

A memorable fundraiser for AWSEF

by Steve Brunkhorst, chapter chair

Imagine a nine-vintage vertical tasting, featuring a “built to last” Napa Cabernet Sauvignon!



Longtime St. Louis (MO) Chapter members Phil and Debbie Rahn collected this flagship wine from the Chateau Montelena Winery in Calistoga over many years. In an act of generosity and adventure, they donated them for a “tasting of a lifetime,” with proceeds from attendee donations going to the AWSEF and the St Louis Chapter.



This is how, in March 2022, 20 members of the chapter were able to taste a flight of “The Montelena Estate” to experience and discuss the impact of age on appearance, aroma, flavor, and overall impression. Tasting began with the 2016 vintage and worked back through time: 2016-15-14-13-12-07-03-1999-90.

By the close of the event our attendees possessed a vivid understanding of how the structural components of acid and tannin change with time. Fruit aromas, fresh and bright in the newer vintages, became preserved and stewed with age.

Each taster identified a “favorite vintage” in which all the components seemed to come together to reach an optimum balance. Not surprisingly, the choice of vintage varied from person to person, but we shared a common experience and growth as lovers of wine.

In addition to donating the wines, Phil Rahn assembled grape-growing and winemaking information for each vintage to share with the group during the tasting. Member Aaron Mandel opened the meeting with an overview of Cabernet Sauvignon blends and the typical impact of age upon these wines.



A big thank you to a local art gallery, “The Gallery at the District” of Chesterfield, Missouri, which welcomed us to use the gallery space for this unique event. The accompanying photos show the beautiful works of art that surrounded the tasters.