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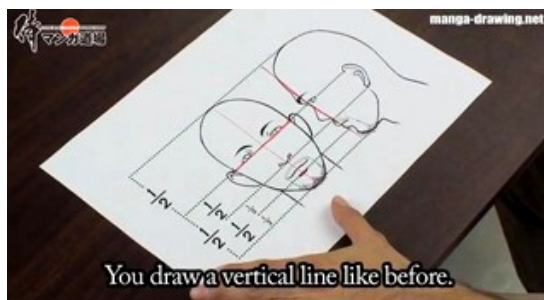
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Soluble New Years Resolutions (reading – 2.1. - 8.1.)

by: **Martine Pullen**

As Big Ben chimes at midnight on 31st December we toast in the New Year and make all those decisions about what we want for the next year, and talk about all the great things we will achieve. Then what? By the end of January or possibly, if we are lucky, February our resolve has 'dissolved' and life carries on as normal until the next time Big Ben chimes out a new year.

Does this sound familiar? If so you are one of the millions of people who make (and subsequently break!) their New Years resolutions year after year.

So why do we do it? What makes January the first such a special time to make a change to our lives and why is it then so difficult to maintain that change?

The answer to this may never be fully known and understood but in my experience there are a number of key reasons that apply to some, if not all, of the broken resolutions.

- We are not at our most sober or 'clear thinking' when we make the commitment.
- Everyone breaks New Years Resolutions so why shouldn't we?
- January is wet, miserable and cold (or hot and sunny depending on where you live) and the weather affects our mood and desire to achieve.
- The friends we tell our resolutions to on NYE either can't remember or are too busy breaking their own to be motivational.

So how can we make changes that are lasting in our lives? These are a few of the positive steps that we can all take to help us make lasting changes in our lives.

- Choose a day and time in the very near future and make that your 'change my life plan' day – don't wait for New Year.
- Tell as many people as you can about your plan and tell them you want to stick to it. It is much easier keeping a commitment you have made to others than just to yourself.
- Set your goal or plan in achievable, measurable steps – try and change the world in a day and you are destined to fail!
- Choose a looking forward plan where you focus on what you want to achieve, not what you want to avoid.

So as we head towards, or away from the New Year lets just enjoy the celebrations and make today the day to make lasting change.

About The Author

Martine Pullen is a Qualified Life Coach, NLP Practitioner and Partner in 'Divergent Thinking' a Coaching and Therapy Practice. More information can be found at www.divergent-thinking.org.uk .





How To Make Incredible New Orleans Gumbo (reading – 9.1. - 15.1.) by: **Eric Theard**

The unique cuisine of New Orleans is a melting pot of many diverse cultures from French, Spanish, German, and Italian to African, American Indian, and Caribbean. This diversity of settlers in and around New Orleans gave birth to the two styles of cooking known today as Cajun and Creole. Gumbo is the perfect example of the marriage between these two styles of cooking. Gumbo originated in New Orleans, but it is the mix of cultural influences on the city that makes gumbo the quintessential dish.

Making a great gumbo requires more than just a wonderful recipe. Building upon each element and extracting every bit of flavor along the way is crucial to the outcome of the dish. There are certain elements that should not be overlooked. Stock is the cornerstone of any great gumbo. Although unnoticed while eating, it is very important to the finished product. A homemade stock is essential for establishing the base of flavor profiles. The roux is equally as important, contributing the flavor and consistency. Pairing the flavor profiles of the gumbo to the correct amount and color of roux is the key to success!

Andouille sausage, Creole seasoning, hot sauce, filé, and so many other wonderful additions gives gumbo the kick that makes it so popular. But the beauty of this dish is the creative freedom it allows. Yes, you must follow a few basic ground rules. However, once you understand the components, the combinations are endless. Each and every gumbo has a taste all its own. Adding sweet potatoes to Ham & Turkey Gumbo gives it a completely unique, yet KILLER flavor! Sweet potatoes are unconventional ingredients, but the outcome proves that a little creativity goes a long way in a pot of gumbo. So, gumbo rule #1 is improvise and get creative!!! The world is your oyster.

Always use the freshest seasonal ingredients, make your own stock, and choose complementary flavor profiles. Be sure to add proteins to the pot at the right time. Adding seafood too early will result in an overcooked mushy mess. But other proteins such as chicken and sausage will need time to cook down and extract flavor into the pot. Thicken your gumbo with roux, okra, filé, or a combination. Typically, okra is not used together with filé and filé is never added while the gumbo is still on the fire. Learning the techniques of New Orleans style cooking will open up a world of possibilities in your kitchen and your taste buds will thank you for it!

About The Author

I am a New Orleans Chef with a strong desire to bring the true taste of my city into kitchens all over the world. For gumbo recipes, videos, and cooking tips visit www.GumboInThePot.com .

