

Vérité



Vérité, French for "truth" could not be a more appropriate name for this iconic winery. We all know how many wineries profess to "*make wines in a true Bordeaux style*" but fall short. Any number cultivate outstanding vineyards, use the right varietals, manage low-yielding crops, mimic Bordelais fermentation and aging practices, and artfully blend. So why do so many of these wines, while often superb in every way, never quite capture the beauty, power and finesse of Grand Cru Bordeaux and Vérité?

Of course, the simple answer would be is that this is not Bordeaux. But what if you could bring Bordeaux to California's vineyards? That's pretty much what mega-vintner, Jess Jackson did when he hired respected French winemaker, Pierre Seillan, in 1997.

Gascony-born Seillan spent decades in the vineyards of the Loire and Bordeaux before landing in Sonoma, where his quest for crafting wines of uncompromising quality led to his mastery of "micro-crus", or vineyards within the vineyard. This blending of the best fruit from mountain vineyards of different blocks and AVA's across Sonoma, produces wines of extraordinary structure and complexity.

Rather than the sea of sameness that typifies many old and new world wine styles today, vigneron Seillan has coaxed the diverse soils and varied micro-climates of his

Mayacamas Mountain vineyards to create three profoundly distinctive wines, each reflective of their origins and Seillan's artistry; each true to their Bordeaux heritage.

I had the opportunity to taste through all three Vérité wines from the soon-to-be-released superb 2005 vintage over a delicious lunch at Naples *Sea Salt* restaurant recently and compare and contrast the expression and nuances of each wine. Midway through the lunch, I was asked to select a favorite. I couldn't. It was like being asked which of my three children I favored. I love them all equally - the wines and the kids. While all are inextricably linked, all three have unique personalities.

Verities' wines for the most part are available only in the finest of restaurants or through the winery, and they are not inexpensive - upwards of \$200 a bottle. In reality though, they represent tremendous value, especially when compared to the cult wines selling for two or three times the price on the other side of the mountains in Napa Valley.

La Muse, (French for "inspiration") the merlot dominant (88%, with 10% cab franc and 2% malbec) of the trio, is as close to a Pomerol style you'll find without crossing the Atlantic to Bordeaux's Right Bank. Liquid velvet, the chocolate, cherry and spice aromas and flavors are beautifully integrated.

La Joie ("joy") the cabernet sauvignon based powerhouse, reminiscent of Pauillac's Lafite, Latour and Mouton, is masterfully blended with the other four classic Bordeaux grapes. Massive, immense and harmonious layers of fruit and tannins. Parker may have been somewhat stingy in his assigning 98 points to this beauty that will continue to show magnificently for decades to come.

Le Desir ("desire"), is unquestionably the benchmark for cabernet franc in California, revealing Seillan's understanding and history with the grape from time well spent in the vineyards of Loire and St.Emilion region. This is a muscular wine, suggesting additional bottle time, but a generous addition of merlot into the blend adds a layer of luxurious silkiness that makes it hard to resist now.

Laying down the three new 2005 Vérité wines will reward your patience, but the winery does have a beautiful wood boxed six-bottle vertical collection with wines from 1998-2003 that are ready to drink now. I just pulled the cork on the 1998 and it was truly incredible.

I know this may not be the best of times for sommeliers and restaurateurs to be adding high-end wines to their inventory, but the economy is going to turn around and this is a wine that would be a crown jewel on your list. Prices will escalate and availability is extremely limited. It is offered in the Florida market through Noble Wine Estates.

For more information on Vérité and to add these highly sought after, limited release wines to your cellar, visit their website or call the winery at (707) 433-9000. Better yet, plan a visit to their beautiful location in Sonoma's Chalk Hill region.