



AURIC PACIFIC

“selling wine with passion!”

Auric Pacific Fine Wines

Issue 36

Dated: March 30, 2007

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Dear All,

The Blood of Jove

In the world of wine, there are wines that dedicate their name to Christianity, like Bouchard in Burgundy, called one of his Beaune 1er Cru, Grèves Vigne De L'Enfant Jésus (direct translated as vine of Jesus Child (despite the true tale on how the wine was named was however different), and in Italy, one of the famous Campanian wine also called itself, Lacrima Cristi (the tear of Christ).

Sangiovese grape, the soul of Tuscan, was actually name that was derived from *sanguis Jovis*, or "blood of Jove". Sangiovese is perhaps the most common and widely planted grape not just in Tuscan, but the whole Italy. It accounts for 10% of the entire grape crop of Italy, some 247,000 acres planted. Sangiovese has many blood-line, it is known as Sangiovese in both Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna (one of the most overrated DOCG wines), but the better Sangiovese in Tuscan is however the low-yield, smaller berries clone known as Sangiovese Grosso, or Sangiovese, closer to those that grown in Montalcino, which locally called, Brunello. In Vino Nobile di Montepulciano it is however known as Prugnolo Gentile, in Maremma, is called, Morellino, which made the famous Morellino di Scansano.

When you think about Sangiovese, Chianti come immediately in mind. Before Baron Ricasoli introduces the basic Chianti blend in 1890s. Chianti was once made entirely from Sangiovese grape. However during then, wine made solely from Sangiovese were somewhat hard and acid, observed by Cosimo Trinci in 1738. Baron Bettino Ricasoli found a way to tame the hard Sangiovese by adding the softer Canaiolo grape, along with some white grape like Trebbiano and Malvasia to improve the fragrance. The **governo** style (mostly discarded these days), which then popularise the technique in Chianti (remember when Chianti was used to be packed in straw-covered *fiasci* bottle?), by blending the unfermented grape juice to young wine to sweeten and compensate the high-acid Sangiovese. The Ricasoli's century-old formula was in 1966 (oddly, after nearly a century later) codified into law as the official blend for Chianti. However, the once poor countryside of Chianti became prospered after *Autostrada* (freeway) was build in 1960s. The situation changed. The newly arrived owners, were mostly the new rich from Rome and Milan, with their ambition and money, they have brought along their attitude towards their success in the city and applied to their vineyard. Since they know nothing about winegrowing, they have to rely on their consultant winemakers, which many of them were well-traveled, trained, quality-oriented, ambitious individual that strive to make a statement for themselves. The old-fashion Ricasoli's formula became the obstacle in the pathway. In 1980s, those quality-driven, most ambitious growers have told the government of Chianti-Classico that they would be abandoning the DOCG system and declared their wines as the lower, most generic designations of *Vino da Tavola* in return to have the freedom to make what they want. Thus, Super Tuscan was born!

Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against Super Tuscan, and in fact, some well site Super Tuscan can be equally thrilling. Name like **San Guido's Sassicaia, Ornellaia, Antinori's Solaia, Isole e Olena's Collezione de Marchi...**etc. However, there are more Chianti producers, conveniently tapping on the international demand for such new sensation, have all launched their so called, supertuscan (to give them the excuse to charged more – while, someone got to pay for those pricey French oak barrels), where many of them are excessively oaked and since their "international" grapes (Cabernets, Syrah, Merlot) blend were louder than their more subtle indigenoussness Sangiovese. They all fall into the undistinguished "international-style", where the soul of Sangiovese has completely been buried and the wines have nothing in common with Chianti.

Like all emerging wine region (despite being an old wine producing country. the true quality revolution in Italy only begins in the last two–three decades ago), Tuscan also struggle to find its identity. The early blend of Sangiovese with international grape such as Cabernets, Merlot, Syrah despite enjoying quick success due to their modern, familiar international outfit. However, the audience soon realized that, those "international" were boring in the same way that all airports, despite well designed, but look alike (famous quote from Matt Kramer). During than, the better foresight producers such as **Isole e Olena** (with Cepparello), **Fontodi** (with Falaccianello), **Monsanto** (Il Poggio Riserva), **Montevertine** (La Pergola Torte), **Riecine** (La Gioia) were all opposing the use of "international" grape in their blend, but chose instead to stand by their very own, Sangiovese. They are convinced, the uniqueness of Sangiovese, which behave much like the tricky Pinot Noir, does not strive well outside their home land, but found it best here in Tuscany, which will ultimately be the answers to their future for Tuscan's wines.

