



## International Syrah Styles – A Comparative Blind Tasting Seminar

Presented by:

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### History of Syrah



- **Etymology:** Shiraz (medieval capital of Persia), Siracusa (Sicilia), Syriaca (Syria), Sýra (Greek island), Sérine (late ripening) antique name in Côte Rôtie
- **Origins:** DNA profiling says southeastern France, the progeny of Mondeuse Blanche and Dureza
- **Relatives:** Pinot, Viognier, Mondeuse Noire, Teroldego
- **Earliest written mention:** 77 AD, Pliny the Elder, as *Allobrogica*
- **Synonyms:** Balsamina, Candive, Entournerein, Hermitage, Marsanne Noire, Sira, Sirac, Shiraz, Syra, Syrac, Sérine
- **Offspring:** Petite Sirah (Durif) – the progeny of Syrah and Peloursin

## Physical Characteristics of Syrah



- **Vine characteristics:** Mid-ripening, vigorous, susceptible to lime chlorosis; low vigor, lime tolerant rootstocks/clones preferable
- **Syrah Decline**, fatal virus disease of the trunk, prevalent in South of France and California. This has led to new, less susceptible clones being propagated
- **Training/pruning methods:** Weak structure susceptible to high winds- spur-pruned, bi-lateral cordon training common in California, single Guyot training in the Rhône and South of France



## Physical Characteristics of Syrah



- **Popular clones:** ENTAV 747, 877 (good Syrah Decline resistance, low vigor)
- **Suitable rootstocks:** 3309C, 101-14 (low vigor) 41B, Fercal (lime tolerance)
- **Soil preference:** Low fertility soils. **Rhône:** Granite **Barossa:** Clay/loam, sand
- **Bunch/berry characteristics:** Long, conical clusters of small, deeply colored berries. Moderately susceptible to powdery mildew and Pierce's Disease; prone to berry shrivel in late season-necessitating expedited harvest



## Primary Growing Regions – Syrah

**World's 6<sup>th</sup> Most Cultivated Variety:** 460,000 acres worldwide

- **France:** 165,000 acres
- (101,000 acres in the Languedoc)
- **Australia:** 90,000 acres
- **Spain:** 49,400 acres
- **Argentina:** 32,000 acres
- **South Africa:** 25,000 acres
- **California:** 19,000 acres
- **Chile:** 17,200 acres
- **Italy:** 16,650 acres (Tuscany, Cortona DOC)
- **New Zealand:** 11,000 acres
- **Washington:** 3,000 acres



**Languedoc – #1 for Syrah**

## Vinous Characteristics of Syrah

- **Sight:** Opaque due to high concentration of pigments; deep ruby in cooler climates, purple/black color due to extraction, high pH in warm climates
- **Nose:** Black, red and blue fruits; plum, black cherry, raspberry, blueberry, black pepper, violets, stony mineral, leather, animal, garrique, black olive, menthol, eucalyptus, licorice
- **Palate/structure:** Full-bodied, med+ - high alcohol, firm yet juicy tannins, medium acidity, black/red/blue fruits

## Old World vs. New World Blind Tasting

### Generally Speaking:

**Old World wines:** more earth-driven, subtlety of fruit

**New World wines:** more fruit-driven, subtlety of earth

### Why?

Climate – Soil – Terroir – Winemaking

## Blind Tasting of International Syrah

- Eight Syrah wines from around the world
- Vintages are 2013 and 2014
- Take 2 minutes to taste each wine and try to determine:
  - **Whether NW or OW**
  - **Possible region of origin**
- After each, I will give my description, provide clues and then reveal the wine

## Wine 1

### Audience thoughts

- NW or OW?
- Possible region of origin?

### Comments



## Wine One-Identity

### Element Syrah 2014, Finger Lakes, New York

- Founded by Bob Bates and Christopher Bates MS in 2005
- Very small production currently
- Minimal intervention philosophy, nothing but SO<sub>2</sub>
- Also make Riesling, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Lemberger, Cabernet Franc
- Syrah sourced from their 1 acre estate Sawmill Vineyard, east side Seneca Lake, mid-lake, sloping, west facing hillside vineyard
- Hand harvest, hand sort, manual crush, whole cluster fermentation
- Spontaneous ferment, no additives, SO<sub>2</sub> after malolactic fermentation
- Basket pressed, neutral oak aging in 500 liter barrel for 24 months
- 196 cases 750 ml., 60 magnums, 21 jeroboams

**Approx. \$40 retail**



**Bates and Company**

**Element's Sawmill Creek Vineyard**

## **Wine 2**

### **Audience thoughts**

- NW or OW?
- Possible region of origin?

