

A Side-By-Side Comparison of Strewn Wines by Bruce Jackson



What better way to enjoy a night of perfect weather than drinking fine wine. To make the evening more interesting, we were going to do side-by-side comparisons of wines using stainless steel fermentation and aging in a variety of oak barrels from different regions and different ages.



The reception was held out of doors in the abundant shade by the production area. Our reception wine was The Sparkler, a cuvee close method sparkling Sauvignon Blanc. It was cold, bright, crisp and delicious. The tasty hors d'oeuvres, breads, cheeses, cold meats and vegetables were provided by Zooma Caters. The atmosphere was cheery and the conversations pleasant.

When it was time for the tastings we gathered outside and Vice President Nick Merola did the introductions of new members and guests. Director of Planning, Ingrid Merola, told the group about a future event at Rockway Vineyards and told of a forthcoming survey the members would receive. Tonight's planner, Bruce Jackson, introduced Strewn owner Joe Will. Joe was the winery's first winemaker and was one of the first in Niagara to offer a wine club, the Strewn Barrel Club. Joe introduced his staff.



Margaret Jackson had organized the 40 people attending into 3 groups and we proceeded to go to the first of three tasting areas.



Outside Strewn Sommelier Juan Nunez-Sanchez had two white comparisons. The first compared a stainless steel fermented Sauvignon Blanc with the Strewn Fume Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc aged in oak. Both exuded lots for Sauvignon Blanc clean, fruit-forward character but the Fume Blanc was softer and more refined. The groups' feelings were split on which they preferred.

The next tasting was a bit more unusual, Gewurztraminer in the usual stainless steel fermentation compared with a Gewurztraminer aged in oak. They were quite different wines with the effect of oak making for more subtlety of aroma and flavour compared to the bold spicy steel fermented version.



Moving inside the production area the next tasting was with Joe Will, assisted by Kathryn Kowal, with no less than 3 Strewn Chardonnays, each fermented in a different type of oak. Comparing them side-by-side allowed us to experience the effect of American, Canadian and French oak on the wine. The

wines were clearly different in textures, aromas and flavours and yet they were all delicious. You might have preferred one over the others but would happily drink any of them.



In the barrel cellar, Strewn's Assistant Winemaker Tyler Bartelds and Cellar Hand Matt Gason poured us a variety of barrel aged Merlots. Our first samples compared barrel samples of 2016 Merlot. Both samples had been in oak for two years but one sample came from an old barrel while the other came from a new oak barrel. For comparison we tried a 2014 Merlot from the bottle.



When the tasting session was over there were wine and food treats in store. Strewn provided us with two post event wines - a brand new 2017 Pinot Grigio and the 2016 Cabernet Franc. Both wines were delicious and perfect pairings for the food provided by Jacqueline and Steve from Zooma Caters.



Many people deserve a thank you from the Niagara Chapter for their part in the event. Joe Will and his staff who led us through the tastings - Juan Nunez-Sanchez, Tyler Bartelds, Kathryn Kowal, Matt Gason, Evan Clermont (who poured the reception and after tasting wines) and Strewn Hospitality

Manager Cathy Royston who helped ring up the post event sales in the boutique. We would like to thank Jacqueline and Steve from Zooma Caters for the abundant foods they provided. We would also like to thank Strewn Winemaker Marc Bradshaw for his excellent wines. The planning for the event was done by Jane Langdon at Strewn and Bruce Jackson for the Niagara Chapter. Thank you all.

Photos are by Niagara Chapter photographer, Bruce Jackson. More of Bruce's photos of the event can be seen at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/photoshopplake/albums/72157696371311132>