Today, the image of Sangiovese in Tuscan has been restored and more and more Tuscan producer has returned to their indigenous grape and rediscovered its beauty!

The following are the list of Sangiovese–based Tuscan, I would highly recommend. Enjoy a further 10% discount for any purchase of six bottles and above.

2003 Isole e Olena Cepparello at 115.00 nett (WS 88 points)

Paolo de Marchi is the pioneer in making 100% Sangiovese wine in his estate at Barberino Val d'Elsa, north of Chianti Classico zone, near Castellina in Chianti. This area is largely known as the finest place for Sangiovese, where the grape truly shine. Isole's style is among the most ambitious Sangiovese, which behave much like a young Bordeaux. Tough and austere in their youth, but profound and complex with age. They are among the most powerful and long–lived Sangiovese in Tuscany.

2003 Montepeloso Eneo, Suvereto at 64.00 nett (RP 90 points)

With the efforts of the new owner, Swiss–born, Fabio Chiarello, this raising star of Suvereto, near Bolgheri is making some of the most exciting Sangiovese–blend wine in the Tuscan coast. As what he so correctly puts it, "is easy to achieve richness in hot climate...but, it would be harder to achieve elegance and finesse". The man has spoke for what is his goal!

2004 Tua Rita Perlato del Bosco Rosso at 65.00 nett (RP 91 points)

2003 Tua Rita Perlato del Bosco Rosso at 63.00 nett (WS 91 points)

This is perhaps the most famous vineyard in Suvereto. They are also among the earliest to be making wine here since 1984. The famous Stefano Chioccioli is the consultant winemaker here. This Sangiovese predominant wine despite made in a modern style, it has good vibrancy, sappiness and plenty of Sangiovese characters.



Casanova della Spinetta – Terricciola, Tuscany

La Spinetta, the famous Piedmont producer previously known for making the finest Moscato d'Asti has expanded its empire into Tuscan, the second winery after **Angelo Gaja** launched his **Ca'Marcanda** in 1996. However unlike Gaja, which his Tuscan proprietary is focused solely on International grape like Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Syrah. The Rivetti brothers have however taken a different approach to work on Tuscan indigenoussness variety, Sangiovese and Colorino. A brief story of La Spinetta. After successfully being crowned as the finest Moscato d'Asti producer (they were the pioneer in making single vineyard Moscato), in 1985, they starting to produce a series of award winning Barberas from Asti and Alba, and in 1995, they proved to the World, their talent does not limit to just the humble Barbera. Their debut release of Barbaresco **Gallina** in 1995,

followed by Barbaresco **Staderi** (1996), **Valeirano** (1997) and in 2000, making their first ever Barolo called **Campè** were all an instant success and reviewed by Wine Spectator, Tanzer & Parker as among the very best Piedmont has to offer. The success of La Spinetta is due to the carefully selected vineyard site, combined old vines, with rigorous crop thinning like green harvest to keep the yield low, and today, the vineyards in Piedmont is 75% bio-dynamic farmed. In the cuverie, winemaker Giorgio Rivetti goal was not to make another Rivetti's wine, but rather to respect the vineyard and maximizing the uniqueness of each vineyard site. The same can be say for their new project in Tuscan, where their winery is located at a village called, Terricciola, between Pisa and Volterra. The first wine, **Il Nero di Casanova** was first made in 2004 with only 3000 bottles. A more serious cuvee of **Sezzana & Sassontino** were subsequently released in last year, with their debut 2003 vintage. Both wine despite stylistically different (Sassontino more profound, generous; Sezzana more structured, powerful), were all received good reviews from The Wine Spectator. So keep a close watch of this emerging star of Tuscan.

2005 Il Nero di Casanova (95% Sangiovese, 5% Colorino) at 46.00 nett

2003 Sezzana (95% Sangiovese, 5% Colorino) at 85.00 nett (WS's 90 points)

2003 Sassontino (95% Sangiovese, 5% Colorino) at 85.00 nett (WS's 88 points)

2001 Sezzana (Magnum) at 190.00 nett (WS's 91 points)

Appellation in Wine

Appellation in wine, works more like the identity of wine. It gives you the particular area, where vines are grow, how the sunshine, rainfall, soil type (and structure), exposure, and elevation that attributes the character of the resulting wine. "Without it? Wine is existent in a gravity-free state, without the pull of place that allows us to trace and track the possible reasons for its distinction", Matt Kramer has so correctly pointed out.

