

Orangewood Wines

Small Wineries, Great Wines

Orangewood Wines' Newsletter

Volume 4 Issue 13 October 23, 2011

Introduction

As we moved from September into October, I have been reading the tea leaves with extra care. Every day there is talk about a double dip recession and I am trying my best to confirm or deny this. We were early in predicting the first dip, so I figure that wine sales are the scout ahead of the army. I compared September sales to previous years and we did not see solid sales growth, but it wasn't too shabby either. Sometimes sales were strong, sometimes weak. What does all this mean? I don't know. We may or may not have a second dip. Maybe October will be more enlightening.

Box Score

New Restaurants:	2
New Retail/Wine Bar Outlets	3
New Sales People	0
New Wineries	1

Contents

New Wine Stores/Wine Bars
New Restaurants
New Winery
Wine Terminology of the Month – Varietal Correctness
Rambling

New Restaurants

Calistro – A California Bistro

18221 North Pima Road (In DC Ranch)
Scottsdale, AZ 85255
(480) 502-0325

River City Grill

600 West 3rd Street,
Yuma, AZ 85364
(928) 782-7988

New Wine Stores/Wine Bars

Bashas' in Carefree

36889 North Tom Darlington Road
Carefree, AZ 85377
(480) 488-1797

Fry's Signature Stores

10450 North 90th Street (at Shea)
Scottsdale, AZ 85258
(480) 661-0001
20427 North Hayden Road (at Thompson Peak)
Scottsdale, AZ 85255
(480) 419-2240

New Winery – Don Manuel Villafañes

At the beginning of the year the importer that supplied us with Argentinean wine decided he liked one of our competitors better. Since then we have pursued a number of alternatives, but always the tasting results missed the target we had in mind. Finally, a broker we have worked with before – Jeff Schaeffer – brought me samples of Don Manuel Villafañes wines. At the staff tasting we were delighted with them. They are from the Mendoza region of Argentina and have a history going back several generations. This wine arrives this week. I suggest you get some before we drink it all ourselves!

Wine Terminology of the Month – Varietal Correctness

One of the burdens of being a wine distributor is that wineries keep wanting to send me wine to try. Generally, I decline, but from time to time the winery is sufficiently intriguing that I allow samples to be sent. I taste them with the sales staff at our weekly meetings. Sometimes we are trying a wine and it tastes good, but, when I ask the question “Does it taste like the varietal it is supposed to be?” Often the answer is “No”. We expect a Cabernet Sauvignon to taste like one and we expect a Chardonnay to taste like one. Sure, there are differences based on where the grapes come from and what the weather was like for the vintage, but, still, there should be some resemblance to its stated wine type. The expression used to summarize this is “Varietal Correctness”.

If you are opening a bottle of X for the first time, how would you know whether it was varietally correct? You wouldn't. That is why we have to practice so much! I, for one, have a lot of difficulty putting names to the aromas and tastes of the wines I drink. However when someone suggests something, “I think there is some tangerine in the taste” this will focus my senses and allow me to confirm or deny the suggestion. You don't need someone to make suggestions, though group tasting is a lot of fun; instead, ask your local wine store to recommend a book or chart that has summaries of aromas and flavors to expect in the various varietals. Of course it's more complex than just using a single list of flavours for Pinot Noir, there are big difference based on where the wine is from – that is the terroir. Still, read what you can, taste the wine, see if what you read applies to the wine you are tasting. Try each characteristic on for size. Can you detect plum, strawberry, leather? If nothing seems to match you can say, this wine doesn't seem to be varietally correct. Try it, a lot.

Rambling

Usually I do not talk about sad things in the newsletter, but I wanted to say that Bacchus, the wine store in Kierland Commons, closed its doors for the last time at the end of September. This was a small “mom and pop” wine store with the additional attraction that “mom” was colleague of mine when I was in the corporate world. Liz and Jerry Jones and their son, Jeff, had been putting untold hours into this venture for a while. For a time Liz was the primary wine buyer but she was only there on Sundays. She and I spent a lot of Sunday afternoons working through the Orangewood portfolio, often resulting in getting some precious space on their wall. More recently, we have been holding our weekly staff meeting at Bacchus and including Jerry or Jeff, so they had an early taste of wines that were arriving. All this worked well; they were one of our top five customers over the 10 years we have been in business. (Ah, the magic of computerized accounting systems.) For the time that I worked with them they were doing what I expected a small wine store to do. They would taste our wines and provide feedback on whether their customers would be interested in them. How did they know that? If you go into a good wine store for the first time, you should be greeted by someone who is knowledgeable about wine and interested

in what you are looking for. (Something to go with Penne a la Arrabiata, that would be very nice.) They will make a recommendation based on what you tell them. The next time you go into the store you can tell them what you thought of the wine and what you are looking for this week (something that would suit my mother-in-law's palate). Over time, the person at the store will get to understand the kind of things you like – and, hence, the kinds of wines they need to buy from me. The two sets of relationships that the wine store has as a buyer and a seller are particularly important for Orangewood, as we represent wineries that only a few people have ever heard of. When you make 1,000 – 50,000 cases of wine each year you are not going to be buying advertising time during the Super Bowl. Instead, you rely on small distributors to hand sell the wines to their customers who, in turn, hand sell to theirs.

Anyway, Arizona has one less such wine store as Liz, Jerry and Jeff focus on the consumption end of the business. Bottoms up!

The Rambler rambles on...

Richard (newsletter writer), Laurie (editor) and Jim Wallace (another writer and editor)
Orangewood Wines