



O P I M I A N NEWS

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**GIVE THANKS
FOR GREAT WINE
PAIRINGS**



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COLETTE MARTIN

One of Opimian's newest Area Representatives, Colette hosts events and assists members in Eastern Ontario. She is a project management professional by day and a wine enthusiast all the time. In fact, she is currently taking the Sommelier Fundamentals program at Algonquin College. She shares her passion for travel, food and wine with her husband, Michael. As a member of the Opimian team, she continues pursuing wine knowledge and using her new-found knowledge to give members exciting new wine experiences – like a tasting in the Diefenbunker (more on that on page 4).



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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.

RENEWAL SEASON IS AROUND THE CORNER



While you're celebrating the many holidays that take place over the next few months, keep in mind that it is also Opimian's renewal season. Look for your renewal notice in the next few weeks! If you'd like to stay ahead of the due date and ensure your membership continues for 2019 (without all the hassle of manually renewing), switch to our Automatic Renewal. Sign in to your online account and tick the "automatic renewal" box. You will also save \$6 from the \$69 annual fee.



ABOUT THE COVER

Pairing your thanksgiving meal with Opimian wines is easy with just a little bit of advice pointing you in the right direction. Flip to page 6 to see what we suggest you do for your thanksgiving wine pairings.



OPIMIAN PICK UP POLICY

Ensuring the efficient distribution of more than 200,000 cases ordered by Opimian members each year requires a lot of coordination between Opimian and the provincial and territorial liquor authorities. Your cooperation is an essential part of this process. That is why we encourage you to pick up your wines within two weeks of release so that valuable storage space at your pickup location can be freed up for the next release. To help you with this, Opimian notifies you when the wines are ready to be picked up. We will also send you friendly reminders at 15-day intervals if the wines have not yet been picked up after 15, 30 or 45 days. If your wine is still at the pickup location after 60 days, it will be returned to the warehouse for disposal. So don't delay. Get to the pickup location quickly so that you can enjoy your Opimian wine as soon as possible.

DISCOUNT AT *Fairmont*

We love treating our members to new and exciting deals. Among the newest and most exciting is our recently negotiated discount for Opimian members! Book a room at the Fairmont, using the promotional code NOPI and receive 15% off the cost of your room.

AWARD-WINNING WINE FROM CELLAR OFFERING 261

Those members who ordered Lot 9901 from Cellar Offering 261 are in for a treat! Blue Rock Cabernet Sauvignon 2015 recently received 91 points from Robert Parker, and 94 points with Best of Class and a Gold Medal at North Coast Wine Challenge.



WINE TASTING IN THE DIEFENBUNKER

When Opimian put out a call for someone to take on the role of area representative for Eastern Ontario, I jumped at the opportunity. As part of the selection process applicants were asked to create an event plan; develop three events with marketing content, wine selections and pricing. We were provided with a copy of the Opimian Area Representative guide and a list of wines.

With a detailed AR guide and an extensive list of wines to choose from I set about selecting possible venues. What would the members like? As a member, what would I like? The goal being to create events that are unique to Opimian, that would engage the membership and create value while showcasing the wines. Ottawa has so much to offer; museums, great architecture, theatre, Parliament, festivals. For a small city, it punches far above its weight class and the city works hard to make these venues accessible to the public. Did you know you can buy tickets for the Symphony on Group? The National Arts center offers a "pay what you can Sunday", and most museums offer free admittance on Thursday evenings. How could I compete?

I learned about the Diefenbunker, a former cold-war bunker built to protect the Prime Minister and 299 of his closest friends (but not his wife and family) that is now a Cold War museum, from an open doors event the city holds every year allowing the public to freely access over 140 buildings, businesses and embassies. A bunker! How cool would it be to taste wine in a bunker? Very cool. Paired with awesome local food... even cooler! I contacted them and they were very open to doing a private event for a wine club. I included this as part of my Area Representative application submission and, when I was selected for the position, I booked the event.

From the outside, the site is very unassuming. The entrance is built on the side of a hill and looks like a large shed. Once inside, just past the armored vehicle and the atomic bomb in the vestibule, you travel a long corridor to get to the reception area. I toured the bunker with the events manager. There is 100,000 square feet of space over four levels that go 80 feet below the surface. We selected rooms, decorated with furniture and equipment spanning the years the bunker was operational, in which to set up tasting stations. I was referred to a local caterer who is familiar with the bunker and understands the challenge

of serving in a place that allows no open flame, for obvious reasons, and does not have running water in most areas. Her familiarity with the site contributed greatly to the overall success of the event.

I provided food pairing ideas based on the wines I wanted to use and she developed a delicious menu. To keep with the Cold War theme, her staff came up with really clever names for each appetizer. Despite some fun suggestions from people, we opted not to serve rations of spam!

