

Orangewood Wines

Small Wineries, Great Wines

Volume 5, Issue 9

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Introduction

A month ago we were still in over 100° F with air conditioning running day and night. Now we have windows open day and night, and I have shaken the dust off my fleece sweaters.

It's nearly Halloween, but further up the supply chain Thanksgiving and Christmas plans are already mostly locked in.

OND (October/November/December), traditionally the high point for wine sales across the country, has been slow starting this year. We have only just begun exceeding last year's numbers.

Topic of the Month - Staff Tastings

The Orangewood sales team meets every Monday to taste wine. I know it's a tough job. We taste for a number of reasons. First is for us to ensure that we know what the wines in our portfolio taste like - training. Second is evaluation of candidate wines - product research. Lastly we compare our wines to competitive offerings - market research. In each case we take our own notes on colour, aroma, taste and finish as well as an overall impression. We designate a consensus note taker for notes that become part of our company knowledge base. We keep the number of wines that we taste to 10 - 12 each week. After that our taste buds are pretty much numb. I am, by the way, in total awe of the sommeliers and wine store owners who taste dozens of wines every day; even when I am visiting wineries, after three wineries everything is purely recreational drinking; but that's another topic.

Our tastings always begin with the black glass tasting I talked about two months ago - when our senses should be at their peak. After that the format varies. Sometimes



Staff Tasting - photo courtesy of Ryan DeWitt

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New Customers

Art House Centro

186 North Meyer Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85701
(520) 620-1725

Cata Vinos

3063 North Alvernon Way
Tucson, AZ 85712
(520) 323-3063

Dante's Fire

2526 East Grant Road
Tucson, AZ 85716
(520) 382-9255

Elk's Club

1206 North Beeline Highway
Payson, AZ 85541
(928) 474-2572

Il Vinaio

270 West Main Street
Mesa, AZ 85201
(480) 649-6476

La Cocina

201 North Court Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85701
(520) 622-0351

Midtown Liquor

339 South Stone Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85701

Vivace

6440 North Campbell Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85718
(520) 795-7221

we taste wines from a winery in the winery's preferred order. Sometimes we taste all the same varietal in increasing price order - in theory each should be better than the previous wine. Other times we will taste a single varietal blind. For this we wrap the bottles in silver foil, mix them up and mark each with a letter. We then taste in alphabetical order. This avoids us being distracted by the label and our expectations for a brand. It also allows me to slip in wines from a candidate winery, from a competitive winery or just a different varietal. When we are done we talk about what the wines might be and our preferences. I am pleased to say we are all fully humbled by the process. Someone said that a wine expert is one who has managed to avoid blind tasting!

Being knowledgeable about our wines, familiar with the competition and selecting only great wines for our portfolio is serious business. I wouldn't want anyone to think that drinking on a Monday afternoon might be fun!

Rambling

Picking a time to hike into the Grand Canyon is tricky. In the summer the temperatures at the Colorado River are in the hundreds, so staying hydrated is a problem. In the winter the temperatures at the rim are below freezing, making staying warm and maintaining footing the problems. Robert, our trip organizer, goes for September/October and February/March timeframes which have their own challenges. Last weekend was a case in point. With reservations for the group of 20 made a year ago, picking the ideal weather is not an option. Instead, as the trip approaches, we are watching all the weather media to figure out what to wear and bring.

This year the forecast was for thunder showers across the entire 4 day excursion. Shortly after arriving at Cliff Dwellers, the Marble Canyon hotel where we stayed prior to the hike, we were treated to "shock and awe" courtesy of a passing cumulo nimbus. Flash-Boom-Dump. Fortunately we were already installed in our rooms and tasting through a lineup of **Avennia** wines. The next morning we hiked to Phantom Ranch from the North Rim - a 14 mile hike with a 6000 feet vertical drop. It rained on Laurie and me a little bit, but the folks behind us have video of Robert emptying out his boots after wading through a stream that had been the trail an hour earlier. Everyone got down safely and in time to taste the selection of Petit Sirah



Grand Canyon from
North Rim

Wild Vine Uncorked

4920 South Gilbert Road
Chandler, AZ 85249
(480) 883-3492

New Sales People

Mark Nowicki worked for 14 years in the mining industry before becoming a successful restaurateur. He started and ran the D'Vine Bistro Wine Bars in Mesa and Chandler until someone offered him a deal he couldn't refuse. Retirement has been boring so he is bringing his expertise to Orangewood Wines. He is responsible for the Tempe and Chandler and the adjacent South Phoenix.

Note on the Pictures

I have put a web page with larger versions of the pictures [here](#).

we had packed down. An extra challenge at Phantom Ranch was a lack of running water. While there was fresh drinking water, there was none for showers or toilet flushing. Fortunately this lack of showers did not affect our ability to enjoy the aromas of the wines.



Cabernet Tasting - photo courtesy of Robert Foster

On our rest day we paid respects to our fellow hiker, Mike, who had died of a heart attack 4 weeks earlier. With Katherine we visited his favorite spot on the Clear Creek trail - a place to sit and watch the Colorado river and the two bridges across it. He used to meditate there for hours. We spread his ashes there. In our minds he is still sitting in that spot.

Later, as we sat waiting for our pre-dinner tasting of Cabernet Sauvignon, the thunder reverberated around us. Someone observed that it sounded just like the thunder of a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand years ago...

The Rambler hikes on...

Cheers,

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

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