

Movies 2004 Us & Them

11.14.04
The Way We Live Now



Free Ranging

By AMANDA HESSER

Back in 1996, an ice-wine maker in Niagara, Ontario, decided that he had had enough of overpriced and marginal balsamic vinegars. So he made his own vinegar from eight varieties of grapes -- all picked when temperatures dipped below 8 degrees Celsius and pressed while frozen. The resulting vinegar, which he called Minus 8, is dark like a raisin, has a soft sweetness and glows with fruit. It is remarkable enough that enthusiasts began calling the vinegar maker's parents, trying to track him down and showing up at his house in hopes of buying some more. This is why he asked that we not use his name for this article.

Minus 8 is similar in body to balsamic vinegar and similar in depth to an aged sherry vinegar. The secret vinegar maker starts with red and white wine (riesling, gewurtztraminer and gamay are the only varietals he will reveal), then ferments them slowly into vinegar and ages them in French oak barrels, blending them using the solera method, in which batches from previous years are mixed in with the new vintage.

Minus 8 is available for about \$29 for a small bottle on a number of Web sites, including www.minus8vinegar.com.