

WILLAKENZIE ESTATE

For the past seven vintages, Bacchus Management Group Wine Director Andrew Green has traveled to WillaKenzie to collaborate with Winemaker Thibaud Mandet and Owner Bernard Lacroute in selecting which lots will be blended for Bacchus' "Thibaud Cuvee." In their pursuit of excellence, they have created a Pinot Noir that is rich and elegant, yet fresh and approachable.

*Making handcrafted Oregon Pinot Noir
for over 15 years!*



DIRT MATTERS. CLONES MATTER. PEOPLE MATTER.

WINE & SPIRITS TOP 100 WINERIES OF THE WORLD 2010 & 2011

www.willakenzie.com

A DAY IN THE LIFE

MICHAEL ACHESON (Sommelier - The Village Pub, Woodside)

*An insider's look into the amazing lives
of some of the most important people
in the world of food and wine.*

11:02 A.M.

I wake up to the dulcet tones of my iPhone.
Boss is calling, he wants to talk allocations.

11:15 A.M.

Shower, shave, get dressed, the usual morning
routine, in 10 minutes flat.

12:00 P.M.

I head out for a quick lunch at Duboce Park Cafe.
I enjoy a large cup of coffee and a turkey, bacon
and avocado sandwich, no cheese and no mayo.
I don't like cheese. There, I've said it. I don't like
cheese. This would normally be the point in the
conversation where a guest or new acquaintance
gets this incredulous look on their face. "Wait,
you're a sommelier but you don't like cheese?!"
Call it my fatal flaw, but I cannot stand anything
stronger than mozzarella. In fact, I once had to
flee the dining room of a restaurant in Cam-
bridge. The chef was from Alsace, and he had just
hollowed out and filled a bushel of small potatoes
with some exceptionally pungent Munster. It was
like chemical warfare in there, and I was caught
in the open without my gas mask.

12:10 P.M.

While eating, I catch up on my reading. Harper's Magazine, the Atlantic, The New Yorker, and the New York Times are spread across the table. It takes a lot of bad news to get to the good. Finally, the food section of the Times. I really liked Frank Bruni, but I think, as a whole, readers have been enriched by his move to editorial and the addition of Pete Wells as the restaurant critic. Wells' takedown of Guy Fieri's place in Times Square was...amazing.

1:00 P.M.

Time to go to work. I jump on Highway 280 and head south toward Woodside. I tune into local news and cruise.

1:35 P.M.

I arrive at my "office," The Village Pub. Today's looking physical, as I pass stacks of deliveries on my way in. I collect invoices, double-check the deliveries, print barcode stickers, and start putting the wine away. We have three temperature-controlled cellars, not including the one off-site. We have to get creative, as the wine program has grown 1,400 percent since opening in 2001, and we now house over 2,500 selections (8,500 bottles).

2:15 P.M.

With less than two hours until the staff meeting, I grab a seat in front of the computer, and get to work. I spend about five hours per day on administrative duties and five in the dining room of the restaurant. Today, I have to select wines for a 100-person catered dinner we are doing at a local home, and seven private dinners in the restaurant, all next week. Next, I do my ordering. While time consuming, we have special software, BinWise, that eases some of the pain and tracks our inventory electronically. My email inbox is full, so I read through and respond. Retail sales are next. I help stock the personal cellars of interested guests. Many of the wines we offer are not available to the general public.

3:15 P.M.

I find seven cases of wine waiting for me in "Cellar A." I place a barcode sticker on the top of each bottle, slowly and methodically. It pays to be accurate, not fast; a mis-labeled bottle now means an inventory nightmare later. Now, where to put the 36 new bottles of Dujac and Leflaive? I find a safe home for them and move on. I welcome an unannounced visit from one of our vendors and spontaneously taste four of their wines. Of the four, one might be a good fit. Can't decide now, I have service to prepare for.

3:45 P.M.

