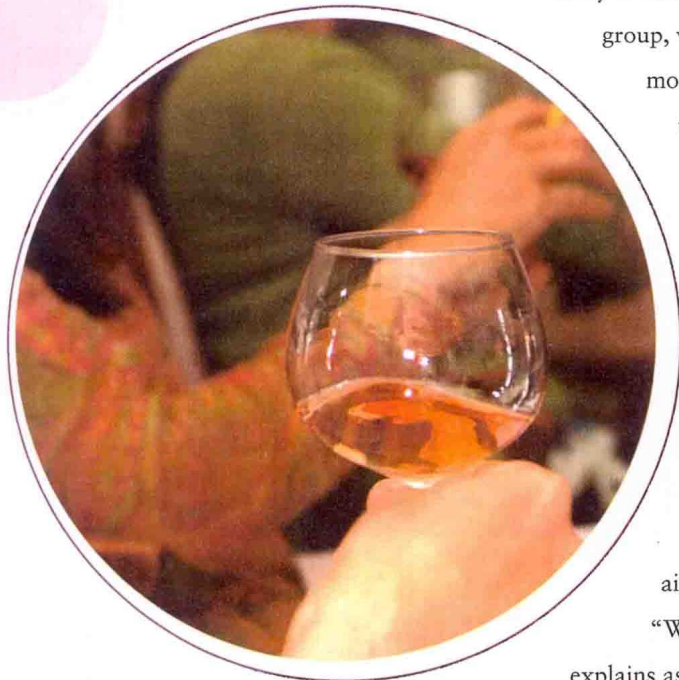


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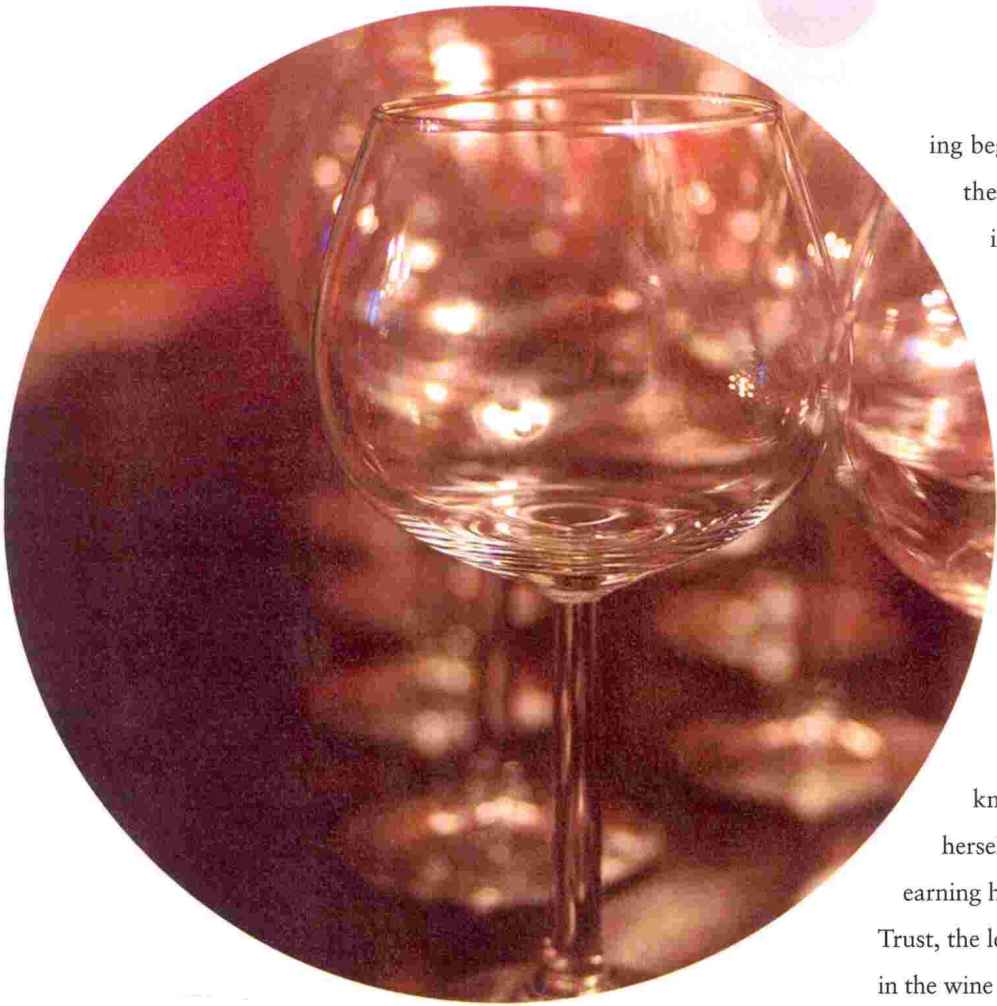
# dancing ON grapes



