



Basic Juice Article
Wonks & Wine

by: *Beau Jarvis*

Lately I've realized that I am spending more and more time visiting political Weblogs and reading politically themed books. I even stream Air America radio on my computer while I'm at work. For me, the gauntlet was tossed down when our president chided my fellow wine drinkers. He referred to drinking wine as 'swilling' wine. Mr. President, one does not swill wine. And those who drink *Yoo-Hoo* through a bendy straw (for safety!) have no room to critique the drinking habits of others.

My newfound political awareness led me to spend much of July's final week on my couch, in front of the TV, watching the Democratic National Convention. For some reason I became quite thirsty watching the politicians yap and delegates awkwardly dance to 'the greatest hits of the 90's and today.' This was an event that necessitated a few glasses of wine.

Perhaps I swill...err drank one glass too many. In any event, I began to compare the convention speakers to specific kinds of wine (yes, I need to get out more). Actually, I think many wines have a unique personality. And, of course, it's a given that politicians also have unique personalities. So read on for a selection of my politico-wine similes. This seems strange I know. Just humor me (these conventions occur only once every four years you know).

Hillary Rodham Clinton – She is always straightforward and to the point with perhaps a little edginess in her delivery. I'm reminded of a red *Côtes du Rhône Villages* wine. I always know what to expect from these wines - simple flavors and, in general, agreeable with food. However, as with Hillary, I'm often surprised by the edginess and spice that lurk close to the surface.

Bill 'Big Dog' Clinton – You either love him or hate him. This phenomenon is similar to wine drinkers' reactions to Sauvignon Blanc. Some folks love the green, herbal quality of this wine, while others liken these qualities to cat pee. Of course I'm in the former category (I like Bill, I like S. Blanc). I enjoy Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand or one of the original Sauvi' Blanc-based wines from France like *Sancerre* or *Pouilly-Fumé*. And I do enjoy hearing the 'Big Dog' hold court.

Barak Obama – The soon-to-be Senator from Illinois is a rising political star. Come November, he will be the only African American in the Senate. And some say he is poised to make a run for the presidency in eight years time. Barak is like a fine vintage Champagne maturing in the cave and eagerly awaited by bubbly lovers everywhere. Of course, after several years, when vintage Champagne is released, it is hailed as a wonderful thing. I expect a similar response to Mr. Obama when he pops onto the presidential stage in the next six to eight years.

Teresa Heinz Kerry – Pinot Noir is a complicated wine. Especially a serious Oregon Pinot or a top tier red Burgundy such as *Clos Vougeot*. Teresa's melodic voice coupled with the pithiness of her speech brought this oft-misunderstood wine to mind. Her delivery didn't seem strained like many of the other speakers. Not only was her delivery grand, she spoke of serious causes like human rights, the environment and equality. Pinot Noir is often described as a white wine in red wine clothing. It seems light and delicate, yet introduces the drinker to an amazing array of scents and flavors. Ms Kerry delivered heady words of wisdom wrapped in a lovely, classy package.

Rev. Al Sharpton – Reverend Sharpton was allotted six minutes yet he spoke for nearly a half hour. He gave the convention handlers one version of his speech and delivered a completely different version to his audience. Al was on fire. He was magnetic. He revved up the entire convention center. I didn't want his speech to end. I stood in front of the TV pumping my fist (My dog quickly ran and hid in the kitchen). The Reverend was like a single glass of rich Cabernet Sauvignon. Rather than drink it, I prefer to sniff it, swirl it, look at it and admire it. As with the Reverend's speech, I simply want to savor a wine like this. Once I look down and notice the glass is empty, I am somehow profoundly disappointed – as I was when the Reverend stopped speaking and exited stage left.

As of this writing, the Republican National Convention is still one month away. However, the Elephants have released a tentative schedule of prime time speakers. My anticipated wine similes for them are as follows:

- **'Governator' Schwarzenegger** – Arnie reminds me of a White Zinfandel; pretty packaging with little or no substance.
- **'Hizzoner' Rudy Giuliani** – The former NYC mayor is like 'house white' wine; fairly popular, but the more you drink, the less tasty it becomes.
- **Dick 'F-bomb' Cheney** – The Veep doesn't bring any particular wine to mind. He's more like a barfly after three shots of tequila; surly behavior and a constant stream of profanity.
- **'President' Dubya** – Since our president seems to think that wine is to be swilled rather than sipped, a *Bartyles & James* wine cooler comes to mind. Now that's a beverage that can be swilled, chugged or pounded. Bring it on!

I never said this was a nonpartisan wine column. Cheers.

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