

March 30, 2009

The Sommelier Says....

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

Wood Ranch Bistro

First I want to thank Kathy and Chris, two of the finest chefs in our area for helping put on a great wine event in Wood Ranch last week. And then to all of you that made it to the Wednesday night event- Thanks! The Bistro has the possibility of being the new 'in' spot for wine in our area, and without your support that could not be possible! I had fun too, serving all of you again. Come back out on April 8th for more fun and great food!

Wine Basics at Herzog Winery

Wednesday, April 22nd - 7 pm

Join me for an educational evening where I will cover Wine Basics - where it comes from, how it is made, the magic of the wine label, selecting, serving, and storing wine. This seminar will include a tasting of four Herzog wines. \$10 per person, please call for reservations 805-983-1560.

Russian River Barrel Tasting Weekend in Review

Traveling to Sonoma this year we had 12 people on the trip for most of the weekend. Once again we had a wonderful time! We even discovered a new winery that we must visit again!

This year we went to the following locations:

Saturday, Foppiano, Optima, Simi, Armida and J Keverson. Sunday it was Hook and Ladder, Trentadue, Stryker, David Coffaro, Bella and Pedroncelli.

The most surprising was Optima, located in an industrial park (I loved it when we arrived) in Healdsburg, it was full of amazing discoveries, run by a husband and wife team, the wines included a wonderful Cabernet and a port that I think everyone in our group purchased.

One of the highlights was J Keverson. John Hazlewood and Scott Broome greeted us at the door of their NEW tasting room, and gave us a wonderful tour of their latest creations. I have to say their 2005 was one of the best Zinfandels I've tasted in my life, and I felt that way until I tried their (still in the barrel) 2007 Alton Lane Russian River Zin AND their 2007 Buck Hill Zinfandel. I bought a case of each. You will find these later this year at Wood Ranch Bistro! (Not my 2005 stock however)

I hope you all plan on joining us next year for this event. March 6/7 and the 13/14 2010. I usually attend the first weekend.

Today's Chianti Classico

"I ate his liver with a nice Chianti...."

Tuscany is one of the world's most established and aristocratic wine regions. Because its reputation is never in question, winemakers here can afford to look at the big picture—where they want to be for the next several generations—unlike those in up-and-coming areas, where the pressure to make a splash in the market is so great that they can only seek to emulate the high-scoring super-ripe, steroidal style in hopes of selling their product quickly.

Wines made in the historic heart of Tuscany, Chianti Classico, are sometimes dismissed as old-fashioned, traditional, light, tart, and lacking in both fruit and oak. That may still be true of some Chiantis, but Tuscan producers today have many more options. Most sell a variety of wines, from their Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG) Chianti Classicos, made with traditional vinification methods and grapes, to the more modern Indicazione Geografica Tipica (IGT) wines, which were officially welcomed into the system in the appellation law revision of 1992.

A movement to upgrade the vineyards in the region, known as Chianti Classico 2000, involves the replanting of the most suitable Sangiovese clones on proper rootstock, identification of the best growing sites, and viticultural research to determine optimum vine densities and trellising systems. A growing number of vineyards are also being farmed organically and biodynamically, further improving the quality of the finished wine.

Winemaking Styles Today

Under the revised appellation rulings, winemakers no longer have to dilute their red wine with white grapes. The minimum amount of Sangiovese required for Chianti Classico DOCG is now 80%; as much as 20% of the wine may consist of other red grapes, but no white grapes may be added. In the surrounding Chianti DOCG, the minimum for Sangiovese is 75%, with the remainder of the blend containing as much as 10% Canaiolo, as much as 10% other approved red grapes, and as much as 10% of the white Trebbiano and Malvasia. In other words, a Chianti producer may now blend in a touch of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, or Syrah, or leave the wine as 100% Sangiovese. In the past, such a wine would have been labeled as the old *vino da tavola* or an IGT.

Most Chianti Classicos are light-to-medium-bodied, elegant, and understated, featuring lovely cherry, leather, and earth notes and a refreshing palate with cleansing, zesty acidity. Fashion-driven? Trendy? Cultish? I think not. And for that, I and millions of fans around the world are grateful.

Looking ahead

- *-**April 8 Wood Ranch Bistro, 7-9pm**
- *-**April 22 Wine Basics at Herzog Winery**
- *- **May 16 Wine Spectator Grand Tasting in Las Vegas**
<http://www.winespectator.com/GrandTour/WSgrandtour.html>
- *- **June 14 Ojai Wine Festival**
www.ojaiwinefestival.com
- *- **July 17-18 California Wine Festival-Santa Barbara**
<http://www.californiawinefestival.com/>

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 to be added to this list, please have him or her send me an email requesting to be included too!**