

A score minus one of the wine faithful gathered at Villa Wykoff to anoint their palates with 2002 Zinfandel. Expectations were high as the intrepid 19 settled under the ersatz awning and gazed down upon the Mighty Snake River. Peter Mika schooled us in the three R's: Ravenswood, Rosenblum and Ridge, from the Alexander, Dry Creek and Sonoma Valleys.

The wines from the Alexander Valley were fun big fruit wines, but with the Ravenswood Big River and the Rosenblum Harris Kratka both being deemed a little hot. The crowd favorite in this flight was the venerable Ridge Geysersville, which was widely appreciated by Youngsters and Geezervilles alike. In the Dry Creek flight, the Ravenswood Teldeschi seemed to have some acrid undertones beneath its sweet jamminess, and the Ridge Lytton Springs was fine but seemed a little thin. The Rosenblum Rockpile Road was the crowd favorite in this flight, with one attendee so enthusiastic about this wine that he was soon being called Rockpile by all those surrounding him. The favorite flight of the day seemed to be that from Sonoma Valley, with the jammy Ridge Pagani Ranch preferred over the cherries and butterscotch of the Rosenblum Monte Russo and the minty Ravenswood Monte Rosso.

Once the tasting was done, the grilling began, and soon there was a feast fit for a king (or at least a Mayor). There were mountains of grilled beef, lamb, sausages and shrimp; foothills of pasta salads, risotto and vegetables; and mounds of pies, sweets and fruit. Anti-piscivorous Wykoff was himself observed happily munching seared ahi, and another handsome and hungry guest downed five plates of food. A finer afternoon in Clarkston could not be found on that lovely Saturday.