

November 15, 2009

The Sommelier Says....

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

Sommelier Tasting

This past week, I was lucky enough to enjoy an invitation only wine tasting held by the Guild of Sommeliers at Mortons, Beverly Hills. I have to admit, being a Sommelier has its advantages, and this is one of my favorites. The Guild of Sommeliers holds these private tastings throughout the country with wines from their cellar. These events are aimed at sharpening the skills of the Sommeliers. I want to share with you a few of the things I experienced during this tasting event. We had six wines pre poured two whites, and four reds. The team of three Master Sommeliers, Master Kruth, Master Cronin, & Master Sherer, who were working the seminar gave the group 20 minutes to break down the wines and then we went around the room describing the wines. The wines were Dirlir Gewurztraminer Kitterle 2004, Domaine Jean Collet et Fils Chablis Mont de Milieu 2005, Domaine des Chezeaux Chambertin 1993, Domaine du Pegau Chateauneuf du Pape Cuvee Laurence 1995, Poggio di Sotto Palmucci Brunello di Montalcino 1998, and Hardys Eileen Hardy 1994.

Following the evaluation period, some lively discussions took place and I quickly noticed that my methods and deductions were pretty much right on- *insert chest puff here...* The method that we used was the deductive tasting technique that I teach in the Taste Like a Pro class. Determining the varietal has become the 'easy' part for me and you really need to open up your senses to breakdown the location and age. One prime example for me was when we came to the Chateauneuf du Pape, those of you that know my palette, know that I love this wine. What surprised me most during this tasting is that I immediately picked up on the Grenache/Mourvedre blend. I did pick up a hint of Lavender, but I could not place the location- *insert brain-fart here...* Bev and I have traveled to the Rhone wine area of France where Chateauneuf du Pape is made and the countryside is covered in Lavender. Nowhere else in the world will you have that hint of Lavender in that blend. Using your life experiences is valuable in blind tasting.

This event showed me again the value of blind wine tasting to not only expand your wine knowledge but also expand your palette. Try this on your own sometime with friends sometime.

Best Thanksgiving White Wines

Riesling: A white wine that may either be bone dry or fairly sweet, excellent with any dishes that are spicy, salty or sweet. Whether from Alsace, Germany or Washington – Riesling wines are a top pick white wine for pairing with

Thanksgiving dinner. Riesling's innate flavors of apple, apricot, honey and its clarifying acidity give it a significant pairing edge with the likes of sweet potatoes, turkey meat and spice-laden or herb-filled stuffing.

Gewurztraminer: This white wine tends to have the aromatic gusto and spicy palate appeal that give it a solid standing with turkey and gravy, bringing out the best in both. Gewurztraminer offers a delicious white wine option for Thanksgiving Day.

Sauvignon Blanc: This crisp white wine is known for its citrus-based flavors that can be surrounded by herb or mineral undertones, making it a prime pairing candidate for turkey and mashed potatoes.

Pinot Grigio: Capable of handling garlic and onions, herbs and rich, flavorful, high-fat dishes, this white wine is a natural for the demands of Thanksgiving Day.

Albarino and Viognier, while they may not boast the initial name recognition of say...Chardonnay, these white wine varietals, offer the perfect opportunity to shake up the Thanksgiving table and take your guests on a little wine adventure, while still maintaining perfect pairing power.

Top Red Wine Thanksgiving Options

Pinot Noir: This red wine is a traditional favorite for Thanksgiving. Pinot Noir's subtle earthy undertones and often mushroom inspired flavors surround the fruit features of the wine and tend to show well with the traditional flavors of turkey and stuffing.

Zinfandel: A fuller bodied red wine that ups the intensity from a Pinot Noir, but still maintains a balancing effect on many traditional Thanksgiving side dishes. This would be a great wine pick for those looking for a heartier red wine with the capacity to accommodate spice, bitter and sweet flavor profiles.

Syrah/Shiraz: The Syrah grape can bring a spicy edge or a meaty character to the table often increasing the complexity, while graciously handling the cornucopia of flavors in a traditional Thanksgiving meal. The prevalent peppery notes of Syrah will partner well with the herb-infused stuffing and both the white and dark turkey meat.

