

ONE BOTTLE: The 2004 Domaine Tempier Bandol Rosé

by JOSHUA BAER

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the devastation of New Orleans, our country has entered into a lively debate. One side argues that the federal government failed to respond in a timely fashion to the people of New Orleans because the majority of those people were poor and African-American. The other side concedes that the government's response was, in the words of President Bush, "unacceptable," but argues that the so-called unacceptable response had nothing to do with racism.

During the week following Hurricane Katrina, *One Bottle* conducted an informal survey. People in California, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Mexico, and New York were contacted by telephone and asked the following four questions:

- #1. In light of recent events in New Orleans, do you think the way George Bush and the federal government responded to the emergency was racially-motivated?
- #2. If Katrina had hit New York City, Long Island, and Greenwich, Connecticut, do you think George Bush and the federal government would have waited three days to come to the aid of evacuees being held in Madison Square Garden and the Jacob Javits Center?
- #3. If you were an African-American living in New Orleans, with no means to evacuate your home other than walking, would you consider the so-called unacceptable response by the federal government to be an act of racism?
- #4. Do you think George Bush's oft-stated opinion that poor people choose to be poor is racist?

The results of the survey were predictable. Liberal Democrats answered "Yes" to Questions #1, #3, and #4, and "No" to Question #2. By "Liberal Democrats," I mean people who: voted for Al Gore in 2000, opposed the armed invasion of Iraq, believe George Bush knowingly lied about the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, voted for John Kerry in 2004, enjoy drinking good wine with good food, and believe that this is not the time to abolish the estate tax and give the wealthiest five percent of the people in the United States the right to make tax-free gifts of all of their wealth to their heirs. All of the Liberal Democrats I talked to make less than \$150,000 a year, do not play golf, and do not work for corporations.

Conservative Republicans answered "No," to Questions #1, #3, and #4, and "Yes, if that's how long it took to get the troops and the trucks in place" (or words to that effect) to Question #2. By "Conservative Republicans," I mean people who: voted for George Bush in 2000, supported the armed invasion of Iraq, think it doesn't matter whether or not George Bush had his facts straight about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, voted for him again in 2004, enjoy drinking good wine with good food, and think all taxes, including the estate tax, should be cut because Americans have a better idea of how to spend their money than the politicians in Washington, D.C. All the Conservative Republicans I talked to make more than \$250,000 a year. Most of them either play golf or work for corporations. Several of them said they thought it was counterproductive to "make a racial issue out of this." When I asked those people if they thought drawing attention to the debate was unpatriotic, all but one of them said no, but the wealthiest one said, "In a way, yes, I do."

The word "race" comes from the Arabic *ra's*, "a head," "a beginning," or "an origin." By 1500, the French were using *razza* as a word for "breed," or "lineage," and also for "people of common descent." In England, by 1520, "race" meant "a group of people with

common occupation." Interestingly, "race" was also used by the English as a word for "wines with characteristic flavor."

In the wine world, wines are often discussed in terms of their breeding. Wines made from grapes picked from older vines planted in famous vineyards are said to have good breeding. Good breeding does not guarantee the wine made from those grapes will taste great, but the expectation is that a well-bred wine will taste better than average in an average year and great in an above-average year. Conversely, wines made from grapes picked from new vines planted in unknown vineyards are said to lack breeding. Lack of breeding does not guarantee the wines made from those grapes will taste bad, but the expectation is that an ill-bred wine will be inconsistent.

Which brings us to the 2004 Domaine Tempier Bandol Rosé.

I have written about French rosé wines a lot during the last year. My interest in French rosé wines is based on a simple fact: Even the best French rosés are inexpensive. Many of them cost less than \$15. The best ones cost less than \$30. I want people who read *One Bottle* to be able to drink the wines that appear in the column. There are times when it's useful to discuss rare wines, but rare wines tend to cost lots of money. One of the advantages of being familiar with wine, and with the market for wine, is that you learn to find inexpensive wines that taste better than expensive wines. The 2004 Domaine Tempier Bandol Rosé is one of those wines.

In the glass, the rosé is the color of the skin of a ripe apricot. The bouquet is immediately satisfying, with suggestions of lavender, lemon, pomegranate, and crème brûlée. The attack is simultaneously lean and luxurious. The small bubbles—the French call them *pettilance*—which you feel on the tip of your tongue are there because Domaine Tempier does not filter their wine. They let it live. That's why it tastes like it's alive.

H. Rap Brown, an African-American activist during the 1960s, said, "Racism is as American as apple pie." The accomplished racist is always subtle. Instead of rounding up people and putting them in concentration camps, the accomplished racist hides behind God, country, patriotism, and the rule of law. Most of the time, he gets away with it. However, these are extraordinary times and truth often makes unscheduled appearances during extraordinary times. One of the reasons we know these are extraordinary times is because events like Hurricane Katrina show us that civilization is a thin curtain. Behind that curtain lies human nature. Human nature is older than civilization and considerably more ruthless than civilized people would like us to believe. Human nature is there, among other things, to remind us of how frightened and how frightening we can be.

One Bottle is dedicated to the appreciation of good wine and good times, one bottle at a time. The name *One Bottle*, and the contents of this column, are © 2005 by onebottle.com. If you need help finding a wine or building a cellar, write to Joshua Baer at jb@onebottle.com.

