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# THEWINEBLOG

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2009

SLIDESHOW

## A New Wine Festival comes to Toronto – SALUTE!

For many years, the Bloor Yorkville region of Toronto played host to Sante: The Bloor-Yorkville Wine Festival. This year there is a new kid in town and it is called Salute Wine and Food Festival. Although there are similarities between these two events – Salute runs during the same week that Sante once occupied and there are some similarities in the types of tastings, the similarities do stop there. Salute has a more intimate, close knit feel to it and has some extra diversity to the events that Sante has not considered in the past. Three notable differences this year were a modern day's Farmer's Market where guests could sample delicious servings of Ontario wines, cheeses and produce. Chef Chuck Hughes of Food Network will man the BBQ and offer tantalizing treats. HGTV host, Carson Arthur, will create a special lounge for the evening which will be up for auction with proceeds going to the Toronto East General Hospital Foundation.

The third notable difference I felt in Salute is the scale of the big industry tasting held on the Thursday. In the past, it would be impossible to get through even one third of the industry tasting due to the sheer number of wineries and the wines they have available. With the Salute tasting, although the number of wineries was similar in size, it did not feel as large scale and, as a result, much more manageable. The focus for this year's festival were the wineries of Prince Edward County and Argentina. Having recently been through an Argentinian tasting, I decided to focus on the main area and the Prince Edward County group which is one of my favourite Ontario wine regions.

Down in the main area there were three wines that really intrigued me – one from France, one from Portugal and one from Chile. From France, the winemaker of Domaine Bourbon was there to talk to us



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and showcase a couple of really great red wines. The wine that I enjoyed the most was the Julienas 2007 which is made solely from Gamay grapes. Gamay is the native grape of Beaujolais, where the winery is located, and it tends to produce some of the lightest red wines available on the market. In Ontario, we have a few good examples of Gamay Noir but Beaujolais is recognized as being heads and tails above most other wine producing regions for their Gamay 's. What I tend to find is that Gamay Noir produced in Beaujolais have more variety in their flavours, more ability to age for a longer period of time and – all around – are extremely food friendly on a variety of levels. The Julienas 2007 fit all of that description to a tee – the list of possible food pairings was as long as my arm. Everything from burgers to pasta with red sauce to pizza to cheese and pate would pair beautifully with the wide variety of flavours that were pouring out from this glass. In terms of the actual wine, the Julienas 2007 was medium bodied and largely fruity in nature – lots of cherry and raspberry flavours – with next to no tannins because it is not aged in oak. The winery itself says the wine could easily be cellared for three to five years, which might be possible if you buy enough because this is one of those wines that you could not have enough of.

The wine from Portugal – from Sogevinus Fine Wines – is one of two white wines I found at the beginning of the tasting that were very impressive. Although Portugal is known for great Port and amazing red wines, there are some truly wonderful white wines that are coming from this country. Perfect levels of acidity, fruit and mineral ... light and lively the whole way through...Portuguese white wines are unique unto themselves and deserve a very serious look. The Agnusdei Albarino Rias Baixas 2008 was still slightly underchilled making it easier to distinguish the aromas of fruit and herbs. You can tell that this is one of those wines that, when chilled to the proper level, is incredibly complex. The flavours were predominantly tropical fruit balanced with great acidity and a slightly lingering finish. There are slight hints of anise (licorice) and aromatic herbs in the mid palate to the finish. The flavours that really stood out were apricot, pineapple and slight hints of toffee. If you did not want to have this at the beginning of a meal, this wine would pair rather well with a fruit based dessert too due to the complexity of aromas and flavours. If you want to pair this with a main dish, try seafood, fish or white meats or, for the more adventurous, Sushi.

The final international wine that was really impressive hails from

Chile – from the Vina Cono Sur. This is one of those wines that is quite easily found in local LCBO stores and is always at a very reasonable price. Viognier is one of those grapes that has become a “go to” grape for me in the summer. While I may enjoy a Pinot Grigio or a Rose wine every now and then in the summer, Viognier has become a very versatile, easy to pair wine and is just as great as a summer sipper on its own. Just to give you an idea, this particular Viognier – the Cono Sur Bicycle Viognier 2008 – was the first wine I sampled this afternoon and it was still lingering hours later when we left. The aromas pouring out of this glass were apricots, citrus fruit, peaches and slight floral note at the end. The wine itself was fresh and lively – with complimentary flavours to those found in the aromas – and although it may seem hard to pair, my suggestions are to head to the Far East to find good pairings – Thai, Indian and Chinese foods seem to be the way to go with this wine.

Now on to our amazing local wines – mostly from Prince Edward County but with one Niagara on the Lake winery added in for their unique Gamay. Chateau des Charmes has become known in local circles for having a very unique clone of Gamay – the Gamay Droit. In 1982, Château des Charmes' founder Paul-Michel Bosc, while conducting pioneering clonal selection research at his vineyard in Niagara-on-the-Lake, noticed a single Gamay Noir vine that exhibited some interesting and unique characteristics. Most noticeably, the vine shoots grew in an upright ("droit") position. Propagation of this single vine began immediately and culminated almost two decades later in the granting of international Plant Breeder's Rights to Château des Charmes. "Canada's first vinifera" was born. Gamay Droit produces grapes that ripen on average about ten days later than Gamay Noir with higher sugar levels and greater colouring matters. The result is a red wine with more body, alcohol and flavour concentration. The 2007 vintage of Chateau des Charmes St David's Bench Vineyard Gamay Droit is everything that vintage promises to be combined with everything this clone promises to be. Gamay's are typically fruity and full of flavour – this one is all that with the added kick of spice and herbs. I would not normally describe a light red wine – like any Gamay – as a powerhouse wine but, in the case of Chateau des Charmes' 2007 Gamay Droit that is the only way to do this wine justice.

Now out to Prince Edward County, where there are plenty of fine wines to choose from. First stop is The Grange of Prince Edward – a

place that has always made interesting Gamay Noir and, this year, saw a Chardonnay added to my favourites. The Chardonnay is becoming a Vintages release in June of 2009 and has a very pale straw colour indicating that it did not come into contact with any oak. The aromas are mostly melon, peach and apple while the flavours are a continuation of the apple with some minerality to give it extra dimension. The Gamay has always been one of my favourites and the 2007 vintage is no exception. This particular vintage has this lovely combination of floral and red berry aromas that continue on to the palate and add a cinnamon overtone to the taste. White meats are not typically paired with red wines but, in this particular instance, Roast Turkey would be an excellent pairing with this wine.

Not all that far from The Grange is a wonderful little winery called Rosehall Run Vineyards. Always one of my favourites with great white wines and very interesting red wines, today my favourite was their 2007 Cuvee County Chardonnay. Rather than being a straight Chardonnay, the Cuvee County Chardonnay is a blend of Chardonnay and Chardonnay Musque. The Chardonnay Musque gives an added dimension and a slight hit of sweetness that most Chardonnay's do not. One of my favourite flavours of the summer is corn on the cob and this wine reminds me of it – Peaches and cream are the predominant flavours then comes the distinctive minerality that most County Chardonnay's have followed by floral and caramel near the end. This wine could pair with a large variety of foods but I would stick with chicken, corn and cream based pasta's.

There were a couple of other wineries from Prince Edward County that were quite spectacular that day but I actually want to wait for a continuation of this blog before I present them to you. Stay tuned for reviews on Bergeron Estate Winery's 2007 Gamay Noir and Thirty Three Vines 2007 Cabernet Franc. Reviews to be posted by the end of this week.

POSTED BY ONTARIO WINE DIVA AT 4:10 PM

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