

Orangewood Wines

Small Wineries, Great Wines

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Introduction

Recently I was reminded of Mark Twain's "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court". It struck me that there was a clue to why so many of us find wine so compelling. See this month's topic for my thoughts.

Last month I reported that I was unable to make the company pilgrimage to California. Last week I was there by myself; visiting wineries and the California Family Winemakers tasting in San Francisco. I "ramble" my way through some of my trip.

Sadly, I learned that Rich Williams closed up his Diamondback distributorship. He had been running it for nearly 20 years. We stored our wines at the same commercial warehouse when Orangewood started, and we worked together on trade tastings for small distributors such as ourselves. Two of our new wineries (Miro Cellars and Airfield Estates) are from his portfolio. I will miss him.

Topic of the Month - Why is Wine so Fascinating?

"A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court" was a tale of time travel published over 100 years ago, in 1889. I last read it when I was in Grammar School over 50 years ago. Someone is transported back hundreds of years and survives partly by being able to recreate some "modern" technology. Even then technology was way beyond the knowledge of a single person. Just think about creating electricity. Much of this is metallurgy and machining of the nuts and bolts and ball bearings for pistons and cylinders and crank shafts with which steam and combustion engines can be built. Wire for generators, magnets, the list goes on. And that was technology from over 100 years ago. Mark Twain stretched the reality. Now stare into your cell phone and imagine trying to recreate the silicon wafers and etching machines that are a part of the fabrication process. The mind boggles.

On the other hand, given a clay vessel, some fruit mashed into it and left for a week or two voilà: wine!

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New Customers

[Casa Sedona Inn](#)

55 Hozoni Drive
Sedona, AZ 86336 ·
(928) 282-2938

[Little Cleo's](#)

5632 North 7th Street
Phoenix, AZ 85014
(602) 680-4044

[Vines & Hops](#)

4216 North Brown Avenue
Scottsdale, AZ 85251
(480) 748-4460
Opening today

[Zinburger](#)

1865 East River Road #101
Tucson, AZ 85718
(520) 299-7799

New Wineries

[Tribaut Schloesser](#),

familiarly referred to as "Champagne Tribaut", just had its first container arrive in the USA. The 100 year old family owned Champagne House is located near Epernay, the heart of the Champagne region. They produce a range of Champagnes that are for the meal, not just for celebration;

Rudimentary wine has been made for thousands of years. Of course the process has been "improved" since then, but the underlying chemistry is the same. I have been in the wine business for 15 years and I like to say that I have learned a lot over that time. In particular I learned how little I know about wine making. I have the utmost respect for those who can make wine, and for their suppliers - grape growers, barrel makers, yeast suppliers and bottle makers.

My point is that today's technology is beyond the grasp of one individual, whereas wine making is understandable. And, it's fascinating to try.

Rambling

When you travel through wine country by yourself there are no arguments about who is the designated driver. In addition, no one is suggesting you are taking the wrong route somewhere. The route I took from Napa to San Francisco was not the shortest, but it was a beautiful morning. I set off heading westerly, working my way south of Mount Veeder through the Carneros AVA (American Viticultural Area) that spans some of both Napa and Sonoma Counties. My intention was to get to Highway 101 so that I could cross the Golden Gate Bridge. Not all the roads are numbered, but the route was well signposted. I went past the Sonoma Raceway with the dial on 91.1FM - a jazz station playing the likes of Cannonball Adderley and Miles Davis. There was a little fog on the hill tops. I got a glimpse of the Oakland Bay Bridge but the Golden Gate Bridge stayed hidden until I was almost through the, presumably renamed, Robin Williams tunnel. Then it was across the bridge and working my way through the streets of San Francisco to the California Family Winemakers (CFW) tasting event. Rambling doesn't get any better than this.

The CFW hold tastings in San Francisco every year. This year it was held at Pier 27, where a conference hall is located near the end of Battery St and below Coit Tower. The organization boasts hundreds of wineries as members. Over 120 of these were at this tasting. Each one set up a table and bottles of their wine for tasting. The event runs from 12:00 - 5:00, with the first 2 hours reserved for trade members such as myself.

I had never been to such a massive tasting before. As I generally explain, I can try 6 - 10 wines in an afternoon, after that it is strictly recreational. I know that some people can do much better. I am always impressed.

So what was I doing at this event? I was there to meet the folks from some of the wineries that Orangewood represents. A chance to strengthen the

for blue jeans, not just black tie.

Miro Cellars is a pet project of Miroslav Tcholakov. He told me that he started this winery because he was looking for more challenge than provided by his day job at Trentadue Winery. He wanted to explore different varietals from different places. Based in Cloverdale, Sonoma, he is demonstrating that he is up to the challenge.

Airfield Estates is based on an old airfield near Prosser, Washington. They produce tasty, cost effective wines including some under a second label, "Lone Birch".

relationships that were already in place. There were three I had in mind. Mike Kuimelis, owner and winemaker for Mantra Wines spotted me as soon as I went in the exhibition hall. He has been supplying wine to us for over 10 years now. He has wonderful Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Zinfandel from his parents' and other vineyards in Sonoma. I was expecting to see Jim Gullett - a former president of CFW and a continuing staunch supporter. Jim and his wife, Suzy, started Vino Noceto, the winery that inadvertently launched Orangewood into the wine business. At the table, instead of Jim, was Lindy Gullett, his daughter. Lindy is taking more and more responsibility at the winery, giving her parents a chance to ease off after 30 years of getting their winery going. I had not met her before, so this was a great chance to get to know one another. My third visit was to Harvey Posert who was manning the Vine Cliff table. This winery we have represented for a little more than a year. We agreed to find a time for him to visit Arizona again this year. Then Jeff Shaeffer spotted me. We worked together a few years ago when he was importing an Australian wine. Now he is doing national distribution for Meeker Winery in Sonoma. A great guy. I stopped by a number of tables of people who had emailed me. I apologized for not having room for more wineries in our portfolio. Then it was off to Oakland airport, a beer and a flight home.

It's a dirty job, but someone has to do it!

The Rambler rambles on...

Cheers,

Richard (newsletter writer) and Laurie (editor)
Orangewood Wines

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