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08.05.2009

The Last Drops: Miscellaneous Tasting Notes from IPNC 2009

I like to tell people that when it comes to reviewing wines, my tasting notes are the least important part of the wine review. As you know, I like to focus on story: the people, places, and history behind a wine.

But sometimes, I get the opportunity to taste a lot of really damn good wine, and I can't simply do individual reviews of all the wines because I haven't got the time. So on rare occasions, I write a little report like this one.

If you recall from last week and the prior weekend, I spent a couple of days at the [International Pinot Noir Celebration](#) in Oregon's Willamette Valley. This idyllic little festival is hard to beat when it comes to a weekend wine experience. In addition to the structured seminars, winery tours, and al fresco tastings, attendees get treated to some really fantastic sit down meals, most of which take place out on lawns and in the shadows of some majestic oak trees.

And at these meals, the wines flow freely. Carried from their secret stashes deep in the backs of refrigerated trucks by snappily dressed sommeliers, bottles of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Champagne, and of course, Burgundy. Occasionally, these wines are also older vintages.

But the older vintages really come out at the penultimate and most popular event of the weekend, the Salmon Bake dinner, where in addition to the normal flow of wine, winemakers and collectors break out some amazing bottles from their cellars to share with friends, family, and random strangers (like me). It's enough to make a wine geek weak in the knees.

So, apologies for the litany of tasting notes, yes they're boring, but some of my readers have been begging for these.

Here goes.

SPARKLING

NV Schloss Gobelsburg Brut Reserve Sparkling Wine, Austria

Bright gold in the glass with medium-fine bubbles, this wine smells of tart apples and raw quince. In the mouth it is crisp and tart with bright apple and cooked quince flavors with a hint of crushed stones. Score: between **8.5** and **9**.

NV Rene Mure Cremant D'Alsace Sparkling Wine, Alsace, France

Pale gold in the glass with fine bubbles, this wine has a stony, mineral nose with bits of lemon peeking through. In the mouth it is crisp and zesty with lemon juice and warm sourdough bread flavors that linger through the finish. Score: around **8.5**.

2001 Soter Vineyards Brut Rosée Sparkling Wine, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Pale salmon colored in the glass with medium-fine bubbles, this wine smells beautifully of hibiscus, rosehips, and a crystalline minerality that is quite arresting. In the mouth it is tart with rosehips and that same mineral quality, that gives it a glassy, smooth quality. Very tasty. Poured out of magnum. Score: around **9**

2003 Soter Vineyards Brut Rosé Sparkling Wine, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Pale salmon in color with fine bubbles, this wine has a crisp nose of orange peel, strawberries, and hibiscus aromas. In the mouth it is bright and juicy with cranberry, orange peel, hibiscus, pink grapefruit juiciness, and a nice refreshing kumquat note on the long finish. Score: around **9**

2005 Soter Vineyards Brut Rosé Sparkling Wine, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Pale, baby pink in the glass with a hint of orange to its medium fine bubbles, this wine has an almost savory nose, with a creamy concoction of meaty floral aromas that is difficult to describe. In the mouth the wine is juicy with bright strawberry and raspberry fruit, with strong hibiscus and rose qualities to the wine as it finishes crispy and beautiful. A lovely example of the form. Score: between **9** and **9.5**.

1997 Soter Vineyards Blanc de Blancs Sparkling Wine, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Pale gold in the glass with medium bubbles, this wine has a nose of toasted sourdough bread with hints of set stone and lemon curd. In the mouth it is smooth with crisp apple and pear flavors with hints of yeastiness. This wine was the very first wine Tony Soter made in Oregon. It was held on the lees for 10 years and disgorged two years ago on the 10th anniversary of his marriage. Score: between **8.5** and **9**.

2001 Cedric Bouchard Champagne Blanc de Noirs Brut "Inflorescence," Champagne, France

Palest gold in the glass with incredibly fine bubbles, this wine smells of warm brioche and golden apple skin. In the mouth it is wonderfully yeasty with silky smooth mousse, gorgeous lemon and raw quince fruit, and a long satisfying finish. Bouchard says "I hate bubbles, so I put in as few as possible and make them really small." These are indeed fine bubbles. 1200 cases made. Score: between **9** and **9.5**.

STILL WINES:

2006 Elk Cove "La Boheme" Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Light garnet in the glass, this wine has a beautifully floral nose of cranberry and raspberry fruit aromas. In the mouth it is wonderfully balanced with great acidity and a core of cranberry and black cherry fruit that has a nice purity to it, plus a little earthy soul. Goes down quite easy and begs for more. Score: between **9** and **9.5**.

2008 Charles Audoin Marsannay Rosé, Burgundy, France

Pale rose pink in color, this wine has a crisp nose of rosehips and wet slate aromas. In the mouth it is tart and lean with flavors of orange peel and wet granite. Nicely balanced and quite taut. Score: around **9**.

2006 Domaine Drouhin Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Bright ruby in the glass, this wine smells of spicy, juicy cranberry. In the mouth it has a beautiful texture and good acidity, with primary flavors of cranberry and raspberry and hints of green herbs on the finish. Score: around **9**.

2001 Lemelson "Jerome Reserve" Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Cloudy ruby in the glass with noticeable sediment, this wine smells of red apple skin and freshly cut cedar. In the mouth it is gorgeously textured with new velvet and ethereal flavors of red apple skin, raspberry, and dried redcurrants, all of which linger in a long finish. Beautiful, and I would say at its peak. Score: between **9** and **9.5**.

2002 Panther Creek "Freedom Hill Vineyard" Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Medium ruby in color, this wine has a spicy nose of mixed red fruits -- cranberry, and raspberry predominantly -- with hints of mintiness. On the palate the wine is soft and smooth with flavors of cranberry and what the French call garrigue -- a heady mix of fresh aromatic herbs from Provence. Score: around **9**.

2007 Anne Amie Prisme White Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Pale gold in color, this wine has a sexy nose of Ranier cherries and yellow plums. In the mouth it offers mind-bending flavors of cherry, pears, and guava, with a nice mineral undertone and great acidity. Yes, this is a white wine made from Pinot Noir, and I want to take it to bed. Score: between **9** and **9.5**.

1997 Bethel Heights "Flat Block Reserve" Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Light ruby in color, this wine smells of red apple skin and redcurrants. In the mouth it is beautifully satin smooth with flavors of

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