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A Podcast for *Sideways* Fans

Slate's Pod Pick of the Week

By Andy Bowers

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There's an old expression at NPR: You can't turn the page in radio. In other words, you can't skip over stories or topics that don't interest you the way you can in a newspaper. It means stories on NPR (or TV newscasts for that matter) are selected and produced to appeal to a general audience—a good principle for broadcasting. But that's one thing I adore about podcasting—you *can* turn the page (or, rather, skip to the next track) if you aren't interested in what you're hearing.

The corollary is that podcasters can offer a much more in-depth take on niche topics, because they don't have to worry about turning off a general audience. If you download a podcast about, say, [World of Warcraft](#), presumably you've come to hear something a little more insidery than a news story that begins: "A lot of people these days are discovering a new computer game ..."

This week's Pod Pick is a case in point. It's about wine, a topic both universal and wonkish, depending on how you approach it. There are several podcasts devoted to Bacchus' favorite beverage, but my choice is **Grape Radio** (Web site [here](#), iTunes link [here](#)).

It's produced out of Orange County, Calif., by three small-business owners who just happen to be nuts about wine. So, they started buying audio equipment (this seems to have evolved into a separate obsession—they now have a \$20,000 studio) and producing regular chats with winemakers, wine sellers, and other experts.

Co-host Brian Clark says the target audience is not so much the small percentage of people who collect wine, but the rest of us. "97 percent of the people who are buying wine out there are drinking it in the first week," he says.

What I find most interesting about Grape Radio is what I like about many podcasts: their length and depth. Having edited literally thousands of audio interviews for NPR (and now *Slate*) over the years, my instincts tell me that a half-hour interview should be sliced, diced, and polished down to four or five shining minutes—

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that's what happens with much of what you hear on *Morning Edition*.

The interviews on Grape Radio go on and on and on. They go from one tiny detail to the next and make my editing finger itch to start slicing. But then I relax and give in to the hypnotic pleasure of learning about the minutiae of the vineyard.

That's not to say the discussions are hard for wine ignoramus like me to follow. In fact, in one recent interview with a California winemaker, even a teetotaler could savor the deliciously catty comparison of his own product to that of a rival: "[They're] producing Anna Nicole Smith, and we're producing Michelle Pfeiffer." Hmm, I'm not sure which one I'd rather drink, but it's evocative nonetheless.

The same winemaker, Joe Davis of [Arcadian Winery](#), recounts an old French saying that would warm the heart of Miles from [Sideways](#): "Cabernet will rape you and pinot noir seduces you. ... Cabernet will throw you down and rip your clothes off, and pinot noir subtly convinces you to take them off yourself."

In short, what I like about Grape Radio is that it's long. And detailed. And has a complex bouquet redolent of truffles, young Gouda, and untied shoelaces (oh God, maybe I'd better stop listening).

Once you've drunk your fill of the wine-cast, consider decanting some of this week's *Slate* podcasts. They include our latest *Slate* Audio Tour, our guide to the memorials on the Mall in Washington, D.C. (which you can take in person or virtually with the pictures embedded in the iTunes file):

- Dec. 16 [Spying Here At Home](#)
- Dec. 16 [Explainer: Get Your Hands Off My Medal!](#) ([Slate piece](#))
- Dec. 15 [Truly Naked Ambition](#)
- Dec. 15 [Explainer: How Do Muslims See Satan?](#) ([Slate piece](#))
- Dec. 14 [Slate Audio Tours: The Memorials on the National Mall](#) ([iTunes link](#))
- Dec. 14 [Baja for Beginners, Part 2](#)
- Dec. 14 [Explainer: Do You Wanna Be in My Gang?](#) ([Slate piece](#))
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Andy Bowers is a *Slate* senior editor.

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