

1st WINE EXPLORERS' WORLD WINE TASTING

"Exceptional guests for a unique journey around the world of wine"

On June 16, seven professionals from the wine industry did us the honor of joining the WINE Explorers' team in the superb setting of the Duclot dining room at 49 cours Xavier Arnozan in Bordeaux, in order to share the discoveries of the first part of the trip, which began in January 2014. A unique tasting, where 12 countries were represented. A complicated choice because after a year and a half of peregrinations and 180,000 kilometers traveled, over 2,250 wines had been tasted and listed.

Choosing those that best represented 2014 was therefore a difficult task, in order to share the adventure with our keen guests from a gustatory point of view. Some wines were tasted conventionally while others were served blind, to give some surprises to a public of connoisseurs. The idea was not to judge these wines, but to assess the potential of each of the selected wine regions and discuss the notion of terroir.

Patrick Schmitt MW, managing editor, The Drinks Business (UK)

Debra Meiburg MW, consultant (Hong Kong)

Jean-Claude Berrouet, oenologist

Sandrine Garbay, cellar master, Château d'Yquem

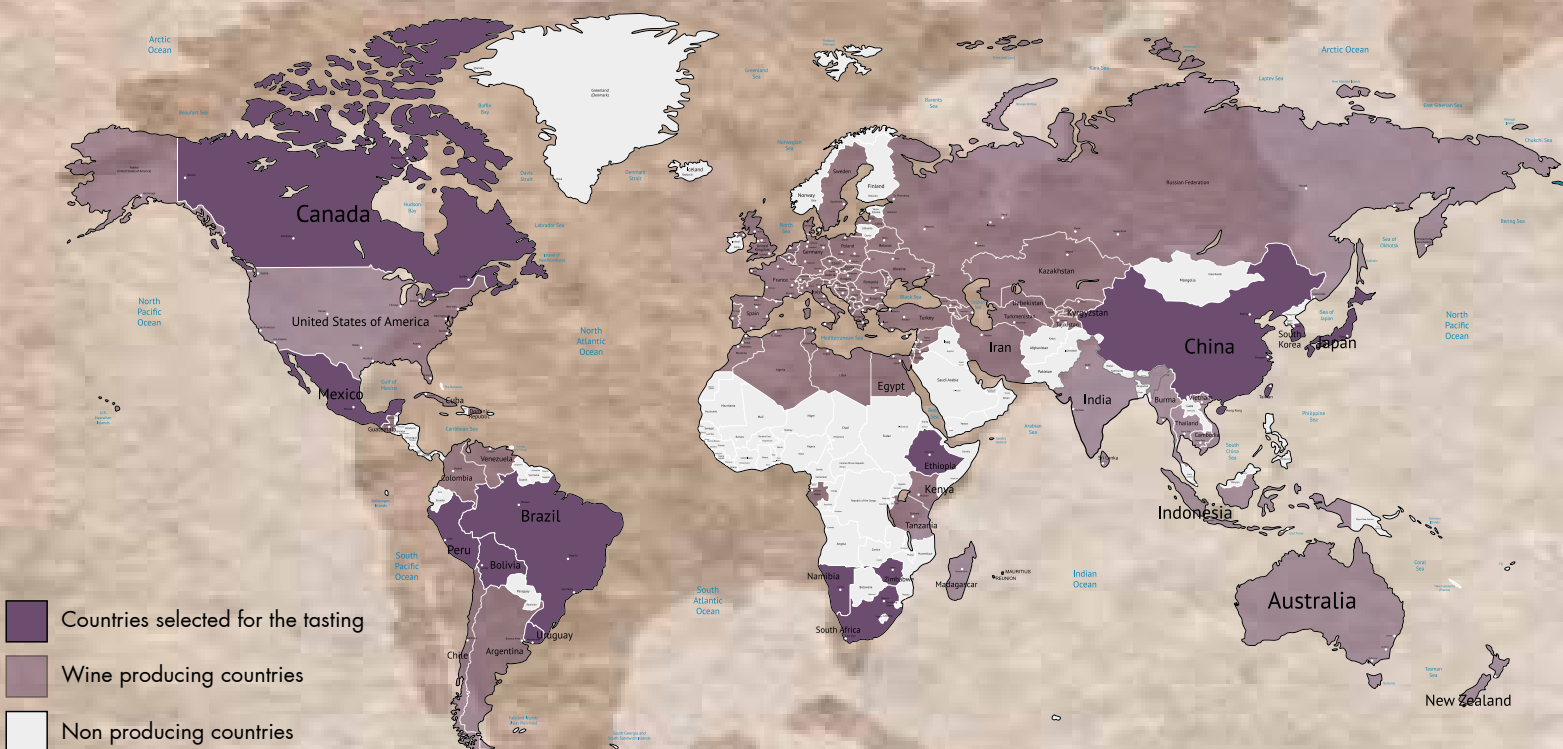
Thomas Duroux, CEO, Château Palmer

Stéphane Derenoncourt, consultant

Rachid Drissi, purchasing manager, Duclot



Presentation of the wines in the order of tasting



DRY WHITE WINES

Kristall Kellerei, 2013, Ruppel's Parrot Colombard, NAMIBIA
Aruga Branca Pipa, 2009, Katsunuma Jozo Winery, JAPAN
Virtude Chardonnay, 2013, Salton, BRAZIL
Skyline of Gobi Chardonnay Reserve, 2013, Tiansai Winery, CHINA
Tasya's Chardonnay, 2011, Grace Vineyard, CHINA

RED WINES

Pinto Bandeira Pinot Noir, 2014, Vinícola Aurora, BRAZIL
Nouveau, 2013, Château Mani, SOUTH KOREA
Cuvée prestige, 2014, Castel, ETHIOPIA
Grande Vindima Merlot, 2008, Lidio Carraro, BRAZIL
Don Manuel Petit Verdot, 2013, Tacama, PERU
