noir and 35% Chardonnay with differing levels of sugar. All three were disgorged on November 20, 2017. The first was completely dry with a marked acidity and subdued aromas; the other had a dosage of 8g/l, which gave it an overly bitter finish and it lacked balance. Giles emphasised the search for balance when determining dosage. He is looking for freshness and purity. Each year reacts differently so the process to determine dosage is an iterative one involving tastings over many months to ascertain the level that gives the best result over time. It is amazing how much difference a few grams of sweetness can make.

Finally, we were treated to two glasses of RD 1996, one disgorged in 2012 and the other in 2017. 1996 was a great Champagne year and both were sublime with complex mellow notes. The earlier disgorged champagne had developed an intense toasty character with hazelnuts and smoke and seemed richer on the palate with a bitter orange and dark chocolate finish. I like mature Champagnes with this character, but some prefer the fresher style. Bollinger carry out four to six disgorgements a year for each vintage of RD and disgorgement dates are marked on the label so that, depending on style preference, you can decide when to drink them.