

The Cork and Demon

Smartass South Texas Wineblog

Thursday, February 02, 2006

Of Northern Italians, Tequila, and Handmade Boots



High on the list of Things That Keep Me From Flinging Myself Off a Bridge is meeting very handsome Northern Italians who make and sell amazing wine. The Hub was showing these gentlemen around his accounts, and since I'd previously reviewed one of the labels, he invited me along. Despite his initial concern, two of us gals decided that we simply could not miss these guys trying on real Texas cowboy boots, and ended up hanging on the whole night with 'em. Why the hell not? Who doesn't want the companionship of cool, brilliant females?

Bressan's Wines

Fulvio Luca Bressnan, a classically trained Bordeaux winemaker and descended from a family long dedicated to the vines, takes no shit and cuts no corners when it comes to making wine. Like many in Friuli, he's of the opinion that varietals such as Pinot Nero (Noir) and

Cabernet Sauvignon do not "belong" to the French, since those varietals have been cultivated by their ancestors since the early nineteenth century. He believes that these grapes have not only a home in Friuli, but can reflect in their quality and terroir that long history, and be among the finest in the world. For him, the fruit and it's pips dictate readiness for harvest, and wood treatment should always reflect subtly in the finished juice. That means big 2,000 liter barrels. "I want to drink the wine, not eat the door to the kitchen," he says.

Fulvio doesn't release his wines until the earliest possible stage of their readiness. At that time they should be lovely and approachable, but will "always taste better for the rest of their lives".

Now that might sound obvious and all, but this man understands what the meaning of "earliest possible stage" is. His current release of Pignolo, a "a pain in the ass" of a grape, is 1997.

1997 Bressnan 'Pignol' Pignolo, Friuli

This varietal is native to Friuli, and is another vanishing beauty in Italy. Called 'The Ancient Friulian Nobleman', a good one yields up subtle but complex aromatics and an elegantly restrained palate. I can't think of anything that compares to it. Despite the near decade on this wine, it's still a teenager with vibrant color and ripe fruit. Put your nose half an inch above the rim, you get violets. Deeper in: anise, minerals and crushed dark berries. Tannins...oh, jeez, what did the Hub say? "They massage the feet of the grape..." which led to a long extension of that metaphor across the table for which we ought all to be spanked. Anyway, they were damned supple. And this baby's only going to get better. Fulvio believed that this wine will be at it's peak in twenty-five more years. Maybe an exaggeration, but I was convinced at the time.

2001 Bressan Pinot Nero

I'm gonna break the Cardinal Rule of blogging and admit that I am only just now wrapping my mind around Pinot Noir and all of it's little secrets. But being a novice isn't a bad thing at all: the learning is the real blast, and a good Pinot can require discussion regardless of your degree of know-it-all-ness. It took me many questions answered and many returns to this glass to begin to understand the way it had

already developed, and where it was headed. The nose was big with dominant red berry fruit, black tea and minerals, with little of the earthiness that signals a traditional style to me. But this wine is far from mature. It was a pleasure to drink now, especially with it's already remarkably supple tannins, but I learned it would take several more years at least to fully acquire the intensity promised in the palate.

The Bressan estate does several other wines, including a Schiopettino that wasn't available for tasting (dammit). They grow Merlot and Cabernet, as well as several white varietals including Pinot Grigio and Verduzzo.



Frederico Frumento, Fulvio Luca Bressnan, and Paolo Bernardi (President, Vinus Purveyors). All three say that stelvins and synthetics are for pussies, and only corks will do for a well crafted wine.
