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SCHILLER-WINE

CHRISTIAN G.E. SCHILLER'S WINE WORLD. NOTES FROM A GERMAN IN AMERICA, WHO ALSO SPENDS A LOT OF TIME IN EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE

MONDAY, JULY 4, 2011

The 2011 Pinot Days in San Francisco





Pictures: Christian G.E.Schiller with Adam Lee of Siduri Wines in San Francisco

The San Francisco Pinot Days was a series of events in the San

ABOUT ME



DR. CHRISTIAN G.E. SCHILLER

I live in the greater Washington DC (US) and Frankfurt am Main (Germany) areas and write about wine. I am a member of the "Weinfeder" (German Wine Journalists Association) and the FIJEV (International Federation of Wine and Spirits Journalists and Writers). I am currently in Germany and post 5 times a week.

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Francisco Bay area, where Pinot Noir producers from California, but also from other US wine regions presented their latest releases. At the center of the events was the Grand Tasting at Fort Mason Center on Saturday, June 18th, 2011 in San Francisco, in which I had the pleasure to participate.

Pinot Noir

In the US, Pinot Noir shows best in Oregon and California, thanks in part to pioneers like the Germans Walter Schug and Robert Stemmler. The reputation that gets Pinot Noir so much attention, however, is owed to the wines of the Bourgogne in France, where it has probably been cultivated since at least the 4th century. Regardless of where it's grown, Pinot Noir is not typically a value wine. That is so because Pinot Noir is such a delicate grape that it is difficult and expensive to grow and make into the spectacular wine it can be. It is sensitive to climate and soil, Pinot Noir needs warmth (but not intense heat) to thrive and does well in chalky soils. As the German name (Spaetburgunder) implies, it ripens late (spät).

Pinot Noir in the World

Pinot Noir is grown around the world, mostly in the cooler regions. Its home is the Bourgogne in France, in particular the Côte-d'Or, which has produced some of the world's most celebrated Pinot Noirs for centuries, typically in the elegant, lean style: light to medium body, with a cherry and raspberry aroma coupled with smoke and wet leaves notes on the nose. By contrast, an emerging style from New World wine countries highlights a more powerful and fruit forward approach, tending toward Syrah in depth and alcoholic content. In addition to the Bourgogne, Pinot Noir is one of the 3 grapes Champagne is typically made of (along with Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier).

Not very well known, but Germany is the second largest Pinot Noir producer in the world (although very little of it is exported). In Germany Pinot Noir is called Spätburgunder (Late Burgundian) and is now the most widely planted red grape. Germany is experiencing a red wine revolution, with red varietals today account to about 1/3 of German wine production. Frühburgunder, an early-ripening form of Pinot Noir can also be found in Germany.

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Excellent post, Christian. As I visited both the Bock Bistrot in Budapest and their restaurant in Villany just before you, I do agree that both serve very good food, and the Bock range of wines is...
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YARRA VALLEY PINOT NOIR 2009 wrote...
Music, wine and great friends will always be a great way to enjoy weekends. Thanks for posting this one. Interesting wines by the way. Cheers!

Derek wrote...
Great post Christian.I love your blog information thanks for sharing.Moshen Zargar

Gilles Nicault wrote...
Dear Christian,This is fantastic, great article! Thank you for talking the time to come all the way to Washington State and visit us in Walla Walla. I look forward meeting with you again in the...
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grandwine wrote...







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- Dining and Wining at the Josef Bock Winery Restaurant in Villany #Hungary http://t.co/DYG3KMf #weinrallye @budapestmoments @winelogs about 4 hours ago
- Tesch Riesling Unplugged 2010 and Duo Favo FAVOriten http://t.co/DjDDuUN @germanwineusa @deutscheweine about 4 hours ago
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Pictures: Pinot Noir Days in San Francisco, Grand Tasting at Fort Mason

In Austria, some of the best Pinot Noirs come from the Burgenland. Pinot Noir is now one of New Zealand's most sought-after varieties. Typically, New Zealand Pinot Noir, which was poured at the tasting, is fruit-driven, with alcohol levels markedly higher than for wines from Bourgogne. In South Africa, Pinot Noir was crossed with the Cinsaut grape to create a unique variety called Pinotage, which has become South Africa's signature grape. Devon Rocks is a typical Pinotage producer in South Africa.

Pinot Noir in the US

The United States has increasingly become an important Pinot Noir producer, with some of the best coming from the Russian River Valley in California and the Willamette Valley in Oregon.

