

WINEHAZARD

ERIC HAZARD'S TAKE ON THE GRAPES OF THE WORLD AND THE FRUIT OF THEIR LABOR.

Thursday, February 14, 2008

Quintarelli, Valpolicella, 1999 (Veneto, Italy)

By Eric Hazard

Valentine's Day for me is not about dinner reservations, or expensive gifts. Valentine's Day is a reason to cook rack of lamb. The only remaining question is what wine to compliment this special meal and this special day. To answer that question, we wandered into Italian Wine Merchants on 16th street to ask for a recommendation. It took the clerk about 36 seconds to point us to the Quintarelli Valpolicella. Good choice.



Vineyard: Quintarelli
Grape: Valpolicella blend
Region: Veneto, Italy
Year: 1999

Source: Italian Wine Merchants
(www.italianwinemerchantstore.com)
Price: \$86

Color: Red turning to brick

Nose: As big and beautiful a bouquet as I expected. Sandalwood, cedar, cigar box, smoke, licorice, sheep's leather came together at first to form this complex, exquisite nose. Swirling brings more fruit such as dark cassis and plum, mingled with black pepper and lavender. Mrs. WineHazard picked up scents most reminiscent of high end leather.

Taste: The wine is very big and very tightly wound, revealing its secrets slowly and seductively. We decanted for five hours before our first taste, and even then, it still had a lot of opening up to offer throughout dinner. When we did wrap our lips around the luscious wine, the first tastes were sweet spices with apple and strawberry. As it delicately moves through the mouth, tastes of cassis, cheese, smoke, spring meadow, mint, strawberry and tobacco all had their turn on the palate, before it finishes with plum and raspberry. The final mouth tastes move from fruit to mint in an enjoyable lingering flavor. Our rack of lamb brought out black pepper, leather, tobacco and mint flavors. The medium-bodied wine does a good job of being meaty without weighty, moving through the mouth delicately, giving each part of the tongue its own exclusive taste.

What I like: I love the pleasure of tasting a wine as nicely crafted and nicely aged as this. It was nuanced and nicely layered, giving us a marvelous wine experience.

What I don't like: That I can't thank Giuseppe Quintarelli in person for making such a wonderful wine.