

PETER MOLNAR: Now that we've talked at length about how technically different altitude wines are, we're going to hear from the people who buy it and write about it and taste it – whether it really does make a difference where it counts. So, with that in mind, I want to introduce Paul Wagner.

PAUL WAGNER: Okay. This is going to be a little different kind of panel. No one brought presentations. In fact, I asked them not to. There are no wines to drink, although you are welcome to finish up what's ever in front of you. But we did ask some sort of general questions to get the ball rolling, and I know each one of these gentlemen. I know how intelligent and how well they know the market... or how intelligent they are and how well they know the market. So it's just going to be a treat to sort of sit back and watch the interaction happen here.

I'm going to introduce them from your left to right: Jeff Prather, who has a long history in the wine industry; astonishing for a man of his young years.

AUDIENCE: [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: That's right. Most recently, at wine.com and now currently working at the Wine Merchant at Ferry Plaza... is that the official name?

JEFF PRATHER: Ferry Plaza Wine Merchant.

PAUL: Ferry Plaza Wine Merchant, with an old friend of mine, Peter Granoff. Wilfred Wong, and Wilfred and I were reminiscing about the first time we judged a wine competition about 20 years ago, in which case I can't remember which one of us disagreed with the other one, but the other one immediately responded—and I'm going to have to clean this up a little bit—but basically said, 'What the... do you know?' And we've been good friends ever since. And it was one of the best panels I've ever judged with, because nobody got into any arguments about whether one of us was right or one of us was wrong. We just moved on to the next wine. 'Okay, you like it more than I do. Let's go ahead.' And Ronn Wiegand, Master of Wine, Master Sommelier. I've known Ronn since his kids went to the same

preschool as my kids, and they're all out of college now. Terrific palate, one of the really thoughtful guys in the wine industry, and also the publisher of *Restaurant Wine*, a terrific newsletter.

To start things off, I thought I'd just run through a quick, less-than-two-minute survey of the American market, because if we're talking about how maybe grape growing is changing, and maybe winemaking is changing, and we're certainly talking at times about how the climate is changing, the wine climate is certainly changing, and the American market is changing. So I've slammed together just a few little slides here. This is a 54-hour course that I teach at Napa College and I'm going to give it in less than two minutes, so you'll have to listen very, very quickly.

What is the U.S. market today? We all know the statistics: 13% of the wine... people drink 86% of the wine. We're not doing enough to reach out to people who aren't part of the market. The second one is, again, another way to look at this, 43% of Americans don't drink any alcohol at all. It reminds me of Humphrey Bogart's great line, which is, 'The problem with this world is everybody's a couple of drinks behind.'

You will note here, and this is a slide that I particularly like showing in Europe because it is quite clear that if you drink wine, you do not vote for George Bush. However, when you show this particular slide in Europe, all of them go 'ooh' and 'ah,' because since 1991, the U.S. wine market has shown pretty consistent growth, and there are a couple of reasons for that, but this is unusual in a world where most wine markets are declining both in terms of revenue and volume. The U.S. market continues to grow. By this time next year, we will be the single largest wine market in the world, and that's pretty darn exciting.

We have a whole new generation of wine consumers. Contrary to what Mr. McCloskey says, they don't necessarily buy 100-point wines. Sometimes they buy Three Blind Moose. They aren't afraid of screw caps. And, interestingly enough, when you come to my house for dinner, I serve you a white wine with the first course, red wine with the second course, dessert

wine, etc. You go to my daughter's house in New York, and she's going to serve sushi, tacos, hamburgers, dim sum, and pizza on one table, and on the other table is a wall of wine that will have all sorts of funny and interesting and creative labels.

RONN WIEGAND: We want to go to her house.

PAUL: Yeah.

RONN: Why go to yours?

PAUL: But it's a different market and so it's a different way of thinking about wine.

Here is what's happening in the U.S. Adult population continues to grow, which is unusual, for example, in Western Europe. Most populations are flat. We're continuing to grow, both birthrate and through immigration. But, secondly, notice the gallons per adult—we're now up to a fantastic 2.8 gallons per adult. As I was talking to Vittorio last night at dinner, we realized that basically the average American drinks a bottle of wine a month and the average Italian drinks a bottle of wine a week. And that's changed considerably because 30 years ago, the average Italian drank a bottle of wine a day, so we're... They're moving in the wrong direction, but we are moving in the right direction.

And here's the thing that's interesting. When you look at this growth, who is driving this growth? It is this younger generation. Millennials are driving 40% of the growth in the wine market. And here's the fascinating part about this: Millennials currently are people between 10 and 27 years of age. Basically, only a third of that generation is of drinking age. In the next 10 years, those kids are going to grow up and they're all going to be of drinking age, and the growth is going to be even more impressive.

So for those of you who are talking to people like me and trying to sell me wine, you're talking to the wrong people. And one of the things that's

wonderful about having these three guys up on the panel is they know who's buying wine today.

To put all of this in context, there are 60,000 wines in the U.S. market, which brings me to my final slide, which I think we'll use as the illustration for today's discussion: 'This is a Wine Shop.'

Okay, having said that, it's my job to sit back, ask a few questions and watch these folks answer them. And the first question I want to ask... We'll save the 100-point question for a little later, okay, guys?

Everybody... all three of them said, 'Ooh, I want to talk about that.' The first question is: We've talked about high altitude viticulture. We've talked about high altitude winemaking. Is there such a thing in the marketplace as a high altitude wine? And we'll start with Mr. BevMo, Wilfred Wong.

WILFRED WONG: No.

PAUL: Thanks, Wilfred. Come on, come up.

WILFRED: The category which I now will say 'ha' for high altitude wines, so it's like a... It's a...

PAUL: He's in sales, not marketing, folks.

WILFRED: It's niche wine. I mean, basically the way... I mean, sitting through this day in these great... among these great presentations... I really found them very interesting and very enjoyable, and very enlightening. These are very important... and this is a very important group, I believe, and it should continue to grow and flourish. But what this group is doing is setting the groundwork for the improvement of the species, making the wine better for everyone. What's made here, all the studies that all you guys do and the super-technical guys talk about are stuff that we end up drinking and the end product.

So I believe the specific market for high altitude wines, there is none and there will never be one except for a very small niche market, and we can talk about that in a moment.

PAUL: Okay. Ronn, when you put together a wine list, when you consult with people, do you talk about mountain wines, high altitude wines, or it's just another...

RONN: Yeah, to answer the question, I mean, yes, there is a market and it's coming and it will grow and it'll continue to expand, in my opinion.

PAUL: See, Wilfred?