Everyone gathered in the dining hall to enjoy some sparkling wine and lively conversation. The rooms in the bunker are compact so our group of 60 was split into three smaller groups. Glass in hand, each group was led in a different direction on a guided tour of the bunker and sampled Opimian wines in the Bank of Canada Vault, the Medical Centre, the War Cabinet Room, just to name a few, and capped the evening off back in the dining hall with a glass of Port and French Macarons. With seven tasting stations, the contribution of our volunteers pouring and discussing the wines was invaluable. I continue to strive to create events for our members that are memorable, educational and above all fun!



CELLAR HUMIDITY 101

This edition of Answers UnCorked first appeared in issue 280, July/August 2009

What is the ideal temperature for a wine cellar?

The most appropriate reply I can give is to say that wine matures at the speed of the temperature it endures over time. Therefore, the higher the temperature the faster the rate of maturation, a process inevitably followed by degradation and eventual collapse.

I tend to buy wines that endure for very long periods. They are wines with high levels of tannin and more often than not, a high level of solids (colouring material, pulp, organic solids) and these wines come together slowly, steadily and most harmoniously when the process is relaxed by taking a long time to be completed. This is why I suggest (for my own wine styles and preferences) a low cellar temperature. So, if 6 – 8°C seems unusually low, I plead that for my wines, it is the best range for my requirements. For more general wine storage, it is not unusual to see advice giving the 10 – 13°C range, but wines kept at that temperature will mature more rapidly than those held in my cellar.

I note that the guidance quoted for the temperature-controlled wine cabinet that has been purchased shows 13°C to be the optimum level. This is very much at the top end of what is desirable and maturation in such circumstances will be accelerated.

Also bear in mind that many wines, especially white wines and sparkling wines, are normally served at a lower temperature than this guide level, so it would be necessary to chill such wines before opening. Whites coming out of my storage are perfect as they leave the cellar. So, in essence, it is a matter of “horses for courses” and if my initial recommendation was on the too low side of low, then let’s turn up the temperature a couple of degrees and enjoy our perfectly matured wine a little sooner. I hope you will accept my revised advice to turn down the thermostat in your wine cabinet to 10!

My goal, when I finished my basement, was to build a passive wine cellar - the result is a 500-bottle capacity cellar. I manage to maintain the humidity levels between 65% - 75%. As for temperature, it does vary – but slowly and seasonally. In the dead of winter, it will hit a low of 10°C and during the summer, it will hit a high of 19°C, with the possibility of reaching 20-21°C, if we have an intense hot period of weather. The changes between these extremes are very gradual, and for most months of the year the cellar ranges between 14 and 18°C.

Wine experts say that wine may be stored anywhere from 8 to 24°C, as long as there are no sharp changes in temperature. In fact, these same

people would suggest that the gradual seasonal temperature changes may actually aid in the aging of the wine. Are my seasonal temperature changes acceptable? Or should I look at installing a cooling unit to help keep my summer highs a little lower?

The fact is that wine is a very patient and long-suffering creature. It does love to be stored in cool, dark and stable temperatures, but even if it does not enjoy the finest conditions, it is very forgiving and still comes back to give you pleasure.

I suggest you do nothing more than monitor the progress of the cherished bottles you store, and if they continue to give you the pleasures you anticipate, then do nothing more but sit back and enjoy!

Most of us keep our wines too long - we should more frequently open them whilst they offer freshness, fruit and vigour!



GIVE THANKS FOR GREAT WINE PAIRINGS

Thanksgiving. While the roots of the holiday are found at the end of harvest as a feast to celebrate the bounty, modern-day thanksgiving mostly features turkey, ham and lots of delicious food. Luckily, for many of us, our feast is grown for us by local farmers (providing you're able to shop locally).

As wine lovers, it is our duty to honour this holiday with a glass or two (or more) of vino that complements and enhances the fare laid out before us. If you need some assistance with finding the right bottles, here are a few tips.

When in Doubt, go for Bubbles

Choose a sparkling when you're heading to a dinner party or only want to have to handle one type of wine for your entire meal. The acidity boosts the pairing potential, the bubbles cut through rich dishes (like desserts) and the whole thing is guaranteed to add a festive flare to the table.

Think Pink (& maybe Bubbly)

Many rosés straddle the line between more acidic whites and fruity, tannic reds; in fact, the majority of the rosés are made with food pairings in mind. A still pink from California, say, would add a subtle sweetness in the glass to balance the salty, savouriness of the turkey. Asti Spumanté rosé from Italy would scrub the palate clean after a sweet dessert.

Play it Safe with the Classics

There are some typical pairings – the ones we see all the time – that you can count on working with at least one, if not most of the dishes on your Thanksgiving table. For the reds, these are Pinot Noir, Syrah and Zinfandel; aim for a wine with tame tannins that will support, rather than overpower, the food. For the whites, we've got Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Gewürztraminer and Viognier; find bottles with balanced acidity.

