

# Chicago Tribune

## World of change in winemaking

Vineyards from Bordeaux to Croatia to China to Michigan adjust to a market revolution

By Bill Daley  
TRIBUNE CRITIC

Chicagoans are thirsty. Whether it's an \$8 glass of 2006 Brooks Riesling from Oregon raised in a toast at Webster's Wine Bar in Lincoln Park, a \$15 bottle of French rosé named the "Pink Criquet" and tossed back on an Oak Park porch, or a \$2,125 bottle of Gaja's 1978 Italian Barbaresco, sipped respectfully at one of Charlie Trotter's prime tables, folks are reaching for wine.

More than a common love for fermented grape juice ties these wine drinkers together, yet few recognize it.

It's the 45th parallel, an imaginary line encircling the world halfway between the North Pole and the Equator.

The 45th parallel is more than an exercise in geography. It symbolizes and connects the increasing globalization of



THE WINE LINE

The 45th parallel encircles the globe, marking vineyards both legendary and emerging, and reflecting a changing wine landscape.

Tribune reporters follow the line in a series of occasional articles.

the savvy wine buyer can exploit. For consumers, he said, they will be able to "look east" along the parallel and find regions producing wines of comparable quality but charging a lot less.

Think of such regions as Russia's Black Sea coast, the Balkan country of Croatia, China's isolated Xinjiang province and even the Leelanau peninsula in Michigan.

"[Wine drinkers] can look along that line as quality wines become more expensive from France and Italy," he added. "If you're looking for a bottle in the \$12 range, there's plenty of choices along that line."



Tribune photo by Charles Cherney

**Alana Bialik (left) and Catie Olson try a 45th parallel Riesling Friday in Chicago.**

flavors, changing climate concerns and the eternal search for good wines at bargain prices.

In the world of wine, the 45th parallel is the global equivalent of the Magnificent Mile in terms of quality and cachet. It threads its way through the Bordeaux and Cotes du Rhone regions of France,

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Italy's Piedmont, the Willamette Valley of Oregon.

For Steven Alexander, sommelier at Chicago's Spiaggia restaurant, the 45th parallel is a global pathway