

Orangewood Wines

Small Wineries, Great Wines

Orangewood Wines' Newsletter

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Introduction

What do you write about when you have nothing to write about? Unlike professional journalists, for me the answer is nothing. So, for those of you who thought there was a hiccup in the email distribution system, worry not: you did not miss an issue.

July is the slowest month of the year for wine buying in Arizona, and 2013 did not disappoint. Well, it did disappoint, but no worse than expected. Now we are into August and looking anxiously for signs that summer is coming to an end. We have had a couple of cool mornings here in Cave Creek – cool enough to open windows for a few minutes. We have had a week and a half of stunning sales. Some kids are back to school, so we are dodging school buses once more. But we know that summer is not over yet. The days continue with temperatures close 110F, and those sales may have been a blip, not a trend. And I had better shut up or this paragraph will move to the Rambling section!

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New Sales Representative

Pete Gulatto has been in wine sales for over 30 years - much of it in Arizona. He lives in Scottsdale but travels to Payson weekly during the summer months. Pete “carries the book” of several other small distributors, allowing him to make his small northern AZ territory worthwhile. I am delighted to have his skills and knowledge to plug up one of the holes in our coverage.

Wine Topic of the Month: “Wine Serious”

When you go into a restaurant and ask about wine there is a spectrum of responses. At one end of the spectrum is “red or white?” Early on when I was the only sales person, I was walking into restaurants to see whether they might be susceptible to my sales presentation. I asked what kind of wine they currently serve and got exactly the response “red or white”. It was accompanied by a flick of the refrigerator’s sliding door to reveal the gallon containers of red and white wine. At the other end of the spectrum is “what kind of wine are you looking for, can I help you?” This end of the spectrum includes restaurants with wines you

may not recognize, but with staff who are familiar with the wines. These are the folks who ask what you plan to eat and whether you had any thoughts about what kind of wine you want to drink. They are able to make suggestions if you have no thoughts, or can fine tune your selection based on your ideas or inclinations. The enthusiasm doesn't have to come from a sommelier; it can be the restaurant's wine buyer – in a “mom and pop” place this might be Mom or Pop. Geno started a pizza place (Nello's) way back when. He was enthusiastic about wine and enjoyed tasting, drinking, buying and selling it. He always had interesting wine for his customers and he learned their tastes. He sold a lot of wine, all of it good, some of it ours. We call Nello's and other places that are passionate about providing a great wine experience “Wine Serious”.

Wine Serious places recognize that some wine drinkers are interested in trying new things and in the stories behind the wines. They take time to evaluate the wines they sell and are willing to share what they learn with their customers. These are the people we sell to. They didn't just become wine serious overnight. They are as passionate about the wines they offer as the wineries we represent are about the wines they make. Our job is to learn about our wines and wineries from our suppliers and to teach our customers what we learn. To be able to do a good job of understanding our wines we limit our portfolio to about thirty wineries. That gives us a chance to meet all the winery people and to taste all their wines. Orangewood's sales team meets every week to visit with someone from a winery (Brenda Lynch from Mutt Lynch winery is here this week), taste all our wines of a particular varietal, check new vintages and evaluate candidate wineries. Not all at the same time. We are not necessarily wine connoisseurs, but we are wine enthusiasts – enthusiastic about wines and the people who make them. We are also excited to supply wine to customers who are “Wine Serious”.

Rambling

Twelve years ago, Laurie and I and eight other vacation-minded folk flew to Italy where we had rented a villa for a fortnight. We all committed to drinking at least one bottle of wine a day, and we did meet our commitments – and more. In fact, when on vacation a glass or two of wine at lunch and a glass or two at dinner pretty much meets that commitment, so, fortunately, it was a minimum requirement not a maximum. We have been trying to do this vacation again. We thought 2011 would be good as the 10 year anniversary, but that didn't happen. We hoped again for 2013, but a look at the airfares had us all blanching. Instead we drank lots of Sangiovese and Chianti and waved our arms around a lot when we spoke. We also took a couple of trips to the east coast to meet up with friends we had not seen for twelve years. Pam and Dick in Philadelphia was one trip; Diane and Nancy in Boston was the other. In both places we visited a few of the local sites, ate some fine meals, drank some wine and beer and reminisced about the trip in 2001. It would have been nice to be in Tuscany, but these friendships are very valuable, and we scratched some of that itch.

August will be exciting. As the Phoenix area heads towards summer, our customers' business slows down and, to address that, they reduce their inventories to improve cash flow. We are whiplashed by the double whammy and can finish with too much inventory as we hit summer. Conversely, in August business picks up for our customers and they need to increase their inventories.

So, we need to increase our inventory, but we don't want to be too far ahead.
Yee Haw, here we go!

The Rambler rambles on...

Cheers,

Richard

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

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