I throw on my suit and tie! In addition to changing my clothes, I change my state of mind. I take a few deep breaths and go from administrator to sommelier, in a Clark Kent-type of way.

3:55 P.M.

Notes in hand, I assemble glassware for today's staff tasting. Today we are discussing white wines from the Cote de Beaune, and tasting a half bottle of Croton-Charlemagne from Bonneau du Martray, a marquee producer to boot.

4:00 P.M.

Staff meeting begins. Our dining room manager goes over the reservations for the evening. We review VIPs, allergies, birthday and anniversary celebrations, table preferences, and special requests. One guest is particular about his martini, he requests an over-sized martini glass, and his table must be pre-set with olive oil and chili flakes. Service topics are next: table maintenance, reading a guest's body language, reminders about "pace" and body "carriage" in the dining room, etc. – the small details that matter in a Michelin-starred restaurant. Chef Dmitry Elperin goes over tonight's menu additions, and asks the staff to describe the dishes. Saving the best for last, it's my turn. I pass out the wine and we begin tasting "blind," using the formal deductive tasting process of the British Court of Master

Sommeliers, focusing on sight, smell and taste.

For some, this is the first time tasting really good Grand Cru white Burgundy. This wine is a great segue into the education topic, and we chat about Corton-Charlemagne, Pernand-Vergelesses and Meursault. An ounce of transcendent wine goes a long way toward firing the staff up for a big night.

4:45 P.M.

We have a large private party tonight, so I take a few minutes to chat with the service team. We review the wines, glassware and service. They are enjoying two beautifully produced wines, a chardonnay and a cabernet from the Napa Valley. I taste each bottle, checking for corkiness, bottle variation, or other off-flavors and move on.

5:00 P.M.

Service begins. With one of our assistant sommeliers on duty, I take the opportunity to head back to the office for more administrative work. Tonight, I am emailing my personal database about an upcoming truffle dinner. I like to give our regulars the first opportunity to sign-up for these dinners. In addition, I meet with chef Elperin to collaborate on a menu for our next seasonal tasting menu. We talk food and taste wines.

5:45 P.M.

Showtime! There are a lot of regulars in the house demanding fine wines. Tonight we saw groups of businessmen closing major deals and drinking big Napa cabs, including the new allocation of Bond (2008 Quella – young, but they loved it). Meanwhile, a local winemaker and her guest enjoyed a bottle of 2009 1er Cru Chablis. We talked a little bit about her new release and she left a few wines for me to taste. We also poured Domaine Dujac, Giacomo Conterno Monfortino, Dunn Howell Mountain, Araujo Eisele, Skipstone, and some older Diamond Creek (my favorite, this stuff is awesome and ages really well!).

10:50 P.M.

As service slows, I begin restocking. My first stop is the bar. They provide me with their "break" sheet, a list of wines offered by the glass that need to be replenished. I organize the cellars and proceed.

11:00 P.M.

Back in the office, I process yesterday's sales, reorganize the Barolo and Barbaresco sections of the wine list, and write descriptions for the new wines we will be adding this weekend.

Tomorrow, the staff will turn these descriptions into "spiels," a single sentence that describes the weight, aromas and flavors of a wine. It's a very useful tool to convey the basic facts about a wine to our guests.

12:00 A.M.

I close the purchase log, that's enough for one night. My final duties are to empty the condensation pans and lock the cellars. Glamorous, I know.

12:15 A.M.

I jump in my car and head home to San Francisco. I meet my buddy Gideon at Churchill for some much needed whiskey therapy. I'm on a Manhattan kick right now (up, with an orange Duke's twist), and a Trumer for my other hand. We decompress, complain about the biz, harass the bartenders and eye a few pretty girls.

1:30 A.M.

Home! No amount of exhaustion can get between my TV and me. I end my day with an episode of "Breaking Bad," and call it a day.

2:30 A.M.

One more episode should do me in. Indeed, it did. I fell asleep instantly.