RPF Tannat, 2011, Pisano, URUGUAY
Don Manuel Tannat, 2012, Tacama, PERU
Juan Cruz Tannat, 2012, Aranjuez, BOLIVIA
Cuvée Ameena Syrah, 2010, D'Orrance Wines, SOUTH AFRICA
Cuvée Violette, 2012, Le Vieux Pin, CANADA
Emma's Reserve, 2012, Silver Heights, CHINA
Kerubiel, 2005, Adobe Guadalupe, MEXICO
5 Estrellas, 2009, Casa de Piedra, MEXICO
Le Grand Vin, 2012, Osoyoos Larose, CANADA
Ensemble Arenal, 2010, Casa de Piedra, MEXICO
Raizes Corte, 2010, Casa Valduga, BRAZIL

SWEET WHITE WINES

Vendange Tardive, 2012, Vignoble du Marathonien, CANADA
Vin de Glace, 2011, Vignoble de l'Orpailleur, CANADA
Tomi Noble d'Or, 1997, Suntory Tomi no Oka Winery, JAPAN

*Legend : in **black** the wines presented with their label, in **white** the wines presented blind.*

TOP 3 OF THE JURY – WHITE

1 - Aruga Branca Pipa 2009, Katsunuma Jozo Winery, JAPAN
(100% Koshu, 6 months in French oak, then 2 years in bottle)

« Bright wine, slightly gold. Nose of vanilla and acacia ; even more complex after opening, slightly smoky. Mouth with a round, smooth and fresh attack. Very delicate and subtle »

Food & wine pairing : fish and beurre-blanc sauce

2 - Virtude Chardonnay 2013, Salton, BRAZIL
(100% Chardonnay, 6 months in French and American barrels)

« Beautiful clarity, light yellow color. Fresh nose with some floral notes. On the palate a pleasant acidity and an interesting balance. The volume comes from the grape. A wine that displays some personality »

Food & wine pairing : fresh tagliatelle with salmon

3 - Vendange Tardive 2012, Vignoble du Marathonien, CANADA
(100% Vidal, noble rot, slow cold pressing)

« Intense gold color. Pretty nose, deep, notes of pineapple, apricot and mango. Smooth in mouth, with candied peach and apricot. Beautiful wine, dense, rich and sweet but still harmonious »

Food & wine pairing : vanilla ice cream and hazelnut feuillantine

Two other wines also got the attention of our jury...

