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WHAT THE GROWNUPS ARE DRINKING

by Diane Murphy & Laura Lindsey

As the firefighters struggled to contain the massive Jesuita fire, our intrepid group of wine tasters gathered to complete our mission. Our hearts went out to the many people who were displaced or lost their homes, and our thanks went out to all the firefighters and law enforcement who went above and beyond the call of duty. Neither rain, nor sleet, nor raging wildfire will keep us from our appointed duty—to seek out new wines and boldly go where no one has gone before (yes, this week also saw the opening of the latest in the Star Trek movie franchise). Our devoted group of five women and three men soothed smoke-ravaged palates with the fruits of **Arcadian Winery**.

Joseph Davis has been making Burgundian-style Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Syrah for Arcadian Winery since 1996. He chooses to harvest the fruit when it has much higher natural acidity and more modest sugar levels than many other vintners because he believes that the wines will continue to evolve in the bottle and that this continued evolution will result in a more interesting wine. Using the traditional French artisan methods of winemaking, Joe endeavors to make wines that “fully express the uniqueness of the vineyard and the region while capturing the voluptuous flavor of the grape and the kiss of cool California breezes and warm sunshine.” So, let the tasting begin!

2005 Chardonnay Sleepy Hollow Vineyard

With a bouquet of citrus and pear, this is a smooth wine that is not over-oaked. In fact, it is so unlike a traditional Chardonnay that some of our tasters found it to be more like a Roussanne. An excellent summer wine, it paired well with cheese, strawberries and salad, and, though we didn't have any seafood at our tasting party, we felt confident that would be a winning match as well.

2005 Pinot Noir Dierberg Vineyard

An “elegant, well-crafted wine, with a lot of finesse,” according to our taster who drinks Pinot every day. Smooth but slightly bitter and peppery, the wine was mellowed by pairing with homemade Camembert (a taster with too much time on his hands is experimenting with cheese making). This wine sits in between the Burgundian Pinots that are all about terroir and the new California-style fruit-forward Pinots.

2004 Pinot Noir Fiddlestix Vineyard

A beautiful color, this wine had smoky aromas of cherries, plum and bacon—or Burgundian pork butt, as one taster effused. In musical terms, this Pinot is hard rock whereas the Dierberg Pinot is classical. A huge wine, it needs a huge meal, something hearty to stand up to its 15.8 percent alcohol. A complex, multiflavored, traditional Burgundy, this rich, full, deep wine was the hands-down winner of the night.

2005 Syrah Stolpman Vineyard

With an almost Port-like bouquet on this wine, we detected smoky raisins and cocoa. This is definitely a wine for food as its flavors really began to emerge in contrast to its edible partners. Surprisingly, it paired equally well with pesto and chocolate.

2004 Syrah Westerly Vineyard

The biggest nose of the night went to this Syrah: hazelnut, vanilla, green pepper and burnt coffee. Delicious mid-palate flavors of chipotle, green olive and pepper, it's a chewy wine with a great finish. Another favorite of the group, this wine went well with spicy nuts and Mexican mole salami, but a thick steak would really do it justice.

So, as the smoke clears, we set off in search of our next wine to taste. To paraphrase our favorite Vulcan: “Drink well and prosper.” Until next time, cheers! 🍷

The Arcadian Wines we tasted range in price from \$30–\$65. You can taste their wines at Tastes of the Valleys in Solvang, and their wines are available from their website and at Los Olivos Wine Merchant Café, Los Olivos Grocery, East Beach Wine, Lazy Acres and other local restaurants and wine shops.

Diane Murphy and **Laura Lindsey** are the co-owners of Classic Vines, specializing in distribution and online sales of small production wines, the best of the boutiques! Visit their website at classicvines.com to discover the hidden gems.