



Ceser Ringberg at Elena Walch

CHEERS TO WINE

Grand Tour 2017 kicks off in Las Vegas to high accolades

BY MARISA FIMETTI

Not every wine reaches the glory of 90+ points, but every wine tells a compelling story that, once told, results in a finish capable of lasting forever. Wine Spectator's Grand Tour 2017 in Las Vegas showcased 244 wines, which earned high accolades from Wine Spectator reviewers. And, for those guests who were interested in savoring and listening, they were sure to leave with tales as delicious as the wines.

Kopka Colheita Port is one example. To taste a wine is to taste history, and in the case of the 1978 Colheita, a tawny port from a single harvest, it means remembering an event like the great fire that devastated the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, including works by Picasso, Miró and Dalí. While this devastation took place nearly 5,000 miles away from Portugal, the liquid that artfully was crafted during that same year, then later captured in the bottle, holds a piece of the world's history.

Makers of port, such as Kopka, the first and oldest port wine house that started in 1638, all employ a mix of philosophy, faith and tradition that involves planning for future generations. Just as planting a cork oak tree comes with an understanding that it won't see its first harvest for 20 years, some styles of port won't be released for nearly 40 years, as in the 1978 Colheita, an elegant fortified wine, crisp and spicy, with notes of dried orange peel, maple and ginger supported with luxurious white chocolate that floods a tangy finish. Locked into its place along the Douro River, it's the juice that tells time.

One of the wines that flows from the northern most region of Italy bordered by Switzerland and Austria, called Alto Adige, comes from the pristine vineyards of Elena Walch. A leading Alto Adige wine estate founded in 1869, at the time when the land was part of Austria, the philosophy of the estate is dedicated to the idea that the wines are a reflection of the individual expression of their terroir. Because of its location, Alto Adige enjoys a climate that fluctuates in temperature from day to night.

“The Abadia Retuerta Seleccion Especial Vino de la Tierra de Castilla y Leon is a marvelous way to show off the vineyard, which is composed of plantings that are 75 percent tempranillo, 15 percent cabernet sauvignon and 10 percent syrah,” said Pablo Paredes, American regional delegate to Abadia Retuerta. The blend is reflective of the estate’s innovative approach of combining Spain’s indigenous tempranillo with varietals from other parts of the world.

Yet, its been a long road for malagousia, a grape that was rescued by winemaker Vangelis Gerovassiliou during the 1970s in Greece. Up until that time, nobody heard of this indigenous varietal, until 30 years later when Gerovassiliou planted the grape in his vineyard only to discover the sheer beauty it would produce in a glass.

The characteristics of the single vineyard Malagousia 2015 (90 points), which harnesses ripe pear, mango and lemon peel, have captured the hearts of wine professionals around the world.

“Malagousia’s fresh and crisp tropical fruit flavors provide a balancing counterpoint to the smoky, grilled notes of our octopus, while the beautiful, floral aromas refresh the palate,” says said Elise Vandenberg, lead sommelier at Estiatorio Milos, located inside The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas.

Concluding Wine Spectator’s Grand Tour, the wine taster’s palate is brought back to the Napa Valley of the 1960s, when much of the land was dedicated to prune orchards and cattle. Wine growers had not yet discovered the bench lands above the valley floor, but businessman Al Brounstein decided to “head to the hills” and do something about his love for wine.

In 1968, he founded Diamond Creek Vineyards, California’s first exclusively cabernet sauvignon estate and the first to plant on Diamond Mountain’s virginal ground. A lover of Bordeaux varietals, Brounstein brought back a handful of vines from the famed French region and planted them on his secluded property.

The estate — run today by his stepson, Phil Ross — annually produces small amounts of elegant wines with great depth and richness that are revered by connoisseurs. The exuberant 92-point 2012 Diamond Creek Gravelly Meadow Fortieth Anniversary Cabernet Sauvignon is one of them.

And, with that, we can roll up the red carpet and make a toast to some of the most captivating wines in the world. 🍷