

BOOK REPORT

Slow cookery

Two volumes offer ways to do it year-round. **E6**



“ Similar styles pitted against each other forced us to stretch our palates. There were no unanimous decisions.”

Greg Kitsock sums up Round 1 of Beer Madness matchups. **E5**

BLOG Check out our daily postings: washingtonpost.com/allwecaneat
CHAT We answer questions at noon today: washingtonpost.com/liveonline

FIRST BITE

Curry Mantra

Regional Indian specialties are featured at this Fairfax City spot. **E3**



MORE RECIPES Paprika Chicken With Hummus **E2** Sweet Pea and Shrimp Saute **E2** Slow Cooker Vegetable Broth; Cabbage With Crispy Bacon **ONLINE**

WINE

Vintner Rutger de Vink, about to make a splash



New depth in Virginia

BY DAVE MCINTYRE

“The wine on your left is Chateau Montrose 2006,” said Rutger de Vink. “The middle glass is RdV 2008, and the third is Dominus ’07.”

I tasted the wines in order, beginning with the classic Bordeaux acidity and elegance of the Montrose, a highly regarded second-growth chateau, and ending with the Dominus, a Napa Valley blend brimming with power and finishing with a slight alcoholic burn. Then I focused again on the RdV as de Vink, its creator, looked on patiently. It bridged the gap between Old World finesse and New World power, with a surprisingly lush core of red fruit and a luxurious texture that caressed my tongue with velvet.

Could this really be from Virginia? I wondered. There was no hole in the middle where the flavor disappears before coming back for the finish, no green vegetal tastes from unripe fruit. A few Virginia winemakers have solved those problems. But that velvet — I had never experienced it in a Virginia wine before.



PHOTOS BY ASTRID RIECKEN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Top, after 10 years of preparation, Virginia vineyard owner Rutger de Vink is about to release his first wines. Above, oenologist Eric Boissenot of Bordeaux, France, blends wines for RdV Vineyards.

Then I did the math: The Montrose sells for \$90 to \$110 a bottle and received a 94-point rating from Robert Parker. Dominus sells for \$150, and Parker gave the 2007 a near-perfect 98 points. Is Virginia ready to play in this league?

Jim Law of Linden Vineyards, one of the Old Dominion’s most respected winegrowers, had described his close friend de Vink to me as “the next generation of Virginia wine.” Tasting the 2008, I understood.

Putting my notebook down, I looked up at de Vink and said simply, “It’s really good.”

“I hate to use the word ‘cult’ wine, but we are trying to take the wine to the next level,” de Vink replied.

Next month’s launch of RdV Vineyards is Virginia’s most-anticipated winery opening in years, as word has spread of de Vink’s project near Delaplane, in Fauquier County. His ambition, expressed quietly but confidently, is to prove once and for all that Virginia can produce wine that ranks among the world’s best. Others have made that claim: Barboursville Vineyards is the most

WINE CONTINUED ON **E5**

Taking his 'cue from a venerable Texan

BY JIM SHAHIN

Special to The Washington Post

Marc Glosserman wanders around Hill Country Barbecue Market in his blue jeans and scuffed cowboy boots as if the restaurant, which opened Saturday in Penn Quarter, were his home.

SMOKE SIGNALS In a way, it is.

More than three years after opening the original Hill Country, in Manhattan, to rave reviews, Glosserman has brought the concept — a love letter to the food of his extended family in Texas — home to Washington.

When the restaurant’s founder and chief executive was growing

up in Bethesda, he frequently visited his grandparents and other relatives in the small town of Lockhart, Tex., famous for its barbecue. “My aunt [in Lockhart] would sometimes ship up a brisket or sauce to us,” recalls Glosserman, 36, who bears a vague resemblance to the mid-1970s Jackson Browne. “As we were eating it, we kept wishing, ‘It would be so great if there was something like this in Washington.’”

Glosserman had what he calls a “real East Coast upbringing.” He attended Georgetown Day School (and now sits on the board of directors). He played soccer and lacrosse in high school. He went to sports camp in Maine in the sum-

SMOKE SIGNALS CONTINUED ON **E4**

Guess who’s coming...

When it’s the Obamas, restaurants scramble

BY DAVID HAGEDORN

Special to The Washington Post

As a former chef-restaurateur, I always wondered what must go on in Washington restaurants when the Obamas come calling. Not just from the usual angles — What did they eat? Where did they sit? How did they tip? — but from an operations standpoint.

