

FINE PALATE



From left: Sergio Esposito; exclusively at Agnes b le pain grille, Chablis Premier Cru 2006 is round, long on the palate and full bodied with refreshing vivacity; and Arretxea 2007 Irouleguy, made with tannat grapes, is powerful in tannins and goes best with grilled beef.



Photos: Jimmy Luk and Alex Lai

TOAST TO NATURE

Savor the flavor of biodynamic wines, whose production contributes to a better environment, writes **Alex Lai**

THE NAME may make connoisseurs wince. But biodynamic wines have become the talk of the town. Biodynamic farming take reference from German philosopher Rudolf Steiner. In the 1920s he favored anthroposophy, linking the cosmos, Earth and mankind, to avoid farmland problems.

In the 1960s, anthroposophist Maria Thun developed a calendar for sowing, cultivating and harvesting to maximize the cosmic effects and elemental forces on plants.

The core belief of biodynamics is to renew soils and improve the nutritional value of foods. It's a holistic biodynamic farm model, where no insecticides, fungicides or herbicides are used. So bio wines are made from resources that were available to our ancestors.

Local restaurants are stocking up on their bio wines. Agnes b le pain grille recently introduced such wines from Cote d'Auxerre, Saintes Foy, Bordeaux, Cote du Rhone village and Chablis Pays Basque.

Christophe Vrignaud, the head of operations, food and beverage, for Agnes b le pain grille, says these wines bring happiness and well being.

Vrignaud adds that biodynamic wines have somehow more soul than other wines because they are made with extreme care and lots of love.

Production is limited because it cannot be mass produced.

Sergio Esposito, CEO of Italian Wine Merchants, believes bio wine gives whatever any living thing needs to sustain a most well-balanced life. Bio wines have pure fruit flavors and are very clean and focused. One cannot really feel the difference in taste, the real difference is the good that it does to your body.

Movia Tokai Gredic 2007 delivers tropical floral notes, hazelnuts, new oak and pears on the nose with balanced acidity, while Gravner Ribolla Gialla 2002 is idiosyncratic and, interestingly, almost like red in its chewy texture.

Biodynamics is different because you need to understand the relationship and function of an ecosystem, Esposito remarks.

Bio is part of the green movement and, like anything good, people will take advantage of the name and change its meaning.
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Movia 2007 Tokai Gredic and Gravner 2002 Ribolla Gialla.

SUMMER SIPPING

SO WE are now in high summer, the thermometer is registering over 30 degrees Celsius and we need something to drink, but what?

Let's save the cabernets, shiraz and other full-bodied reds for the cooler months. What is needed is a wine that can be enjoyed well chilled, is light bodied but packs some flavor.

Rose sales are booming around the world, with the greatest growth in English-speaking markets, but also in Japan, Russia and northern Europe. Hong Kong remains remarkably resilient to the appeal of rose, however: last year it accounted for less than 4 percent of all wine shipped here.

This suggests that there is great potential for the growth in sales of rose wines. Part of the challenge is overcoming some image problems and a general

lack of understanding. Rose is produced from dark-skinned grapes with a minimum of skin contact after pressing.

The classic rose grape variety is grenache, one of the few that can thrive in the hot, dry, rocky vineyards of Provence and the southern Rhone.

Outside Europe rose is made in a variety of styles and a wide variety of grapes are pressed into service. California has its blush zinfandels, generally low in alcohol and slightly sweet. Australia produces rose from grenache and a host of other varieties which are generally darker and higher in alcohol than their European counterparts.



By Diogenes
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Three to try:

1. Chateau d'Esclans Rose 2007 - HK\$280

A classic dry rose from Provence. The winemaker is Patrick Leon, formerly of Mouton Rothschild. D'Esclans are rose specialists and produce three others, including the cheaper Whispering Angel. Altaya 2523-1975 www.altayawines.com

2. Domaines Ott Chateau de Selle Rose Coeur de Grain 2008 - HK\$295

Unusually for a Provence rose this contains a high proportion of cabernet sauvignon, with grenache and cinsault. Links Concept 2802-2818 www.linksconcept.com

3. Turkey Flat Rose 2008 - HK\$148

From Australia's Barossa Valley, a blend of grenache, shiraz, cabernet sauvignon and dolcetto. Watsons Wine Cellar 2606-8828 www.watsonswine.com