



THE GREAT PINOT NOIR CHALLENGE

Monday, April 18 2011

(Written by: Tony Beatty. President, Australian Wine Appreciation Society)

Our Society continues the tradition of wine challenges started ten years ago with Riesling; continued six years ago with Shiraz, four years ago with Cabernet, two years ago with Chardonnay and now with Pinot Noir. Originally inspired by Wolf Blass, who encouraged us to start with Riesling, mirroring his big Challenge in Australia; this event has grown into one of the premier events on the wine calendar.

This turned out to be a very exciting, but challenging event! Because of the generosity of winemakers, agents, and suppliers, we were able to showcase thirteen top class wines; seven from Australia and six from the rest of the world. These wines were tasted blind by the attendees, who then voted for their favourites. The combined votes ended up ranking the wines as listed below. These consumers were mostly made up of members of the Australian Wine Appreciation Society, but there were also guests from other Societies, the wine industry and some local wine experts.

This was difficult task, as the wines were all so good! The tasting came down to nuances and subtleties in the various wines, and the voting reflected this. It turned out that, with one or two exceptions, the voting was incredibly close; in some cases, just a handful of votes separating three or four wines. This is a testimony to the outstanding quality of the wines presented.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Agents in the Vancouver wine community, and the Winemakers around the world, whose support for our Society have made these tastings possible.

THE GREAT PINOT NOIR CHALLENGE

RANK		WINE
1	New Zealand	Felton Road Block 3 2007
2	France	Nicolas Potel Chambertin Grand Cru 2006
3	Australia	Yabby Lake, Mornington Peninsula 2007
4	Australia	Kooyong Estate, Mornington Peninsula 2006
5	Australia	Bindi - Composition, Macedon Ranges 2008
6	Australia	MacForbes- Woori Yallock, Yarra Valley 2007
7	Oregon, USA	Sineann , Wyeast Vineyard 2006
8	France	Nicolas Potel Volnay 1er Cru, Santenots 2006
9	Sonoma, USA	Barnett, Russian River, Tina Marie Vineyard 2009
10	Australia	Giant Steps, Sexton Vineyard, Yarra Valley 2007
11	Australia	Yarra Yering, Yarra Valley 2006
12	Australia	Josef Chromy, Tasmania 2009
13	BC, Canada	Meyer Family, McLean Creek Vineyard 2008

Tasting Notes

1. Felton Road Block 3 2007
 - Medium Garnet color. Nose of berry jam and stones. Initial dusty tannins on the palate, building to extremely complex flavors of raspberry. Lengthy, mineral finish. This wine is really built for the distance and should age wonderfully well. Will continue to improve.
2. Nicolas Potel Chambertin Grand Cru 2006
 - Medium Ruby color. Has a nose of pure, rich raspberry jam. Leaves an instant impression of richness, yet is really pure. Tannins come through on the mid palate, and everything flows together into the long, long finish. A very nice wine.
3. Yabby Lake, Mornington Peninsula 2007
 - Spice and raspberry dominate the nose. This is very full flavored. Harmonious, with an extremely long finish – and it tastes really great! Delicious.
4. Kooyong Estate, Mornington Peninsula 2006
 - Medium Garnet color. Nose shows scents of rich cherry pie and spices, leading to rich flavors of the same. Dusty tannins reveal themselves on the long, long finish.
5. Bindi - Composition, Macedon Ranges 2008
 - Medium Garnet color. Nose a bit funky. Alcohol comes through before the fruit does. Very different from the previous wines. Finishes nicely, though.
6. MacForbes- Woori Yallock, Yarra Valley 2007
 - Light garnet color. Nose of stewed strawberries. An elegant, light bodied wine with balanced acid and light tannin, yet very long.
7. Sineann , Wyeast Vineyard 2006
 - Medium Garnet color. Shows a strong nose of minerals, which close out the fruit. However, the fruit is there on the palate in a very rich way, showing raspberry jam. Has really great mouth feel. Lovely finish. Nice wine.
8. Nicolas Potel Volnay 1er Cru, Santenots 2006
 - Light garnet color. Complex nose showing spice, vanilla and cherry pie. Starts out with dusty tannins, but turns out to be light and elegant with a moderate finish.
9. Barnett, Russian River, Tina Marie Vineyard 2009
 - Medium Ruby color. Nose shows forward raspberry with a touch of smoke. Luscious and slippery on the palate, with flavors of ripe berries. Some heat shows on the long finish.

10. Giant Steps, Sexton Vineyard, Yarra Valley 2007

- Medium Garnet color. Stones and ripe red cherry nose. Palate shows bright cherry, then raspberries followed by a bit of tannin. Lighter bodied, but has power and a lengthy finish.

11. Yarra Yering, Yarra Valley 2006

- Medium to Medium-dark Garnet color. Has a nose of Bumble berry pie. This is a very fruit forward wine with more body than the others, yet is still refreshing to drink. Quite rich on the palate and really delicious. But does stand out for being very different from all the other wines in color, substance, and flavor profile. Even so, it is very nice.

12. Josef Chromy, Tasmania 2009

- Light Garnet color. Earthy nose showing candied cherry notes. Shows gentle acidity with a mineral finish. Balanced, harmonious, and elegant. Light bodied but none the worse for being so.

13. Meyer Family, McLean Creek Vineyard 2008

- Medium Ruby color. Nose of forest floor and red cherries. Dusty tannins meet the palate immediately, followed by lean flavors of cherry, raspberry. Moderate finish. Overall, slightly disjointed.

We were very fortunate to have Mark Davidson as our moderator. Mark is one of North America's top wine educators, and sommeliers. Here are his comments from this tasting.

“This was a very satisfying tasting to host. What I was hoping to have happen was that the participants would leave with a better understanding of the general style and evolution of Australian Pinot Noir, and to be surprised by its subtlety and complexity. I am thrilled that we achieved exactly that. Even though a New Zealand wine won, it was so close that it didn't really matter. Every wine showed so well. I am looking forward to hosting the next Challenge!”