

The Oenophile Blog

“Life is too short to drink bad wine”. We don’t know who said that, but it accurately reflects our philosophy. Unbiased information and opinions on wines tasted by the editors of LuxuryWeb Magazine. A new issue is published semi-monthly.

by Manos Angelakis

Interesting, lighter summer wines arrived at our offices a couple months ago. We tasted them accompanying a variety of dishes, sometimes pairing whites with what would normally require a heavier red wine, and reds with lighter meat and fish dishes. We found the acidity of the whites helping to cut the fattiness of the heavier meats, thus making the dish easily digestible, while the red wines added zest to cold meat or fish dishes. Not every pairing was 100% successful, but most worked to our benefit.

Particularly nice were:

From California: **Turner Road’s Appellation Series** a quartet of 2005 **Lodi Pinot Grigio**, 2004 **Central Coast Merlot**, 2004 **Paso Robles Cabernet Sauvignon**, and 2005 **Central Coast Chardonnay**. We were rather surprised at the versatility of these wines. For example, one evening, the Pinot Grigio paired very well with Breast of Duck in a savory Pedro Ximénez and Cherry Sauce, while at another evening, the Merlot was a worthy accompaniment to a Veal Tenderloin with Herbed Vinaigrette. They can be found in many discounters at under \$10 per bottle. We rate the two whites at LWM87 points, and the two reds at LWM86 points. Really nice wines for the low price.

From Western Australia: **Houghton Wine Company** is one of the better wineries of the Swan Valley, with a heritage dating to 1836. We tasted five distinctive wines, two straight varietals, and three varietal blends. Most interesting were the two white blends. The 2005 **Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc** blend was particularly aromatic with melon, citrus and a hint of smokiness, while the 2005 **Chardonnay and Verdelho** blend had lush tropical flavors and aromas with a round full palate. Verdelho is a Portuguese varietal mostly cultivated in Madeira, and finding it in an Australian blend is very unusual. Both white blends paired well with grilled trout-based dishes with rich buttery sauces. The 2005, 100% **Chardonnay** varietal was a bit yeasty, due to barrel on the lees aging, and tasted more like a French wine than Australian. The 2004 **Shiraz** had berry and plum aromas with violet and mint highlights and complex red forest berry, chocolate and spice flavors. Finally, the only bottle that had a distinctive winery, Bordeaux variety feel was the 2004 **Cabernet, Shiraz and Merlot** blend. Red forest fruits, cocoa, and toasty oak dominated the nose of this wine that was full on the palate with tangy spice, plum and cassis flavors. At a suggested retail of \$15.00 per bottle (many discounted from \$11 to \$12), all are a bargain. We rate the whites LWM85 to 89 points, the Shiraz at LWM89 points and the Cabernet, Shiraz and Merlot blend at LWN86 points.

From France: 2004 **Chateau de Fontain-Audon, Sancerre**. 100% Sauvignon Blanc. Crisp and clean with nice citrus and tropical fruit flavors and elegant minerality. 2004 is a return to the leaner, fresher style of Loire whites. A perfect match for oysters and asparagus in a cream sauce. Not an inexpensive wine but well worth every penny. Rated at LWM92 points. It does not seem to be a long life wine it will probably peak by 2008; drink it now, and enjoy.

In addition, at the recent tasting of Riesling & Co., World Tour 2006, I had the chance to taste Rieslings from the exceptional 2005 vintage. This is another banner year for wines from the Mosel, Rheingau, and Rheinhessen. If you like Riesling wines, 2005 is an excellent choice to purchase and add to your cellar as the 2006 vintage, all of which is still on the vine, looks like a much lesser year. Following a very hot July, August was cold and rainy. The temperatures went up the first days of September, but the grapes are still waterlogged and, in some vineyards gray rot has appeared. So 2004 and 2005 are the better years currently available in wine stores, and should be laid down.

At the tasting, the following wines caught my attention:

From **Weingut Joh. Jos. Prüm**. 2005 Riesling Spätlese, Graacher Himmelreich and 2005 Riesling Spätlese, Wehlener Sonnenuhr.

From **Weingut Schmitts Kinder**. A dry 2005 Riesling Spätlese Großes Gewächs, Randersackerer Pfülsen.

From **Weingut S. A. Prüm**. The entire 2005 line - from the less expensive to the honeyed Beerenauslese is worth purchasing. Especially nice, the off-dry 2005 Riesling Kabinett, Blue Slate; the 2005 Riesling Spätlese, Graacher Himmelreich; 2005 Riesling Auslese, Wehlener Sonnenuhr; and the previously mentioned 2005 Riesling Beerenauslese, Graacher Dompropst Erste Lage.

From **Gunderloch**. 2005 Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel, Nackenheim Rothenberg.

From **Schloss Johannisberger Weingüter**. The entire 2005 line.

From **Schloss Reinhartshausen**. Both the 2004 Riesling First Growth, and the 2005 Riesling Spätlese, from the Erbach Schlossberg vineyards.

From **Balthasar Röss**. 2003 Riesling Erstes Gewächs, Hattenheimer Nussbrunnen and 2005 Riesling Kabinett, Hattenheimer Schützenhaus.

Finally, from **Weingut Robert Weil**. 2005 Riesling Kabinett, and 2005 Riesling Spätlese.

Cheers!

Editor's Note: In our very busy lifestyles, few individuals have the time or budget to personally taste and evaluate the thousands of wines a typical wine merchant offers or has access to every year. By necessity therefore, people look to us, the "professionals", to guide them in their selections. Professionally evaluating wines is a very subjective exercise. Each critic's personal preferences and prejudices play a major factor in their recommendations. We at The Oenophile Blog, taste wines every day and describe them in our stories. These suggestions are only a starting point for you, the consumer. Ultimately, it is your decision to either purchase or not our recommendations.

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