

A Wine Tasting Experience

By Hap Hansen

Some years ago, I had been invited to participate in a wine tasting by a relative who was a wine wholesaler. He invited me because he knew that on very rare occasions, I was known to have a glass of wine or two. For those of you who know me, that was an understatement.

The wine we were tasting was a Pinot Grigio from Italy. The vineyard owner was our host and he poured small amounts of wine into our glasses. We were expected to sniff, swirl, take a small taste, and then tell the owner what we experienced.

There were three wine tasters. We all did the preliminary work and then the vintner asked the questions of us. "Mr. Smith, how did you find my Pinot Grigio?" Mr. Smith said, "It is clean and complex with notes of yellow fruit, citrus and spice accented by creamy touches and just a whiff of smoke. The palate is medium bodied, with sharp flavors, very good acidity and spicy, supple flavors. It ends with a mineral, almost salty sensation as the orange and mandarin peel notes increase." When he had finished, I looked at my glass and said to myself, "What?"

He then asked the lady taster, "Ms. Jones, how did you find my Pinot Grigio?" She said, "The wine is mouthwatering, showing off floral notes of jasmine, orange blossoms and verbena. This delicate perfume is complemented by rich citral tones of lime zest, tangerine and mandarin orange. White peach and ripe pear along with tropical accents of pineapple, lychee and guava round out the aromatic profile. A hint of minerality, along with a bit of exotic barrel spice - cumin and coriander - add even more intrigue as it balances zesty crispness with weight and richness." Again, I looked at my glass and said to myself, "What the heck are they drinking?"

Unfortunately, it was now my turn. "Mr. Hansen, how did you find my Pinot Grigio?" I said, "Well, I just looked into the glass and there it was!" No one smiled. Frowning, the vintner said, almost sarcastically, "Mr. Hansen, are there any further comments?" And I said, "Yes, it was very good." Obviously, that was the one and only time I have participated in a formal wine tasting. So what did I learn the hard way? Don't get involved in things you know absolutely nothing about!