RONN WIEGAND: No, I mean, it will. I mean, it is a niche. It is a small niche and it'll grow as much as we educate. I think I've only seen one wine list out of thousands that has a mountain vineyard section. Nobody has any high altitude that I've seen. But in picking particular wines that have specific characteristics that are higher altitude in nature, and very obvious, especially when compared to the generic run-of-the-mill from a similar, or nearby, or even confused appellation with what we're talking about...one of the great and classic examples and you've probably possibly already talked about it here today are the Cumulus Wines where, you know, they're rolling and they're climbing. I mean, what fucking [?] brilliant. I mean, that's unbelievably brilliant. I mean, that is the definition of what we're talking about, and that is education. I mean, you couldn't have done anything better to exemplify, you know, the challenges and a great solution to selling and educating about high altitude wines than that. I mean, that's just the classic case study. It'll be used, you know, in Harvard Business School in 50 years.

MALE: There's a case of those wines on its way.

RONN: I've already got cases. I like it. I drink it. I buy it myself. I like the wines great. I mean, they are the way to do it.

Now, that being said, when I put wines on wine lists, when I advise restaurants, when I write about and taste wines for review purposes, I definitely want to know as much about the wines as possible, and I want the people that are selling the wines to know as much about the wines as possible...for example, some of my favorite wines in the planet are Chianti Classicos. Well, those are high altitude Sangiovese, and...I have to differentiate and I have to let people know, they're... people in restaurants, Italian restaurants that don't truly know much about Italian wines than that those are the most [...unintelligible...] equivalent of Riesling versus the Rheingau, which is the Montalcino and even the...coastal zones of Verema [Maremma?]. . .that the wine has different characteristics. It's a cooler climate. But in fact, in Chianti's case, it's cooler climate and higher altitude and has a slimmer structure, much more aroma.

That's the kind of education that I've been doing for 30 years and I'll continue to do. And sometimes I associate it with higher altitude. I try to simplify and explain, and that's what it's going to take...and, again,... kudos to the Cumulus Company for what they did. I mean, that's it. I mean, they did it. I mean, it's unbelievable what they did, just incredible.

PAUL: And, Jeff, when people walk into the Ferry Plaza Wine Merchant, do they ever walk in and say, 'Hey, Jeff, do you have any of that high altitude wine?'

RONN: How high do you want to go?

JEFF PRATHER: I'll be political and say I agree with both these gentlemen that there isn't a category, but I'll say, 'not yet.' And I agree with Ronn in the sense that it's called by different names, and that's one of the rocks that this group is going to have to push to a high altitude, is the fact that we haven't come up with a definition for it yet. One of the highlights for me today was the Italian presenter saying that they have a definition for it, like they have a definition for Reserva and we don't... We call everything 'reserve.' It's like, 'Yeah, everything's reserve' in America. In Italy, they have a definition for it. In Italy, they have a definition for mountain fruit.

They have a definition for high altitude fruit. And I loved it when he turned around and said, ‘This is hilly fruit, but it’s not mountain fruit,’ or ‘It’s not high altitude fruit.’ So I love the fact that it’s defined there and I think we need to follow their lead and find definitions. And I think that’s one of the challenges that will come out of this.

And your question about what needs to be researched, the first thing that needs to be researched is, ‘what the heck is it?’ To answer your question—I’m not trying to be that political—is the fact that people do come in and say, ‘I’m looking for mountainside fruit. I’m looking for Mountain Cabernet.’ They have never used, in my knowledge, the word ‘high elevation wine,’ as yet. But I’ll start using it and see if people pick up on it.

PAUL: Go, Wilfred.

WILFRED: But Jeff, I have to say one thing, and to this group, Jeff, works in an incredible wine shop. His company is one of the best wine shops not in just U.S., in the world, so...

PAUL: Where do you work, Wilfred?

WILFRED: Me? I work in a little office. It’s in the East Bay of San Francisco. Yeah. But, anyway....I agree with both these guys that this is a very important category, but ... in San Francisco, with that clientele, that audience, he’s going to have those questions where you won’t get in most of the country. You know, so it’s a niche market. It’s a very special... It’s a very important market, but very niche.

RONN: It requires education. And the people who grow high altitude wines, as I said before, they need to educate. They need to differentiate. They need to take whatever is the benchmark, whatever the benchmark is, southwestern Australia, whatever, and explain how ‘ours is different.’ Higher altitudes, slimmer wines, more delicate, more expressive aromas, slightly slimmer structure, and that’s how to do it. You know, that’s...

And so my suggestion, and I've thought about this, is rather than coming up with a one-blanket definition-fits-all for high altitude wines, it's different. It's totally relative in... every vineyard area of the world – I would say, related to the district in which you're located. And that's the best and most effective way, especially where there's a famous group of wines there. I mean, Napa Valley's very obvious. I mean, valley floor versus hillside mountain fruit. That kind of thing, you know, take the common denominator that people mostly know and that is most popular and is most well-established in the marketplace and then compare yourself to that, because that's an easy way for people to understand it.

PAUL: Marketing wine is an awful lot about finding words that people actually understand.

RONN: Simple.

PAUL: Building some kind of understanding with the people you're talking to, and then trying to explain what you're selling based on those words.

Wilfred, when you write a tasting note, and I've seen you write a couple of them... I've been to a store where some of the tasting notes were actually written by Wilfred Wong... Do you use 'high altitude fruit'? Do you use 'mountain fruit' as a descriptor in some of those notes?

WILFRED: Occasionally. When I look at shop talkers, since I write... our company has 66 stores and I write about... And we have about 3,000 wines per store on the average, and it would take a... a combined total, we have about 3,500 wines. My job is to taste and assess about 8,000 wines a year, and then when I write notes that I pen my rating, then I will take the liberty of writing whatever I like, as long as it's not a swear word. So I will use like... I have not used 'high altitude,' but I will use it after today. But I use 'mountain.'

PAUL: We're done, folks. Thanks very much for coming.

JEFF: I can follow up on that. We have a website. We also have shelf-talkers at the store, and we don't necessarily, haven't yet used the word 'high elevation,' the words 'high elevation,' but we try to give people as much information as possible. Instead of just the adjective generation, or to Leo's point, the 'cherry berry' stuff, we try to give them specific information. And we give people, when wineries provide the information, we will give that information to people and say, 'This vineyard is 6,200 feet in elevation.' And we often sometimes go on and describe some of the characteristics the wine has because of the elevation, but we haven't started a category nor have we used the term 'high elevation wine' yet.

PAUL: And, Ronn, you sort of gave an initial description there of the characteristics of a wine that's grown at higher elevation.

