

Orangewood Wines

Small Wineries, Great Wines

Volume 5, Issue 5

June 28, 2015

Introduction

This month we took a long overdue trip to Italy. It has had been 14 years since we were last there. As a result you might expect some Italian oriented content in this month's newsletter. When we got back any pretense of coolness in Phoenix had gone - it was an extreme heat warning from the moment we returned. A little "chillier" today - mere 4 degrees above normal (108F in downtown Phoenix). Not surprisingly, June and July are the nadir of our year in sales.

Topic of the Month - Winery Visits

While in Italy we visited a number of wineries including the two that we represent: Elena Walch and Avignonesi.

Alto Adige used to be part of Austria, but became part of Italy following the first world war. It is a more independent region than most of Italy. The major requirement from the central government is that everyone learn Italian. Since everyone speaks German, it makes everyone at least bi-lingual. The region is a large glaciated valley which makes it a wide flat bottomed valley. The Dolomites are all around. The slopes of the valley are largely planted with grapevines and the valley floor is mostly apples - they produce 70% of Italy's apples. The Elena Walch winery is located in the town of



Karoline showing the intricately carved traditional barrel to Laurie

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Note on the Pictures

I have put a web page with larger versions of the pictures [here](#).



View across vineyards and Tramin to the Dolomites

Tramin - the home of Gewürztraminer which literal translates to "spicy grapes from Tramin". We met with Karoline Walch, one of Elena's daughters. She showed us our apartment and then gave us a tour of the cellars which contain mostly barriques but had previously been concrete tanks. We also drove out to one of the vineyards which is planted on a south facing slope. There is a [Wine Spectator](#)

[video](#) of Elena shot at the winery. It is almost as good as being there.

At Avignonesi we met with the winemaker, who took us on a tour of the nearby vineyards and their winery and cellars. Ashleigh Seymour is an Australian who is helping the new owner transition the winery to be fully biodynamic. She explained that many of the demands of becoming biodynamic make a lot of sense. Having vineyard workers spraying chemicals and wearing biohazard suits is not good for the health of the worker or for the health of the fruit we will be drinking. We learned about the vine spacing, and about how cow horns are buried filled with manure and then diluted and sprayed on the vineyards to bring nutrients back to the soil. The point overall being that the vineyards need to last for generations and must be sustained. The next day we visited the old winery, including the Vin Santo aging room. We and the rest of our large group stayed for a two hour wine paired lunch. Not a martini in sight.



Ashleigh Seymour and with Laurie and I

Rambling

It is always a struggle to express the many wonderful aspects of a winery visit in 100 words or less. Being able to use pictures does help, but even so I could not cram in the time we spent with Karoline's parents, nor the wonderful time we had with the staff at Avignonesi. My thanks to all those that did not feature in the brief sketch of these two world class wineries. For those reading this who notice the absence of other wineries - stay tuned!

This trip to Italy was mostly organized by the owners and customers of the Old Town Wine Cellar in Yuma. Overall there were 20 people in the group. We had a few activities together and most in smaller groups. We took on the challenge of driving in Italy, of drinking a bottle of

wine per day, of consuming huge amounts of olive oil and pasta, and generally getting pretty relaxed.

The Rambler vacations on...

Cheers,

Richard (newsletter writer) and Laurie (editor)
Orangewood Wines