

TASTE

of the seacoast

June 2008

Wine Buzz

By JoAnn Actis-Grande

Off to the Races...

The month of May is not just for prestigious horse and car races, it's a month for one of the most prestigious wine festivals too, the Nantucket Wine Festival. The month also brought us some other smaller venue events. I sure don't run like Big Brown or Scott Dixon, but if there's a chance to taste wine, I'm off...

I rode the ferry to attend the twelfth annual Nantucket Wine Festival with Taste publisher, Keith J. Lemerise, and Lois Fowler, co-founder of the Coast of Maine Wine and Food Festival. Our first event was the Grand Gala—and grand it was with over 30 stations of wine and food, including our own Ten Center Street, located in Newburyport.

The next day we attended a seminar on "Entertaining with Champagne Cocktails", by master mixologist from Eastern Standard Restaurant, in Boston. We all agreed that the "Frelate Rose" cocktail was our favorite—made with St-Germain (an elderflower liqueur), mixed with champagne, served over ice with a lemon twist. The recipe for the St-Germain Cocktail is 2 shots of champagne or sauvignon blanc, 1 ½ shots of St-Germain Liqueur, topped with 2 shots of soda or sparkling water, mix in a tall, ice-filled Collins glass and serve with a lemon twist. Try serving it at your next party.

Later I attended "Bargain Hunting for Fine Wine Treasures," by Bin Ends, a value driven retail wine store in Braintree, Massachusetts, informing us on how to shop for first class wines at significant savings—start looking for Greece and Portugal as the next wine regions to produce collectable wines.

A highlight of the festival was an unexpected invite to an Italian wine tasting at one of the "Grand Houses" where I interviewed Leonardo LoCascio, president and CEO of Winebow. He founded the company in 1980 and imports some of the finest Italian wines, many of them receiving Tre Bicchieri (highest standard of wine by Gambero Rosso) year after year. We tasted five award winning Italian wines: 2003 Castello di Bossi, "Corbia" from Tuscany; 2004 Valle Reale, San Calisto from Abruzzo; 2004 Coppo, Barbera d'Asti "Pomorosso" from Piedmont; 2004 Montevetrano from Campania and a 2003 Allegrini Amarone from Veneto.

The next evening we had a delicious dinner at American Seasons with Josh Widaman, assistant winemaker at Chimney Rock Winery. He was pouring the 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon reserve, his first vintage at Chimney Rock. We also discovered Chimney Rock Elevage Blanc, made from Sauvignon Gris and

Sauvignon Blanc, which is featured in the new hit movie Sex and the City.

American Seasons restaurant is celebrating their 20th anniversary this year. It's a unique Nantucket treasure. I was invited back to American Seasons for a Veuve Clicquot Champagne and Caviar Tasting with Cyril Brun, the winemaker at Veuve Clicquot.

The Grand Tasting is two days of four 2-hour sessions, with over 150 wineries pouring their wines. We hung out a bit with New England native Peter Merriam of Merriam Vineyards. Currently Merriam Vineyards produces Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and will produce a Chardonnay this fall. Merriam Vineyards is opening a new winery this summer in Sonoma.

Many of the people who travel to the festival love to travel in general. Representatives from Cayman Islands and Turks and Caicos were on hand sharing information about these lovely destinations.

I am now reading the book, "Passion On The Vine", by Sergio Esposito, owner of Italian Wine Merchants in New York City and exhibitor at the festival. The book is about Sergio and his journey through Italy looking for fine boutique wines to sell in his shop. "Passion on the Vine," also takes us on a trip through Italy, visiting legendary winemakers. I highly recommend reading his book. www.italianwinemerchant.com, Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble and other book stores.

Back in Portsmouth, I had a relaxing evening attending "Food Writers Night", a fundraiser for Seacoast Slow Food. Rachel Forrest, "Wine Me Dine Me" columnist for Seacoast newspapers hosted the event. Taste editor, Jean Kerr, and other Taste food writers read their work and supplied recipes that were prepared for our dinner.

Spring Wine Fest at Vinilia Restaurant and Wine Bar in Boston, celebrated wine of the worlds, paired with regional foods that match the wines. Guests were handed a passport to travel to 10 different wine countries. Preferred wines were the Ramos Pinto Adriano White from the Douro region of Portugal, Borgo Magredo Prosecco and J.Lohr's chardonnay stood out.

Memorial Day weekend I was off again, this time to visit with my Italian family in New York. Time with them may not be a wine and food festival, but when you're Italian, every meal is a celebration. Salute...