### **My comments**



## Wine Two-Identity

### Trinity Hill Syrah Gimblett Gravels 2014, Hawkes Bay, New Zealand

- Trinity Hill founded in 1993 in Hawkes Bay's Gimblett Gravels sub-region by winemaker John Hancock and partners Robyn and Robert Wilson
- Grapes were hand-harvested from estate-owned vineyards of individual sites and clones and then fermented separately before blending post-fermentation
- Partial whole cluster fermented and 2% Viognier included for aromatics and freshness
- Wine was aged for 14 months in a mixture of new and older French oak 228 liter barriques plus larger 5,000 liter oak ovals

**Approx. \$40 retail**



## Wine 3

### Audience thoughts

- NW or OW?
- Possible region of origin?

### My comments



## Wine Three-Identity

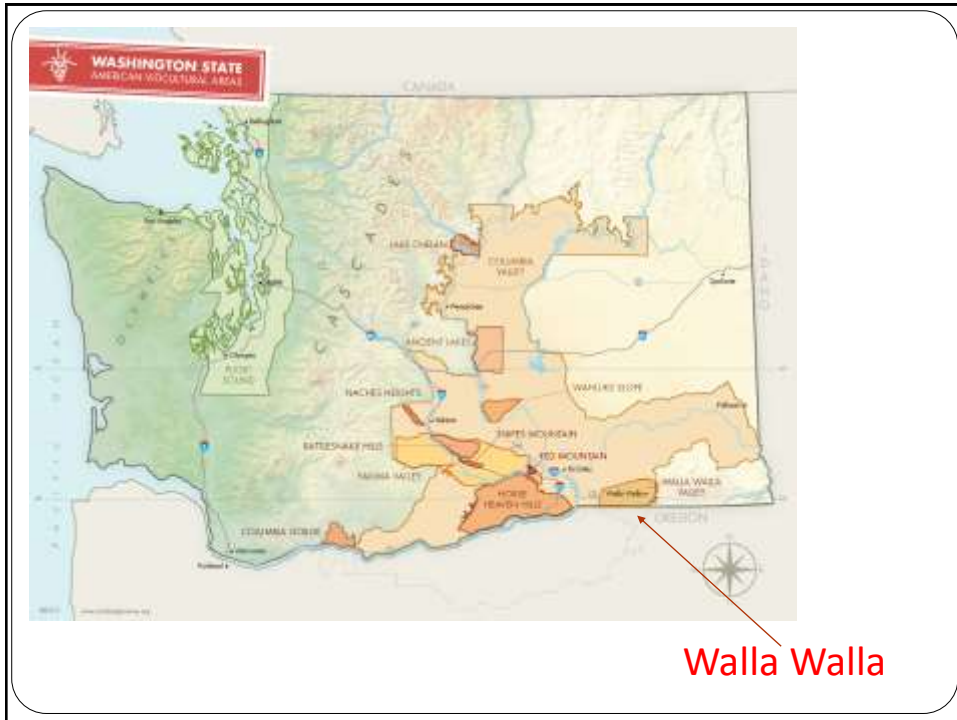
### Gramercy Cellars Syrah “Lower East” 2014, Columbia Valley, Washington

- Gramercy Cellars is an 8,000-case winery founded in 2005 by Greg Harrington MS and his wife, Pam, to make Rhône and Bordeaux based wines in Washington State
- Philosophy : to develop or partner with the best vineyards, harvest ripe, not overripe, grapes, intervene minimally in the winemaking process, and use as little new oak as possible
- Lower East series refers to Walla Walla’s state location and offers great value
- 2014 is 100% Syrah sourced from several vineyards in both Walla Walla and Yakima Valley
- 100% French Oak Barrels, 10% New Oak for 16 months

**Approx. \$28 retail**







## Wine 4

### Audience thoughts

- NW or OW?
- Possible region of origin?

### My comments



## Wine Four-Identity

### La Bracesca “Achelo” Syrah 2014, Cortona DOC, Tuscany, Italy

- La Bracesca estate’s property extends over an area of 1,255 acres, 840 acres are planted with vines
- The estate’s name comes from the historical farm that once stood there, owned by the Count of Bracci
- Marchesi Antinori has owned the estate since 1990
- Achelo refers to Achelous, the Greek figure who gave us the cornucopia, or horn of plenty.
- 100% Syrah, cool maceration to extract flavors and aromas. After 10 days, 70% of the wine was placed into barrels where it underwent malolactic fermentation. The remainder was aged in stainless steel tanks.
- **Approx. \$26 retail**

### Antinori’s La Bracesca Estate



## Wine 5

### Audience thoughts

- NW or OW?
- Possible region of origin?

