

Cellar owner offers philosophy about wine

Bryan-made Chardonnay gets honors

By Elisa Hutchins
Reporter



A 1986 Chardonnay wine premiered at Windows of the World Restaurant in New York City this summer after winning best Chardonnay in the Southwest in a regional winetasting.

But even if your favorite libation is not wine, you might like to know that this award-winning Chardonnay comes from Messina Hof Wine Cellars in Bryan.

Paul Bonarrigo, owner and sixth generation winemaker, is a big part of the reason that, after ten years, his twelve different wines have won 46 international, national and statewide awards. This is a first for any of the 26 Texas wineries that are beginning to catch up in the race with Nappa and Sonoma valley vineyards in California.

His attitude toward wine is relaxed and casual. According to Bonarrigo, one doesn't have to spend \$100 on a bottle of wine or pretend to know what to do with the cork.

"Many wine experts promote a snobbish appeal to people," Bonarrigo says. "You don't have to know the vocabulary or be able to tell what wine goes with chicken. It's a pain in the neck. Our philosophy is that wine is a wonderful drink and we want you to feel comfortable with all of the varieties."

If you go to Messina Hof, Bonar-

ing no sweetness. Many think sweet wines are more alcoholic but they have much less alcohol content than dry wines.

• Touch — there is a technique to tasting. It isn't very glamorous, Bonarrigo says. Put some wine on the top of the tongue and slap the tongue on the roof of the mouth. One should be able to feel the aroma come through the nose.

After learning the senses, Bonarrigo opens up a bottle of Chardonnay and begins wine-tasting.

But before the tasting, the cork must come off. But once off, what does one do with it?

"I was at a wine-tasting in Austin a while back and the waiter brought out the bottle, opened it, and gave the cork to a gentleman from San Angelo who told me he knew nothing about wine," Bonarrigo says. "The man took the cork and looked at it very closely. He then held it up in the air and showed everyone at the table the cork. Apparently they were not pleased with his actions, so he ate the cork."

The only reason one smells the cork is to make sure it is wet. If it is, then the bottle has been stored on its side, as it should be.

After the cork is off, the Chardonnay is poured. It is a dry, simple wine and Bonarrigo says it can be served with fish, chicken, bread, cheese or anything else.

Sauvignon Blanc also is a white wine. It is green in color and has a slight taste of green olive. It also has a smoky characteristic to it that

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— Paul Bonarrigo, owner of Messina Hof

comes from an aging process in smoky-styled oak barrels.

The wine is perfect with anything made of crab, Bonarrigo suggests, or turkey and dressing.

Red wines such as Messina Hof's Papa Paulo Porto have a tendency to be sweet. Port wine has a cherry, chocolate flavor that comes from the sweetness of the grape as the two-year aging process takes place.

Port is fortified, meaning a distilled liquor is added to the wine dur-

ing aging. In this case, 195 proof brandy was added. It is anywhere from 18 percent to 21 percent alcohol with a sweetness level in excess of 2 percent. Because of the sweetness, Bonarrigo says it should be served as an after-dinner drink with chocolate, ginger or stilton (goat) cheese.

"A perfect dessert for the hot summer months is the Texas Desert," Bonarrigo says, laughing. "First, take a half-gallon of Bluebell old-fashioned vanilla ice cream and half a bottle of port. Pour the wine over the ice cream and put it back in the freezer for a while and serve. And that's it."

An interesting thing about port is that it has legs, Bonarrigo says. If one swirls the wine around in the glass and watches it settle, it looks like legs forming on the side of the glass. This is caused by the sweetness and the high alcohol content.

Bonarrigo can talk about wine for hours, and his knowledge in this area is limitless. His family comes from the wine country of Messina, Italy, and together with his wife's heritage from the vast vineyards of Germany, Messina Hof has grown to a good-sized business. Bonarrigo's talent and understanding of the wine industry has placed Texas in the national spotlight of a profitable industry and is one that Bonarrigo says will only get bigger.

Rehnquist postpones 2 executions

WASHINGTON (AP)—Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist on Tuesday postponed the executions of two condemned men in Texas who were scheduled to die a minute after midnight Wednesday.

Rehnquist granted stays to Robert Anthony Carter and Noble D. Mays that will remain in effect pending action by the full Supreme Court on formal appeals by both.

Rehnquist gave Carter and Mays until Sept. 25 to file the formal appeals.

Carter was convicted of the June 21, 1981, fatal shooting of Sylvia Reyes, 18, an attendant at a Houston gas station.

Carter, a high school dropout, was 18 when convicted in 1982.

He said the gun went off accidentally when he reached into the cash drawer at the service station.

Mays was convicted of stabbing to death Jerry Lamb during a Wichita Falls robbery.

Police said Mays and another man asked Lamb to drive them to their disabled car, but then robbed him at knifepoint.

As Lamb tried to escape, he was run down and stabbed by Mays, according to trial testimony.

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