Eric Theard New Orleans, LA Twitter: www.twitter.com/erictheard





I Love Italian Wine And Food (reading – 16.1. - 22.1.)

by: **Levi Reiss**

Vino Nobile di Montepulciano is one of six Tuscan wines that carry the allegedly top of the line Italian DOCG classification where the G stands for guaranteed. But if your wallet is brimming with cash or you don't mind maxing out your credit cards you can find much, much better wines known as Super Tuscans. I won't be reviewing any Super Tuscans, at least not until the economy turns around, but when the wine store had a sale I jumped on the chance to taste the Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, a wine reputed to date back to the mid-1300s. It is based on a local clone of the Sangiovese grape that is found in so many Tuscan wines. You may remember that 2003 was a scorching summer in many parts of the world. Tuscany was not spared and this vintage was not considered to be one of the best. I would relish the opportunity to do a tasting of multiple vintages of this wine.

The city of Montepulciano is in southern Tuscany, fairly close to the Umbrian border. It's a lovely Tuscan hill town with a Fifteenth Century square, the Piazza Grande. If you are ready to spend a lot, try to stay in the Locanda dell'Amorosa which is even older. Before reviewing this wine here are a few suggestions of what to eat with indigenous wines when touring this beautiful region. Start with Animelle di Carciofi con Mousse de Mele al Calvados (Artichoke Hearts with Apple-and-Calvados Mousse). For a second course, eat Umbrichelli alla Norcina (Handmade Spaghetti with Cream-and-Sausage Sauce). For dessert indulge in Cantucci (Almond Biscuits dipped in Vino Santo, a Tuscan dessert wine).

OUR WINE REVIEW POLICY

All wines that we taste and review are purchased at the full retail price. This particular bottle was purchased at a public first come, first served sale.

Wine Reviewed Canneto Vino Nobile di Montepulciano 2003 14.8% alcohol about \$24 (normally about \$32)

I'll start by quoting the marketing materials. Description: Match it to a meat-based lasagna. Tasting Note: The Nobile '03 from prugnolo gentile with small amounts of merlot and cabernet sauvignon showed well. The nose starts out rather hesitantly but goes on to reveal perfectly ripe, eloquently expressed fruit followed by lovely spicy notes. But it is on the palate that the wine really comes into its own, displaying good extract, tanginess and energy. Score - 2 Glasses (out of 3).

I first sipped this wine alone. It was mouth-filling and quite persistent. The Vino Nobile had a great balance of tannins and acidity. The first meal had for starters barbecued chicken wings in a sweet and sour sauce. I tasted black cherries and tobacco with oak in the finish. The main dish was barbecued spare ribs. With the ribs the tobacco was predominant. So far so good.

I next tasted this wine with a combination of rib steak and shoulder steak slathered with a home made barbecue sauce composed of ketchup, mustard, garlic, lemon juice, and black pepper. The Vino Nobile was noble; it was powerful with a great balance among the soft tannins, fruits, and acidity. It was quite long. It really cut the grease of the potatoes roasted in chicken fat and picked up acidity when facing a tomato salsa salad.

The final meal was a commercial shepherd's pie. This time the predominant tastes were black cherry and oak, but I tasted tobacco as well. The wine maintained its force when I added a spicy jalapeno pepper sauce.

The first cheese tasting involved a Mozzarella which weakened the wine. A Yellow Cheddar didn't weaken the wine as much. In both instances the wine was frankly wasted. Perhaps a better cheese would have made more sense. Moral of the story, don't waste a fine wine such as this one on fairly pedestrian cheese.

Final verdict. I would jump out and buy more at this price. But I think that I would pass at the regular price in my area. I definitely remember other Italian wines at that price that were even better.

About The Author

In his younger days Levi Reiss wrote or co-authored ten computer and Internet books, but he prefers drinking fine German or other wine with the right foods and the right people.

He teaches computer classes at an Ontario French-language community college.

Check out his global wine website www.theworldwidewine.com with a weekly column reviewing \$10 wines and new sections writing about (theory) and tasting (practice) organic and kosher wines.



Antique Jewelry - Investment and Fashion (reading – 23.1. - 29.1.) by: **Kimberly Clay**

There are two major reasons for purchasing antique jewelry: as an investment and for fashion. While the term 'fashionable antiques' might appear to be an oxymoron, the wearing old but tasteful jewelry has always been regarded as both fashionable and acceptable in society, and in fact a study of antique jewelry down the ages can tell a lot about the history and culture of a country.

The purpose of jewelry was originally to adorn ourselves, and then became a symbol of status. The ability to afford rare and expensive gems and metals was displayed publicly by wearing them on one's person. "Look at me: I am richer than you!"

As design became increasingly important, the famous jewelry houses and designers such as Fabergé, Tiffany and Cartier were born from their unique design capabilities, but as the 20th century came along, design became secondary to setting as many diamonds as possible in a piece to increase its actual raw material cost as opposed to its perceived value.

It is doubtful if today's jewelry will ever become as sought after as that of the great fashion houses and jewelers, and now is the time to purchase antique jewelry for investment because, as it is snapped up and placed in collections, there appears little capable of taking its place. There is still a lot of antique jewelry to be found in antique shops, and even on eBay you will see many fine pieces selling at affordable prices.