### My comments



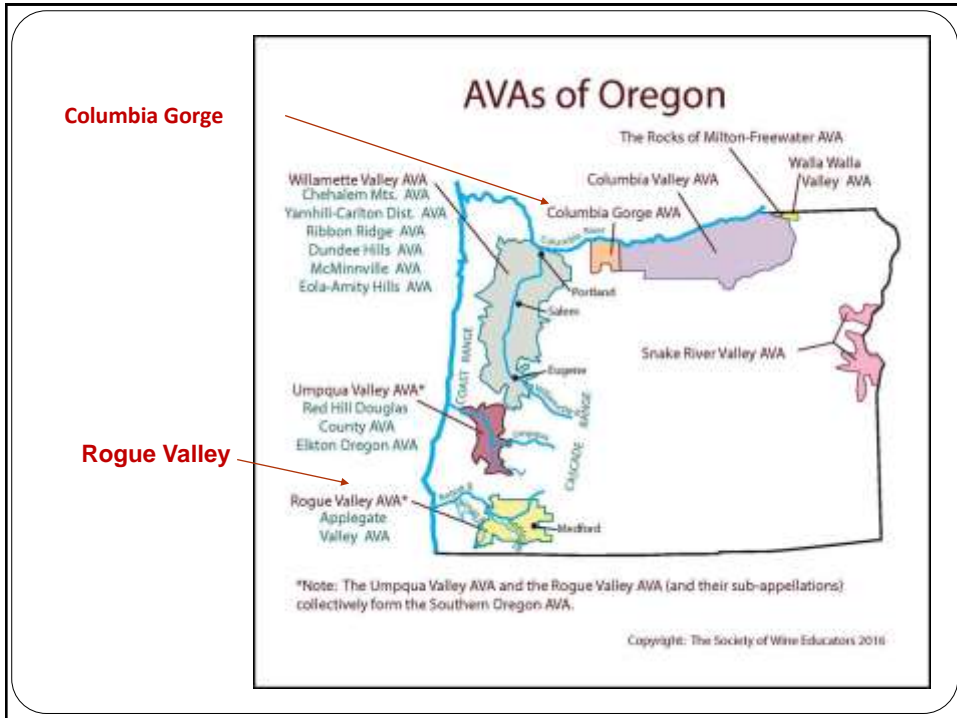
## Wine Five-Identity

### Penner-Ash Syrah 2014, Oregon

- Founded 1998 by wife and husband Lynn and Ron Penner-Ash
- Specialize in Pinot Noir, Syrah and Riesling
- Lynn is the winemaker, the first female winemaker of note in Willamette Valley
- This wine is 100% Syrah, sourced from prime Syrah growing areas in the Rogue Valley and Columbia Gorge AVA regions
- Aged 17 months in French oak: 30% new, 35% 1 year old barrels, 15% 2 year old barrels and 20% in neutral barrels

**Approx. \$42 retail**





## Wine 6

### Audience thoughts

- NW or OW?
- Possible region of origin?

### My comments



## Wine Six-Identity

**Jean-Luc Colombo “Terres Brûlées” 2014,  
Cornas AOP, Rhône Valley, France**



- **1984:** Jean-Luc and wife Anne start wine consulting business
- Began buying land, first in Cornas, later throughout the Rhône
- **1994:** Established Vins Jean-Luc Colombo
- Cornas planted exclusively to Syrah on granite soils
- Terres Brûlées (burnt earth) is made from 30+ year old vines from 20 different plots totaling 11 steeply sloped acres
- Stainless steel ferment, aged 21 months in oak, 15% new, 85% 1-4 years old. Egg white fining, unfiltered.
- **Approx. \$54 retail**

### Cornas

Small, 108 hectare  
appellation -  
*Red wine only*

### Wine Regions of the Rhône Valley



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## Wine 7

### Audience thoughts

- NW or OW?
- Possible region of origin?

### My comments



## Wine Seven-Identity

### Qupé Syrah Bien Nacido Hillside Estate 2013, Santa Maria Valley AVA, California

- Winemaker Bob Lindquist founded Qupé in 1982, making 900 cases of Chardonnay, Syrah and rosé
- This wine is 100% Syrah from the Z Block at Bien Nacido Vineyard
- Z Block is a custom block that was planted for Qupé in 1992 on a steep, southwest facing hillside slope
- The 2013 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this wine's production
- Aging for 20 months in Francois Freres Burgundy barrels – of which about 50-60% are new

**Approx. \$40 retail**

## Bien Nacido Vineyard



## Wine 8

### Audience thoughts

- NW or OW?
- Possible region of origin?

### My comments



## Wine Eight-Identity

### Two Hands Shiraz “Bella’s Garden” 2014, Barossa Valley, Australia

- Two Hands founded in 1999 by Michael Twelftree and Richard Mintz to make the best Shiraz from Australia’s top growing areas, showcasing stylistic diversity of Australian Shiraz by highlighting regional and vineyard characteristics, allowing the fruit to be the primary feature of the wines
- Bella’s Garden is named for Twelftree’s daughter, Bella, born in 2002
- The wine is a blend of the best barrels of Shiraz sourced across Barossa Valley
- Grapes are de-stemmed and fermented in open-topped fermenters, with pump overs 2-3 times daily, aged 17 months in French oak puncheons and hogsheads, 14% new, the balance seasoned

**Approx. \$75 retail**

### Major Wine Areas of Australia





Questions/Comments?

**THANK YOU!**

A copy of this presentation will be  
available on the SWE website soon