
2018 HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL WINE & SPIRITS FAIR

This event in early November each year really is the gateway to wine in Asia. Buyers come from all over Asia and wineries from all parts of the globe come to show their wares to eager Asian buyers.

My interest in this event is in part to see and taste what other countries are currently doing with wine. So, here is a smattering of what occurred wine wise at the 2018 Hong Kong International Wine & Spirits Fair (HKIWSF).



These are in no particular order:

USA: Most of the American exhibitors were whiskey producers, but one really notable exception was, *GOOSE RIDGE ESTATE WINERY*, from Columbia Valley in Washington State. They had a cracking range of wines, including their *2017 STONECAP RIESLING* (Remember it was an American Riesling from Missouri that won this year's CIRC) and most impressively their *G3 2016 MERLOT*, which was the best American Merlot I have tasted in year's – well and truly good enough to prove the movie, “Sideways”, completely wrong! As if this wasn't enough, they also had some damned good wines in 250mL cans under their *CASCADIAN* label, especially the *2016 CHARDONNAY* – excellent! Oh, and just too top things off they had a wide range of ciders, from traditional apple cider through to a sensational “Spiced Cranberry” cider.



INDIA: I have already covered these wines in my blog, Indian Wine Day, November 16, 2018.

THAILAND: My good friends from *GRANMONTE* were also there as were the team from *SILVERLAKE VINYARD*. I will review the *GRANMONTE* wines in a blog soon, so in the meantime, suffice it to say that they are really good wines that I am happy to share with family and friends.

Chatting with Surachai Tangjaitrong, the CEO of *SILVERLAKE*, he explained that they were at a lower altitude than GranMonte but as they were near the coast, their vines are subject to cooling sea breezes.

The *SILVERLAKE MOONLIGHT VALLEY COLOMBARD 2017* was a delightful, tasty, well balanced wine, ideal for entrees or picnics.

The *SILVERLAKE MOONLIGHT VALLEY DORNFELDER 2016* was sensational – great varietal aromas and silky-smooth flavours. Elegant and superb.

KOREA: This was the very first time I have tasted wines made in Korea. The winery is called *GRAND COTEAU* and they had three wines on show – *GRAND COTEAU M5610-A ROSÉ*, *GRAND COTEAU 2017 RED* and *GRAND COTEAU ICEWINE NV* – none of which had much detail about them. Even their web page did not provide much information other than that they are on the hills of Daebu Island facing the Grand Canal (to the mainland). It would appear that the vineyard was planted around 20 years ago mainly to a variety called “Campbell Early” a US *Vitis labrusca* variety. Like with the wines made in Bali, the Korean wines are OK to drink and enjoy with the local food whilst there, but that’s about it.

JAPAN: There were many Japanese stands but most of them were about Saké or Plum wine, however, the good folk from *CHÂTEAU MERCIAN*, which I visited in 2015, were there. I tried their *2016 NAGANO CHARDONNAY* which is a world-class Chardonnay, then their *2016 GEWÜRZTRAMINER*, again very classy and their “star”, the *CHÂTEAU MERCIAN 2016 YAMANASHI KOSHU* – a fabulous example of this native Japanese white grape variety.



PORTUGAL: Shifting continents I then visited the crew at *QUINTA DO PILOTO* from Palmela Portugal. They had a range of really interesting wines made from varieties that we don't normally see here in Australia, such as their "*SIRIA*" *VINHO BRANCO 2017* made from *Codega* and *Roupeiro*, or their *2014 VINHA DOS PADAIS* which is a field blend of *Alicante Bouchet*, *Touriga*, *Castelao* and *Syrah*. All excellent wines, with their *RESERVA 2015* being the *piece de resistance*. This superb red wine is made from 75plus-year-old *Castelao* vines given the Rolls Royce treatment to produce an amazingly silky, smooth sophisticated wine.



SPAIN: Finally I went and visited my friends at *BODEGAS CUATRO RAYAS* from Rueda in Spain. I had visited their ancient vineyards and winery in a tour of the region in 2016. They made really delicious wines from the local white variety, *Verdejo*. This year they had a special wine on show, *CUATRO RAYAS AMADOR DIEZ CUVÉE 2015*. This is their very top of the range *Verdejo* made from ancient vines, hand-picked, matured for five months on lees, etc. This is a class act even to the packaging, where the label is made out of a very thin veneer of wood. By the way the wine is superb!



This was just a quick snapshot of the wines present at the excellent HKIWSF. There were many other stands from other countries, some of which were quite good, whilst others were of little note.

So when you get the opportunity, try wines from other countries, especially those made from varieties that you haven't heard of. Some of these wines may disappoint, but others will be smashing and more than make up for the disappointments.

Enjoy your wine. *Cheers!*