RONN: Compared to other similar wines at lower altitudes of the same grape varieties, I mean, they definitely have more fragrance. I mean, they're a slightly slimmer structure. They're usually a little bit crisper, but not always—depends on how they're handled, how they're blended. Yeah, a little bit leaner, a little bit more elegant in character if they're handled properly and they're clean—no bacterial spoilage, please—not over rot. You know, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I mean, compared to rolling in the climate, you got it in a nutshell.

PAUL: So when you put together... and Ronn consults on wine lists, not just for small companies but often quite large companies... do you... is there a category in that wine list, not necessarily called high altitude, but do you look for a way that people are looking for that kind of characteristic? Do you try to weave that into the wine list?

RONN WEIGAND: Yeah, yeah, that's a great... that's a great question, because it all leads into the menu, yeah, absolutely. Right now, I mean, there's a great deal of awareness in the sommelier community and in the on-premise, you know, the upscale restaurant community about sort of cool climate wines. I mean, there's been talk about it for 30 years. And many

high altitude wines fit into that category. They're a subcategory. And so I sort of overlap the two. I look for wines that have a structure that permits them to go well with items on the menu. That's what I look for, and they happen to frequently be higher altitude wines and/or cool climate wines and sometimes they're one in the same. Yeah, so to me, you know, we just clone the two.... that's a perfect entryway in, but the food-friendliness of them is something that I want to stress is critical. And so, yeah, many of them end up on my dinner table, but more importantly on wine lists, because of that. Yeah, I'm looking for refreshing wines, wine with refreshment and fragrance. I like wines with fragrance and high altitude wines that are not ruined in winery tend to have that.

PAUL: And, Jeff, when people come in saying, 'Well, I'm having...' What is it... what is it when they say... What food are they having for dinner that makes you say, 'Ah, let's take a look at one of the wines that Ronn just described?'

JEFF: Well, as Ronn pointed out, you look for things that are refreshing, things that aren't ponderous, and this is going to open up a whole can of worms here, but one of the things that I look for, and I'm sure Ronn was alluding to this as well, is we're looking for wines that are more in balance and less alcoholic bombs. We feel that the alcohol is getting out of control and that they may garner better scores—I'll open up another can of worms—but the size, you know, does matter and we think smaller sometimes is better. And so we look for wines that are refreshing, not overly ponderous in oak, not overly ponderous in alcohol, and are better with foods. And that's the thing that I think we've lost our way on in the wine business. We're going for scores. We're not going for wine that goes with food, and I think that's a huge sin.

PAUL: This is where we pause for an applause, that's right.

So, Wilfred, you use a point rating system with your notes. What's 100-point wine for you?

AUDIENCE: High elevation.

WILFRED: High elevation. But, sorry, I'll go to your question in just a second.

PAUL: Go ahead.

WILDRED: These two guys are very optimistic about how they approach wines. Okay, let me tell you, I was in a restaurant recently called Zen. Does anyone know that restaurant? It's in Healdsburg. I'm sure you would say it's a pretty good restaurant—good food; good wine; good service. Am I correct? Yes? More or less okay. Not a great restaurant, but very, very good. So I'm having lunch with a writer named Laurie Daniel. I don't know if you know Laurie Daniel. She's a writer for the *Mercury News* and other people. And since I went to this winery called Martinelli, and he refused to open me a bottle of Zin, so I decided I'll order it at this restaurant. So I ordered a bottle of their expensive Jackass Zin, is that correct?

JEFF: Yup.

WILFRED: And I recall Prather gave it like 99 points or 98 points, whatever. So I'm pouring this wine for Laurie and me, and so we're drinking it and we're not going to finish it because it's way heavy, way thick, way dark. So then the server, who was very good and cordial and helpful, I said, 'Have you ever tried this wine?' He said, 'No.' I said, 'Have a glass.' So we poured a glass for him. He was very thankful. So I said to him later, I said, 'Tell me, is this bottle of wine light, medium or heavy bodied?' Now it's 16.9 alcohol. Now you tell me, how many here think he said it was full-bodied? Raise your hand. Okay, well you can raise your hand higher. You don't have to be so chicken. Well, fine.

MALE: That's how Bush got elected.

WILFRED: How many said medium-bodied? How many... Okay, and how many would you think light-bodied? Light-bodied. And so this guy is a server in a good restaurant, right in the heart of wine country, and he thinks that 16.9 alcohol is light-bodied, so...

JEFF: I think that's a clear case for Ronn Weigand to step in.

RONN: Yeah. No, he did. Obviously, he drinks spirits straight out of the bottle. That's what he does. He carries a little flask with him, so of course it is. No, I just want to reiterate what I was saying before is there's always room for high altitude wines that have still retain that crispness and that fragrance on every wine list and in every wine by the glass program in the world. And that's how I pick wines. I wanted to finish that.

I always put up... You know, if I do 50 wines by the glass, 20 wines by the glass, 3 wines by the glass, I want at least one of them to be crisp and refreshing so people order a second glass, you know, it satisfies one of the major styles. And, in fact, I'd prefer more of them to be that way, but you know we have to make sure that the customer orders them. And the same in doing wine lists. So, you know, regardless of the variety, find its higher altitude equivalent, whether it's Shiraz, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, whatever, cool climate and/or higher altitude fits the bill.

PAUL: There were a couple of questions here. I have a ton of questions, but folks, this is a free-for-all. Alan had one case. He had one. Let's start with Alan and then we'll go to Casey.

ALAN: Yeah, I'm [...unintelligible...] and I think most of us in this room [...unintelligible...] high alcohol wine. And I think we also agree that high altitude wine offers some of the great [...unintelligible...] that we're going experience. How do you square the higher intensity of those wines? [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: We in marketing and sales are frequently asked to explain what the hell winemakers are doing, so I think it's appropriate we do that again today.

JEFF: How do we square the intensity of high elevation wines?

ALAN: Right. And, especially in the context of not [...unintelligible...].

JEFF: Right. One of the reasons I wanted to come to this conference was I was hoping that high elevation may be one of the answers to bringing down the alcohol levels. And that was one of the reasons I asked Bill Easton, 'Were your high slopes lower in alcohol?' Well, it was only lower in alcohol by .2. So everything I've heard today with the low density atmosphere at the high altitude, you're getting higher tannins, higher color ratios, more intense wines, but also it seems like they have to leave... they're a month later in picking, oftentimes. And so we're still picking at very high sugars, so it really hasn't solved the alcohol problem, necessarily. And to me, that's disappointing because I was hoping we could get intense flavors without the high sugars and therefore the high alcohol.

