

# It Keeps Getting Better

*The news about wine, that is*

by **Fred Bondurant**

**T**hese are definitely the best of times—at least for wine drinkers. Over the last few years the good news just keeps pouring in. Research suggests an impressive list of health benefits to moderate wine consumption. Wine contains substances called antioxidants, which for some time have been known to be beneficial. Antioxidants fight the never-ending battle against free radicals. By defending healthy cells, antioxidants can help protect the body from cardiovascular disease, estrogen depletion, certain pulmonary diseases, cancer, macular



PHOTO: BY ISTOCK

degeneration and more. Some studies show that waste grape skins (from wineries) can serve as the basis for new anti bacterial medicines.

Because red wines are left in contact with grape skins and seeds longer than white wines, many people believe that red wines are more powerful antioxidants. While this is partly true, it is also true that white wine antioxidant molecules are smaller than those found in red wines. These smaller antioxidant molecules are able to diffuse better throughout the body, and may serve an important purpose all their own.

There is still more good news. The U. S. Supreme Court recently declared the state laws forbidding the shipment of wine to individuals as illegal. This is exciting for those of us who want to experience the products of small bou-

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tique wineries in our own homes. Until now, Floridians have been able to only dream about sampling the art of smaller yet remarkable vineyards, whose volume is too small to be handled by national distributors.

A new world of exquisite wines produced in small vintages is now open to us. But how do you begin? Luckily we have local experts. In our area there are two wine shops that specialize in helping the curious wine lover find and try wonderful lesser-known wines.

Tom and Nancy Hart operate Vino 100 and Mark Blust operates Wine Styles. Both businesses are franchise operations whose corporate experts search the world for wines of outstanding value. More than 100 wines under \$25 are offered altogether, along with a modest selection of higher-priced wines.

At Wine Styles, wines are arranged by style—not brand, country, region, or varietal type. Blust notes, “Given the



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**Mark Blust of Wine Styles can help you find the perfect wine for your own particular taste.**



complement them. When you visit Wine Styles, Blust and his staff are happy to explain these in detail. They offer daily samplings, a newsletter, a wine club program, and a wide selection of wine-related gifts and accessories.

At Vino 100, Nancy and Tom Hart offer an eclectic selection, which may

same raw material (the grapes and the juice) to work with, different vintners can produce strikingly different styles of wine." The length or method of aging a wine can vary greatly. That aging could be done in barrels of different types of wood—or not in wood at all. More or less sugar or alcohol can also be created, depending upon the fermentation process. For example, the taste of a wine with nine percent alcohol will be perceived to be sweeter than one with 14 percent. Winemakers employ various styles including New and Old World

styles. New World wines normally display more fruit, and many are blended to achieve a uniformity of taste from one year to the next. Old World wines are more inclined to let each year's crop be unique, showing what nature and the earth brought forth.

At Wine Styles, white wines are divided into four groups: crisp, smooth, rich, and bubbly. Fruity, mellow, and bold describe the reds. Nectar is where to find desert wines, ports, and the like. Each wine is further described individually, along with suggestions for foods that

include only around a dozen wines from California. The Harts feel that many of today's best wine values are from the Southern Hemisphere, particularly South America. "Most of our customers are familiar with, or have traveled to Australia, or even South Africa. They may not have developed a comfort level with South America," explains Tom.

Nancy says, "I love it when a customer says that they have never seen any of these wines before." At Vino 100, it is all about exploration. The Harts don't consider themselves to be salespeople. Instead they

## Free Radicals and Antioxidants

**N**early every day, free radicals and antioxidants appear in the news. Although we know one is bad and the other is good, what exactly are they?

From basic chemistry, you may remember that certain molecules can lose an electron. To be in harmony or balance, these molecules need to combine with another atom or molecule to recover their natural or complete set of electrons. An ion may be a familiar example. These components with a missing electron are the free radicals. Often the process of finding that extra electron(s) involves oxygen. Thus, the term "oxidation" is used. Antioxidants serve to intervene in that process. A familiar

example is iron oxide, commonly referred to as rust. Not a good thing! A cut apple turning brown is another example of oxidation. Vitamin C, an antioxidant, will prevent that oxidation.

In people, free radicals occurring on the cellular level are of concern. Oxidation on that level can cause numerous problems involving DNA and other vital compounds. How do we get these free radicals in our bodies? Studies indicate many come from environmental pollution, certain foods, and aging, to name a few. Surprisingly, an undisputed health benefit, exercise, also creates free radicals. Oxidation is thought to contribute to, if not be the cause of, numerous maladies

from Alzheimer's to cancer to a decreased immune function.

### Wine Styles

Publix Plaza at Gladiolus Gateway  
11600 Gladiolus Drive, #314,  
Fort Myers, Florida 33908  
239-461-WINE (9463)  
[www.winestyles.net](http://www.winestyles.net)

### VINO 100

Park Shops at Andrea Lane  
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Tom and Nancy Hart of Vino 100 offer a fine selection of wine varieties grouped by taste

see their role as guides or counselors. And this guide doesn't use traditional wine ratings. The only person to please with a wine selection is oneself. Most days, selected wines are available for tasting. "Part of the experience here is to kick some tires," says Tom.

At Vino 100 you will find reds on one side of the shop and whites on the other. They are arranged by two measures. Flavor is categorized from fruity to dry and body from light to full. A graphic display for each wine makes it easy to choose according to your individual

taste. Also included is a description of the wine's particular characteristics and recommended food pairings.

Affiliated with Tinderbox International, Vino 100 also maintains a selection of cigars in their humidor along with wine-related gifts and accessories.

If you are looking for a little excitement and a lot of good news, exploring what's new in wine is a great idea. Learn something new, enjoy yourself,

and protect your body from free radicals—with just one glass. 🍷

*Fred Bondurant, a self-taught cook and connoisseur of good food, was motivated early on by the discovery that dates really appreciated a guy who could cook.*

## Chef Profile

**Chris Menassa, executive sous chef, Sanibel Harbour Resort & Spa**

**HOMETOWN:** Brockton, Massachusetts. I grew up in a large Mediterranean family, [with] a Greek mom and an Egyptian dad. We ate squid, octopus, feta, mashed broad beans. I didn't know about Twinkies or even macaroni and cheese until I was fifteen years old.

### IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

**BECAUSE:** I had a small restaurant in Maine, located near the last exit off I-95. A friend of mine who was working in this area invited me down. After that, I never left.

**HOW LONG AT SANIBEL HARBOUR:** Nine years.

**FAVORITE MEAT:** Leg of lamb, slow roasted with garlic, olive oil, oregano, kosher salt, and pepper.

**FAVORITE SPICE/HERB:** Nothing's better than fresh cracked black pepper. Also, I keep a micro garden at home: dill, parsley, basil, and rosemary.

**FAVORITE GADGET/TOOL:** For a chef there is no tool more important than a set of sharp knives. A really good knife is the best. You can do anything with it!

**DAILY INSPIRATION:** At Sanibel Harbour, I finally reached the position to which



I aspired. I started out on a line making salads. I told the human resources director that I would make executive sous chef in five years. I made it in four. Having this position, I'm not tied to any one area. I work with the entire culinary team.

**PLANS FOR THE FUTURE:** Someday I'd like to travel around the Mediterranean. I'm also writing a book.

**WORDS OF WISDOM FOR HOME CHEFS:** Use the freshest ingredients you can find; use what is in season. Good food takes time. Don't rush it.