Oregon's David Lett of Eyrie Vineyards is credited for first having planted Pinot Noir in Oregon in 1965. Then the French came with Domaine Drouhin bringing European sophistication to Oregon. In 1987, Drouhin purchased land in the Willamette Valley, and in 1989 built Domaine Drouhin Oregon, a state-of-the-art, gravity-fed winery.



Picture: Christian G.E.Schiller with James Melendez (James the Wine Guy) at the Grand Tasting

Two of California's Pinot Noir Pioneers are Germans by origin, Walter Schug and Robert Stemmler. Walter Schug's home is Walter Schug Carneros Estate winery in Sonoma, California, but he was born and grew up in Assmannshausen in the Rheingau in Germany. He also received his formal training as winemaker in Germany. Walter Schug

(8) Grenache (1) Grosses Gewaechs (10) Gruener Veltliner (6) Hochheim (7) Hungary (6) ice wine (3) In the Glass (21) In the plane (7) In the train (2) Italy (7) Japan (1) Lake Constance (5) Languedoc-Roussillon (2) London (4) Long Island (4) Luxembourg (1) Madagascar (6) Mainz (3) Malbec (3) Maryland (1) Merlot (2) Missouri (8) Mittelrhein (2) Mosel (10) Nahe (8) Napa (3) Napa Valley (1) natural wine (6) New World (4) New world wines (7) New York City (1) New York State (5) New Zealand (5) noble sweet wines (2) Old World wines (2) Oregon (14) organic wine (10) oysters (4) Paris (4) Pfalz (2) Piedmont (1) Pinot Grigio (2) Pinot Gris (2) Pinot Noir (21) Poland (2) Port (1) Portugal (2) Prosecco (1) Rheingau (37) Rheinhessen (25) Rhone (2) Riesling (69) Russia (3) Sauvignon Blanc (3) Schiller (1) Schillerwein (4) Sekt (9) Serbia (6) Sherry (1) Shiraz (1) Silvaner (1) Social Media (3) South Africa (19) South-West of France (4) Spaetburgunder (7) Spain (5) sparkling wine (13) sustainability (1) Switzerland (2) Syrah (3) Tempranillo (2) UK (5) US (78) VDP (19) Virginia (12) Washington DC (21) Washington State (12) Web 2.0 (12) weinrallye (2) Weinviertel (2) Wikio (1) Wine and Art (9) wine and food (36) Wine bar (30) Wine event (10) wine festival (2) Wine ratings (54) wine tasting (8) Wine trends (1) winemaker (15) Wuerttemberg (1) Zinfandel (5) Zweigelt (1)

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first made Pinot Noir in 1954, with his father in Assmannshausen in the Rheingau. Walter Schug was the first winemaker at Joseph Phelps in 1973, where he initially built a reputation for Riesling and Cabernet Sauvignon, but also made Pinot Noir. In 1989, Walter purchased 50 acres in the Sonoma portion of the Carneros Appellation for their new Carneros Estate. I have written about Walter Schug here.

Robert Stemmler, also a native from Germany, is another early and passionate producer of outstanding California Pinot Noir. He arrived in Napa Valley in 1961 after making wine for nearly a decade in Germany. In 1976, he founded his own winery in Sonoma's Dry Creek Valley and in 1982, having found a cool-climate Russian River Valley fruit source, released his first Pinot Noir to great critical acclaim. Robert traveled tirelessly promoting his Pinot Noir at tastings dominated by Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay producers, and he steadily developed his own following.

Pinot Noir Days in San Francisco

This year's San Francisco Pinot Days brought together Pinot Noir producers representing every California Pinot Noir style, appellation and price point, as well as a number of Pinot Noirs from Oregon, New Zealand and Burgundy. There were winemakers dinners, tastings at wine stores and a series of seminars, where your could meet the winemakers and taste their Pinot Noirs. The majority of the producers Pinot Days featured fell into the "boutique" category.

Grand Tasting

The grand tasting of Saturday, June 18 at Fort Mason in San Francisco showcased over 200 producers of Pinot Noir. Consumers were able to sample up to 400 Pinot Noirs from many important Pinot Noir regions in the US, from the Russian River Valley to the Santa Lucia Highlands, Oregon to Carneros, the Anderson Valley to the Sonoma Coast to the Santa Rita Hills. Most of the wines were the highly acclaimed 2008 vintage. It was fun to taste these wines and to talk with the winemakers who created these beautiful wines. Here is a document listing all the winemakes that poured their wines and a link to the Tasting Broshure.

Here are my highlights.

