



ÉCHANSON HONORAIRE'S TASTING
Knysna, South Africa, December 1, 2019

TASTING NOTES

Flight 1 – Whites & Rosé

Grenache Blanc – The Leeuwenkuil 2015

Grapes procured from the Swartland. Made and bottled in Stellenbosch. A beautiful rich compelling nose – apple, quince, tropical tones.

Grenache Blanc – K.W.V. Classic Collection 2019

By contrast this wine seemed more simple, as if it had a residual sugar. The drier style showed more nuance.

Vriesenhof Grenache Rosé 2018

Particularly successful as the wine was more toned and it showed nicely on the edges. The standard Grenache, Pinot Noir and Cinsaut at the Cape are more calmly toned wines with lighter colours.

Malvasia Rey/Verdelho Blend 2015

We didn't record notes on the bottle we opened as the wine had browned having perhaps been exposed to heat during storage and that was not the producer's fault.

Flight 2 – entry level Rioja reds

Marques de Riscal Tempanillo 2008

Clearly had benefitted from the extra time in bottle. A blueberry firm taste.

Ludovicus Tinto Garnacha

From the Terra Alta. Was more simple, light and easy.

What proved interesting were the next wines: two Crianza (minimum 1 year in oak, released after a minimum of 2 years)

Viña Alarde Crianza – Marques de la Concordia 2014

Started a tad watery but deepened, more vegetative like baked beans, with good tannins.

Cosme Palacio Crianza

More healthily packed but not refined. A bit like our dried meat called 'biltong'. Good clean acids.



Flight 3 – Rioja Reservas

For Reserva wines the regulations stipulate a minimum of 3 years before release and a minimum of 1 year in oak, and 6 months in the bottle. We had pre-cooled all the wines what with summer knocking, and this helped the drinkability.

Compania Bodeguera Valenciso Reserva DOCa 2011

Glorious nose. Cocoa, integrated smooth and dark.

Beronia Graciano y Mazuelo Reserva DOCa

Savoury, spicy and generous. Made for a meal, but a welcome guest – a winner.

Bodegas Muga Reserva DOCa

Very traditional wine from the town of Hago that holds an annual festival celebrating the Rioja. Calm and refined. Graceful and nigh on being the wine of the day.

We then had 2 bottles of the famed wines – wired to prevent fraudulent interference – from Bodegas Marqués De Riscal.

Reserva 2013

So untypical, being tight and tart

Reserva 2014

Smooth with that rich enduring ‘Rioja’ taste that we know. A wine of texture. It scored the highest average of the day at 17.8 out of 20.

Flight 4 – South African comparisons

Baleia Tempranillo

Abraham de Klerk has moved to Brisbane but not before producing a lovely graceful Tempranillo at the Baleia Estate in Riversdale 150 km west of Knysna. Healthy, alert, beautifully restrained.

Delheim Amperbo Tempranillo 2015

More dense – very much a red wine, a block of chocolate. It was well received with its generous taste.

Mellalast Tempranillo 2016

More savoury.

So here were three different styles of the same grape – which is no criticism, especially when the present market is looking for little points of difference – some attribute.



Fairview Tempranillo Reserve of 2017

Showed as plummier and a bit edgy, needing opening out.

The last wine at the tasting was a favourite of Échanson Honoraire George ...

Vriesenhof Grenache 2013

Made by Dr Jan 'Boland' Coetzee. This wine won the 'Tri-Nations' tasting between Australia, New Zealand and South Africa in 2015. More tawny, red onion, minty. Loved by the ladies. The grapes came from Jan's family farm on the West Coast, called Piekernierskloof where the vines are 80 to 100 years old. Jan "Boland" Coetzee claims that Napoleon (a lover of Châteauneuf-du-Pape) while imprisoned on St Helena Island, arranged for these vines to be sent to Piekernierskloof so that he would be able to enjoy wines while on the island. It was Fairview's Charles Back who had advised those farmers not to sell their grapes for less than 8000 Rand a ton – as his way of ensuring that these grapes remained available. Jan took cuttings to his Vriesenhof farm in Stellenbosch and worked on them so that in 2015 he was able to produce Grenache on his own site. He calls it, as he does his famed Pinot Noir, "Vin de Vriesenhof".

Fairview Grenache

Sadly the bottle we had was corked! A pity. ☹

Conclusion

So, it remains to see whether the Cape producers of Tempranillo and Grenache and wines of their ilk, simulate the traditional style of Rioja with barrel and bottle maturation – with Tempranillo being blended – or will the wines be something different, something non-French on their list.

If, however, you read history, Grenache came from the neighbouring Southern France. We do also have the Cabernet Sauvignon that has been a component of some Rioja blends since 1868 – think of the Phylloxera crisis in Bordeaux to see the plot.

Peter Bishop