

Eau de Vie

a wine, spirits, and travel newsletter

Vol. 17 May 2020

CORONAVIRUS VS. EPICUREAN PURSUITS

As many of you know, this newsletter, our wine and spirits education classes, and our canal boat trips to France are hobby jobs for us. We do them because we like to learn, to eat, to drink, to travel, and these Epicurean pursuits are best done with others rather than alone. They are hobby jobs because while these pursuits take effort to organize and administer, the monetary return on effort is minimal and the true reward is the sharing of the experience.

But the coronavirus is making sharing experiences difficult. That got me to thinking about the philosopher Epicurus and if there is something in his ancient wisdom that I've forgotten. The constant drone of bad news and the morass of coronavirus cancellations has me sitting on edge lately.

If your knowledge of Greek philosophers is a bit rusty, here is a primer on Epicurus. He lived between 341-270 BC and he believed that the purpose of philosophy was to help people attain a happy, tranquil life characterized by *ataraxia* (peace and freedom from fear) and *aponia* (the absence of pain). He advocated that people were best able to pursue this philosophy by living

self sufficient lives surrounded by friends.

When I first learned of Epicurus I was immediately attracted to his ideas because his philosophy validated my pursuits. I like to share wine with friends. I like sharing food and experiences. I like nurturing an environment where this could be maximized and, I found that by doing this I found my own *ataraxia*, peace and freedom from fear. A canal boat journey is pure *ataraxia*, peaceful, slow travel. I was completely hooked on my first trip.

But the coronavirus has made the Epicurean solution for freedom from fear impossible. The best laid plans are interrupted and cultivating a life with shared experiences is now discouraged. So what to do? How would Epicurus advise me during the current crisis?

I dug a bit deeper into Epicurean thoughts and here is what I found. Epicurus says, "*The fundamental obstacle to happiness is anxiety. No matter how rich or famous you are, you won't be happy if you're anxious to be richer or more famous. No matter how good your health is, you won't be happy if you're anxious about getting sick.*" At this moment in time there

is a lot of anxiety in the world about diminishing wealth and health. So how are we supposed to become less anxious if the cure for anxiousness is happiness and happiness can be attained by pursuit of genuine moments with friends, but that is currently prohibited?

The answer is deceptively simple. It is to give up wanting and to understand that everything you need you already have. This is summarized in Epicurean thought by these three statements: *enjoy the moment, recall the past with gratitude, and look to the future with optimism.*

We are all enduring numerous societal constrictions, cancellations and postponements and each of us longs for the return of how it used to be. But I'm reminded by Epicurus that you can never have the same experience, you can only make new ones and this is how it always has been.

So I breath deeply, I take pleasure in the spring growth of plants in my yard, I think back to the fun events and travels we've had over the years and I plan for the time in the near future when we can gather together and enjoy each other's company once again. These thoughts calm my mind and as I write these words a warmth grows in my chest, a smile comes to my face and I feel happy.

POSTPONED

Our 2020 trips to France have been postponed until 2021. With the mounting evidence that international travel this summer will be restricted in some form, we've decided the best option for us and our travelers is to slide the trips from this year to the next.

This means that we will not be offering any new trips in 2021 and currently all of our 2020 travelers are still keen to go in 2021. If any spots open up I'll post their availability here in this newsletter.

2020 Pairing Club Classes

I'm still hopeful we can host the summer class. I'll let you know in future editions of this newsletter.

Practical Information:

Class starts @ 6:00pm @ 2620 E. Superior Street. Cost is \$20/pp.

Class size is limited to 12.

R.S.V.P. required.

Class includes: Nose Testing, 6 wines, tasting cards, information, and custom wine pairings.

Each class needs 5 volunteer pairing cooks. Email:

david@savvynomad.com to volunteer to bring a food pairing.

July 18th ~ *Été*
Wines for Summer.

August 15th ~

Diner en Blanc Duluth

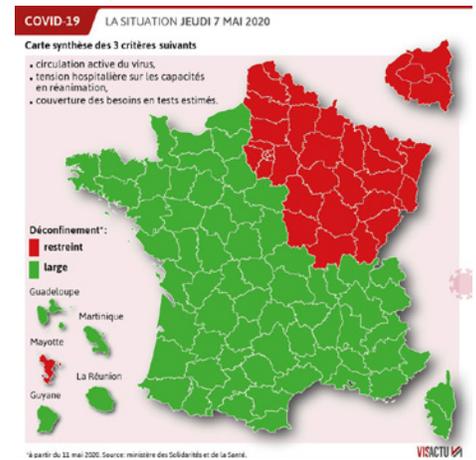
November 7th ~ *Automne*
Wines for Fall

CURRENT AIRLINE RULE CHANGES:

Recently I read an article that said that the airlines are experiencing a 95% reduction in passengers. I don't even know what to think about that. I've been traveling internationally all my life and seen many changes in the airline industry but I have no way to know what the other side of Covid19 will look like in regards to air travel - we've only got the current view.

Here are some of the recent changes as they relate to air travel. Delta Airlines has blocked out the middle seat (no one liked that seat anyway) and is requiring passengers and crew to wear face masks. United Airlines is loading the plane from back to front (I wish they'd do this anyway) and requiring face masks for all travelers. If you don't have one they'll give you one. American Airlines is removing meal service for flights under 4.5 hours, moving people around the plane to create the maximum amount of distance and requiring face masks.

All the airlines in the world have adjusted their rules on ticket exchanges, refunds, credits and how much time you have to use the credit. Most airlines are allowing for tickets that we purchased before March and have travel through September to be changed for free and a credit to be issued for future travel. But each airlines has their own specific rules. [Check out this info graphic to see how your airline ticket will be affected.](#)



Deconfinement

On May 11th France officially starts their deconfinement. The map above shows the current level of infection in country but more importantly the colors relate to the words *faible* (low) and *elevée* (high) [on this chart.](#)

This chart is the *plan de deconfinement* and it outlines what activities, venues and services will be allowed to be opened on May 11. Some items like travel will still be restricted through May and the government will offer guidance at a later date.

This plan, the French quarantine, and their countrywide coordination to managing the coronavirus outbreak lies in stark contrast to the hodge podge, lack of cohesion, American response.

While I wouldn't want to struggle under the intense quarantine that the average French citizen has had to endure I'm envious of their exit strategy. Time will tell which nation will emerge with less disruption but I'd like to have a map and a plan on how we will manage the next phase of the crisis. But, I imagine America will just cowboy up and rip off the bandaid to see if the wound is still bleeding. YEEEH HAW!