TASTING REPORT

ANTHONY DIAS BLUE'S VINITALY SEMINAR ON **BORDEAUX BLENDS** HAS SURPRISING RESULTS



PHOTO: ANTHONY DIAS BLUE

A Blending of Blends

Blending is the winemaker's way of making greatness out of disparate parts. This technique—like a painter mixing colors or a composer combining various instruments—is used frequently in the production of great wines.

The most prevalent products of this practice are "Bordeaux blends"—wines that are combinations of two or more of the traditional Bordeaux varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec. Blending has been used in Bordeaux for hundreds of years, and it is now common in other regions that produce stylistically similar wines.

This April at VinItaly, my tasting seminar was an exploration of top Bordeaux blends from France, Italy and the United States. The twelve wines—four from each country—were tasted blind and in random order. The results of the tasting were interesting and instructive: After each wine was tasted, I asked the audience to guess which region the wine was from; in each case, fewer than half of the 50 tasters (all members of the wine trade) made the correct identification.

What this reveals is that parity has been achieved at the top of the quality heap. The 12 wines showed extremely well and demonstrated that equally outstanding Bordeaux-style wines are being made in a number of places around the world.

My own notes and scores from the tasting are below.
—*Anthony Dias Blue*

FRANCE

Château d'Issan 2005, Margaux ($60) Smooth and tangy, elegant, ripe and juicy with grace and focus; long, racy and quite lovely. **92**

Château Smith Haut Lafitte 2008, Pessac-Léognan ($75) Dark, deep ruby color; edgy, bright and tangy plum with vanilla oak; complex, long and balanced. **94**



Château Lassègue 2006, Saint-Émilion ($175) Dusty and juicy with excellent structure and nice, edgy style; fresh and balanced. **89**

Château Rauzan-Ségla 2008 Margaux ($75) Juicy and bright with fresh, ripe plum and raspberry fruit; racy and supple with soft tannins and good length. **92**



ITALY

Tenuta di Arceno 2006 Arcanum I, Toscana ($95) Dark, lush and dense with wild cherry, spice and vanilla oak; juicy, deep and nicely structured; intense. **95**

Castello Banfi 2006 Excelsus, Montalcino ($81) Bright and dense, tangy with plum, spice and soft herbs; toasty and long. **92**

Marchesi de' Frescobaldi 2007 Mormoreto, Toscana ($70) Tangy, juicy and toasty with dense, ripe plum fruit; long and racy. **92**

Castello di Querceto 2005 Cignale, Toscana ($80) Crisp, tangy and clean with spice and bright plum; supple, long and round with fine structure. **92**

U.S.A.

Cardinale 2006, Napa Valley ($250) Ripe and fresh with tangy plum fruit and smooth vanilla in the nose; bright and lively, clean, complex and balanced. **93**

Joseph Phelps 2005 Insignia, Napa Valley ($200) Velvety and lush with ripe plum, blackberry and vanilla oak; balanced, focused, spicy and rich; delicious. **96**

Raymond 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon, Reserve, Napa Valley ($32) Ripe and rich, juicy and lush; nicely structured and long; showing ripe plum and racy acidity. **90**

Verité 2006 La Muse, Sonoma Valley ($260) Dense, ripe and spicy; dark and concentrated, juicy and youthful with rich texture; supple, balanced and complex. **94**

