

Ever remarked, 'What a buttery Chardonnay'?

Fermentation is a word most of us are familiar with, especially when concerning food.

Fermentation is carried out by yeast organisms and is responsible for converting grape juice into wine, milk or cream into cheese and grain into alcohol.

Malolactic fermentation, however, is one that is carried out by bacteria rather than yeast. It is sometimes referred to as secondary fermentation.

The bacteria that performs this task are in a group known as lactic acid bacteria, the most prominent of which is called *Oenococcus oeni*.

The purpose of malolactic fermentation is to soften wine so that it tastes better.

Acids in wine create tartness or sourness on the sides of the



Charles R. Thomas

ON THE BARRELHEAD

tongue and in the cheek pouch, which when present in large quantities can be unpleasant.

Malolactic fermentation decreases this acidity and makes wine more agreeable.

The four principal acids in wine are:

- Tartaric acid, the most prevalent acid in wine. It is seldom seen anywhere else.

- Malic acid, the second most common acid. Its flavor is

similar to green apples.

- Citric acid, the third common acid. It has a lemony flavor.

- Lactic acid, an acid found free in nature. It is important in human metabolism and respiration. Lactic acid is a much softer acid and primarily found in sour milk and sauerkraut.

Not all wines are candidates for malolactic fermentation.

Although it can occur in most any wine, it is most commonly allowed to occur in wines where the style of the wine calls for a softer variety or in cases where the acids are unusually high.

If the wine is a fairly light and acidic white wine whose charm depends on its tartness and acidity, it is not a good candidate for malolactic fermentation.

This would remove the most

notable aspects of the wine's flavor.

White wines that are fuller in body and are meant to be enjoyed more for their complexity than their freshness and acidity are candidates for malolactic fermentation.

Such wines are Chardonnay, Viognier, Sauvignon Blanc and perhaps Sémillon.

Many red wines are candidates for malolactic fermentation, but some, depending on their acidity and crispness, might be ones where the wine-maker would avoid malolactic fermentation.

An example of this wine is Beaujolais, White Zinfandel and other pink wines.

Lactic acid is commonly used in Europe as well in wineries in California to allow the wine to undergo natural malolactic fer-

mentation. Winemakers allow the wine to be open to the air to achieve this.

A second method of malolactic fermentation is to place the wine in used barrels which contain residual malolactic bacteria in the pores of the wood.

This process is often interrupted by winter cold. In spring, the bacteria will become active with rewarming of the wine and malolactic fermentation will finish.

Other factors that may impair the ability of the malolactic fermentation to proceed include a low pH or excess acidity and levels of alcohol that are too high.

Malolactic fermentation reduces the acidity almost by half and also produces carbon dioxide.

A pleasant side effect of malolactic fermentation is the pro-

duction of a chemical compound called diacetyl. Diacetyl is the flavor compound responsible for the smell of butter.

Therefore, a wine that has undergone malolactic fermentation will have a slight buttery bouquet that can be very prominent, especially in Chardonnays.

The presence of this compound makes it possible for some wine aficionados to determine by smelling the wine whether the wine has undergone malolactic fermentation.

Diacetyl is completely harmless, and its only effect on wine is in its pleasant sensory component.

Charles R. Thomas, a certified wine judge, owns Chateau Thomas Winery in Plainfield.

GET BUSY

Historical society mixes music with wine, cheese

The Johnson County Historical Society will present the fourth annual Wine, Cheese and All That Jazz fund-raiser from 7 to 9 p.m. March 3 at the Johnson County Museum of History, 135 N. Main St. in Franklin.

Guests can sample wines from Mallow Run, Oliver, Easley, and Grape Inspirations wineries.

Blue Thunder Entertainment will provide music. The event also will include a silent auction.

Cost is \$25 per person in advance and \$30 at the door. The fund-raiser will

benefit the society and the museum. The event is open to adults 21 and older.

To make reservations, call 736-4655 or go to johnsoncountymuseum.org.

Jazz pianist, Hoosier poet put on dual-medium fund-raiser

Award-winning jazz pianist and composer Monika Herzig and Hoosier poet Norbert Krapf will perform in a concert at 3 p.m. Sunday at St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 600 Paul Hand Blvd., Franklin.

The performance will be the first in a series to benefit the St. Thomas Clinic,

Johnson County's only free medical clinic for the underserved.

Krapf and Herzig's "Have a Heart" theme blends original poetry and jazz. The performance includes readings from Krapf's published collection, such as the new "Invisible Presence: A Walk Through Indiana in Photographs and Poems."

