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Explore the purity, beauty and grace of Austria!

by ***Roland Muksch***

Tradition and Pedigree

Grüner Veltliner is the signature variety of Austria and there are many winemakers in the country who produce glorious wines with it. However, Toni Bodenstein from Weingut Prager, is unrivalled in his Wachstum Bodenstein. Toni amassed over 110 clones of Grüner Veltliner which are planted as bush wines on stakes in very high density at over 10,000 plants per ha. This is the old and backbreaking method of planting wine, and entirely different from the now common low density Hochkultur - translated high culture – which Toni dismisses with a pinch of irony. The vines are planted in the most famous and distinct Wachau site of Achleiten. This Smaragd 2015 captures its sense of place with ease and amplifies and concentrates it to unreal levels. The result an extremely complex wine with intense salty minerality, stone fruit, citrus zest and an array of herbs and spices. 2015 was universally recognised as one of the best vintages recently. It gave additional concentration and depth to the vines. Toni's wines that year are at the pinnacle of the Wachau that year and the GV Wachstum Bodenstein is his most outstanding child. *(This wine was selected to pair with the recipe of 1-star Chef Pino Lavarra featured in "Secrets de Chef", page 24,* ***www.bbr.com****)*

Ethereal Magic

The young Georg Prieler has a magic touch. He produces Blaufränkisch, which is often highly extracted and dense, in an almost Burgundian manner. His wines are delicate, floral, spicy and perfumed of ethereal charm. Goldberg is the best plot on the slopes Leithaberg – the last frontier to the Pannonian Basin of Hungary. As a teenager, he was sent by his father to negotiate with an old lady owner the purchase of the land. It took him several years to purchase and several more to nurture it and turn it organic. This dedication can be felt in this Leithaberg DAC Goldberg 2012 with insane perfume and with a lingering mineral palate. ***www.fohringer.at***

A dessert symphony

Alois Kracher was a legend in Austria and in the world. Recognised 7 times as sweet winemaker of the year he understood like no other how to produce liquid gold. After his sudden passing, his young son Gerald successfully continued this success story. The Weinlaubenhof Grand Cuvee Nouvelle Vague TBA No 6 2010 is a blend of Chardonnay and Welschriesling with a residual sugar level above 200 g/l and the effort of the house to produce the best wine of their year. The result is fascinating, a combination of such high intensity, sugar, freshness, depth, layers is hard to imagine possible and the finish continues beyond a measure of time. ***www.altayawines.com***

One of a kind Sauvignon Blanc

The Neumeister family do not do things by halves. Apart from running the best gourmet restaurant in the region they created a perfect gravity fed wine cellar with state of the art equipment. Their Sauvignon Blanc Moarfeitl from South East Styria is highly sought after and is in a category of its own. The wine features purity of fruit, mineral intensity and an elegant oak profile. A wine that is opulent and rare for a Sauvignon Blanc and can effortless improve with age. The 2013 is spectacular, powerful and deep. ***www.fohringer.at***

Elegance re-found

Riesling and Grüner Veltliner are famous in Austria, but Weißburgunder, Pinot Blanc, was once considered as the most elegant white variety. These days Weißburgunder is often globally dismissed and plays second fiddle to Chardonnay or Pinot Gris, but there are people like Rudi Pichler who treat this variety with respect and produce a truly amazing wine with it. Grown on the famed terraced hill of Kollmütz in the little village of Wösendorf in the Wachau it is produced as a Smaragd – the highest quality level in the region. Rudi is proud of this wine, as it shows the terroir like Riesling or Güner, and even trups some of the best in Burgenland where it is more famous. The 2015 was a particular success that will age with ease and give pleasure along the way. Alas, the quantities produced are small. ***www.fohringer.at***

The Montrachet of Austria

In the middle of the Kamptal lies a distinct mountain, the Heiligenstein, which is almost entirely covered in terraced vineyards. Geologically very unique and with perfect exposure this is the best place in the region and probably one of the best in the world to grow Riesling. A true Grand Cru and already earmarked to achieve this status when the appellation is introduced locally in a couple of years. Bründlmayer, led by Willi Bründlmayer and lately by Andreas Wickhoff MW manages to make the most impressive wines from this appellation. Their top wine from this appellation, Alte Reben (old vines), manages to extract all the magic of this site. Filled with deep minerality, vibrancy and intensity these are wines that grow ever more complex and rich with age. The 1ÖTW 2014 was universally recognised as the best Riesling of the year, and despite the difficult conditions during the growing season, those old vines prevailed and created a wine of epic proportions. ***www.asc-wines.com***

WINES OF AUSTRIA!

BY: J.C.VIENS

With this issue, we begin an exploration of vinous discoveries beyond my own cellar to learn about the little gems that tickles the taste buds of various wine personalities we often meet. Today, we take a peek in the cellar of Roland Muksch who is not only a contributor to Spirito diVino Asia but also the Vice-Chairman of the Hong Kong Wine Society and the Deputy Consul General of the Ordre des Coteaux de Champagne. Perhaps by virtue of being Austrian or because the wines are simply fantastic, Roland has a deep passion for the wines of his native country. I heard, and perhaps this is a secret that I am revealing unknowingly, that Roland has the ambition of making wine himself one day in Austria. For sure he is knowledgeable and as a Master of Wine candidate, he is sparing no efforts to enhance the subject he loves so much. As we did in our last issue, I selected one of the wine to pair with the recipe featured in our column "Secrets de Chef" which this time is presented by Pino Lavarra, the 1-Star Michelin Chef of Tosca at the Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong. The Grüner Veltliner, the signature variety of Austria pairs delightfully with Chef Pino's Riso al Latte of Mozzarella, Veal Sausages and Cime Di Rapa. In the future, we will continue to invite various guests whose cellars are sure to be filled with all kind of little gems we seldom hear about either because they are off the beaten path or because they are exclusive to a select few. Enjoy!