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## Aykroyd knows his stuff when talking wine



Veronique Vardin ,

Dan Aykroyd in town promoting his line of wines and vodka.

The spirits world is an apt fit for the former "Ghostbuster," who's got two wines and a vodka on the market.

Joel Koyama, Star Tribune

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It surely comes as no surprise that Dan Aykroyd has an interesting take on most any topic. From UFOs (he's a believer, and has seen a pair) to organizational acumen ("Instead of Kellogg Brown Root, they should have Harrah's running the

logistics for the military"), to which of his characters is most like him ("Oh, the Conehead; I feel alien in this culture, and I like to consume mass quantities"), he's a font of smart, funny takes. Duh.

Aykroyd was in town last month to promote his new line of wines (a crisp chardonnay and a lusty cab, each retailing for \$20) and vodka (Crystal Head; see Spirit of the Week). So that's primarily what we talked about between his appearances at Byerly's and Haskell's, which drew throngs of fans (and sellouts of the products), including folks dressed up in "Ghostbusters" and "Blues Brothers" garb.

**Q** Did you have an "aha" moment as a wine consumer?

**A** Yes, with ["Blues Brothers" guitarist] Steve Cropper. One Friday night he said, "Why don't you come up to my house and we'll break out some wines?" So we finished shooting, I think it was the Tabernacle scene, and we went up there and it began this long tradition of Friday-night dinners where he busted out these Napa cabs and these French cabs. And he *ruined* me forever.

And then when I went over to England after John [Belushi] died, I was met by Isaac Tigrett, who I went on to do House of Blues with. And we went to his dad's cellar in Regents Park in a house he was renting from the queen. And he said "My dad, when I went to India, he and his buddies drank a

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million dollars' worth of my wine. I'm gonna get him back this weekend."

I had told him I loved reds, and we went into that cellar and took the Beychevelle and the Haut-Brion and the Margaux and the Lynch-Bages, we took about a quarter-million dollars' worth of wines. In two weeks, we drank them all -- friends, parties, every restaurant we'd come in with six bottles. I said, "Is your father going to be mad about this?" and he said "What's he gonna do about it? He knows he stole mine."

**Q** Are you involved in the actual winemaking of the wines that bear your name?

**A** Yes. I partnered with DeLoach Vineyards. I said to Jean-Charles [Boisset, owner of DeLoach], "Let's cut back on the oak on the chardonnay." So we made that and he says to me [in faux French accent], "You, you light on your feet, so elegant, you're so sweet. You want a lighter type of cabernet, you not one of these guys who likes the heavy," and I said, "Oh, I like the heavy."

So we sit down and start testing. The first blend, no, the second blend, I don't like it, the third blend -- it's like working on a script. You do the first draft, then you revise it, then you punch it up, then you polish it.

**Q** If these wines were a Dan Aykroyd character, what character would they be?

**A** OK, the red would be Fred Garvin ("SNL" male prostitute), robust, a lusty blend. And I think the white would have a bit more refinement, probably Leonard Penth-Garnell (host of "Bad Theater" on "SNL"), so we've got robust and refined.

**Q** If Belushi were alive, would he be a wine guy?

**A** No, Belushi would be a fine brown-spirits man drinking great American bourbon from the South. I think of Johnny every time I walk into a House of Blues, I think, "I wish you were here to see what we've got going."

And I am confident, because I believe in the afterlife and spiritualism, that we do reunite for a brief period with the people we love and those that have loved us, we see them in the form that we knew them. And I know Johnny's gonna be waiting for me when I go through.

**Q** Any words to live by?

**A** To those who have been given much, much will be required. If we are fortunate and have been given good things in life, it's incumbent upon us to share it and spread it around.

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