

August 20, 2009

The Sommelier Says....

Hello and welcome to the newsletter for <http://www.wine-sommelier.com/>

Paso Robles Trip Review

We are so spoiled here in Southern California. The availability of really good local wines is amazing. As most of you know, one of my favorite locations for wine tasting is the Paso Robles area. I took a trip up there this month with a few others from this newsletter group and was once again very pleased with some new discoveries as well as some of the old favorites.

Saturday was spent at **Justin** for their release party, food, music and lots of barrel tasting. I think I am slowly moving over to their Justification as my favorite Justin wine. A blend of Cabernet Franc and Merlot with aromas of currant, black tar, leather and cedar. The entry is bright with red fruit, soft, elegant and extremely approachable. The mid palate has good weight, and exhibits flavors of red currant, blackberry, cedar and caramel. Slightly dusty tannins from the Cabernet Franc blended perfectly. After Justin, where else would I go? Dark Star obviously!

Greeted with a huge hug from Susan, she gives great hugs, and I love bringing new wine lovers into **Dark Star**. Here they see how wine should taste and how you should be treated by a winery. Here again I am discovering the joys of another one of Norm's creations. His Anderson Road is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (45%), Syrah(45%) and Petite Syrah (10%). A somewhat unusual blend of varietals, but well-balanced wine in texture, acidity, sweetness and weight. In fact I had a bottle of it with dinner last night with a nice 5 cheese ravioli and marinara sauce. The perfect paring!

Sunday we decided to try new wineries, since there are over 280 of them in the area, we went north up to Santa Miguel.

As a Sommelier, I do a lot of research on the variety of wines that wineries make, their various blends, their climate, the wine maker and years in existence. So in taking all of things into consideration, I selected the first winery today based upon their Name! To me it was like that old commercial, with a name like Graveyard Vineyards, you know it has to be good! And you know what... it is!

Graveyard Vineyards was like a diamond in the rough. A very small producing winery doing only 1200 cases this year, but what Rob and Paula Campbell-Taylor, the owners and caretakers of Graveyard Vineyards did when they bought the beautiful hilltop property in 2003, was create wines that make you say- I want more! Priced very reasonably from \$10 to \$40 a bottle, these wines are to die for! Their winemaker Jason Bushong has done a great job developing wines that

truly a joy to drink. The two wines that really knocked my socks off were their basic house wines, each selling for \$14 a bottle. The NV Paso Tombstone White and the NV Paso Tombstone Red. These wines are perfect everyday wines, that bring a lot of character and complexness to a \$14 bottle of wine. I would serve these wines to the most critical of palates. On your next time through Paso Robles, please stop and see Paula and enjoy their wines. You can even bring a fishing pole and catch some large mouth bass in their lake on their property!

<http://www.graveyardvineyards.com/index.html>

While we were at Graveyard, the owners of **Tackitt Family Vineyards** came by and invited us to try their wines out. Their tasting room had just opened that week. Back in the 1970s, the family planted about 29 Gewürztraminer vines that were brought from Germany. That was the beginning of the winery. Today Gewürztraminer remains as their signature wine, unfortunately they only had a few bottles available and those were spoken for so we were unable to taste them, maybe next time. I did however enjoy their 2005 Merlot, Hand crafted, then barrel aged for 24 months. Light fruitiness, hint of smokey oak, and just the right amount of tannin. It was priced at \$25 a bottle.

<http://www.tackittfamilyvineyards.com/>

Following Tackitt we stopped for lunch, and again I was not disappointed. Punching into my GPS I looked for wine bar/café, and it took me magically to the **Basque Café** in San Miguel- WOW! This is a special Tapas bar, that you should not miss. Excellent portions, low prices and delicious plates. Located at 249 Tenth Street , San Miguel, be sure to check out the specials on the menu near the front gate.

After lunch we traveled south past Paso Robles and went to another 'new' winery. I say new but **Rotta Winery**, founded in 1908 by the Rotta Family, is the only remaining family owned "original" winery in San Luis Obispo County. I can't believe that I past this winery by for so many years. They had over 14 wines on their tasting list, and most of them I enjoyed very much. But the two wines that really got me were their dessert wines. The Zinfandel Port (\$25) the sweet Berry-like aromas are accentuated by the full flavor of the Zinfandel grape. The heavy, smooth, flavors fill your mouth with memories of the 70 year old vines that struggled to produce this dreamy wine. And their Black Monukka Dessert Wine (\$25) The Caramelized, Nutty and Vanilla aromas of this baked cream sherry reveal the flavor of the Black Monukka grapes that produced this wine. That was one that I bought two bottles of. I loved it.

<http://www.rottawinery.com/>

Last but not least of this Paso Robles trip was **Pomar Junction Winery**, located in Templeton. I again used my keen spider sense to select this winery to visit- it had a cool label..... Trains. What guy doesn't like trains? Pomar Junction's

history harkens back to Templeton at the turn of the century, when the El Pomar District was known for almond and fruit orchards, along with a few wine grapes. The Southern Pacific Railroad reached Templeton with its coastal lines and built the town. This was a beautiful winery, and I have to say that on every 'new' wineries I visited this trip, that locations and views from the tasting rooms were spectacular. Rhone varietals dominate this winery, which I love. I had a very nice Viognier (\$25) and a very young Syrah (\$25) a 2006- but it was very tight and could stand a very more years in the bottle.

<http://www.pomarjunction.com/>

That concludes this trip report to Paso Robles, it was once again filled with amazing wines and great people working at them. There is a passion for their wines that reminds me of me of my trips to Italy and visiting the wineries there. The family, the wine, the love of the land.

What wine is this?

Sight: Clear, day bright, medium-minus concentration. Ruby color with hints of purple. Medium viscosity.

Nose: Medium-plus intensity. Red fruit dominated with strawberry, red cherry and watermelon. Secondary aromas of violets and bubble gum. Strong minerality of wet granite. No new oak.

Palate: Dry, medium-minus body, medium alcohol, medium-plus acidity, low tannin. Flavors of strawberry, red cherry and cranberry on the palate. Violets and bubble gum. Crushed granite minerality. Slight bitterness. No new oak flavors. Medium length and complexity.

If you think you know, drop me a note- the first correct response wins a bottle of wine from my personal wine cellar!

Rancho Ventavo Wine Classes!

Address: 741 South "A" Street, Oxnard CA 93030

Telephone (805) 483-8084.

I am teaching a series of Wine Appreciation Classes at Rancho Ventavo Cellars. Contact Rancho Ventavo to signup and additional details.

Looking ahead

***- October 30- Nov 1- Wine tour to Willamette Valley Oregon (Date change)
(Airline- Alaska \$300 pp, Hotel Best Western Woodburn \$90 night-
Approx cost per couple \$1000- plus wine purchases and tasting fees) If you
are interested, please contact me ASAP and I will send you the details.**

Cheers-

Tim

If you would like to be removed from this list, please reply to me at tim@wine-sommelier.com and request removal from this list.
If you know someone that wants this list, please have him or her send me an email requesting to be included too!