

CONNOISSEURS' GUIDE TO CALIFORNIA WINE



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TUESDAY TRIBUTES

05/15/2012

Tuesday Tributes

Chenin Blanc vs Riesling—And Other Random Thoughts

By Charles Olken

Hello to all you mothers out there who make your day into such a fine wine day. If there is ever a day when an aromatic white is in order, it is a sunny, breezy Sunday afternoon when we get together with several generations of mothers in several venues from brunch to dinner with a stop in between. And truth be told, we did enjoy a fair number of well-chosen whites on the day.

I must admit my bias upfront for Riesling as the bright and easy to like white of choice for this special day. But, having come back from the Loire Valley just a week ago, I also took along a few choice Chenin Blancs—of the dry persuasion mostly, and kind of had my own personal taste-off.

The Rieslings still lead the pack for me if I have to choose one variety. Nothing wrong with a good, off-dry Vouvray, but frankly, Riesling does off-dry a little better. On the other hand, the bone-dry Rieslings left me cold (no pun intended). Crisp they were, but less than pretty and a touch green and angular for their sins. The dry Chenins seem to wear their brightness and acidity a little better and to hang onto their aromatic sides more clearly. Took along a couple of fairly sweet wines, and here I will admit to a bit of a surprise. Loved the Riesling, but found a sturdier glory in the sweet, grapefruity, pineapply, ripe pear flavors of the sweet Vouvray.

I am tempted to declare a draw here, but that is really not fair. Each variety has its own unique charms, and while I have been remiss in not paying enough attention to well-made Chenins, I have to side with Chenin as the star of the day if only because it was like a visit with an old and long-lost friend.

Random Thoughts

--The auction firm, Sotheby's, has commissioned its own house Champagne which it will sell not just to the "swells" attending its auctions of the good and the fancy, but will offer online as well to all comers. Now, I get why restaurants and grocery stores may want their own privately branded merchandise, but an auction house going into the wine business seems a bit of a stretch. What's next? Bentley and Rolls Royce dealers? Tiffany's?

--Decanter Magazine, my choice for the top slick paper wine magazine in existence, is in the midst of running a poll for its readers about the so-called "natural wines". In its own little bit of irony, Decanter wants to know if wine labels, including those who would brand themselves as "natural", should disclose what is really in the wine. It has created a poll for its readers that includes the following choice: "(b) No, it's just a bunch of hippies spouting health and safety rubbish".

--From the "I could not make this up if I tried" file comes this press release for a new winery in the Napa Valley:

"Frenchie Winery, named for and inspired by Raymond Vineyards Proprietor Jean-Charles Boisset's French bulldog, debuted on May 9. "Frenchie was a gift to my beloved wife," Boisset said, "to ensure that she would always be in the company of a French gentleman."

"Frenchie Winery wants to ensure that canines are well taken care. Frenchie Winery is the only tasting room in the

world designed exclusively for dogs, including a special dog-friendly tasting bar”.

I wonder why Connoisseurs' Guide was not invited to the Grand Opening. We could have borrowed my daughter' dog, Cody Ross, a Springer Spaniel named for the baseball player, for the event. Now that his namesake is no longer with the San Francisco Giants, Cody the dog is no longer in demand on game days in these parts.



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For thirty-five years, Connoisseurs' Guide has been the authoritative voice of the California wine consumer. With readers in all fifty states and twenty foreign countries, the Guide is valued by wine lovers everywhere for its honesty and for its strong adherence to the principles of transparency, unbiased, hard-hitting opinions. Now, it is becoming the California winelover's most powerful online voice as well. And, our new features provide an unmatched array of advice and information for aficionados of every stripe.

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