How do I square the intensity? I applaud the intensity. I know that we look for delicacy in some wines, and I think there's a room for delicacy and fragrance and wonderful aromas and flavors, but there's also room for intensity without being hit with a sledgehammer. You know, at least make the sledgehammer smaller. I mean, make small sledgehammers. But I mean, I love the intensity in wines, and I'm not trying to be... make a plug here, but we have... we don't have a rating system. We have an iconic way of describing wines to our customers. And one of them is the amount of oak on the wine, one of them is the amount of sugar in the wine or dryness level, and one of them is intensity, and it's a 1-to-5 scale. So, you know, we don't try to stock all five point intensity levels, but we want to have some because there are some instances where you want something pretty intense, depending on the food.

And, again, we keep going back to food. When we hire people, we hire people with restaurant backgrounds, not with wine backgrounds, because we feel that the job of a retailer—we don't call ourselves retailers, we call ourselves merchants—a merchant should give an opinion, and that opinion

should be based on what you're going to enjoy with your meal because that's the intention of wine.

PAUL: Casey had a question, and then Jim.

CASEY: [...unintelligible...] high elevation questions, but [...unintelligible...] in the marketplace now? [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: Wilfred has an opinion.

WILFRED: Yes, there are way too many, particularly where the differences between the wines are minimal. There's a very well-known winery in Napa Valley that I won't name that's got a bunch of single vineyard Cabernets, very expensive, and when I taste them, they all taste the same to me. And so ... I think that where... a winery, like Ridge Vineyards, for instance, has many single vineyard Zins all over the state, they have done a good job. I mean... their wines are clearly different from one another. But there are some wineries who pick very, very ripe and put a lot of oak in their wine, and the wines really don't taste that much different from one another. So, in that case, where warranted, make as many single vineyards as you can, but where it's not warranted, then don't do it.

PAUL: Good answer. Yup. Okay, we answered that one, Casey. Jim, did you get some...

JIM: Yeah, [...unintelligible...] Wilfred about the alcohol level question. How are BevMo customers voting on higher alcohol levels?

WILFRED: Well, the higher alcohol... The BevMo customers are generally the more average, normal kind of Joe. They don't.... they're not as, in general, as high level as the customers that go to Jeff's place, because they're really... they're more into it. But we do have some of those, but I think that our customer base is what America drinks, actually, and a lot of those people like the higher alcohol. They do enjoy it. In fact, one wine that I recently kind of slammed is our own wine, but it's okay, in a big article.

But I said that I'd give it a good rating—back to the ratings—but I personally will not drink it because it's not my style. And I was pouring that same wine at one of our re-grand openings. I poured it for 20 customers and they all loved the wine. I mean, I just... let me tell you, it's 16% alcohol. I poured the wine and these people not only did they want to buy it, they wanted me to sign the stupid bottle. So it's really irritating, but...

PAUL: It was your good looks, Wilfred.

WILFRED: Yeah, right.

PAUL: We had a couple more questions here.

MALE: [...unintelligible...] I think it was '96 [...unintelligible...] tested after three years [...unintelligible...]?

PAUL: Glenn? Glenn McGourty from Mendocino Lake County knows a lot about this... Is that an appellation that makes sense in the marketplace to you guys?

GLENN MCGOURTY: Sure. Yeah, why not.

JEFF: Absolutely.

WILFRED: It's a free world.

GLENN: Yeah. Out here anyway.

PAUL: I have a slightly different opinion of appellations, in general, because I think most appellations are so broad that they don't define anything. And if you ask Wilfred's customers what is the most famous region for making wine in America, they will tell you Napa. Do you know what number two is?

WILFRED: California.

PAUL: California. Wilfred knows the answer to that question. Ahead of Sonoma, ahead of Red Hills of Lake County, ahead of all of them, California, because that's about as much as they know about appellation. Peter had a question.

PETER: [...unintelligible...].

WILFRED: Not that specific. I mean, to me, it's that the bottom line as we continue with the millennial group, you're going to have really two groups of customers: You have the highly enlightened customer who will buy every single goddamned wine that this guy puts on the list—sorry, I'm just kidding, just kidding. No, I mean...

RONN: They should.

WILFRED: Yeah.

PAUL: They should.

RONN: I would.

WILFRED: I'm saying that with my heart. I actually like what Ronn does. He does a great job. But I'm saying that... so you have that millennial who's interested in buying really the fine wines and really educated, and really into it, because they want to know. They want to have the best experience and they love wine, and they love the whole romance of wine, and that's a big part of it. Then you have the other customer who says, 'Give me a double Chardonnay and fill it to the top, otherwise I'm going to tell your manager.' So that kind of a customer, all they're interested in is the flavors—Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet, Merlot—that's... oh, and Malbec—and that's about it. I mean, they may slide over Syrah and Sangiovese, but they're done, and they don't even care whether it's from the Languedoc, whether it's from anywhere. They just want the varietal label.

JEFF: Okay, time out. Wait, but that begs the question: Do you cater to the lowest common denominator of your consumer?

PAUL: Wilfred?

JEFF: I think you have to educate them to bring them up, you know, it raises all boats, excuse me.

WILFRED: Let me tell you... it has value... both sides of the coin are valid. What you do is truly valid. What I do is probably valid, too, I guess.

JEFF: Absolutely.

WILFRED: But the... If we want to grow that percent that was on the back side of not drinking wine, then we have to say, 'Take this Cabernet, don't look at the vintage, this says Cabernet and this is your favorite brand. Drink it, enjoy it, have... this is... taste it.'

PAUL: Well, and one part that's missing in that whole equation, and has been missing up to this point in the whole discussion of what we're doing about marketing wine; people do not buy wine because they want a glass of a beverage. People buy wine because they want an experience. And it's not necessarily... Cabernet may not be an experience. Chianti, even if it comes in a little straw-wrapped fiasco is an experience of going to another country, opening a bottle of wine, experiencing 'La Dolce Vita.' And that is a reason why a lot of people buy wine. It doesn't have to do with 100 points. It doesn't have to do with varietal. It has to do with the sense of traveling in their mind for 45 minutes.

JEFF: In that sense, Cabernet is an experience because ... a lot of people have been to Napa, and Napa to them... if you live in Ohio, you go, 'Napa, wow, great thing.'

RONN: You know, Wilfred talked about two different markets, and I think it'd be appropriate for both of you as merchants to talk about what the

average bottle sale is in your establishments, roughly speaking. I mean, what's the average bottle of wine sell for? I mean, to put them all together, knock out a couple of the highs, I mean, a couple of lows. What's the average bottle? Jeff, you should know this.

PAUL: I'll bet it's not that different, actually. Pardon me?

RONN: You have to know that.

PAUL: I'll bet it's not that different.

JEFF: No, I don't think it is.

PAUL: I think it is.

JEFF: Okay. let's see. I'll show you first.

PAUL: I don't want to see yours.

JEFF: I... I... I'll have to admit I'm guessing because I don't need to know this. I don't do the financials.

