



# THE SWARTHMOREAN

SERVING SWARTHMORE AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES SINCE 1893

OCT 3

## The Oeno Files

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The Ethanology group toasted its fifth anniversary in late September. *Photo by Karen Vesely.*

On a good night, the Ethanology group might go through 70 or 80 glasses.

But, Steve Platt says, with 1 ounce pours of wine, “You’re really only drinking two or 2 1/2 glasses during the evening. Of course you may drink more if you like what you taste, and less if you don’t.”

Dedicated to the proposition that life is too short to drink bad wine, Swarthmore residents Steve Platt and Robin Schaufler are charter members of the Ethanology wine group which meets more or less monthly to taste wines, as well as other myriad forms of alcoholic beverages. The group consists of seven couples or pairs from as far away as Wilmington. “A regular group is important: it allows us to build a common knowledge base, and also allows the development of a strong sense of community,” Steve said.

The hosts select the theme, beverages and foods for the meeting. For the fifth anniversary celebration, held at their home this September, Steve and Robin chose to explore chartreuse, a fiery French liqueur that is made in yellow and green varieties. Six courses were tasted, each including pairs of cocktails which contrasted chartreuse-based drinks with more familiar concoctions for sipping comparison. The cocktails sparked both (familiar) debate and (uncommon) agreement on a few favorites, Steve said. “We all basically preferred the Amber Dream over the Negroni, and the Sazerac over the Carthusian Sazerac.”

The group’s website at Ethanology.net puts forth its manifesto — stating that beverages are part of the experience of eating and experiencing one of the principal joys of life. Better understanding of why things taste the way they do enhances enjoyment, the theory goes.

The Ethanology group also has a serious scholarly tinge. But tasting notes on fine vintages from France and California are interleaved with reviews of poolside cocktails and mead. And adventurous food and wine pairings have turned up some unusual revelations — who knew Azerbaijan produced such good wines?

Members with well upholstered wine cellars enrich the experience for others, as, Steven recalled, when the group celebrated his 60th birthday with several 30-year-old wines. But pleasant discoveries of lower cost gems abound, too. Steve said that a recent tasting of Zinfandels convinced him that Coppola Diamond 2016 was 90% as good as a \$40 bottle of Ridge Pagani 2015. It is fun as well as serious study: several sessions have involved the whimsy of poolside cocktails and mead.

Ethanology.net stockpiles the history and notes from tastings going back over the years and contains guidelines which other budding oenophiles can use to assist in establishing their own tasting groups.

You’ll need a lot of glasses — maybe as many as six per member, per tasting — and you’ll need a light hand. Steve pointed out that responsible drinking involves not only moderation in intake, but also that proper appreciation depends upon clear-headedness and taste buds that retain their acuity.

Ideally, moderation balances indulgence, as expressed in Ethanology’s manifesto that “Every sensory experience should be felt through your entire body and mind, forming memories that stay, flavor, and enhance the rest of your life.”

If that strikes a chord within you, Ethanology members are only too happy to tell you more about tasting groups, and to set up your own. Send a message to [ethanology.everywhere@gmail.com](mailto:ethanology.everywhere@gmail.com) (<mailto:ethanology.everywhere@gmail.com>).




Steve Platt set out dozens of glasses for a recent Ethanology tasting. *Photo by Karen Vesely.*

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