



Basic Juice Article
Wallace on Wine

by: *Beau Jarvis*

I find it difficult to write a consistently engaging wine column. Let me explain. If I were to simply write a few sentences each week about the wines I've recently sampled, the column would be about as interesting as reading the rules of *Publishers Clearing House* sweepstakes. So how on earth can I keep this column interesting to me and the five of you who read it? In the past, I've tried writing wine reviews in the form of Haiku and Limericks. This led me to ponder how some of my favorite poets and authors would approach wine writing. David Foster Wallace is a favorite author of mine. He's "playfully erudite." He writes in a nonconformist style. His writing also aggravates some readers. However, I find his writing engaging, challenging, and humorous. With sincere apologies to Mr. Wallace, to those who enjoy his work, and to those who become cross-eyed with frustration and/or rage at the mere mention of his name, I present a wine review in the David Foster Wallace style.

Lustau⁽¹⁾ "Los Arcos"⁽²⁾ Dry⁽³⁾ Amontillado Sherry (\$10) – Very bright⁽⁴⁾ caramel/copper in color. This Sherry offers dizzying⁽⁵⁾ scents of roasted almond⁽⁶⁾, salt⁽⁷⁾, date⁽⁸⁾, and wood⁽⁹⁾. In the mouth, The Arcs⁽¹⁰⁾ tastes like a dry Tawny Port⁽¹¹⁾. This is a tasty wine⁽¹²⁾, wrapped up⁽¹³⁾ in a tangy, food-friendly⁽¹⁴⁾ package⁽¹⁵⁾. Sip⁽¹⁶⁾ Los Arcos alongside your favorite *Tapa*.⁽¹⁷⁾ It is the perfect accompaniment to Gazpacho⁽¹⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Lustau was actually established in 1896^(a) by Don Jose Ruiz-Berdejo y Veyan. I've no idea why the brand isn't named "Ruiz-Berdejo y Veyan," unless it simply costs too much in terms of label real estate or ink outlay.

⁽²⁾ Or "The Arcs" if you have limited or no command^(b) of the Spanish language.

⁽³⁾ And when the Spanish designate Sherry as "dry," they aren't whistling Dixie^(c). There will be precisely zero fruit scents, aromas or flavors to be pried^(d) out of the glass.

⁽⁴⁾ I'm not implying the wine actually glows in the dark. Rather it shimmers in the glass. Perhaps the description should have read, "Shiny, shimmering^(e) caramel and/or copper in color."

⁽⁵⁾ When sniffed or drunk in moderation, Sherry does not cause dizziness. It is dizzying in the sense that the mind struggles to conjure up adjectives for all the volatile molecules ascending the nasal passages and making contact with cilia-equipped neurons.

⁽⁶⁾ Preheat oven to 350F^(f). Spread almonds over baking sheet. Roast for twenty minutes or until almond skin begins to crack.

⁽⁷⁾ Many Sherry producers and enthusiasts claim that Sherry grapevines are imbued with salt from ocean spray carried on the breeze^(g).

⁽⁸⁾ Fruit of the date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*), which is mentioned in both the Koran and Bible^(h).

⁽⁹⁾ This is one of those annoying adjectives used by wine writers the world over. I don't mean that the wine smells like a plank of wood. Rather, it smells like the inside of a toasted barrel⁽ⁱ⁾. Of course, not many folks have actually sniffed the inside of a barrel; let alone a toasted barrel.

⁽¹⁰⁾ On-demand Spanish translation!

- (11) To my knowledge, there is no such thing as a dry Tawny Port^(l). Tawny Ports are actually quite sweet. Their unique flavors can be partially attributed to wood (see ⁽⁹⁾)
- (12) One of the major struggles in wine writing is avoiding repetition when referring to the wine under review. I'm tapped out after, "this wine," "the wine" "this Sherry," and "Los Arcos." I now must resort to inserting adjectives such as "this tasty wine." Redundancy is a killer.
- (13) The reader is being set up here for a whopper^(k) of a metaphor. I am attempting to paint a mental image of the Sherry as a gift, wrapping paper and all.
- (14) Another all-too-commonplace wine adjective.
- (15) Metaphor delivered^(l)
- (16) While sipping isn't required, it is recommended. Los Arcos tastes deceptively light in the alcohol department. However, it packs an alcohol-punch of 18.5%^(m)
- (17) *Tapas* literally means cover or lid⁽ⁿ⁾.
- (18) A cold^(o), tomato-based Spanish soup that is popular in warmer areas and during the summer. It is usually spicy, but a milder variant has also become popular.

- (a) Also the year in which Utah was granted statehood.
- (b) And really, shouldn't we all learn Spanish as a sign of friendship to our southern (as in Mexico) neighbors?
- (c) Or whatever ditty your typical Spaniard might whistle.
- (d) **pry** *tr.v.* pried, prying, pries
- (e) Thus I would have been able to employ the timeless literary device of alliteration, which is clearly illustrated by the phrase, "Sally sells seashells by the seashore."
- (f) $T_c = (5/9) * (T_f - 32)$; T_c = temperature in degrees Celsius, T_f = temperature in degrees Fahrenheit
- (g) This needn't be a Wizard of Oz-type breeze. The Sherry region is, in fact, on the southern coast of Spain. So there is close proximity to ocean spray; although I'm not sure if I buy the whole salt-imbued-vineyard thing.
- (h) And, I assume, the Torah.
- (i) Barrels are often toasted on the inside for purposes of ageing wine. The toasted wood imparts buttery, spicy-sweet, scents to ageing wine.
- (j) Tawny port is aged in wooden barrels, exposing it to gradual oxidation and evaporation, causing its color to mellow to a golden-brown after roughly ten years "in wood."
- (k) As in a large-sized, heavy-duty metaphor – not a big hamburger or malted chocolate candy.
- (l) !!
- (m) A higher alcohol percentage than even the biggest of California Cabernet or Zinfandel wines.
- (n) "The association with appetizers is thought to have come from the old habit of placing a slice of bread or a piece of ham on top of one's wine glass, perhaps to keep out insects. This edible lid was the precursor of modern-day *tapas*."
- (o) In both fiction and real life, there have occurred embarrassing situations in which a Gazpacho-ignorant diner insists that his or her cold soup be heated up.

Dear reader, if you have made it this far, I raise my glass^(aa) to you. If you wish to rant or rave about the Wallace style used in this wine review, please email me at:
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^(aa) Cheers!

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