

## New World vs. Old World

It is a debate, a classification and grounds for divorce in the wine world; new world vs. old world fuels more diatribes and elicits more apologies -- the new world for its bountiful fruit and the old world for its austerity. Though not mutually exclusive, the extremists can be classified into two distinct camps that wage a polite ideological war. On one hand you have the "wizedened" more often wealthy wine effete who with a wave of their hand will buzz words like minerality, wet forest floor, creosote and terroir. Their kryptonite is a bottle of Molly Dooker. They detest overt fruit, alcohol over 14%, oak and are unable to choke down any sparkling wine that is not made in Champagne; they yearn to return to the days of yore when feet were purple with grape juice and alcohols barely rose above 11%.

The New World campers are easy to spot with their purple teeth, drunken smiles and youth. They prefer anything that is jammy and pours like motor oil. Their leader and patron saint is Robert Parker of Monkton and instead of grace before meals they face the direction of his childhood home and chant "Praise Him". These ruffians eschew nuance, balance and acidity in wine. They buzz words like kirsch, prunes, new French oak and 17%. Their kryptonite is affordable Burgundy.

This war has been raging for four decades since the initial battle at the 1976 Paris tasting which legitimized California Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon based Bordeaux blends. The new world upstarts, Chateau Montelena 1973 Napa Valley Chardonnay and Stags Leap Wine Cellars 1973 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon rose to the top of their categories, in fact trouncing their much revered French counterparts. Then with a review of '82 Bordeaux, a spectacularly clad New World knight named Robert Parker with an inky pen to skewer his dirt munching foes ascended the vinous throne to declare the vintage spectacular; low acid and ripeness became de rigueur and fanned the flames into scorching infernos.

Today, the rise and legitimization of the new world wine regions (Western United States, Australia, South American, New Zealand and South Africa) and the New World palette has given us one very important thing, MORE WINE and in turn more diversity in wine. Do we always want to drink the same type of wine? Of course not! We have our favorites, but different foods, occasions and even moods warrant a different flavor profile in our wine. I would never refuse a sip of Barolo with its heady aromas of rose petals, cherries and saddle leather, but there are times that I want to drink a palette pounding Santa Barbara Syrah and watch my pearly whites disappear into a purple haze.

I think it is wise to look at both camps and extract elements that fit your palate. You will only be able to do this by tasting wine, not by reading about it. The more you taste the more you will

know what you do and do not like and in fact, the more you will know about yourself. My first acquaintance with Chinon (Cabernet Franc from the Loire Valley) was not a pleasant one. I realized how much I disliked eating the acerbic flavor of green bell peppers. I erroneously thought that all Chinon and all Cabernet Franc tasted like green bell peppers. It does not. Under ripe Cabernet Franc will not have the blueberry and fresh mint flavors that are its hallmark, but instead will have more cherry and green bell pepper flavors.

It took years for me to come to my senses and realized that all Cab Franc couldn't possibly taste like this. I began sampling throughout the world and have since found amazing examples in Napa, Chile and even Chinon.

I have picked two wines to review this week which I believe have been misunderstood by the American palette. The white wine is New World, California Pinot Gris (Grigio), and the red is Old World, Chianti Classico from the Tuscan countryside in Italy.

White: Etude Pinot Gris Carneros 2010

Pinot Gris is the exact same grape as Pinot Grigio, the grape that our trend setting, dry wine drinking mothers first began to ask for by name. The rise in popularity led many opportunistic wineries and labels to over produce which sacrificed intensity and flavor. In recent years, the wine effete has eschewed Pinot Grigio as flavorless wine. This is not the case with Etude Pinot Gris. On the nose, fresh peaches, lime, melon and herbs leap at you following with a rich texture on the palette echoing peach and herb aromas. The finish is lengthy and ends with wonderful acidity. Pair with pate and asiago.

Retail Price: \$25

Red: Fontodi Chianti Classico 2007

Take the images of wicker covered bottles and banish them from your mind. This ain't a red and white checkered table cloth chianti. Chianti Classico is a demarked region within the Chianti DOC of Tuscany. A blend of predominantly Sangiovese, Fontodi's Chianti Classico has the power of a New World wine, but with the layered complexity of Old World. The classic smells of cedar, red cherries, sandalwood and saddle leather explode onto your palate and finish with substantial fruit, acid and tannin. This wine screams food and the sweet smells of allspice rubbed duck breast would be a perfect match.

Retail Price: \$45