Siduri Wines

Siduri specializes in ultra-premium Pinot Noirs. Production is about 10,000 cases. Siduri is named for the Babylonian Goddess of wine, who, in Babylonian mythology, held the wine of eternal life. Siduri released the first wine in 1994. Today, Siduri produces Pinot Noir

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from 20 different vineyards stretching from Santa Barbara in California to Oregon's Willamette Valley. Siduri is headed by the husband and wife team Adam and Dianna Lee, who jointly make and market the Siduri wines. I met Dianna recently on the East Coast and was pleased to meet Adam Lee at the Pinot Days in San Francisco.

Sojourn Cellars

Based in the town of Sonoma, Sojourn Cellars is a highly acclaimed winery specializing in the production of ultra-premium Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon wines, sourcing fruit from vineyards in both Sonoma and Napa Counties. Sojourn Cellars consistently produce remarkable wines with a hands-off natural winemaking style that showcases the character and personality of the individual vineyards.



Picture: Owner Craig Haserot and Assistant Winemaker Randy Bennett

Olson Ogden Wines

Founded by Tim Olson and one-time Northern Virginia resident John Ogden, Olson Ogden Wines produces a quirky but quality-minded range of wines with a focus on Pinot Noir and Rhone grapes like Syrah and white Marsanne. Olson and Ogden is one of those estateless wineries that have no permanent physical presence. John Ogden worked in the high tech corporate world for most of his life, before becoming a winemaker. He met Tim Olson who was just finishing up a stint as the winemaker for Tarius vineyards. Together they started Olson and Ogden a few years ago. I was introduced to the outstanding Olson Ogden Wines on one of John Olson's frequent trips back home to Virginia.

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Picture: John Ogden

Scherrer Winery

Since the small winery's first vintage in 1991, the goal has been to create handcrafted, full-flavored wines that express the personality of the Sonoma County vineyards where they are grown. Fred Scherrer first became known for Zinfandel from his father's Alexander Valley vineyard, and now his careful hand with Pinot Noir from the Russian River and Sonoma County has quietly gained attention and a steady following.



Picture: Owner/winemaker Fred Scherrer

Donum Estate

The Donum Estate is both a place and a unique project. In fact, it's three places. Donum Ranch is a 200-acre property with 70 acres devoted to vines located on gently rolling hills that rise up from San Pablo Bay in Carneros. Less than a mile away is the venerable 20-acre Ferguson Block. And the 11 acres of Nugent Vineyards lie to the north in the Russian River Valley. All three vineyards provide superlative estate grown fruit for Donum Estate's "ultimate Pinot Noir project."Based on a Burgundian grand cru model, this program's goal is to produce the finest Pinot Noir and Chardonnay possible. Anne Moller-Racke farms all 3 vineyards. She came from Germany to the US about 30 years ago with her then husband Marcus Moller-Racke, when Marcus' family bought Buena Vista winery in Sonoma, one of the oldest wineries in California.



Picture: Anne Moller-Racke and Christian G.E.Schiller

DeLoach Vineyards

DeLoach Vineyards pioneered Pinot Noir wine growing in the Russian River Valley when Cecil DeLoach, a firefighter from San Francisco with a passion for winemaking, first planted the grape in 1973. In 2003, DeLoach Vineyards was purchased by the Boisset Family from Burgundy, France. A recognized authority on biodynamic, organic, and sustainable winemaking, in 2004 the family brought these concepts to DeLoach Vineyards. New vines were planted in 2006, and the first vintage grown with biodynamic farming techniques was the 2010 vintage.



Picture: Christian G.E.Schiller with DeLoach Winemaker Brian Malony

Torii Mor Winery

Torii Mor Winery in Oregon was founded in 1993 by Donald Olson, MD who remains the owner to this day with his wife, Margie. The winery was initially a small project that was intended to showcase the fruit from the vineyard. Olson Estate Vineyard was planted in 1972 and is one of the oldest vineyards in the Dundee Hills AVA. Since its modest beginnings in 1993, with just over 1,000 cases, Torii Mor has blossomed into a super-premium winery that focuses on small lots of handcrafted vineyard designated Pinot Noir with an annual production of 15,000 cases.



Picture: Jon Tomaselli, Assistant Winemaker

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POSTED BY DR. CHRISTIAN G.E. SCHILLER AT 1:47 AM 
LABELS: CALIFORNIA, OREGON, PINOT NOIR

1 COMMENTS:

Toni Trebbiano said...

After reading this, I really wish I'd been to the Pinot Days in San Fran.. instead I can recommend this article about German and Austrian Pinot Noir: http://www.captaincork.com/Meinung/Golenia-Deutscher-gegen-Oesterreichischen-Spaetburgunder-Salwey-Adeneuer-Erben

JULY 5, 2011 6:45 AM

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