



... WHEN THE CONVERSATION IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE WINE

SPRING 2010

Words from the Winemaker

HI FRIENDS,

One of the nicest things a winemaker can say to another winemaker is “you made a really good showing with ...”

I love when that happens, and it happened last year when I went to Paso Robles for a barrel tasting for winemakers whose wines are being aged in barrels from Tonnellerie D’Aquitaine of France. Arnaud Marjollet is the local rep, complete with French accent. Some 50 winemakers attended the annual get together. All were from central and northern California except one – me! Middle Ridge is the only winery in Southern California that uses his barrels.

The barrels come in a variety of sizes. I use the smaller, 225 liter size to maintain the ideal oxygen exchange through the staves of the barrels and to maximize the aromatic and flavor extractives that come from the oak. These small barrels provide the ideal wine-to-wood contact for creating great wines.

Arnaud specializes in European barrels. I’ve been using barrels from three forests in France – Allier, Voges, and Jupille. The oak from Allier is ideal for Cabernet Sauvignon – offering just a hint of oak essences without being overpowering. Voges barrels produce a sweetness in the wine that emphasizes the aromas of blueberries and other sweet fruit without making the wine smell like smoked salmon – ideal for Cabernet Franc. And Jupille barrels are a very tight grain which results in a slow oxygen exchange that works great for aging Merlot.

In addition to selecting the country and forest for Middle Ridge barrels, I also specify the amount of toasting that’s done to the interior of the barrel. Toasted oak helps break down certain harsher tannins into smoother tannins and offers aromas of vanilla, spice, leather or tobacco to the wine.

I really appreciate the barrels from Arnaud – the quality of the wine that comes out is wonderful! It’s nice to have a “secret sauce” component that no other winery in the Temecula Valley uses.

When I was invited to the winemakers’ barrel tasting, I chose NOT to take samples of my Paso Robles wines. Instead, I brought wine made from Temecula fruit. In a sense, I went to Paso Robles representing the Temecula Valley. Okay, an unofficial rep, but a darn good one!

I made a lot of good friends there, especially when they tasted the Middle Ridge 2008 Cabernet Franc. Several commented that it “made quite a good showing” ... which is wine-maker code for “very well done.” I was pleased to get such positive feedback and to make a good showing on behalf of the Temecula Valley.

I’ll be attending Arnaud’s barrel tasting again this year. I look forward to hooking up with old friends, making some new ones, and exchanging ideas on wine styles and techniques. And besides, I’ve got some awesome Temecula wines to share with the gang up north!



Until we meet again,
Good Health, Good Drink, Good Times

Chris Johnston
Winemaker & Bottle Washer



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SAUVIGNON BLANC STYLES & TASTES

The Sauvignon Blanc grape is one of the world's great white wine grapes. It offers distinctive flavors of citrus fruit (particularly grapefruit and lemon), melon, fig, herbs, gooseberries, and sometimes grassiness. Sauvignon Blanc is typically light, crisp and full of fruit. To identify your favorite Sauvignon Blanc, here are a few flavor profiles or styles to consider. Do you prefer:

- An earthy, minerally wine?
- Hints of grassiness or herbs, or tropical fruit?
- A creamier, not-so-zesty Sauvignon Blanc?

Old World

Wines of this style are best identified as the French Sancerre, or the White Bordeaux, or as the famed dessert wine Sauternes. The major distinction with this style is the focus on what the earth gives to the wine -- the French refer to this as *terroir*. French style Sauvignon Blancs are identifiable by their *minerally/steely* expressions. They are ideal wines for shellfish, especially steamed mussels, clams and oysters!



New World

Mostly from California, these wines focus more on the fruit than the earth -- they tend to be a bit more *grassy and herbaceous*, and less minerally/steely. These wines are great to pair with chicken, grilled vegetables and a tart sorbet.

Some Sauvignon Blancs stand out because of their *lemongrass, tropical fruit*, or intense *grapefruit* aromas and flavors. This style is New Zealand's wine claim to fame! The wines are very punchy with high acid structure, making them a good fit for sushi and Asian food, including many traditional and spicy Thai and Vietnamese dishes.

Another style variation can be found in the California fume blancs. These are Sauvignon Blancs that have been introduced to oak. The oak tends to soften the zestiness, lending a creaminess and an added spicy/honeyed expression. These wines do well with lighter dishes, and dishes that are cream based.

Recommendations

Old World: 2008 Sauvignon Blanc, Paso Robles

New World: 2008 Sauvignon Blanc, Temecula Valley, Cavanaugh Vineyards (no oak)

GREAT GIFT IDEAS

"A bottle of wine always seems to start a conversation."
Chris Johnston, Winemaker

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- Father's Day
- Any Day!

Give the gift of conversation by sharing a bottle of Middle Ridge wine. One- and two-bottle wood boxes help you gift in style. Order online on our website or pick up boxes at The Collective in Old Town Temecula.

You can also keep the conversation going all year round with a wine club membership -- it's the perfect gift!

