

GREETINGS,

This month I'd like to answer a few questions recently posed to me by some fellow wine lovers.

What are the differences between single vineyard and multi-vineyard wines? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?

To me, the strength of a single-vineyard wine is its ability to capture a "sense of place" and its consistency of style and character from vintage to vintage. Multiple-vineyard wines, on the other hand, allow the winemaker to blend lots that have one or two great attributes but are deficient in another area. A good example is blending one Chardonnay that has a ripe, exotic bouquet, but is lacking in structure, with another Chardonnay that is brisk and acidic. In this case, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Why are some varieties normally blended, while others are almost always 100% varietal? For example, Cabernet will often have a little Merlot (or the other Bordeaux grapes) mixed in to tame the tannins. But you rarely see a Pinot Noir blended with other varieties.

We have done numerous blending trials with Pinot Noir and have found that we lose the distinctive varietal character with even just a small amount of blending. A while back we did a trial adding Syrah, since it is the only other red variety in the vineyard. It turns out, our Pinot Noir is so delicate that just 3-5% of Syrah in the blend makes it taste like Syrah. The Pinot grape's subtle essence is overwhelmed by



the heartier Rhône-based grape. While Chardonnay is normally 100% varietal it is occasionally mixed with other grapes. In Australia it is not uncommon to see bottlings that contain equal parts Chardonnay and Semillon. We are looking at a Chardonnay/Viognier blend for the 2009 vintage. I'll keep you posted on the results.

Do you ever experiment with food and wine pairings at home? Are there any unusual combinations that you personally enjoy drinking? For example, I like Gewürztraminer with steak, but I'm too embarrassed to admit it in public.

First off, there are no rules. Drink whatever you enjoy. Unless the food is overly sweet, acidic or spicy, you can often interchange different varieties, whether red or white. I have found that Pinot Noir pairs well with citrus fruits or citrus-infused dishes. Another odd combo is Pinot and plums. We have plum trees in our orchard at home and Pinot goes really well with the fresh fruit or plum tarts. Not too far from your Gewürztraminer story, I like a crisp, acidic Sauvignon Blanc with steak. And, I like Viognier with most any food, especially Pork Chile Verde! I think Viognier is one of our most versatile grapes. We planted a few "low-chill" passion fruit vines at our house a few months ago and are discovering that Viognier beautifully accentuates the wild aromatics.

When it comes to food and wine pairings, don't be afraid to experiment. Some of the most exciting culinary experiences I've ever had involved counter-intuitive combinations. You just don't know until you try. I hope this helps.

Thanks for your continued support of our wines. I'll talk to you again next newsletter.

Sincerely,



DENISE SHURTLEFF, WINEMAKER



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