It is still worn, of course, although yesterday's fine pieces do not always fit with today's clothes fashions. Nevertheless, as taste is replaced by price, this is less important a factor than it once was, and the days appear to be over when jewelry was designed to suit particular styles of clothing and fabrics. Today, anything goes as long as it is bright, glittering and expensive. In many ways, "Bling" has superseded taste and sensitive

design.

So, what should you be looking for when purchasing antique jewelry - whether it is for investment or fashion? First check the symmetry of the piece. True antiques are not symmetrical: they are hand-made and each side is slightly different than the other. You can also tell a lot from the fastenings, because barrel clasps are modern, as are post and clip and clip-back earring fastenings (1930s at earliest). An antique will be smooth to the feel, and have no jaggy edges that catch on your hands and clothing.

Platinum and white gold were not used until the 20th century, and earlier 19th century jewelry was made of silver, although gold was used. Also keep in mind that gemstone cutting machines were not used until the mid 19th century, so any modern cut was not possible until then, the elongated baguette cut being introduced in the art deco and art nouveaux pieces of the 1920s.

If you intend purchasing antique jewelry for investment, therefore, it will pay to learn about the subject. Either that or never purchase a piece until it has been checked by an expert. Fashion, on the other hand, is a different thing entirely. While real antique jewelry prices can be set by the piece itself, the value of fashion jewelry is largely set by trends rather than intrinsic value.

Art deco jewelry, art nouveaux, retro - name it what you will, but a large proportion of jewelry designed and produced under these labels had little real value, and some even less in terms of design. To take a corollary with furniture, the 'in' furniture style of the 1950s and early 1960's, 'G-Plan' had no mitigating features other than that it was different, and so became the furniture fashion statement of its era. Although it is now enjoying a resurgence under the label of 'retro', G-Plan will never be regarded as antique, irrespective of how old it is.

That is as true as the fact that you could never imagine true antiques being referred to as 'retro', yet the term can be, and has been applied to the art deco jewelry designs of the 1920s. Whether these designs will ever become fashionable again is another question, but it does raise a question as to antique jewelry and its place in fashion vis-a-vis that acquired for investment.

Would an art deco piece of jewelry be purchased as a fashion item? Not at the moment, but perhaps as costume jewelry. Would it be acquired as an investment? Doubtful! Can the same be said of art nouveaux? And what else? So where does fashion end and investment begin, or is there no defining line, and do people purchase the jewelry that appeals to them rather than for its projected future value?

One thing is certain. Real antique jewelry has a part to play in the worlds of fashion and of investment, and it is wise to take expert advice prior to parting with your money irrespective of your purpose in buying it. However, would you wear your investment? Only you will know that, and even then only when the time comes to choose - or to show off!

About The Author

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Anime Designs Methods and Skills (reading – 30.1. - 5.2.)

by: **Ivan Lim**

There is variety of ways to design an anime series. Very often, it depends on how an artist draws or designs, or what his or her personal techniques are. With most things that relate to art, it can be difficult to apply a system or a structure to create anime. There are many anime series that start with the artists relying on the storyboard. This contains an artist drawing out plot and main flow before more meat is added further down the process of production. Animators who use such methods are generally structured in their ways and techniques. Other artist may have an abstract feel about their final project. They might have some vague idea in their minds writing it out panel by panel. They might not have a final progress in the whole story, lettering their ideas and imaginations run wild before choosing the one that feels right at the final stage. There are many artists who are said to be more structured and do not depend solely on visual direction. These artists can write different scripts that make different possible arcs to the anime plot. Then they choose the best one and start artistic design on it.

Despite the difference in technique, all animators still have to remember the final storylines to be delivered. This helps them to remain in focus in order to reduce waste of effort and time in not meeting production deadlines. Artists always try to improve themselves especially in the field of heavy industry as anime. There is no question that keeps a talented artist far, but nothing can substitute dedication and hard work. Most animators understand that and apply it to become good illustrators. To become an anime artist, you cannot gain new knowledge through the work of other animators. You should understand and learn their new techniques and see how you can work them into your own. It will lead to new creative stimulus and ideas.

While anime art is an artistic type of expression, animators should also research other forms of art such as writing, painting and even more boring and more structured engineering styles. These could be added to the overall experience and the anime art can only increase with different techniques and experiences from their artists. Anime is usually considered a type of limited animation. That means, the convention of limited animation is applied to make fool into thinking that there is more movement than there is. The internet has played an important role in the anime exposure of Japan. Before 1990's, Japan had limited anime exposure in other countries. As the popularity of internet started, so did interest in anime. Most of the fandom anime came through the internet. The combination of different internet communities and raising amounts of anime material, from video to images helped to increase the growth of fandom. As the internet gained more popularity, internet advertising revenues increased from 1.6 billion yen to 180 billion between 1994 and 2004. Now, anime is considered as one of the greatest exports of Japan.

About The Author

I am Ivan Lim, anime fanatic and building an anime community through this site: www.SelectAnime.com

