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## Mystery tasting gives producer's Italian wines a big boost

By Kristine N. Curry

It was billed as a mystery tasting; and, as hokey as that title seems, last week it managed to lure 21 of Chicago's top wine professionals who were anxious to discover just what the Wine House, a local distributor, was up to.

The tasting was blind. Four groups of three wines each were presented without indication of grape or geographic origin. The tasting sheet merely described the wines as sparkling, white, first red and second red. The tasters were asked to rank the wines in order of preference for each flight.

The wines were exemplary. Tasters had little difficulty guessing that the whites were chardonnay and the first groups of reds were pinot noir. Those in the second red group easily were identified as Cabernet Sauvignons. Each group seemed better than the last.

But what was the the origin of the wines? The question caused each taster to perform some mental acrobatics.

"I knew for certain that each flight had a California and a French wine," said Leslee Reis, an Evanston restaurateur. "The mystery was the origin of the third wine. But because the tasting was organized by Seth, I figured they must be Italian."

Seth is Seth Allen, the import director of the Wine House and a devotee of Italian wines. His direction of the tasting was an eventual giveaway.

The mystery wines were Italian. After the scoring was complete, Maurizio Zanella, owner and winemaker of Ca del Bosco, a winery in Lombardy, was introduced to the tasters. He was pleased. Zanella's wines had taken three second places and had tied for a first place. While that might not sound like a great showing, the competition was stiff.

Zanella's nonvintage Brut was second to Krug. His 1985 chardonnay lost by only one vote to a 1985 Grgich Hills. A 1985 Musigny Vieilles Vignes from Georges de Vogue bested his 1985 Pinero pinot noir by three votes. The top-per for the day, Zanella's 1985 Cabernet Sauvignon, tied for first place with a 1985 Chateau Mouton-Rothschild, one of Bordeaux's crown jewels.

Not bad for an Italian wine. Zanella was quick to qualify his motivations for the tasting. "This is not a game, although it was fun," he said. "It is not a competition between one wine or another. I wanted to show how our wines compare to other wines of the world. I only wanted to point out that our wines belong with the best wines. We (Italian winemakers)



### The Grapevine

have to shock the customers because they don't know that we are changing. Italy means quality wine, not just jug wines. This is the point of the tasting."

"It was a bit of a risk," Allen added. "You never know what will happen when you stage a tasting like this, but we are very confident about the quality of Maurizio's wines. They belong with the finest wines, not just in Italian restaurants."

Ca del Bosco has a reputation for producing what many consider to be Italy's finest sparkling wines. That Zanella also has tackled chardonnay, pinot noir and Cabernet Sauvignon with such success is a tribute to his winemaking skills.

He is quick to point to the soils and growing conditions on his estate in northern Italy. "All of the grapes are grown on my estate which is wonderful for grapes," he explained. "I have been growing chardonnay and pinot noir for the sparkling wines for many years. The Cabernet Sauvignon, cabernet franc and merlot used in the blend of the Maurizio Zanella were planted in 1972."

### Mystery tasting results

#### Sparkling wines:

Krug Champagne, nonvintage, 39 points, \$50.

Ca del Bosco Brut, nonvintage, 46 points, \$26.

Shramsberg 1981 Reserve, 53 points, \$30.

#### White wines:

Grgich Hills 1985 chardonnay, 43 points, \$38.

Ca del Bosco 1985 chardonnay, 44 points, \$40.

Montrachet 1985 Marquis de la Guiche Drouhin, 51 points, \$120.

#### First red wine group:

Musigny 1985 Vieilles Vignes Comte Georges de Vogue, 39 points, \$120.

Pinero 1985 Ca del Bosco, 41 points, \$65.

Carneros Quality Alliance 1985 pinot noir, 58 points, \$28.

#### Second red wine group:

Chateau Mouton-Rothschild 1985 Pauillac, 38 points, \$75.

Maurizio Zanella 1985 Ca del Bosco, 38 points, \$40.

Diamond Creek 1985 Volcanic Hill Cabernet Sauvignon, 62 points, \$31.



"Italy means quality wine, not just jug wines," says Maurizio Zanella, owner and winemaker of Ca del Bosco in Lombardy.

MAURIZIO ZANELLA



### Ca del BOSCO

FRANCIACORTA

Denominazione di Origine Controllata



1985

Vino ottenuto esclusivamente con uve di cabernet franc, merlot, barbera, nebbiolo dei vigneti di proprietà, situati in località Formica nel Comune di Adro, partita catastale 11453, foglio 28, mappali 135 - 154 p. e nel Comune di Carzago S.M., partita catastale 13241, foglio 1, mappale 14 p. Da 656.18 q.li di uve, vendemmiate dal 10 al 17 ottobre 1985, si sono ottenuti, al termine della vinificazione e della maturazione in botti di rovere, 429 hl., pari a 56.000 bottiglie, imbottigliate a Carzago (Italia) dall'Azienda Agricola Ca del Bosco di Annamaria Clementi Zanella.

PRODUCT OF ITALY

IMPORTED BY

THE WINE HOUSE - CHICAGO - IL 60623

RED WINE OF LOMBARDY

NET CONTENT 750 ML

estate bottled

alcohol 12% by vol.

Note: The possible points ranged from 23 to 69. The lower points indicate a better score as the wines were scored one, two or three in order of preference.

### Wine notes

Mark your calendar for April 19, 20 and 21. The Wine House will sponsor three new release tastings where 56 wines will be available for \$10. The April 19 tasting will be in the Westin Hotel, 6100 N. River Rd., Rosemont; the April 20 tasting will be in the Fairmont Hotel, 200 N. Columbus Dr.; and the April 21 tasting will be in the Sheraton Homewood Inn, 17400 S. Halsted St., Homewood. The tastings begin at 6 p.m. Tickets may be obtained by calling 254-9020.

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