How and when does the management learn that POTUS and/or FLOTUS are coming? Who waits on them? Do they order off the menu? Is there an official food taster?

When I received a tip a few weeks ago that the first lady would

be lunching at Equinox, Todd and Ellen Gray’s quietly chic farm-to-table eatery, I rushed downtown to see firsthand.

This was Michelle Obama’s second visit to Equinox. On Jan. 17, 2009, days before the inauguration, she celebrated her birthday there with the president-elect and 11 others. Restaurateurs hoped it was a harbinger that the Obamas, as they famously were in Chicago, would be very good for business here.

And they are. One or both of them have eaten in restaurants across the Washington area, at tony spots such as Michel Richard Citronelle, the Source, Rasika and Komu and at more casual destinations such as Good Stuff Eatery, We the Pizza, the Majestic and Ray’s Hell-Burger.

DINING CONTINUED ON **E4**



JEWEL SAMAD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The Obamas arrive at Blue Duck Tavern in October 2009 for their anniversary dinner.

SPIRITS

Jason Wilson

Hot on the trail of bourbon's holy grail

Someday soon, Buffalo Trace in Frankfort, Ky., will unveil a special batch of bourbon that represents what it calls "the holy grail."

In fact, for about 20 years, the distillery has undertaken Project Holy Grail: its systematic, clinical quest for a "perfect" whiskey.

Last summer in New Orleans, Mark Brown, the president of the Sazerac Co., which owns Buffalo Trace, gave a presentation on Project Holy Grail to a group of journalists.

"We know which aisles in which rickhouses make the best whiskey," Brown told us.

Then he asked rhetorically, "What does the Holy Grail look like?" And answered, "Somewhere between complexity and balance."

"Yes," he added, "we are being purposefully vague." To date, Buffalo Trace has concocted more than 300 experimental whiskeys, many of which have been released as special editions in the Buffalo Trace Experimental Collection over the past few years.

Wilson is the author of "Boozehound: On the Trail of the Rare, the Obscure, and the Overrated in Spirits" (Ten Speed, 2010). He can be reached at jason@jasonwilson.com.



DEB LINDSEY FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

distiller's eyes. Regardless, most of the ones I've tasted, I must say, have been pretty delicious.

We all know that "perfect" is a slippery term. Several of the journalists in New Orleans wondered aloud: On exactly what basis will perfection be determined? Brown told us he had "dissected" the 10 top-rated whiskeys of a handful of influential spirits writers, among them F. Paul Pacult, who publishes the newsletter Spirit Journal; Gary Regan, the cocktail columnist of the San Francisco Chronicle; and John Hansell, editor of Malt Advocate magazine.

Brown said, "We're waiting for that 'Eureka' moment when Malt Advocate says, 'You did it.'"

In the world of wine, there has been a lot of recent soul-searching about the validity, objectivity and overall worth of

100-point rating scales. What, some ask, do the points mean? Many of us feel overwhelmed by the shelf talkers posted in wine shops, trumpeting 90-something points for this, 90-something points for that.

Of one thing I am certain: This perfect, holy-grail whiskey ain't gonna be cheap.

Price. Value. Those were not discussed as part of the holy-grail algorithm, just as they are rarely discussed in 100-point rating scales.

Bourbon is one of my favorite spirits, and early spring is probably my favorite time of year to drink it.

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new Knob Creek Single Barrel, which will retail for around \$40; it is bold and smoky yet surprisingly balanced for 120 proof.

In fact, as I've recommended many times before, Buffalo Trace's basic bourbon, at \$20, is one of the best-value whiskeys in the world.

The other night, I compared several under-\$20 bourbons in my cabinet, both neat and then mixed in old fashioned (I make mine, by the way, with: sugar, two dashes of bitters and orange peel twist, muddled; two ounces of bourbon; two ice cubes, gently stirred.)

But my favorite of the evening was the wheated bourbon Old Weller Antique 107, which sells for around \$20 to \$22.

I mean, at least on that particular evening, it seemed kinda perfect.

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Beer Madness, Round 1: Squeaking to victory

BY GREG KITSOCK

Strong opinions. Colorful descriptors. And some sharply divided decisions.

Beer Madness has achieved a level of parity that would be the envy of most pro sports leagues. Of the 32 first-round matchups, the winner squeaked by 6-5 in 14 of the contests.