RONN: But you sell?

JEFF: I do sell, and I do most of the writing, but...

RONN: And I've been in the store and I see the people buying wines. They're not buying cheap wines there.

JEFF: No, they're not buying cheap wines. I would say it's between \$20 and \$25.

RONN: Yeah. Okay, then it's more. And Wilfred?

WILFRED: Well, our most important price point is \$9.99.

RONN: There you go. I figured it'd be double or triple. Yeah, okay. So they're different markets, I mean, to a large degree.

WILFRED: However...

JEFF: Go ahead.

WILFRED: There's a change in the air. The...

RONN: Tell us, quickly. What is it?

JEFF: There's a change. I don't know about you, but, I mean, we sell a hell of a lot of wine between \$9 and \$12, but we sell a lot of wine in the upper echelon, and you asked for the average. And I would guess that the biggest chunk of wine that we sell—and that's why I think the average is there—is somewhere between \$18 and \$22. That's the sweet spot for us, because we are a weird market. I mean, you know, we're lucky. We're in the fairy closet. We got very lucky. We're in San Francisco, where there's a bunch of freaks there. And... and they'd come in and buy wine, but I mean...

RONN: Wilfred, where do you live?

JEFF: To his point, this millennial generation...

WILFRED: I live there.

JEFF: ...are going to ask for three Verdelhos to take home. I'm like, 'Wow, this is great.' I didn't know what a Verdelho was till I was 40.

WILFRED: 50.

JEFF: Okay, whatever.

WILFRED: Anyway, actually... cutting-edge as he is... now for us, the new price point that's really become important, actually, was already last year important, is \$20 and high rating. And going back to the rating of... of our rating wines, and I've actually talked to people and done the research on this, when people go into a store, like our store—I'll use our store because since I know our stores pretty well—our talkers either have no ratings, A-rating and attribute, meaning Parker, Spectator, myself, Sonoma [...unintelligible...], whatever, and most customers look at the point and forget who the hell is after that.

JEFF: Sure.

WILFRED: They just see 90 points or 89, you know, buy a 90, forget the 89.

PAUL: It makes you want to start your own newsletter, doesn't it, folks?

JEFF: Oh, boy.

WILFRED: A certain amount of individuals will read the verbiage to see what I said or Parker said and see if they like that information. And then... and then a certain amount of people are totally unsatisfied with that and say, 'This is not enough for me. I don't get a great sommelier-type service. This information on the side is not enough. I'll go somewhere else.' That type of person needs 100 words to get them into it. So, basically, to me it's most people see points by itself, but then a certain amount of people will see points, and about 30 words... 15, 30 words maximum and then they tire out, and then a small, small, small group of people will say they need 100 points. I'm talking about TA, RS, pH, winemaker, age of vine and all that stuff, which is very important... so all... part of the equation is important. We cannot as an industry allow... I mean, what Ronn does, what each one of us does up here, and what all you guys in the audience do is very important, so we've got to keep that up.

PAUL: It's interesting. I'm going to interject to that and then I'm going to go to a couple of questions, and I know Ronn has some stuff too, but if you've seen the Constellation Genome Research Project, one of the things they point out is they break the market down into six segments, five of which are dominated by women rather than men. And none of those segments are strongly influenced by points. They are influenced by recommendations, but not necessarily by points. I've always said the perfect back label would just say, 'This wine goes with everything.' You know, because whatever you're having... whatever you're having for dinner, this is it.

JEFF: But they already say that. It goes with chicken, pizza, fish and fowl, I mean, whatever. It's the most ubiquitous, stupid marketing writing ever on back labels, and we've got to stop that too.

PAUL: Okay, Peter Molnar.

PETER: So... carrying the conversation backwards, you say that there are two different markets or three different markets or six different markets. I read once about 3% of the vineyards in California are higher elevation. There's over 1,000 feet. So [...unintelligible...] naturally scarce [...unintelligible...], so where should we target that one? I mean, [...unintelligible...] high altitude. They will be [...unintelligible...]. Is pricing point [...unintelligible...] good or being scarce?

PAUL: Well, this is where I put my marketing instructor hat on and talk about the De Beers Corporation, because managed scarcity is one of the all-time paradigms for marketing a product. If there's not very much of it, then your demand ideally should exceed your supply, and that means you can charge anything you want.

RONN: Yeah, I agree, the wine should be good and marketed appropriately.

JEFF: The demand has to be created, though, through the education of high elevation. And that's why I think the appellation is not a bad name. Islands in the Sky, at least, gives them a little tidbit of information.

MALE: I think [...unintelligible...]. I think Glenn, who's the expert on this, [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: It wasn't me. It was somebody else.

MALE: Appellations [...unintelligible...] when people know your area. If they don't know your area, they won't [...unintelligible...]. So if we are talking about people who come to Mendocino County, then it makes perfect sense to really promote your appellations. If we're talking about people in Sacramento, who aren't really quite sure where Mendocino is, I'm not sure they get a lot of traction with that.

RONN: Or people in Chicago wonder if they can visit Mendocino in the afternoon after they go to Disneyland.

PETER: We had a couple of...

MALE: [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: Long... long process; doesn't happen overnight. But one of the ways I explained that process is when you sell the vineyard, you sell the winery, you sell everything else, and Freddie Franzia here calls up and says, 'I'd like to buy your name.' How much he is willing to pay for that is ultimately the result of whether you did a good job of doing that, developing your marketing or not.' Yeah.

WILFRED: ... It goes back to Peter's question here, to market high elevation wines. I think the first thing that has to be done is focus. As a group... the group has to focus on what are the commonalities of character?... I mean, you have many countries represented here in which they're high elevation, high altitude.... We all know kind of the buzz words

of higher acid and etc., etc., etc., but we have to break it down and just distill it to a very focused character that links them all together worldwide. Okay, so whether it's Argentina or whether it's here or whatever, we need to get into an ABC focus of why they should be marketed together. If such, if we can't do that, they market those wines against other ultra premiums and, you know, go for that route.

PAUL: Okay. [...unintelligible...].

MALE: [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: How much is the word 'Napa' worth on a label of wine?

RONN: I say at least 50%.

JEFF: Yeah, it's worth a lot of money

RONN: A lot.

JEFF: And...

RONN: And I bet you sell the Lake County wine as of value then. Just make sure it's a people quality and try to taste the wine side-by-side with people.

JEFF: That's what I was going to say. Undercut them. I mean, they're standing there with these huge prices and you've got a great opportunity. Come in with quality and undercut the price and... I mean, we'll be happy to be the champions of Lake County and...

RONN: Sure, I'll write about them all day.