Beaujolais Nouveau: A light, fruity red wine, from the Gamay grape, that goes quite well with turkey and all of the fixings. This wine is released from France on the third Thursday of November, just in time to highlight your Thanksgiving feast!

Rosé and Sherry wines, along with the aforementioned sparkling wine category are also worthy of consideration for Thanksgiving wine pairing potential. They all provide a capable go between for those that are not firmly camped in either the red or white wine trenches. If you are considering a sparkling wine you may

choose one labeled as “extra dry” – which will offer a touch more fruit flavor than a “brut.” As for rosé wines, a drier selection will be the most versatile for pairing with virtually any part of the Thanksgiving feast.

Keep in mind that if you are hosting 5 or 50 guests this Thanksgiving that you don’t have to spend an arm and a leg to offer a lovely selection of wines. There are many well-received, well-rated value wines that you can obtain for \$10 or less.

Legal Filing Claims BevMo's "Five Cents" Sale Deceives

A class-action complaint filed in San Francisco last month alleges Beverages & More Inc.’s widely advertised “Five Cents” sale is deceptive and calls it a “fraudulent business practice.”

The promotion, which has run for a number of years, wraps up this week. According to the complaint, BevMo represents consumers paying the “regular price” for a first bottle get a second identical bottle for just “five cents.” The complaint claims, though, that BevMo, which in fifteen years has grown to operate 100 stores, marks up the regular price of the first bottle so consumers are not actually paying BevMo's regular price. For some bottles of wine, BevMo marked up the price so much that it actually cost more to buy two bottles during the sale, the filing claims

The complaint cites the example of a Vago Rojo Tempranillo-Malbec advertised in the sale at \$19.99 a bottle so consumers would pay a total of \$20.04 for two bottles for an apparent savings of \$19.94. It claims however, that BevMo's price for the same wine then dropped from \$19.99 to \$6.99, meaning consumers could buy two bottles for \$13.98.

“BevMo publicly disseminated advertising with the intent not to sell the wine on the price terms as stated in the advertisement – i.e. not to sell the “regular price” bottles at a regular price,” the filing alleges.

“This practice of using a fictitious, marked up, or otherwise misleading regular price” is a deceptive, unfair and illegal practice,” alleges the filing. Plaintiff Peter Gray Jr. of San Francisco seeks restitution, damages, injunctive relief, and attorneys' fees, claiming to have been “actually injured as a result of BevMo’s conduct in an amount not less than the difference between what he paid for the two “regular” price bottles of wine (a total of \$17.98 plus tax) and what he should have paid if BevMo had sold the bottles at their actual regular prices (a total of \$12.98 plus tax).”

The complaint says BevMo’s legal counsel sent a letter to Mr. Gray prior to the filing, rejecting a reimbursement request. The letter purportedly acknowledged that BevMo sold wine at prices identified by Gray but said the higher prices cited by Gray were “regular” prices, while lower prices at issue were “ClubBev” prices.

The complaint claims the distinction is “legally irrelevant,” and was filed by Kemnitzer, Anderson, Barron, Ogilvie & Brewer in Superior Court in San Francisco on October 22.

“The allegations of the purported class action claim are without merit and obviously we plan to defend against it rigorously,” David Richards, executive vice president of marketing and ecommerce for BevMo said.

What wine is this?

Last Issues answer: Shiraz from Australia

Sight: Clear, day bright, medium-minus concentration, pale straw color with hints of green. Medium-minus viscosity.

Nose: Medium intensity. Red and green apple and meyer lemon. Secondary aromas of white mushroom, cheese rind, hazelnut and subtle white flower. Strong chalk and crushed oyster shell minerality. Slight oxidation suggests neutral barrel.

Palate: Bone dry, medium-minus body, high acid, medium alcohol. Confirm meyer lemon, under-ripe pear and apple skin on the palate. Subtle hazelnut, soft cheese, creamy texture on the mid-palate, but no signs of new oak. Strong chalky minerality dominates the finish.

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

Upcoming Events:

November 18 and 20- The Family Kitchen! I will be there both nights from 5-9 pouring some of your favorite wines. Come on by and have a nice meal by John or Cathy too!

November 21/22- Paso Robles Wine trip, I am going up Saturday morning and staying at the Holiday Inn Express. If you want to join us, drop me a note today!

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!