In addition, the duo has works specifically written for their collaborative performances.

Herzig and Krapf also will present their interpretation of John Lennon's "Imagine."

Suggested donation is \$10 per person. All ages are welcome.

New exhibit of paintings scheduled to open at museum

A new collection of paintings by Hoosier artists will be on display at the Johnson County Museum of History in Franklin from March 9 to April 13.

"Painting Indiana II: The Changing Face of Agriculture" tells the story of Indiana agriculture and how it evolved from family farming to a global industry using biotechnology and satellite positioning.

It also discusses the impact the transformation had on the people, culture and the economy of the state. Works

showcased in the exhibit are in a book of the same name.

The exhibit features 10 Indiana plein air artists, who painted subjects including livestock farms, lumber harvesting, meat packing plants and farmers' markets.

Contributing artists Bill Borden, Mark Burkett, Mary Ann Davis, Lynn Dunbar, Bob Farlow, Jeff Klinker, Ron Mack, Nancy Maxwell, Carol Strock-Wasson and Scott Sullivan have adopted the style of painting in the open air, or, as the French say "en plein air."

The style gives paintings a more natural look that painting from a photograph does not.

Smart

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE C1)

initiating my untarnished Scrabble board.

I thought things were going well when I began challenging her plays like Tony Dungy in the Colts' Super Bowl XLI win.

The difference was that Coach Dungy's challenges went his way.

When I challenged Phoebe on a spelling, I was wrong.

One challenge went something like, "Phoebe, that's not even a word."

She showed me the word in our five-pound bound Webster's. "Veejay" is a real word and comes from the words video jockey: an announcer of a program (as on television) that features music videos. The word "veejay" is worth 57 points on a triple word score.

My next exasperated question was, "Phoebe, we don't have music videos on our five-channel television and, I've never even seen that word. How do you know it?"

She simply noted, "I read it in a book."

That's when I decided that she probably wasn't doing enough chores because of her habitual reading addiction.

I figure while she's grounded from reading she can clean the entire house while I read a few novels and study the dictionary.

I won't feel even a tinge of guilt when she asks me to raise my lime-green, fuzzy-slipped

feet while she vacuums underneath them.

Anyway, she pummeled me in Scrabble, even though I laid down the awesome word "beguile."

If I'd had a "d" or "s" to go with it, I would have earned the extra 50 points for laying down seven tiles at once.

But I didn't, and she outplayed me.

It was my new game, and I had planned on christening it with a win in my favor. So you understand that I had to ground her.

Last Tuesday, she was preparing for the regional spelling bee at Greenwood Christian School behind my back.

Being a supportive mom, I immediately dropped what I was doing and helped her study. That, and I didn't want her learning any new words that I don't know.

A hint for you parents who need help to help your children with spelling: Phoebe and I found that the online Merriam-Webster Dictionary (www.m-w.com) has an audio feature that pronounces words so you can hear them (not that I couldn't figure out how to pronounce words like "kyrie," "roentgen" and "kreplach" all by myself.)

Here are a few more of Phoebe's fifth grade spelling bee words, just in case you have an upcoming Scrabble game planned or if you just want to impress your co-workers: "smolt," "dentifrice," "trenchant," "peregrination," "tamarack."

I'm awaiting the opportunity

to use some of these new words in my everyday casual conversations.

At the spelling bee, maybe one of the officials will ask for some audience help. The judge will say, "We ran out of good sentences, and we need some help. Does anyone in the audience have a sentence for the word 'kreplach'?"

That's when I'll casually volunteer and nonchalantly include eight words that the kids have been studying: "After my peregrination (walk), I climbed to the top of a tamarack (pine tree) but screamed a kyrie (short liturgical prayer that begins with the words, 'Lord, have mercy') as I slipped and fell 25-feet to the ground."

"The trenchant (keen) hospital nurses gave me the great news that my roentgen (x-ray related) tests were negative and offered me smolt (young salmon) and kreplach (a Yiddish word for a square or triangular dumpling filled with ground meat or cheese) to regain my strength."

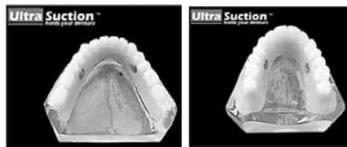
"I used dentifrice (a powder, paste, or liquid for cleaning the teeth) after eating."

All the wide-eyed 10- and 11-year-old fifth-graders will look up to me in awe. Except for that one girl who keeps beating me in Scrabble.

Janet Hommel Mangas, the third of seven children, grew up on the east side of Greenwood. She now resides in the Center Grove area with her husband and three daughters.

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