JEFF: Absolutely, and sell inexpensive great wines from lesser-known producers in a lesser-known region. That's one of our... that's one of our [...unintelligible...].

MALE: [...unintelligible...].

RONN: Just roughly. That's shooting from the hip.

PAUL: And I'm going to file a minority report here. I'm going to file a minority report, because when you talk to consumers about wine... when you talk to consumers about anything, the way they understand the positioning of the product is based on... Anybody had a marketing class? Nobody... nobody's willing to raise their hand now. I would've had a lot more luck earlier. The four P's, right? Price, produce, packaging, promotion. In wine, if you tell them the price of the wine, your consumer will tell you that a \$20 bottle of wine is better than a \$10 bottle of wine. They know because it costs twice as much. And one of the challenges of pricing your Lake County wine at half the price of the Napa Valley wine is that they are going to say in their mind, 'Okay, and it must be half as good.'

WILFRED: I would agree with that.

PAUL: So that's...

RONN: That's where the merchants step in.

JEFF: That's exactly right. That's where the sommeliers of the world come in. That's where the merchants come in. I have always believed that a sommelier, and I believe a merchant is very much the same thing, is a translator. We're there... I mean, because there's a whole lot of crap written about wine. There's a whole lot of crap thought about wine, and there's too much verbiage, and it's just an adjective generator, the whole cherry-berry thing. But we are translators. I always think of sommeliers as a translator from the chef to the customer. You go, 'Hey, this is a wine that will go with whatever this crazy man is putting on his, you know, pineapple salsa on your halibut.' 'Okay, we'll find something to go with it.' So a merchant is there to translate all the crap that the wine business and the media throw at wine and to the customer and make it more user-friendly.

And if we kept that in mind more often, we'd be so much more successful. User-friendly. User-friendly. And I think, as a merchant, you go in and you explain to them. And we put it on the... we put it on our shelf-talkers, 'You will not believe the quality of this wine for the price.' And that sells wine. People don't say, 'Oh, my God, it must be half as good as Howell Mountain. Wow, I can buy two bottles.' That's what they say in our store, and, again, we're freaks.

RONN: You know, Argentina's pretty hot because of the quality of the wines at the price, so I wouldn't worry about Lake County being, you know, shut out of the market because it's not Napa and sells for half the price. People will find it. If the quality's in the bottle, people will find it.

JEFF: Absolutely.

MALE: [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: That's why you get to stay up late at night. Question right here.

MALE: [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: The question here is, 'Is Leonetti an example of a wine from an unknown region that sort of established credibility based on a very high price?'

RONN: Yeah, sure, absolutely.

JEFF: Well, I sort of cut my teeth in the wine business in Seattle, and the place where I worked and I was the buyer, Ray's Boathouse, we were the first buyer of Leonetti. And I'm not trying to brag, I'm trying to give you a little history.

WILFRED: He's bragging.

JEFF: No. No... No, I'm just telling you that Leonetti, you know, sold to us and the price was ridiculously low. And for five or TEN years, those of us in the wine business in Seattle told Gary, 'Your wine isn't expensive enough.' And he resisted it because he said... He's very humble, first of all, and he said, 'There's just no way people are going to pay that kind of money.' And when he broke the \$50 barrier, he thought, you know, he was smoking crack. But now he's what, \$75 or \$100 and he's, you know, living large. But he...

PAUL: He can afford to smoke that.

JEFF: Exactly. But he was very hesitant. I mean, it was a very slow, organic growth. And when he started out... his goal was not to be expensive, and he ended up being expensive, but he was very hesitant to raise his price.

RONN: But he had a track record and he delivered quality year in and year out, year in and year out. You've got to do that before you can raise your prices. It can't just be one year.

PAUL: It is one of the... I believe, one of the great methodological disasters of the wine industry that in terms of doing comparative pricing at wineries they go out and they buy the 10 best known brands at that price point. Often brands that have been around for 5, 10, 15, 20 years, they put there on the middle of it and then they say, 'Okay, if we finish in the middle of that pack, we must be worth the same amount of money.' When you find consumers going into wine shops saying, 'Give me a blind tasting of 10 wines at this price point' in order to make their selection, that would be valid methodology. But given that that never happens and, in fact, people walk into wine shops saying, 'Ooh, BV Georges de Latour, I've heard of this one before. Wagner's Special Selection, don't know this one. They're the same price.' There's a disconnect there. And it may not happen in your winery laboratory, but it sure happens out there on the consumer shelf.

RONN: Equity. Brand equity, absolutely.

PAUL: All the way in the back.

FEMALE: My question is [...unintelligible...] the whole group.  
[...unintelligible...].

PAUL: What's the lowest common denominator of high elevation?

JEFF: Well, that's the definition.

RONN: Not below sea level. That's out.

PAUL: Below sea level like right out.

RONN: We can just take it right out.

JEFF: So we started one. Do we hear two? Do I hear three?

FEMALE: [...unintelligible...]?

PAUL: Well, let's try a real simple way. How many people think 500 feet is high elevation? Okay. I'm just asking the questions. You're welcome to vote any time, folks.

JEFF: 1,800 is your definition, is it not?

PAUL: How about 1,000 feet. Do I hear 1,000 feet?

MALE: [...unintelligible...] 1,200 feet.

PAUL: Alan, you're saying 1,000?

ALAN: I think that would be the most.

PAUL: Okay, 1,500 feet?

JEFF: Somewhere in the middle.

PAUL: 2,000 feet? 2,500 feet? Too afraid to vote? A lot of hands there, yeah. Thought so, yeah, okay.

JEFF: Requiring oxygen.

PAUL: That's right. Yes?

MALE: [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: Of course.

MALE: [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: Of course, of course.

JEFF: Definition.

PAUL: We do have the old vine syndrome of what does constitute high altitude. Greg, who actually knows about this stuff, might have an opinion.

GREG: Well, no, I'm going back to [...unintelligible...].

RONN: Don't shop there.

MALE: [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: Yes...one of my students actually came up with a plan...

RONN: There you go.

PAUL: One of my students actually came up with a concept of a scanner that you could attach to your PDA and you could scan an SKU and get an

out-print of all sorts of information about the wine, so... I agree with you. One of the things I say about selling wine is that people buy a wine to take a vacation. It's a 45-minute vacation somewhere. That's what that bottle of wine means to them. And all too often, in the wine industry, we invite them to take a beautiful vacation to their high school chemistry class or their high school geology class. And you know what? I don't want to go there. I don't know why they would want to go there.

More questions? Yes?

MALE: [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: ..ask a couple of questions to follow-up on that. First of all, is biodynamic a category?

MALE: Yes.