European (or Old World) has long been the pioneer in mapping their appellation. They understood the uniqueness of the wine lies on the piece of earth, not in the hands of man. Let ask ourselves, how many given years can a winemaker make his wine? Thirty? Forty? How many wine he made he could possibly see the maturity? Maybe half. The collective knowledge of each appellation requires generation after generation, man can only learn and discover which grape varieties is best suited for which location. In this case, winemaker is merely a servant here rather than the master. The immortality lies on the appellation. Obviously appellation must be able to deliver some sort of goodness in order to worth a while. This means, when both isolated land and grape are well match. It can produce the uniqueness that is equal by no others.

All old world wine-growing nations like France, Italy and Spain have their appellation origin system. However, what makes them different with new world's appellation system is, the old world, "controlled" the appellation of origin (France - *appellation d'origine contrôlée*; Italy - *denominazione d'origine controllata*; Spain - *denominacion de origen calificada*), in other words, they guarantee the authenticity as well as the quality of where the wine is from, which all new world geographic indications failed to address. Unlike old world, new world do not have the luxury of time to study and delineate their sites much like those exquisitely detailed appellations of Burgundy (burgundy's vineyard existed since sixth century), where not only they have isolated which grape suit for which soil, but which vineyard is superior than the one next to it, with their best vineyards are designated *grand cru*, then come the second, *premier cru*. Timescale is needed for the new world, much like when it took the old world decades, centuries to see the turning of the wheel. Perhaps what has been observed by Robert Louis Stevenson in 1880s, when he first arrived in the virgin land of California will one day translate into reality.

"Wine in California is still in the experimental stage....one corner of land after another is tried with one kind of grape after another. This is a failure; that is better; ...so, bit by bit, they group about for their Clos Vougeot and Lafite...yield inimitable fragrance and soft fire; those virtuous Bonanzas, where the soil has sublimated under sun and stars to something finer, and the wine is bottled poetry; these still lie

undiscovered...undisturbed. But there they bide their hour, awaiting their Columbus; and the nature nurses and prepares them. The smack of California earth shall linger on the palate of your grandson."

The following are some of the unique vineyards in California that should earn their appellation.

Spottswoode - Sense of the Woman

The team behind this family-owned estate is almost entirely woman. Current president of Spottswoode, Beth Novak Milliken, is the youngest daughter of Mary Weber Novak. Recently, Jennifer Williams has taken over from Rosemary Cakebread as the estate winemaker and vineyard manager, while Rosemary remained as the consultant winemaker. Spottswoode estate vineyard is located just off Rutherford, after the town of St. Helena along highway 29. The organically farm vineyard consisted of sand and clay loam soil is making some of the most sumptuous yet refine elegant Cabernets in California. Whether is due to the touch of the ladies or simply is the "terroir". Year-in-year-out, apart from the mother's nature would shown her temperament on the wine, you can always expect that sense of feminine, that weightless grace from this Cabernets. With the 2003 vintage, Spottswoode is releasing their "second-vine" label called, **Lydenhurst** Cabernet Sauvignon. This wine is fruit sourced from the estate grown vineyard where the vines are younger. Despite that, they received no less rigorous vineyard treatment as the estate Cabernets.

2003 Lydenhurst Cabernet Sauvignon at 90.50 nett (RP 90 points)

2003 Spottswoode Estate Cabernet Sauvignon at 160.00 nett (RP 94 points)

Forman - Euro-Beautiful

I knew Ric Forman for nearly a decade. He has always come across as one of the most honest winemaker in California in terms of the way he price his wines. He often criticized his peers for over charging their wines and he value the important of wine being part of the culture, part of the dinning experience, but not a commodity nor the product for the rich. Forman winemaking approached has a huge influence from the European wine style. He cherish brightness, vibrancy, elegant and finesse. His early style of wine often started it life slowly, with austere and tough when young, turned mallow and soft with age. He is also among the pioneer in blocking the malolactic, in order to preserved the natural acidity to portrait his idea Chablis-style Chardonnay. Despite recently his Cabernets is moving toward much riper, fuller style. However, the elegant, the mountain-vineyard wine structured, is still evident everywhere in his wine.