n a clear, starry May evening, a local book club is learning a lot about wine. Tucked away in Laura Callahan's appealing home deep in the woods on Ryders Lane, the group, which calls itself "Chapter 2," gathers to discuss their selection for this month, *A Good Year*. Written by Peter Mayle and set in Provence, the book tells the story of a man who inherits a vineyard, and recounts a fascinating tale of the hugely lucrative and competitive boutique-wine trade.

While, traditionally, reading groups meet to discuss books—dissecting language, symbolism and meaning, and sharing their insights and reactions—tonight's gathering goes one step further. JoAnn LoGiurato, founder of Dancing on Grapes, a company devoted to wine education for women, will conduct a wine tasting, including some of the regions discussed in the book itself. In addition, JoAnn has provided the group with suggested food pairings. Trays of gourmet cheeses, olives, chorizo, and duxelles fill the air with fragrant, rich odors.

"Women are neglected consumers when it comes to wine," JoAnn explains as we stand in Laura's spacious kitchen moments before the club meet-



ing begins. JoAnn busily and calmly goes about organizing the various bottles she will be pouring later. “We walk into a liquor store, and many of us will have to ask for recommendations,” she says. “At restaurants, the wait staff typically hands the wine menu to the man at the table.” JoAnn deftly manipulates a simple corkscrew, moving methodically down the line of bottles, which are opened in record time. “I want to provide education to women so that they can feel more comfortable with making wine decisions.”

JoAnn’s wine journey began with a class at Norwalk Community College. “I love to cook and entertain,” she explains, “and I’d always wanted to know more about wine pairings.” JoAnn soon found herself drawn into the fascinating world of wine, eventually earning her intermediate certification from the Wine and Spirits Trust, the leading provider of high-quality education and training in the wine and spirit industry. She never dreamed it would lead to starting her own company. Just two years later, Dancing on Grapes is lush and ripe with business around Wilton and other parts of Fairfield County.