-Rüppel's Parrot Colombard 2013, Kristall Kellerei, NAMIBIA
(95 % Colombard, 5% Sauvignon Blanc/Chenin)
A very aromatic wine, light and pleasant... that seduced by its «drinkability»

-Tomi Noble d'Or 1997, Suntory Tomi no Oka Winery, JAPAN
(100% Riesling, noble rot)
Undoubtedly an unusual wine...



TOP 5 OF THE JURY – RED



1 – Cuvée Violette 2012, Le Vieux Pin, CANADA

(100% Syrah, 14 months in barrels with 19% new)

« Intense deep red color. Green pepper notes on the nose with herbs, olives and blackcurrant. Beautiful mouth, slightly herbaceous with a tapenade and red berries profile. Nice tannins, light oak and very good length. A wine full of elegance and finesse »

Food & wine pairing : veal chop

2 – 5 Estrellas 2009, Casa de Piedra, MEXICO

(Blend of Tempranillo, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Grenache and Cinsault, aged for 12 months in French and American barrels)

« Complex and earthy nose. Black olive, plum. Mouth well structured, balanced and harmonious. Good length with an aromatic finish. A wine with lot of finesse »

Food & wine pairing : chili con carne

3 – Kerubiel 2005, Adobe Guadalupe, MEXICO

(38% Syrah, 16% Cinsault, 16% Grenache, 6% Tempranillo, 3% Viognier)

« Garnet color, early evolution. Intense nose of jammy fruit (plum, strawberry, gooseberry). Very nice, evokes childhood. Mouth also on black and ripe fruit. Beautiful and dense structure in mouth. Seductive and very well made »

Food & wine pairing : sautéed veal and wild rice

4 – Le Grand Vin 2012, Osoyoos Larose, CANADA

(50% Merlot, 24% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Petit Verdot, 9% Cabernet Franc and 4% Malbec, 20 months in French oak barrels with 60% new and 40% of one wine)

« Nose of spices and wild herbs (rosemary, sage, thyme), combined with ripe black fruits. Round mouth, full, balanced. Elegant and harmonious tannins. Remarkable density and length »

Food & wine pairing : lamb

5 - Pinto Bandeira 2014, Vinícola Aurora, BRAZIL

(100% Pinot Noir, 6 months in French oak barrels)

« Light color, quite dense. Nose of modern Pinot noir, woody, ripe and fruity with notes of blackcurrant. Quite fine. Nice texture on the palate. Precise extraction, long length. Beautiful final »

Food & wine pairing : white meat or marinated red tuna

A few words about the countries presented

AFRICA

Special mention for South Africa

A terroir already well known by connoisseurs for decades now, this tasting was the confirmation that South Africa can produce magnificent and elegant wines, especially from the Syrah grape variety, as here in the Robertson region with the cuvée « Ameena Syrah » from Dorrance Wines which was unanimously appreciated.

Ethiopia : a country as beautiful and endearing as atypical and confusing

11 million bottles produced per year, including 1 million by the CASTEL winery. Real potential in this wine region located 100 kilometers South of Addis Ababa, the capital. You can find here beautiful poor soils perched at 2,000 meters above sea level, with cool nights that allow the grapes to gently reach nice maturity, especially for red wines. Rainfall, often low, but offset by drip and controlled irrigation (as in Chile or California), allows the plant to receive just enough water. The global impression of the wine tasted is positive, even if it is strongly marked by its aging in new oak barrels. We guess a real potential for this young wine country... to be remembered.