PAUL: Okay. Is it a category or is it added value? Do people come in and say, 'I only want biodynamic,' or do they... or is it a question of, 'Ooh, I can have all that and biodynamic too?'

WILFRED: It's probably more the latter.

JEFF: In San Francisco, it's a category. People don't come in very often asking for mountain fruit. They come in every day, multiple times per day looking for wines that were grown sustainably, or organically, or biodynamically. It's part of their vocabulary. They know these. They know the differences. It's a very sophisticated market, and it's a very political market. And with the ecology and the global warming, it's very top-of-mind, at least in San Francisco, and I think in California, and perhaps across the country, eventually. It is important.

RONN: It's coming.

PAUL: It's appropriate that during this discussion, the wind has blown all of our nametags off the panel here.

JEFF: We are now voted off the panel.

RONN: We are nameless.

WILFRED: Oh, good, I like that.

PAUL: Ronn, when you put together wine lists, when you consult with people, does biodynamic enter into the equation?

RONN: Yeah, sometimes some restaurants have that kind of a culture, a wine culture, where they're going... they're buying organic produce and so forth and so on. So yeah, I try to put more and more out all the time. Yeah, it's coming. I mean, it's definitely there. I mean, my son's... my children's generation, they're there as well. You know, Whole Foods is there.

PAUL: It's interesting. You know, I played a fairly... a role in the Lodi Rules for Sustainability, that whole project, which has sort of broken, I think, a fair amount of the new ground in that direction. One of the things we learned with all of our market research was that consumers across American believe that wine is grown sustainably and organically already. A huge number of consumers believe that all vineyards are owned by very nice little old men who wear lederhosen and wouldn't do anything other than tend each vine personally. And there is that argument of, 'If we make a big deal about this, we may be telling everybody that only 30% of your sexual partners have diseases,' and that may not be the best message we want to convey about the whole industry.

RONN: That's a good point. Let me just mention this little anecdote from about 15 years ago. I was speaking with, then, the Public Relations Director for Gallo Winery. And we got into this discussion about organic. And he said, 'Do you know, Ronn, that we are the largest farmer of organically-grown grapes in the entire state of California?' And I said, 'Well, why don't

you make something out of it?’ And he said for the exact same reason that Paul just mentioned. ‘What do we do with the other 95%? If this percent is good, why aren’t we 100% organic?’ And that’s exactly why they didn’t and haven’t to this date.

PAUL: Yeah, yeah. Alan had another question.

ALAN: [...unintelligible...].

RONN: And he’s the biggest person on the panel, so.

MALE: [...unintelligible...] for us for a minute, and tell me how do you market, and [...unintelligible...] market, how would you spell high elevation wines [...unintelligible...] important?

RONN: How much money you got?

JEFF: Yeah.

RONN: Number one.

JEFF: I would do it in the same way that Ronn Weigand described them earlier, either in writing or in person through the verbal communication, tell them the characteristics of that wine because of the elevation. And, as I said before, we already try to give people specific information when it’s provided to us, and we share that information. So I would say, if you’re looking for a wine with somewhat more delicacy and yet still maintaining the intensity of flavor, and I’m not going to... First of all, here’s what I would not do: We were talking about the sommelier and the merchant, and Wilfred here, very correctly, said some people have a 30-word or a 100-word limit, you know my estimation would be that people have about a two to three sentences. I figure I have about 15 seconds.

RONN: Yup.

JEFF: Sometimes if they're nice, I've got a minute, but most of the time I've got about 15 seconds or else I'm talking to their back as they're walking out the door, so...

PAUL: Muttering.

JEFF: ...what I wouldn't say is: 'I have a wine here that is grown with an accelerated heat load, with a unique orographic airflow characteristic, grown in a lower density atmosphere.' I would not say that. And I'm not trying to make fun of the research. I think it's very important. I just don't think that's the way we communicate with consumers. User-friendly. I keep harping on the same thing. But I would say, 'At 6,200 feet, this particular Cabernet Sauvignon has these characteristics, which I particularly enjoy because I like it, because it goes with my food.' Again, the same hammer, but I'm going to go back to that every time.

PAUL: Yeah, marketing is not about getting people to buy things they don't want. Marketing is explaining to them why they want what you've got.

RONN: Uh-huh, right.

PAUL: George...

JEFF: On a daily basis, people walk in and ask for 'below 14% alcohol,' and we... I mean, literally, every day.

PAUL: Oh, yeah.

JEFF: And we talk to them about not just the alcohol levels. I was working for a Napa Winery that I shan't name, and I was taking wine home with me and I was waking up with a hangover because I was drinking 15-1/2- and 16 percent wines every night.

WILFRED: Two bottles.

JEFF: Well, no. I was literally having two glasses and waking up with a hangover. And I said, ‘Wait, I’m a big guy. I’ve drunk wine all my life. What’s going on?’

RONN: Two bottles a day.

JEFF: Two bottles a day is... oh yes. But, no, but I asked him, ‘What are they looking for? Are they worried about alcohol level or are they’re worried about driving? Or what... Are they concerned?’ And they said, ‘It’s just too strong a flavor.’ And so when they say ‘too strong,’ I know they mean, ‘We’re looking for something more delicate.’ And that’s when I would give them the high elevation spiel.

WILFRED: Jeff, is that the wine you tried to sell me?

JEFF: No, that’s not the wine I tried to sell you, Wilfred.

PAUL: It was a different bottle. George had a question.

GEORGE: My question is back to the vine dynamic/organic. It’s debatable. It’s all-wonderful. It’s great marketing and sexy, but who the hell under... and to really understand it [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: Jeff’s consumers do that.

RONN: It’s coming. It’s coming. You know, Whole Foods is going 30% or whatever. I mean...

JEFF: Whole Foods is in Ohio.

WILFRED: To go back to your feelings is that all the stuff we’re talking about—the biodynamics, the higher elevation or any one of these important disciplines that we have to pursue—the best part of all this is the research, the research that is being done in order to improve the overall species, because it will filter down to the elementary wines at some point. It will go

and help the Cabernets, Chardonnays, Merlot, Sauv Blancs of the world, because that information is of value to everyone, so it's important to pursue.

PAUL: Russell. I'm sorry, Randall, hello.

RANDALL: [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: Let me offer a couple of slightly different ways to look at that, because I don't know about the rest of you, but in the last five years, there has been a pretty concerted move amongst a number of producers to make, for example, Chardonnays that are not round and fat, but are, in fact, much leaner, much tighter. And those wineries, because they have defined, to Mr. Shaw's point, they have defined themselves in a new and distinctive style and position. They're being very successful about that.

RANDALL: [...unintelligible...]. What about red?

PAUL: And my point being, who are we to say that the same cannot be accomplished for reds?

