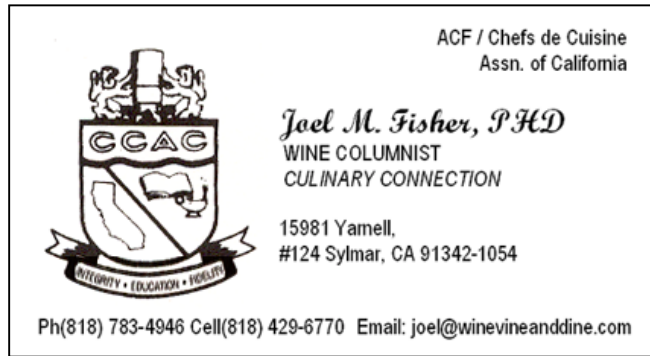


## ***FROM THE GRAPEVINE***

BY [JOEL M. FISHER](#) and Sara Fisher Chapin



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Buzz about a new wine bistro in Old Town Pasadena has been generating steam recently. First, a colleague casually mentioned **Vertical Wine Bistro**. Then I spotted a review by S. Irene Virbila of the *Los Angeles Times*. Next, it reached 'hot' status with *L.A. Weekly's* Jonathan Gold. So I decided to go see if reality lived up to the rep.

Located on a busy corner near the old Raymond Theater, the bistro occupies a pleasant upstairs space. A friendly dining room and hip bar are divided by an imposing wall of wine bottles. Let me start with the real star attraction: the wine. Wine director Mike Farwell presides over 400 selections. He pours up to 100 wines by the glass every day, and has crafted more than 20 different flights to sample. To encourage tasters, the restaurant keeps guests' tasting notes on file for reference on future visits. What a great idea. In terms of food, the menu has wine-bar standbys such as cheeses and charcuterie. It also boasts more innovative dishes compliments of Chef Sara Levine, formerly of **Opus Bar & Grill**. Overall, this place has a cozy atmosphere and great taste. Check it out if you're in the neighborhood.

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With the holidays rapidly approaching, the *Bon Appetit* Tasting Panel Los Angeles recently met at **Social Hollywood** (formerly the Hollywood Athletic Club) to taste rosé champagne and sparkling products. More than three dozen products were on hand. I put together a list of my favorites for those looking to buy some interesting bubbly at all price points.

### \$30 and Under:

- Segura Viudas NV Cava ~ \$10
- Boevet-Ladubay NV Champagne Rose Excellence ~ \$15
- Roederer Estate NV Brut Rose Anderson Valley ~ \$28
- Lanson NV Brut Rose Champagne ~ \$30
- Nicholas Feuillatte NV Brut Champagne Premier Cru ~ \$30 (A favorite of Ira Noroff, Vice President of Southern Wines and Spirits)

### \$60 and Under

- Heidsieck Monopole NV Brut Rose Champagne ~\$32
- Bruno Paillard NV Brut Rose Champagne Premier Cuvee ~\$35 (Wine educator Martin Weiner's personal favorite of the tasting)
- Gloria Ferrer 2003 Brut Rose Carneros ~\$35
- Veuve Clicquot NV Brut Rose Champagne~\$45
- Chandon NV Brut Rose Etoile, sur lees 2001 ~\$45
- Taittinger NV Champagne Prestige Rose~\$55
- Chandon NV Brut Rose Champagne ~ \$60
- Ruinart NV Brut Rose Champagne ~ \$60 (One of my favorites of the day.)

### \$75 and Up

- Delamotte NV Brut Rose Champagne ~ \$70
- Pol Roger 1999 Brut Rose Champagne Extra Cuvee de Reserve ~ \$75 (A popular favorite of the panel.)
- Henriot 1998 Brut Rose Champaign Millesime ~\$80
- Nicholas Feuillatte 1997 Brut Rose Champagne Cuvee Palmes d'Or ~ \$100
- Veuve Clicquot 1985 Brut Rose Champagne Rare Vintage Series ~\$120
- Perrier Jouet 2002 Champagne Cuvee Belle Epoque, Fleur de Champagne Rose ~ \$170
- Krug NV Brut Rose Champagne ~ \$250 (Yes, you get what you pay for!)

When you're out in the stores looking for inspiration for that New Year's party, I hope this helps.

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I've always enjoyed the Norwegian cuisine that came from my ex-in-law side of the family. Christmas in particular meant beloved classic Norwegian dishes. But amidst all the wonderful food, one dish loomed ominously. Enjoyed only by the oldest generation and treated as a hazing opportunity by the younger generation, lutefisk is the kind of food that has no middle ground. This is a cod that has been soaked in lye and dehydrated. When resuscitating it, the end result can only be described as fish Jell-O. The family endured this for decades.

And then came a revelation. First, a couple years ago my favorite Swedish lady made a sauce that enlivened the fish and made it palatable. Then, some Norwegian cousins recently came to the States for a visit, and I was fortunate enough to join the family for a feast. The surprise of the meal was the lutefisk – which was actually good! For those curious, give this recipe from Erling Hoy and Hilde Brun a spin. You can find lutefisk at Scandinavian delis. Put the fish in a baking pan, skin side down. Heavily salt and pepper it, then cover with foil. Cook for 40 minutes at 200. Meanwhile, cube and cook some potatoes and hearty bacon. You may also want to prepare homemade pea stew – or, for the time-strapped, pick up Toro Pea Stew mix at the same Scandinavian store you found

the lutefisk. When the fish is done, drain all the liquid, and serve alongside the bacon, potatoes and scoop of pea stew. The blend of flavors is fantastic!

Happy holidays, everyone. Enjoy this time with your loved ones. Here's to a great 2007.

Joel M. Fisher PhD writes a monthly column for the [Chefs de Cuisine Association of California](#). He has been a wine instructor for the Culinary Arts Department, [Art Institute of California-Los Angeles](#), and is the founder and president of [LAWineFest](#). Additionally, he is Director of Public Affairs for Avalon Hollywood, and a partner in [WineVineandDine](#), which hosts wine tastings, wine dinners, and wine-and-food pairings throughout Southern California. His email address is [joel@winevineanddine.com](mailto:joel@winevineanddine.com).

Sara Fisher Chapin has never liked lutefisk.