That was our design. In previous years, we matched up beers in a category randomly, leading to some real laughs.

Three Philosophers from Brewery Ommegang in Cooperstown, N.Y., scored the biggest margin of victory, trouncing Monk's Blood, a canned offering from the 21st Amendment Brewery in San Francisco, 10-1.

But our panel of tasters found any obvious flaws in the latter, an oak-aged strong ale spiced with vanilla beans, cinnamon and figs. Ellie Tupper, one of two beer professionals on the panel, found them both sweet, fruity and a little "boozy."

Three Philosophers, a blend of a strong, dark Belgian-style ale (dubbed a "quadrapel") with cherry-favored Lindemans Kriek from Belgium, measures 9.8 percent alcohol by volume.

Both of these dark, roasty ales are strongly flavored: Palo Santo draws its spicy, incense-like notes from being aged in tanks made from an exotic Paraguayan hardwood.

Most of our samples came from bottles. In four matchups



PHOTOS BY ASTRID RIECKEN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Top, Ellie Tupper preferred her own beer; above, Kathryn Bangs had a way with words.

that pitted draft against packaged beer, barrels and bottles split 2-2. "Reminds me of the roasted barley tea which we drink a lot during the summer in Japan," wrote Hiromi Kowaguchi of our lone cask ale, the Dark Horse mild from Oliver Brewery in Baltimore.

Did Tupper recognize the Tupper's Keller Pils she and husband Bob contract-brew in Hampton, Va.?

Of nine Maryland and Virginia beers duking it out in Beer Madness, the local guys held their own, winning five matchups.

Schlafly Brewing in St. Louis opened in 1991. Port City Brewing has been making beer for little in Beer Madness.

Vote for your Round 2 favorites at wapo.st/beer madness.

WINE

Will a \$90 Virginia wine be hard to swallow?

WINE FROM E1

credible contender with its Octagon, a Bordeaux-style blend based on merlot.

As Virginia's modern wine industry blossomed over the past 35 years, vintners experimented with site selection, vineyard techniques and grape varieties, steadily improving quality as they learned to cope with the region's humid climate.

Eric Boissenot, oenologist from Bordeaux, France describes as "mostly family."

From the outside, the new winery resembles a typical Virginia farmhouse, a tribute to the region's agricultural tradition.

On a warm, springlike afternoon in early March, I joined de Vink and his cellar master, Joshua Grainger (who also apprenticed at Linden), and their French consultants, viticulturist Jean-Philippe Roby and oenologist Eric Boissenot, in the winery's laboratory as they blended the 2010 wines.

He worked the 2001 harvest at Linden, learning winemaking from Law, and traveled to Bordeaux and California to meet with winemakers and viticulturists.

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You can make an exceptional wine in this part of the world, and he is doing it because of his passion and attention to detail.

Eric Boissenot, oenologist from Bordeaux, France

describes as "mostly family." The vines were planted in 2006 with the help of some of California's leading viticulturists, soil scientists and winemakers, including Daniel Roberts, Alfred Cass and David Ramey.

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The tap of pipette against beaker alternated with the splot of wine spit into the stainless-steel sink as Boissenot worked intently through 27 bottles coded by grape variety and vineyard block.

Boissenot said that he was impressed with the quality of the 2008s and that the wines have improved each year.

Will the market accept a Virginia wine that costs nearly \$90? De Vink plans to use comparative tastings to win over skeptics.

"Maybe it's the pioneer spirit," he said. "You tell me it's impossible to make a world-class red wine in Virginia, and I say, well, let me show you. I want people to say, 'Look what we have in our back yard: a winery that can compete with Napa and Bordeaux.'"

To test de Vink's confidence that a comparative tasting of the RdV against leading wines from California and Bordeaux can build his market, I duplicated the tasting he'd organized for me, using purchased bottles of the 2006 Montrose and 2007 Dominus and a sample he provided of the 2008 RdV.

All four tasters expressed a preference for the Montrose, but they agreed that the RdV belonged in its company, and they generally preferred it over the Dominus.

"It's going to be a hard sell," Wessels predicted. "The wine's worth it, but the question is, will he get it?"

What do you think of Virginia wine? Share your thoughts with Dave McIntyre, who will join today's Free Range live chat at noon: washingtonpost.com/liveonline.

Advertisement for Calvert Woodley Fine Wines & Spirits, featuring various wine and cheese selections with prices and promotional offers.