Tried & True Suggestions

The following suggestions have been tested by our experts and are ready for your experimental eye. Try them out and see which you like best.

For Turkey & Dressing

- Cabernet Franc
- White Burgundy
- Bordeaux Blanc
- Pouilly Fuissé
- Chardonnay with low or no oak
- Dry Riesling
- Gewürztraminer
- Beaujolais Grand Cru
- Merlot
- Pinot Noir
- Fruity Zinfandel

For Light Side Dishes (like green beans):

- Albariño
- Grüner Veltliner

For Cranberry Sauce:

- Prosecco
- Dry Rosé

For Pumpkin or Pecan Pie

- Sweet Moscato
- Port
- Sherry (fortified wines like Pedro Ximénez or a Cream Sherry)
- Any "late harvest" wine

Always Remember your Audience

Thanksgiving is about family and friends. The people around your table will include palates from various walks of life. Cater your wine pairings to their tastes for the best results. New World wine drinkers, for instance, often prefer "sweeter" wines. Try selecting wines in a similar style that work with your menu. Then it becomes a good opportunity to introduce your guests to something new but similar to what they've always enjoyed.



LIVING WINE: 9TH INTERNATIONAL MASTER OF WINE SYMPOSIUM

As Chairman of the Institute of Masters of Wine, I recently participated in the 9th International Master of Wine Symposium held in Logrono, Rioja, Spain. The Symposia, held every four years, are an opportunity to get away from the day to day, and to consider a long-term view of the trade.

The four-day June event, open to all in the wine trade, gathered 450 leading wine professionals including producers, merchants, researchers, educators, writers and over 100 Masters of Wine, from 30 different countries around the world. A series of speakers and panel discussions, with presentations ranging from the strictly technical to broader business issues, were complemented with tastings of over 500 wines. Many wines were from Rioja and Spain, as hosts, but also featured were wines from many other countries including Israel, England, China and Japan.

The changing climate is a big concern to all in the trade. Guest Speaker Jonathon Porritt CBE, former Director of Friends of the Earth and Founding Director of the Forum for the Future, shared findings in the latest report "Melting Snow & Ice, A Call for Action". Snow and ice are melting in the Arctic and Antarctic at a faster rate than previously believed possible and that rate continues to accelerate. Melted snow and ice will impact all regions of the world through increased global warming and rising sea levels with more frequent and erratic weather events.

Last year, the global wine trade witnessed one of the smallest harvests on record due to late spring frost across Europe and summer drought conditions in many countries. California also saw raging wild fires across the state in October and December 2017. The weather continues to be unusual this year with the icy "Beast from the East" in February, hail storms in May in Bordeaux and Champagne, high rainfall and cooler temperatures in Southern Europe in spring and early summer, and a severe drought in South Africa.

General warming of temperatures can cause several problems when it comes to growing grapes for quality wine production. Warm winters can mean that the vines do not go into full dormancy during winter and can facilitate the spread of diseases and vectors of disease.

Heavy rainfall in spring, like this year, encourages fungal diseases and also makes it difficult for growers to spray as the tractors cannot cope with the soggy soils. To produce high quality wine, grapes need to ripen both in terms of sugar and acidity levels (known as physiological ripeness) and, in the case of red wines, need to achieve full phenolic maturity.

In quality wine regions, these two currently tend to coincide. However, as the climate becomes warmer, there will be a divergence between the two. Grapes may ripen physiologically earlier without full flavour development. Drought conditions and scarce water supplies are also a current topic of discussion with researchers looking to learn from old vines growing in hot regions, such as Spain and South Africa, and developing drought-resistant rootstocks. Ultimately, it may be that vine varieties once suitable for a particular region and climate no longer are so.

For millennia, vines have been cultivated by man and grapes made into wine. Wine, in many cultures, is an important part of life (as it is to many Opimian members) and is becoming increasingly so in others as the basis of hospitality, social interaction, relaxation and enjoyment. These current challenges possibly represent a greater threat to the wine trade than that of Phylloxera, which nearly wiped out the industry at the start of the 20th century.

Adaptability is a key word that came up time and again at the Symposium whether it is adapting vineyards and winery practices, or adapting to the business environment, wine consumer attitudes and behaviours, or new technologies. Wine producers have much to think about. Opimian's producers are very conscious of conserving nature and minimising their impact on the environment. All employ sustainable farming practices with many farming organically and/or using biodynamic techniques. Efficient water use in vineyards and wineries, reducing CO₂ emissions, re-carbonising soils and waste management all have a role to play. Adaptation will be key to overcoming those challenges. We all have a role to play to ensure a healthy, sustainable and vibrant future for wine.