

### Predictions for the New Year



I would not be a legitimate wine journalist unless I made some predictions about what wines and wine trends will be hot or cold in the New Year. I mean, all the other cool journalists are doing it. But the problem is, I am really terrible at making predictions – as evidenced just hours earlier today at my annual “Predictions Lunch” where a group of friends gather to forecast the events of the future and mercilessly tease one another about how poorly we did when last year’s predictions fell flat on their proverbial fortune telling faces.

For example, last year, I predicted with confidence that NCAA BCS Football Champion would be Alabama, the Broncos would win the Super Bowl and the Nats would make the Play-offs. So much for my ability to forecast athletic competitions. And my guess is that I am not much better at picking out wine trends. So, with that lengthy disclaimer, I would be remiss if I did not at least offer my best – such as it is – educated guess as to the good, the bad and the ugly wine trends for 2014.

First, **the good: Keg wines** are here to stay. And they are definitely becoming a thing, particularly with the young and the hip who want a decent, quaffable wine to enjoy with their meal without having to break the bank to hear the pop of a cork. In addition, restaurants can more easily sell wine in different sizes, such as small tasting-sized pours to liter-sized carafe. And economy of scale - a typical keg holds the equivalent of 26 bottles – gets passed on to the diners economy of money. So, the next time you ask your server what's on tap, they just might say Saintsbury Chardonnay of Miner Cabernet Sauvignon, two California favorites that are now available by the keg.

Where can you find wine on tap in DC?

**Matchbox** 1901 14<sup>th</sup> Street, NW

**Graffiato** 707 6<sup>th</sup> Street, NW

**2 Amys** 3715 Macomb Street, NW

**District Kitchen** 2606 Connecticut Avenue, NW

**Poste Moderne Brasserie** 555 8<sup>th</sup> Street, NW

Next, **more good** news: I think “Old World Wines” will find New World consumers. As Spain, Portugal and Italy continue invest in modern winemaking equipment and more younger, highly-educated winemakers take over the reins, European wine regions typically associated with inconsistent or tannic wines will gain popularity with American consumers who usually gravitate towards wines from the United States, Australia, New Zealand and South America.

For example, the **2010 QUO Gastiago Grenache** from the Campo de Borja region of Spain. This delicious red wine is produced using fruit from very old vines – 60-plus years old – and is incredibly rich and full in the mouth with copious amounts of ripe berry fruit, subtle spice notes and an incredibly lush mouthfeel. The fruit-fueled finish goes on and on, supported by supple, sweet tannins. At **\$20**, this wine offers a spectacular value.

Another wonderful example of New World style in an old world bottle it the **2012 Quinta do Crasto Tinto** from the Douro Valley of Portugal. This wine sports scents of dark fruit and smoky meat aromas. In the mouth, the wine feels silky smooth and leads to generous notes of dark cherry, black raspberry and juicy black plum. The finish is soft and easy to drink, thanks to the sweet tannins and juicy fruit. **\$15**

**The Bad:** Box wines – sorry, I just don’t see this catching on in 2014. While many decent wineries are now putting better juice in a box – which is actually wine packaged in a plastic bladder protected by a box, usually made of corrugated cardboard - both the overall quality and cache are still not ready for primetime. Maybe New Zealand or Australia will pave the way in the coming years, the same way they did with screw-top closures.

**The Ugly:** Orange wine. It is not really “a thing.” I hate to disagree with all of the hipster foodies and wanna-be wine waiters who think that orange wine is a thing just because it is odd and different and that seems to be the only reason to push it on to wine lists (and diners). Now, don’t get me wrong, Orange wines (by the way – there are no oranges in orange wine, nor is it technically orange in color – they tend to be bright gold to tawny brown) are actually a legitimate wine style that comes from fermenting white grapes with the skins and seed left in contact with the juice for a prolonged period of time – sort of like red wines. Some labels are even oxidized during the winemaking process, giving them interesting depth and a tart-ish pluck to the finish. Due to the prolonged skin and seed contact, the wines develop more of a tannic characteristic, leading many to compare them to lighter styled red wines, such as Lambrusco. The good news is that many of them are very food-friendly – think pork chops and roast chicken. But trendy? Remember gruner veltliner?