

From: Usman Khan
Sent: Wednesday, August 25, 2010 11:13 PM
To: Paul Grieco
Subject: Re: Summer of Riesling Wine Bar Crawl: Your Final Challenge

1. If you were hanging off a cliff with nary a chance of survival, which grape would offer the best chance of rescue and why: Riesling or Chardonnay

Do I argue the obvious choice? It's The Summer of Riesling Crawl. If I pick Chardonnay, I'm going to offend Paul Grieco's sensibilities.

His penchant for not serving the Other White Grapes is well-known and often maligned by those drinkers (heathens). Yet, by successfully making the case for Chardonnay, I'll stand out from my fellow Riesling Crawl Completers (the ambitious bastards).

First and foremost, realistically speaking, if I am hanging off a cliff, what wine would offer the best chance of rescue? Hanging off a cliff, the power of a particular grape will offer little chance of survival. Give me some rappelling gear and let's have a discussion.

If death is certain, I'd rather have a bottle of Dr. Bürklin-Wolf Kirchenstück Riesling Trocken 2002 clutched to my chest and down my gullet (and die happy with perfection on my lips as I'm plunging to my death) than knowing a particular type of wine is going to save my sorry arse because it's malolactic fermented.

Looking at the grapes themselves, a Riesling grape is more specific - undergoing colder growing conditions and most likely, cold stabilization, whereas Chardonnay is an "easy" wine that adapts to its environment and various soils.

If fortune favors me, a Riesling grape might come through in that crucial moment as my fingernails precariously cling to the grooves of a cliff. More likely than not, my desperate pleas to Bacchus as I'm chugging that golden Trocken in freefall will make him spare me because of my superb taste.

2. Germany is the home of Riesling and is considered by many to be the finest practitioner of the dark arts of the Riesling grape. Austria is relatively new to the pantheon of great Riesling expression. And Alsace rests comfortably and confidently in the middle, at least stylistically. Please differentiate the Riesling expressions between these three giants of the wine world.

"Andale, donkey!" the man urged his animal forward. Oftentimes, the stubborn donkey would refuse to walk, pausing mid-step to stomp his hoof like an enraged toro out to gore his taunting matador.

Today, though, when the man spied the donkey's fierce hoof about to ravage his bare foot, the redness of the soil caught his eye. Red like blood, red like wine. Such is common in Rheingau, he supposed. The red slate of the soil meant it was late harvest, meant the Riesling would be sweet enough to decay the man's teeth, had he any left. He could taste the full-bodied Riesling of the Rheingau as if he were back in his youth, sampling the freshness and delicacy of the wine with every sip. The Riesling in Rheingau aged just as beautifully due to its high acidity levels.

He could remember when he had savored the timeless Riesling of Alsace, smiling tipsily as the above average alcohol content enticed him to venture into the fields of calcerous soil where the grape was grown. He had seen the steel tanks in which the wine was fermented, noting the absence of oak barrels, thinking all the while how his palate had never been so fully overcome by the thickness of a wine. Then there was Austria. The dryness of the Riesling had allowed the man to detect hints of granite, mica soil, and white pepper. The Austrian Riesling would have gone stale had he taken the bottles from his brother's home so many years ago—he remembered the Austrian Riesling peaked at five years.

The donkey began to move forward, surveying the man as if he understood his longing for Riesling