Namibia : a confidential production

This country has only four wineries, less than four hectares each! Located North of South Africa, viticulture remains anecdotal there.

ASIA

China : a giant which is just beginning

World's 5th biggest producer and current largest consumer of red wines, China remains primarily a country of extreme conditions of production, with temperatures ranging up to +40°C in summer to -40°C in winter in many central regions, forcing the vines to be buried each winter. The vines are quickly damaged and it is impossible to keep old vines in many regions. Quite an important problem for the elaboration of super premium wines. However, the size of the country offers many different mosaics of climates and soils, allowing hope for a nice future for a production which is so recent. Some top winemakers, as Emma GAO in Ningxia, have already shown us that it is possible to make some very fine and elegant wines.

South Korea : too much moisture for *Vitis vinifera*

A unique Korean wine presented during the tasting has helped us to highlight the fact that in very wet cultivated areas (90 to 100 %) – as here in South Korea or in Taiwan, for example – wine production requires the planting of hybrids vines other than *Vitis vinifera*. This seems to suggest that quality wine production is compromised in regions relatively close to the equator, where the humidity is constant and the cycle of the vine is continuous.

Japan : great elegance in the land of the Rising Sun

Japan is a country with generally difficult weather conditions, with a wet climate. The meticulous care of the vine still allows them to produce some very nice wines, especially from the Koshu, Riesling or Pinot Noir grapes. The tasting has shown that Japan can produce very elegant and aromatic wines, both dry, like the delicious « Aruga Branca Koshu » from Katsunuma, or sweet like the cuvée « Tomi Noble d'Or » from Suntory, a surprising botrytis Riesling (moisture combined with an altitude of over 700 meters here becomes an asset).

AMERICAS

Brazil : a real potential

The country opened its borders only 25 years ago and is just beginning to reveal its potential. The region of Serra Gaucha, situated around the 29° parallel South, is already promising, both for sparkling and still wines. A topography which reminds us of Tuscany, a rather temperate climate, plenty of sunshine, a moderate but good altitude (700 meters on average), combined with expertise thanks to the Italian immigration and strong technical investments, promise a bright future for the Brazilian wine industry.

Bolivia, a land full of promises

Wine production exclusively in altitude (1,600 to 2,800 m) is probably the main secret of Bolivia's success with quality wine production; mainly for red wines. Because despite the semi-tropical location of the country around the 21° and 22° parallel South, the region of Tarija (the country's main producing region), benefits from drier conditions at over 1,600 meters and has a remarkable terroir, mainly composed of well drained sandy loam soils and schist dating from the Jurassic period.

In many Bolivian wines we found freshness, elegance and some complexity, like during the tasting with the cuvée « Juan Cruz Tannat » from Bodega Arranquez.

"Heart stroke" for Canada

The classification of this first WINE Explorers' tasting is telling: the Okanagan Valley, in British Columbia, is full of treasures. Near the 49° parallel North, the climate is governed by a coastal mountain range that protects the region from cold and wet depressions swept by the Pacific Ocean, 400 km to the west. The result : a warm and dry climate with annual rainfall of 200 mm and an average temperature of 22°C during spring and summer time. The region produces fantastic red wines, fresh, with beautiful elegance and finesse.

Another great discovery – at the other end of the country, some 4,400 km to the East : the sweet white wines of Quebec, from hybrid varieties such as Vidal or Seyval. A very small production offering very nice wines with concentrated aromas, thanks to a cool climate and grapes harvested (very) late by a few irreducible passionate winemakers.

Mexico : the beautiful surprise

The region of Baja California, South of California, was one of the best surprises of the first WINE Explorers' tasting. Located on the 31,5° parallel north, this semi-desert region lacks of water (less than 200 mm of rain per year in good years) and does not forgive any approximation. It results in solar wines, powerful and balanced, meticulously blended, combining up to six grape varieties in the same cuvée and show how important it is to consider Mexico as one of the next stars of tomorrow's new-world red wines. A nice recognition for a country that was, in 1554, the pioneer of the Americas in terms of viticulture...

