

SNOW ON WINE

ON WINE-ING AT SIX FEET

Dr. Jeff Snow



Like many of you it was my hope that “**stay home – stay safe**” would have ended by now and a nice restaurant meal with a great wine would be at hand. But alas, although we have, at this writing, moved to “**phase 1,**” with hope for “**phase 2,**” cooking at home or getting take-out continues. Then again, there could be a “silver lining” to this cloud. **Silver as in coinage.** Restaurant wine prices are “spendy,” typically 75% to 250% above retail. I took the liberty of perusing the wine lists of several favorite Spokane eateries (all of whom have nice takeout menu items now), and compared prices to those at local wineries and specialty wine shops. For six popular local wines the price was about half of wine list cost - give or take \$5-\$10 (see table 1).

Wine wholesalers, wine specialty stores, and small local wineries have lost their major market, the hospitality industry. For them to survive, they need our help. So let’s UP our purchases from struggling local specialty wine retailers and local wineries. I’m talking about wines which are rarely seen on the shelves of supermarkets or large chain retailers. Wines from small, hands-on producers, who make delicious wines; wines with scents and flavors unique to their terroir. So spend the “**silver**” that you would have plunked down at a restaurant at your local winery or wine shop. You’ll be drinking a lot higher-up the vine and helping to save our local purveyors of quality wine.

Maybe you would like to pick-up a few tips on locally available grub and grog. Our local specialty wine shops are ready to help you there too. At “Vino Wine,” John Allen tells me they can help you select wine to pick-up at the door between 10 AM and 4 PM by calling (509-838-1229). Even more fun, he and Sommelier Eric Cook do a “virtual tasting” every Friday from 4 PM to 5 PM. Each week they pick a different restaurant which pairs food (pick up @ restaurant) to the featured 3 or 4 wines (pick up @ VINO). Then you can sniff, sip, taste and dine “virtually” along with John and Eric. The VINO Wine Facebook page lists the restaurant and the wines on Wednesday, when you must sign up. You can also view recordings of previous weeks tastings there.

After you finish with John and Eric, have a little nap, and then go to the 7 PM Friday online tasting at Rocket Market (726 E. 43rd). Preparation is one stop, as Andrew Hansen puts together 3 or 4 wines with pairings of cheeses and charcuterie which you pay for and pick up there.

And let’s not forget other shops like Huckleberry’s Natural Market with Spokane Wine Company on South Monroe, or our old friend Matt Dolan at Petunia’s Market at 2010 N. Madison. Downtown there is Wanderlust Delicato on 421 W. Main, and in Kendall Yards try Nectar Wine and Beer (1331 W. Summit Parkway). On May 14th they did a virtual blend tasting featuring 4 wines they selected, and they had 2 oz of each in small, numbered glass bottles that you could pick-up at their Kendall Yards location and then login to Zoom to follow along as they explored each of the wines. In Spokane Valley a hidden gem is Bottles at 3223 N. Argonne. Just call any of them or check Facebook pages to see what they have planned for us wine lovers. Terra Blanca’s tasting room manager conducts virtual tastings every Wednesday and Friday at 2 different time slots, for your convenience.

So skip the restaurant wine list markup. Invest some of that “**coinage**” and UP your typical purchase price and quality. All the better to enjoy that “silver lining” as we wait out our “social isolation” and at the same time help save our treasured local wine shops and wineries. And maybe we can carefully gather a few friends, at recommended social distance, on the patio, deck, or yard, and share some new taste sensations that you found, as we while away the days until the lockdown ends.

Table #1: average or typical price found in selected but anonymous locations

RESEARCH SAMPLE WINE	RESTAURANT WINE LIST PRICE	WINE SHOP/WINERY RETAIL PRICE
Domain Drouhin Laurene	\$160	\$70
Robert Karl Claret	\$ 48	\$20
Chateau Ste. Michelle Canoe Ridge Chardonnay	\$45	\$24
Emvy Cellars Devotion	\$66	\$32
Va Piano Syrah	\$66	\$35
Barrister Cabernet Franc	\$55	\$33