

Wines

Tasting Amarone



Michael Tabone

I don't enjoy drinking high alcohol wines but I do sometimes enjoy tasting them. A recent convert to the world of wine organised a private tasting of Amarone, for which Matteo Galtarossa from Azienda Montecariano was invited.

Amarone is the wine made in the Valpolicella area of the Veneto in north-east Italy with a process called *appassimento*. Local red grapes are air dried for about three months, losing approximately more than half of their original weight at harvest. This results in very concentrated amounts of natural sugars, tannins and acidity and facilitates very high degrees of alcohol in the finished wine - 16.5 per cent or even more.

Bolla's 2005 is light in body and tannins and therefore does not handle its 15 per cent of alcohol very well. Masi's 'Costasera' from the same vintage has more body and grip - livelier tannins and acidity.

Tommasi's 2001 is equally good and pleasant.

Zenato's 2003 is drinking well now. It is rounded and soft with tannins that are quite dry at the end, reflecting the extreme dryness and heat of 2003. Drink up, this will not last. In a league (and price) of its own, there was Romano dal Forno's 2002 - heavily extracted with polished tannins, smooth, very modern, woody (French barriques) and not typical at all. More cassis and dark fruit rather than the typical varieties of cherries that one normally associates with Amarone.

The grandfather and patriarch of Valpolicella, Quintarelli, was represented with two wines. There was the Rosso del Bepi 1999, which although made in exactly the same way as Amarone, was declassified by Guzeppo Quintarelli himself and not

"Drink up, Zenato's 2003 will not last"

sold as Amarone. At his level of standards and reputation, one can understand why, but under any other circumstances this is a very good wine - excellent to drink now.

The tannins are soft, the alcohol a bit apparent. Quintarelli's philosophy is to release his wines when they are more or less ready to drink. His Amarone 1998, which has just been released, has to be one of the greatest wines of the world - great



character and individuality, rich and solid but at the same time elegant and fine. Very complex, it will keep for many years. To stand out like this, while retaining 'typicity', is truly a remarkable achievement and an aim that all great wine makers should aspire to.

There were also a couple of Reciotos, which are the sweet version

of Amarone. At 80 g of residual sugar per litre, Montecariano's 2001 has a fantastic spicy, dried cherry/plum aroma, Port-like. Well-balanced by a lively acidity and a sweet but fresh mouthfeel. Very long.

It will accompany strong and/or blue cheeses and maybe even strong, dark chocolate-flavoured desserts. The Italians have coined

the phrase '*vini di meditazione*'. Without a doubt, Amarone is one such wine. I have difficulties finding the appropriate place for it on my dining table, but can certainly enhance an enlightened conversation with good friends sitting on an armchair in front of a roaring fire.

Happy drinking.

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Wine appreciation



Waiters can expect to be asked about what wines should go with the duck, or how good that '95 Bordeaux really is. But for Muslim waiters who shun alcohol, the question is a bit tricky. Now a company in Cairo is training hotel staff on the finer points of wine appreciation, even though they'll never touch a drop. It could be the first step to putting Egyptian wine back on the map. (AFP)



Din L-Art Helwa chairman Martin Galea (left) and Marsovin director Jeremy Cassar at the launch of La Torre.

Marsovin launches La Torre range at Hastings

Marsovin recently launched its new range of La Torre wines at Hastings Gardens in Valletta by Din L-Art Helwa chairman Martin Galea.

La Torre, dedicated to the towers originally built by the Knights of the Order of St John, consists of seven wines - Chardonnay-Girgentina, Gellewza-Shiraz, Girgentina, Trebbiano, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Sauvignon Blanc. Each wine carries the name of a different tower restored by Din L-Art Helwa.

Marsovin has never previously produced a mono varietal wine from its indigenous varieties Girgentina and Gellewza.

This range aims at promoting these varieties as they can only be found in Malta. Marsovin director Jeremy Cassar said: "Marsovin selected only the very best Girgentina and Gellewza to produce these wines."

Marsovin will donate a sum of money from the sale of La Torre to Din L-Art Helwa to be used for the

restoration of towers. Tourists visiting these towers will be able to buy wines on the spot.

Mr Cassar said: "We need to promote our heritage more. Introducing a wine which supports our heritage will raise the awareness of these towers. Marsovin is not only proud to carry these towers on its label but more so happy to contribute towards their maintenance."

For more information visit www.marsovin.com.