RANDALL: [...unintelligible...] going through at high altitudes when you have [...unintelligible...]?

PAUL: Well, the same thing was said about those Chardonnays 10 years ago: 'How are you going to make those wines soft and rich and fat, because that's what the market wants?' And the answer was, 'Well, some of us aren't going to do that,' and created a new category for these fresher, brighter Chardonnays that are pretty darn successful right now.

RANDALL: Well, we all [...unintelligible...] Cabernets sitting around just with 22 reds. That's it. I'd love to do that. Everybody's job would be easier, but what am I going to do about the tannin [...unintelligible...]?

JEFF: I'm not a winemaker and I can't solve your dilemma, but I can quote Mr. Phillip Shaw, who said, 'Isn't it ripe enough?' He presented a wine

today that was at 13.2, I believe. Was it not? And I didn't get overly tannic characteristic out of that wine, and that was a high elevation wine, was it not? So there is a solution somewhere.

RANDALL: [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: Now that four or five of us have cited Phillip Shaw, he's decided he might just as well speak for himself.

PHILLIP SHAW: [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: Yeah, less appropriate for the food, rather, than more appropriate.

PHILLIP: [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: Well, it worked for Ronn. And if there is one paradigm of marketing, in general, it's you do have to explain what makes you different, or, as my mother used to say, 'What makes you think you're so special?'

MALE: [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: Well, in fact, I had a similar sort of question for them. But before we do that, I do want to make sure that we're not sending people on a 45-minute vacation to law school. But given that, should there be a high altitude or elevated wine marketing association? Should there be a group that tries to wrap their hands around this and help define what it means to be a high altitude wine? Is that a possible next step? Yeah, we've talked about research. Yeah, we've talked about winemaking and grape-growing, but on the marketing side, should we create a Corro [?] Mendocino high altitude effort? Boy, the enthusiasm is just overwhelming on this count. Glenn has an answer.

GLENN: No, I don't really have an answer, but I have an observation that's [...unintelligible...]. There's a national regulation by growing grape vines [...unintelligible...] you know higher [...unintelligible...] water capacity,

lower fertility that [...unintelligible...] different kind of wines that is coming off of...?

PAUL: Although that line was originally written, Glenn, because in the Roman times, the hills, actually, as much as anything, provided frost protection because the cold air drifted to the bottom, so...

GLENN: [...unintelligible...].

PAUL: Gentlemen, how do we market high altitude wines?

JEFF: That's a big question. I don't think that we lack enthusiasm. I just... it's a big bite to bite off....

PAUL: What wine would you serve?

JEFF: It's partly... it's partly a financial question. I mean, it always comes down to money, but if you're going... I mean, it's... a great idea. If you're going to establish a high elevation wine category, you have to do education.... You have to do marketing in order to achieve that education. And I like the idea that Ronn was referring to about Cumulous. It's short. It's sweet. It's something that the consumers can grab onto. And instead of calling them high elevation, I think you have to come up with some phrases or a name of some sort of identifier for these wines. I spent some time on the phone with Paul, trying to figure out what we were going to talk about here, and I spent some time on the weekend doing a little self-brainstorming, and I only spent about 15 minutes, but I was trying not to self-edit myself. And you might find these pretty pathetic, but some of the ideas I came up with were... like ad campaigns where you would anthropomorphically turn grapes into people and have them... You know, 'If vines could hike, they'd go to the mountains,' and things like, 'Heavenly wines are grown in the heavens.' But here's a very weird one: 'Elevate before you *élever*.' 'Grapes enjoy a view too.' 'Shallow, rocky soils, lack of water, thin air, exposed to sun and the elements; it's heaven to a vine.' Those sorts of things. You can also do the negative approach like the Alaskans do to the

lower 48—they hate them—but you could say, ‘Flat vineyards make flat wines.’ I don’t think that’s the way to go. Another one was, ‘High plains grafter.’ But my favorite of them all was something I came up with, which was ‘Verticulture.’ The idea of vertical winegrowing. So verticulture is what I’ll offer you for free.

RONN: Very good.

PAUL: Wilfred. Wilfred, how many points? Wilfred Wong, how many points do you give that rating?

WILFRED: I rate 97.

JEFF: You’re a buddy.

PAUL: And do you have any other suggestions to add to his?

WILFRED: No, I think he did a great job. I mean, to me, it’s a... it’s a dilemma, because if you are marketing high altitude wines and you are presumably very knowledgeable about the category, individualistically or as a group, if you’re going to take that road, you better damn well know what you’re talking about. Otherwise, the consumer will become more confused than they were before you started talking.

PAUL: Ronn, last word for you.

RONN: Well, last words, I’ll repeat what I said earlier. It’s a slow process of education. I don’t think that necessarily defining it worldwide is a good way to go. I’d go back to how I was talking about selling within a category of wines: Napa Valley, South Eastern Australia, whatever. Even Chianti zone, Chianti Classico versus just basic Chianti, talk about, you know, the higher altitude vineyards in that specific zone, and how the characteristics are different because of that change in elevation. That’s the way to go as far as I’m concerned. I mean, it’s just too difficult to do a blanket thing worldwide.... Besides, it doesn’t start with altitude necessarily per se. It’s

also climate, gradient, south, northwest facing. You know, do you face the sun or not, wind, all of those kinds of things enter into the personality of a high altitude wine, so... you can't be too definitive about it. It's relative to the region, to a specific area, and that's how I would tackle it, and that's how I already educate about it.

PAUL: I hope you all took notes. I think this is a terrific panel. I want to thank Ronn Weigand, Wilfred Wong, Jeff Prather, some of the brightest, nicest, and most fun guys in the wine industry. Thank you, gentlemen.

PANEL: Thank you.

PETER: I wanted to follow-up on that thanks. Thanks to everyone who came, first of all, and shared your thoughts, shared your wine, shared your time with us, especially our speakers, especially those who came from far away. My curiosity is not sated, but it's definitely piqued from today. I mean, what we're talking about here is that we've gone through a survey of sort of the state of high altitude wine around the world. It's been fascinating. There's a lot of material there. We're going to put it all on the website in a few weeks' time, so please check the [elevationofwine.org](http://elevationofwine.org).

And I hope this is just the beginning of the collaboration we've talked about at the beginning of the day. We're going to go ahead with this research advisory group. We're going to pull together your ideas and we're going to move forward on having that in two years, so we hope you all make it back.

So with that, we wanted to invite you to drink some wines, take the dust off your palate. And we'll be here for about an hour and then the buses will start heading down, actually, about five-thirty. Dinner is at 7 o'clock over at Brassfield's. There's directions in your packet on the back on the left-hand side, of how to get there. You're all welcome. And again, thank you. This is a great, great day.