2004 Forman Cabernet Sauvignon, Howell Mountain at 140.00 nett (ST 91-94 points)

Philip Togni - The Mountain Goat

Philip Togni is among one of the most experienced winemaker in California. His is one of the student of the famous French oenologist, late Emile Peynaud (the same person that taught Michel Rolland) and has produced a vintage in Chateau Lascombes in Margaux. He has made wine in France, Algeria, Chile before returning to California where he produces wines for Chapellet and Cuvaion. He eventually set his foot in Spring Mountain and made his first vintage of 1983 with only 300 cases. Togni despite his small built, he is a real fighter. He has in the past fought for Phylloxera, pierce's disease (vine disease), grassy-winged sharp-shooters, despite he has pull-out and stop making his delicious Sauvignon Blanc, but his Cabernets has never been better and among one of the most unique Cabernets of California. One tasted his opulent, voluptuous Cabernets, it would be hard to imagine they will age well. However, having tasted several time of his vertical that goes back in the mid 80s, I am convinced that his Cabernets not only aged gracefully, it has overtime trimmed off the early baby-fat and turned more classic Bordeaux like.

2002 Philip Togni "Tanbark Hill" Cabernet Sauvignon at 125.00 nett (WS 92 points)

2004 Philip Togni Cabernet Sauvignon Spring Mountain at 208.00 nett (WS 95 points)

David Ramey - The Wine Guru

I first met Ramey, it was during his stint at Dominus Estate (owned by Christian Moueix of Petrus). We have subsequently met again in a Chardonnay seminar where he spoke to me lengthily on indigenous

yeasts and malolactic fermentation. His work on *selection massale* or mass selection of old Wente, Robert Young & Long Vineyard clone for his chardonnay, also inspired others to work beyond the clonal select. I have always been a great admirer of Ramey Hyde Vineyard chardonnay, in fact, we have such argument each time we meet, whether his Hudson Vineyard was better than his Hyde. Obviously, I've won the debate, where the unique cool-pitched, earth-mineral of Hyde vineyard was later acknowledged by most American critics as the higher rated chardonnay from Ramey's portfolio. All Ramey's wines are vineyard designated. He has adopted the old world concept into his new world materials. Currently, added to his existing portfolio are Cabernet Sauvignon from Larkmead Vineyard (valley floor vineyard that set between Spring Mountain and Diamond Mountain) and Pedregal Vineyard (vineyard next to Rudd, Dalla Valle, Phelps Backus and Screaming Eagle). Ramey's wines are immensely sex-appeal style. However, it does not collapse like most Californian wine that made in the similar approach. The persist length of flavors that found in his wines have everything to do with his admirable work in those unique site as well as his traditional winemaking approach.

2004 Ramey Claret, Napa Valley at 81.50 nett (RP 89 points)

2004 Ramey Cabernet Sauvignon Larkmead Vineyard, Napa Valley at 145.00 nett (RP 95 points)

2004 Ramey Cabernet Sauvignon Pedregal Vineyard, Oakville at 145.00 nett (RP 95 points)

2004 Ramey Cabernet Sauvignon Jericho Canyon Vineyard, Napa Valley at 195.00 nett (RP 94 points)

Cathy Corison - The First Female Winemaker

Corison is among the very first female winemaker in California. She has spent 10 years working with Chappellet Vineyard before launching her own label. She might not come across as tall as you would expect, but she certainly has a braver heart than anyone with twice her size. Where Californian wine is concerned, she is my hero! She always said to me, "I made wine for myself!" Indeed, do not expect the usual big fruit, judicious oak, diluted cassis-liqueur Cabernets from her. She don't make statement wine that would succeed commercially, but wine of conviction, wine of true soul. Her restrained, discreet, that classic-St.-Julien mineral-earth scented palate that give off crystalline fruit purity and elegant is both unique and unmatched by those cosmetically enhanced, steroid-booster Cabernets that so commonly found in Californian these days.

2003 Corison Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley at 125.00 nett (ST 89 points)

2002 Corison Cabernet Sauvignon Kronos Vineyard at 178.00 nett (ST 91+ points)

*** Enjoy a further 8% discount for purchase of 6 bottles and above of the above offers.**

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