


FROM THE GRAPEVINE



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Another month, another wine fest! This September, the 2nd Annual Southern California Wine Festival took place in Van Nuys, organized by Ben Saeidian, co-owner of **City Art Gallery**.

More than sixty different wines and spirits were presented, from 20 wine-producing countries around the world. Complementing the wine was a veritable gourmet spread of cheeses and nibbles. Water was kindly donated by **Icelandic Waters**. Live jazz by the [Bill Reichenbach](#) quartet, raffles, and both silent and live auctions added to the festival air.

This all added up to be a truly fun event. It was also a philanthropic one: two charities, the [Make-A-Wish Foundation](#) and the [Children's Tumor Foundation](#), received donations from the proceeds. Wineries who sent contributions for the two charities included [Berghold Winery](#), [Macchia](#), [M. Consentino](#), [Peltier Station Wine](#), [Dry Creek Vineyard](#), [Michel Schlumberger Wines](#), [Pedroncelli](#), [Rafanelli Wines](#), [Match Vineyards](#), [Hill Family Estates](#) and [Woodbridge](#). My profound thanks to each of these wineries!

I'm glad that Saeidian contacted me to consult and help organize the wineries. It was truly an honor, and I look forward to next year!

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When the opportunity recently arose to attend a wine dinner with the controversial Michel Rolland of Bordeaux, I jumped at the chance. Bill Thomas of West Los Angeles' [The Wine House](#) hosted the event, featuring the wines of the new [Rolland Collection](#).

Rolland is a complicated figure. Born into a French winemaking family and a noted Bordeaux-based oenologist who consults around the world, he is credited for significantly improving many wineries' offerings. His portfolio includes wines from Chateau Berlineau St.-Vincent (Pomerol); Chateau Fontenil (Fronsac), Chateau La Gland Clotte, (Bordeaux Blanc), Chateau Le Bon Pasteur (Pomerol), Chateau Rolland-Maillet (Saint-

Emilion), Campo Eliseo (Toro, Spain) Val de Flores Malbec (Mendoza, Argentina) and Bonne Nouvelle Red from Stellenbosch, South Africa).

Yet at the same time, he is decried as an agent of wine globalization, stamping his taste preferences on wines from around the world, diminishing the regional characteristics and *terrior* so highly valued by many. And in the recent film *Mondovino*, Rolland was shown advising clients to microoxygenate, a contentious procedure. (After the film came out, Rolland stated that he is not a big fan of microoxygenation. He only advocates it under specialized conditions, when tannins are extremely ‘fierce’ or ‘hard.’)

So, I honestly didn’t know what to expect of an evening with this larger-than-life figure. I was delighted to find Rolland a friendly, outgoing chap. The wines and the conversation were equally interesting. He also handled the inevitable question about *Mondovino* with grace and rationality. It was a very nice evening and a fascinating experience.

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The hot weather is finally coming to an end, and an uncharacteristically early rain storm has already blasted the city. It’s time to retire those chilled whites and reexamine what reds you have socked away in your racks. Think of it as changing your wine wardrobe, just like you retire your summer wear and pull out your sweaters. Most of all, remember to drink what you like and like what you drink.

As always, happy drinking!

Joel M. Fisher Ph.D primary web site is joelfisher.com, Joel also writes a monthly column for the Chefs de Cuisine Association of California and has been the wine instructor these past five years for the Culinary Arts Department, Art Institute of California-Los Angeles. He is Director of Public Affairs for Avalon Hollywood, and as a partner in WineVineandDine conducts wine tastings, wine dinners, and wine-and-food pairings throughout Southern California. His email address is joel@winevineanddine.com. Sara Fisher Chapin loves big *amarones* and deep ports, so is excited that the season is (almost) upon us.

