

Orangewood Wines

Small Wineries, Great Wines

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Introduction

We have hit that time of the year when we have neither the heater nor the air conditioning running. Some people call it the Spring Equinox. I think of it as the time to adjust my wine cellar temperature up by a degree, and to start looking around for my polo shirts, shorts and Birkenstocks.

In last month's introduction, I worried that the end of the football season would result in lower readership. I am pleased to report that readership stayed steady. Thank you.

New Sales Consultant - Lee Andresen

Lee recently retired from a lifetime of sales positions and completed his term as chairman of the Phoenix Chapter of the American Wine Society, where he was a proponent of Arizona wines. Lee found that he was missing something. He realized that now would be the time to apply his selling skills to his passion. We are delighted to help him to help us. He is focusing on Old Town Scottsdale and convincing us to add Arizona wine to our portfolio.

Rambling

One of the benefits of being in the wine business is being able to see what the general public rarely gets to see. You can enjoy these sights vicariously by reading these newsletters! A couple of weeks ago I agreed to meet one of our sales people, Jimmy, who was driving around with Eric Titus (Titus Vineyards), at Razz's Restaurant. As I arrived at the agreed time, I learned that things were running late. Thus prepared, I called Razz - he usually has the door locked - and he let me in. Razz has a preference for Santana and the Rolling Stones as background music, so this generally suits my mood. I let Razz know that things were running behind. He was philosophical - that means they are doing well, he said. So we talked about various things and I watched as he did food prep for the evening. I learned a lot. Over the next ninety minutes I watched him preparing a variety of ingredients. Most of the preparation involved a knife, a very sharp knife and during this process he sharpened it several times. I noticed that Razz still has a full set of fingers. When using that knife he has his fingers well curled. I used to chop onions by first cutting them on the equator. Razz first cuts the

onion through the poles. Then he divides the result in half, removes the poles and an outer layer or two, then carefully slices the onion along the longitudes towards the pole, but not quite getting there so that it just barely hangs together. Now he turns it and chops through, generating perfect 5 millimeter cubes of onion to be used for "Je ne sais quoi".

While Razz is prepping he is dealing with a constant barrage of phone calls. As a business owner he can't ignore any of them, but most are junk, although one is a reservation for the evening. A walk-in interruption is someone trying to sell hood cleaning. Who knew hoods over restaurant stoves needed cleaning, but I learned that hoods get disgusting, despite daily cleaning of the filters. Razz gets them cleaned 3 times a year. The cleaner, who Razz had used since he first opened a restaurant on Cave Creek Road in 1978, had gotten sick and could not do the work anymore. The walk-in closed a sale.

Carrots, peppers, chives, Italian beef... I notice that whatever he is preparing, Razz examines it very carefully before starting work. Chives, for example: he lays them out and picks out the ones that don't make his cut. Who knows what his algorithm is? Not round enough? A little brown? Too leaf like? As you know, it's tough to be brief about these things. We also had a conversation about wine in cooking. I had always used the principle that if I didn't want to drink it, I should not use it for cooking. Razz's theory is that if you can drink it, drink it, if not, use it to cook with. His onion soup is a testament to this approach. Try it next time you are there. It's all from otherwise undrinkable wine. By this time the staff have started showing up. Jimmy and Eric are still doing a good job somewhere, so I ramble on...

The Rambler rambles on at Razz's...

Cheers,

Richard (newsletter writer) and Laurie (editor)
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