Peru, a great terroir

The Ica Valley is the main region of production of the country. The climate is dry and hot. "A bit like Chile", some said. And even if we are here on the 17° parallel South, this region is suitable for producing wines in exceptional conditions, « thanks to the characteristics of its unique climate and its alluvial soils», loved to emphasize great wine figures like Max Rives and Emile Peynaud. At the foothills of the Andes, red wines made from Petit Verdot and Tannat grapes can give very good results.

Uruguay, to follow very closely

Despite a fairly dense and rather concentrated annual rainfall, very conscientious wineries know how to produce very nice wines, especially red, with rather early varieties such as merlot, or other less early as tannat. It is the case of the Pisano winery for example, which benefits from clay and limestone soils with very high pH (7.5 to 8), giving mineral and complex wines. In the land of meat lovers (52 kg consumed per year per capita !), wine knows how to find its place with style.

THE FINAL WORD

All regions of the world are not conducive to viticulture. Yet, many factors such as soils, altitude, climate, grape variety or climat can create special conditions for the production of very nice wines. A protective mountain barrier, a South-facing hillside... are sometimes the ingredients for an elegant and complex wine. However, what can make each of these wines some 'great' wines is above all the skill of the winemaker and his meticulous knowledge of its terroir.

Understanding a terroir is adapting its cultivating system, choosing the appropriate plant material, making the right choices in the vineyard and in the winery. Jean-Claude Berrouet reminded us during this first tasting of this wise definition of terroir, given by Olivier De Serres in the 17th century and which aptly illustrates this final word : « Air, land and complant are the foundation of the vineyard ». Let us not forget that.

The conclusions of this first WINE Explorers' tasting still remain relative because unfortunately we do not have the chance to visit all wineries of the countries we explored (it would take although 10 generations of explorers to try to visit them all!). And as we all have a different palate, it is possible that we sometimes lacked objectivity. That is why it was very important for us to be surrounded by leading experts in the world of wine, with various backgrounds and experiences, to balance the impressions that we had when tasting these wines the first time.

This experience remains primarily a humbling lesson and of open-mindedness, for wines sometimes «outside of the usual standards» but with an undeniable potential and personality. We will renew it with joy next year!

The world of wine is far from having revealed all its secrets...

Amandine Fabre & Jean-Baptiste Ancelot

The wines from the world selected for the cocktail



Brut 2011, Miolo (Brazil) - José Bepi Salton NM, Salton (Brazil)

Gran Nature 2009, Casa Valduga (Brazil) - Cidre de feu, Union Libre (Canada)

Divine Tropical Lychee Wine, Oxenham (Mauricius) - Brut Nature Tannat 2011, Pisano (Uruguay)

The WINE Explorers' project in a few words...

WINE Explorers is the story of a dream which comes true. A dream that every wine lover has already made : to go with a backpack discovering vineyards worldwide. Since January 2014, our tasters-globetrotters travel the world and meet winemakers and vineyards from the whole wine planet, enthusiast people, with often confidential productions that have never passed their borders. And we have chosen to share this dream with you by writing, filming it, and bringing in our bags some precious bottles to continue enriching the world wine heritage.

How is the project doing ?

After having already explored 25 countries on four continents, the team began the first European tour in early July. The adventure is enriched with the preparation of a documentary series entitled «WINE Explorers Truck», co-produced with Doc Land Yard (Gedeon Programmes Group). The first episodes should be available this autumn 2015.

Acknowledgments

We thank our partners to believe and support this project : the VIDELOT Group, DB Schenker, Château Lafon Rochet, Château Calon Ségur, Château La Conseillante.

Thank you to Elisabeth Jaubert, Ariane Khaida and Jean Moueix for having made this tasting possible. And thank you to all the people close to the project and who encourage us every day.

For more information on the WINE Explorers' project :

-website : www.wine-explorers.net

-blog : <http://blog.wine-explorers.net>

-Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/WineExplorers>

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