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WRO WINE BLOG

Posted by Robert Whitley on March 25, 2009 at 9:49 AM

Godfather of Paso Wine Scores Huge Win in San Diego



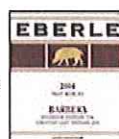
In the picture above I'm chatting with Gary Eberle at the start of the Paso Robles winery cookoff last summer. This is an event that Gary organized to raise money for college scholarships for local kids.

Gary is more than just a winemaker and a gentrified vintner. He is the Godfather of the Paso Robles wine industry and a pillar of the community, where he settled more than 30 years ago after starring in football at Penn State University.

He learned his winemaking at UC-Davis and was one of the earliest pioneers in Paso Robles wine. He introduced Syrah to the region in the 1970s, and has long produced one of the best Paso Robles Cabernets.

The thought that Paso might one day be counted among the finest wine regions in California might have occurred to Eberle, but few others shared that sentiment when the Eberle Winery first opened its doors.

I was sitting about 20 feet from Eberle on Sunday when his 2007 Barbera swept the prize as Best of Show red wine at the 28th annual San Diego International Wine Competition. The judges had their hands raised and the counters were counting and Big Daddy Eberle, one of the 34 judges, was tapping his feet and nodding his head.



He knew what none of the other voters knew, for they were tasting and voting "blind", meaning they were unaware of the identity of the wine.

"I knew it was my wine," Eberle told me shortly after the winning wine was unveiled. "I know that taste."

It was a good moment to be Gary Eberle. He had another wine, the 2003 Eberle Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, in the Sweepstakes vote for Best of Show red, and life was good, for Gary Eberle is a true believer in the intrinsic value of wine competitions.

He espouses the virtues of gold medals everywhere he goes, and has told me many times that medals boost his sales. Every year he ponies up the entry fees and sends his wines off to several carefully chosen competitions, knowing that his wines are good and will win their share of the gold.

And so it was on Sunday as I smiled and thought how fitting it was that the Godfather of Paso Robles wine had finally walked off with the big prize from one of my wine competitions. No one has ever deserved it more.

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Columns



Kenwood's Artist Series

Gerald D. Boyd

With the release of the 2004 Artist Series Cabernet Sauvignon, Kenwood celebrates 30 years of art and wine, a concept compared to the very practice of winemaking that many believe is an art in itself. The Artist Series Collection is a work in progress, for both the art of the label and the art of the wine in the bottle.

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Wrestling with Riesling

Norm Roby

Winemakers from Napa, Oregon, Monterey, Washington, Alsace, Texas, New Zealand, Michigan and Mendocino converged on

Boonville in Mendocino's Anderson Valley over the weekend of February 20-22. The draw was definitely not the area's night life but was in fact the 4th Annual International Alsace Varietals Festival. Over the weekend, three dozen wineries poured Gewurztraminer, Riesling, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc and even a Muscat or two.

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Our friend Tom Maresca (an occasional contributor to Wine Review Online) and his wife Diane Darrow wrote a charming cookbook a few years ago entitled "The Seasons of the Italian Kitchen." One of our favorites among the book's recipes is Spaghetti alla Norma, an old, traditional dish that was reputedly re-named in the 1830s in honor of the opening of Vincenzo Bellini's opera 'Norma.'

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On My Table



Brunello for the Long Term, and for Now

Mary Ewing-Mulligan

I don't drink Brunello di Montalcino on a regular basis (who does?) and therefore I sometimes forget how much I love this wine. Thirty-plus years ago, a Brunello was the first great wine that I ever experienced -- my 'Aha!' wine, as Oprah might put it -- and my