

The Wine Guy's *Wine Tasting Notes*

May, 2010



White Oak Vineyards, 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa \$52. Magnum

It has been many years since I've had a White Oak. This well-aged Magnum showed a great deal of fruit, which helped it pair well with a baked ham. Not overly tannic, this wine will hold for a few more years.

Spy Valley, 2008 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough \$23.

You will not find a lot of New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs in my tasting notes because I don't care for their citrus flavors, which I consider a sign of being unbalanced. The rest of the world, however, does not agree with me, as these wines are very popular. The Spy Valley was lightly grapefruity and, I thought, very pleasant. This is a wine I could enjoy any summer afternoon.

Carolina Heritage, 2008 Chambourcin, American \$10.

This 6-month-old winery, located in Elkin, N. C., is certified as organic but does handle some non-organic wines that are made from purchased grapes. The vines were planted in 2005 but production is still small, about 400 cases in 2008. This Chambourcin is a light, fruity wine that I served with my final pot roast of the season. A tasting of their wine selection shows a lot of promise.

Penner-Ash 2006 Syrah, Oregon \$36.

I visited the winery during my Oregon trip last year and was very impressed by their overall quality. I bought this bottle in Atlanta, but these wines are available in N.C. if you search them out. The grapes come from the Columbia and Rogue Valleys since they have a warmer climate than the Willamette. The wine is dense with very rich flavors. It could easily be shelved for 5 years, but we chose to decant it about 45 minutes before dinner. I recently poured their Viognier in my wine class, and it too was very rich and deep.

Mulderbosch, 2009 Chenin Blanc, Western Cape of South Africa \$16.

Mulderbosch is one of my favorite South African producers, and this brand new Chenin Blanc shows why. This southern hemisphere wine is similar to the New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, but with only the hint of citrus flavors. Chenin Blanc has been one of the stalwarts of the region with this wine as a very good example.

Trade Show Tastings

My rule for trade show tasting notes is that I only discuss wines of which I have had at least one full glass or more. However, I do taste many wines each month that I don't discuss here because I only have a taste. Over the past several weeks I was invited to two trade shows (invited guests must be in the business of wine at the wholesale, retail or restaurant level or, in my case, as an educator and writer). A few comments on several wines I tasted seem to be in order.

In Durham there was a tasting sponsored by the French Trade Office with a wide variety of French regions represented. The most interesting wines were from **Champagne Baron Fuente**. Their wines are dominated by Pinot Meunier, which most Champagne houses don't use or use only in small proportions. I was blown away by their Grande Reserve which contained 60% Meunier, 30% Chardonnay and 10% Pinot Noir. The fruit flavors were like no Champagne I have ever tasted. They also make a 100% Meunier but did not bring any to this tasting.

I also attended a distributors' tasting that was organized after the Charlotte Wine Weekend. The Charlotte tasting is always sold out and I have never been able to get tickets, so when I was invited to the trade tasting following the main attraction, I went. Certainly the highlight was the first wine offered: a **1997 Drouhin Montrachet**. Considered by most as the finest white wine in Burgundy, and the most expensive, this one was poured from a magnum. Soft, smooth, understated, yet with a definite authority, this wine was as good as it gets. They also poured 12 other Drouhin wines from Burgundy and concluded with a magnum of **1997 Drouhin Clos de Vougeot**. What great bookends for their part of the show!

The other highlight was meeting Ken Wright, who was pouring about 10 of his wines. I was most interested in tasting his **2007 Chardonnay** from the **Celilo Vineyard** in Washington. I had poured the 2006 wine in my wine class the week before, and that wine had problems which I could not identify. The wine Ken poured was very different. It was clear and clean-tasting with great body and flavor. Of course, Ken could not explain the problems from my description, but that is the nature of bottle variations. Along with the Chardonnay, we tasted five of his **Oregon Pinot Noirs**, which are about as good a full-bodied Pinot as one can find.

Other producers of note were **Falcor**, who did a very well-received wine dinner in Winston-Salem recently, the **Schug** wines from **Carneros**, and a new wine to me called **Solena** which was very impressive.