

I had a very enjoyable wine experience this past week that I would like to share with you. My son was celebrating his 50th birthday and of course the occasion called for wine with dinner. As a rule, when we get together for dinner, we never serve just one type of wine. There is always a variety and this occasion was no exception.

There were several wines on the serving cart, but two labels caught my eye. One wine was a blend made in the Walla Walla region of Washington State. It was from the Waterbrook Winery and it was called Waterbrook Melange. Cost: around \$11 retail, more in a restaurant. The other wine was a 100% Pinot Noir from the Village of Nuit St. George in Burgundy, France; and it was produced at Meo-Camuzet Vineyards. Cost: around \$90. (I donated the \$90 wine to the birthday boy.) My mind drifted away for a few moments and I was thinking: what if the two wines could talk to each other. What does an \$11 wine say to a \$90 wine? I imagine that the conversation would start out with the two wines realizing that they were produced 6000 miles apart, only to end up on the same serving cart in Leominster, Massachusetts. Both wines that I was daydreaming over were really stunning, particularly the \$11 Melange. It really stood up well against the \$90 Meo-Camuzet.

Let's take a closer look at the Melange. Believe it or not, the Melange is a blend of ten wines, which I will list for effect. They are: 47% Merlot, 18% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Syrah, 7% Cabernet Franc, 4% Malbec, 4% Grenache, 2% Sangiovese, 1% Mouverdre, 1% Cinsault, and 1% Cunoise. Winemaker John Freeman is the man in charge of the blending process. He has a few years' experience in doing this. He must be doing something right since 10,000 cases were produced from the 2013 vintage and are all sold out. Just for giggles, I went to the Internet and looked up food pairings. As luck would have it, we were spot-on. We were serving Roast Pork Loin and grilled vegetables and that is what the pairings called for.

Waterbrook has a genuine problem when it comes to South Carolina. It is one that I would like to see resolved. The winery has a terrific line up of product, however the closest distributor is in Georgia. (I received this information from the Winery Tasting Room Manager.) The winery, and many others like it, is prevented from making direct shipments to Wine Club Members, should they reside in South Carolina. I believe that the retailers and the South Carolina Department of Revenue are together on this issue. I sincerely hope that this matter is resolved soon. The tax revenue that is lost from direct shipments is very small – perhaps it could be called insignificant. One additional point: I know for a fact that wineries are authorized to collect state taxes on direct shipments. I should know... I write the check.

The Domaine Meo-Camuzet served along side the Melange was big and bold and, of course, I wish that I had a dozen more bottles. Meo Camuzet is a house that is headquartered in the heart of prestigious Vosne-Romanee in Burgundy, France. It can trace its ownership beginnings back to the Louis XIII period. However, bringing it into the modern day world, we find that Domaine Meo-Camuzet was purchased in 1902 by the Jean-Nicolas family. The family was passionate about wine and about making sure that the property produced the best that Burgundy had to offer. But the new owners were politicians and spent a great deal of time in Paris. That being the case, the search went out for the very best winemaking talent available to produce wine in their absence. The decision paid off because today Meo-Camuzet produces wines that can compete with any other wine in the world. Each year the Estate produces Grand Cru, Premier Cru and Village wines. The wine that was served at the birthday dinner was a Meo-Camuzet Nuit-Saint-George, Rouge, Premier Cru. The Birthday Boy was pleased, so I let him have a second glass.

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When my family gathers together to celebrate an event, we know that most of the guests will arrive with a bottle of wine. We have a rule that is enforced. The wine is not to detract from the actual event, i.e. a birthday or anniversary. After all the candles have been blown out, then the wine can turn into a competitive side event. Hopefully, the competition turns into a learning experience so that on the next occasion, one might see an improvement in the quality of the wine that shows up. Over the years I must admit that I have seen a big change in the way we consume alcohol at our house parties. It is more wine, or should I say more *good* wine; very little hard liquor, Less Budweiser and more craft beers, no cigarettes but an upturn in cigars. I wonder where that came from.

Oh well. Let the party continue.

Cheers!