## JOANN'S SHORT LIST of WINE BOOKS

***The Wine Bible***, Karen MacNeil, Workman Publishing Co.

***Wine for Every Day and Every Occasion***, Dorothy Gaiter and John Brecher, William Morrow, Publisher

***Wine for Dummies***, Mary Ewing-Mulligan and Ed McCarthy, For Dummies

***The World Atlas of Wine***, Hugh Johnson, Simon & Schuster

***Great Wine Made Simple***, Andrea Immer, Broadway

***Pocket Wine Guide***, Oz Clarke, Harcourt

***Oldman's Guide to Outsmarting Wine***, Mark Oldman, Penguin Publishing

***Wine for Women***, Leslie Sbrocco, William Morrow Publishing.





## JOANN'S TOP WINE PICKS *for* THIS EVENING

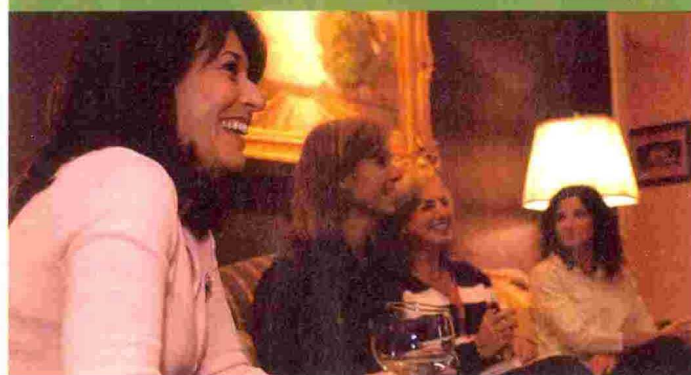
Zardetto 2002, Prosecco, Veneto, Italy  
Chateau Chaubinet 2003 Sauvignon Blanc,  
Bordeaux, France  
Evolution, Sokol Blosser, Oregon  
Bieler Family Routas, Dry Rose, AC  
Coteaux Varois, Provence, France  
Bellevue Estate 2003 Tumara Pinotage,  
South Africa  
Viu Manet 2003 Malbec Reserve, Chile  
Silvano Garcia Monastrell '03, Jumilla, Spain

JoAnn enjoys her role as a wine educator. She spends countless hours tasting wines; attending wine education classes (she recently returned from a four-day wine camp held out in the vineyards of the North Fork of Long Island), and takes pride in sharing her knowledge and passion with others.

The group settles into the plush couches of Laura's living room as JoAnn, looking vibrant in a bright pink sweater and black pants, stands confidently in front of a small round table, covered with a tablecloth the color of – what else? – deep, red wine. Resting atop the table is her signature centerpiece: a purple shoe, speckled with multi-colored glitter and draped with a colorful boa. (The shoe is her insignia, printed as the logo on both her business cards and letterhead). To kick off the evening, JoAnn hands out a “Wine Geek’s Quiz” to test everyone’s understanding of wine. A multiple-choice question like, “What is the correct temperature for storing wine?” fools almost everyone (the right answer is 53-59F). The next question, “The antioxidants present in one glass of red wine is the equivalent of seven glasses of orange juice or 20 glasses of apple juice – true or false?”\* creates a lot of deep thinking. When they count up their final scores at the end of the 12-question quiz, the group realizes that there is, indeed, a lot to learn about wine.

With the group a bit humbled and ready to settle in for the tasting, JoAnn explains the steps in tasting a wine. She pours, then slowly then lifts the glass by its stem (“never hold a glass any other way; you’ll warm the wine”). She then examines its color (“if it’s a white wine, it is clear, straw-like, golden, light green, pale yellow or amber”). Next, she demonstrates how to smell the wine (“gently swirl your glass to enhance the wine’s natural aroma and stick your nose down into the glass, inhaling deeply”), and finally shows the group how to take a taste (“allow a small breath of air in through your lips – even if you look or sound a bit funny”).

The group is rapt. Leaning forward, they are all ears – and taste buds. JoAnn’s knowledge of wine spans as far as a vineyard, as deep as a barrel. She explains



optimal soil conditions, grape varieties, screw tops versus corks, and best wine bargains. As the group tastes, nibbling on cheese and other goodies, JoAnn continues to share information. She readily answers questions raised by the book, such as why Bordeaux is grown in stony soil, as most great wines are grown. “Actually, really poor soil may have all the minerals and all the properties good grapes need to grow in,” JoAnn explains knowingly. “The roots need to stretch down and reach deep into the soil into that mineral base.” Nods of understanding follow. She goes on to explain that the closer the agricultural areas, or vineyards, are to the equator, the riper the grapes are. The best environments for grapes to grow, she continues, is in regions with long growing seasons, with warm days and cool nights. This allows to grapes to ripen, producing a maximum of flavor in the grapes.

Like a veteran teacher, JoAnn effortlessly leads the discussion, answering all the questions with expertise. She explains which foods go with various wines (“spicy food needs acidity and a fresh, fruity wine to cut the heat”), and how to interpret labels. And she clarifies many other questions that are raised from the reading. (Why did he

cut the grape vines back? He was putting the energy back into the fruit to create the sweetest taste, she answers).

At evening's end, everyone is well sated with food and drink. The warm yellow walls of Laura's living room pulse with energy, and the room swells with chatter and laughter. One group discusses planning a trip to the California Wine Country. Others talk of which wine they will serve at their next dinner party.

"One two three, eyes on me!" JoAnn demands jokingly. The room quiets to a hush, people settling back for the final taste—a dessert wine – paired with chocolate-covered strawberries. Cheers!

\*The correct answer is True

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