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Benchmark tasting pits Grüner and Furmint against 'commercial' wines

By Jo Gilbert
Published: 10 July, 2023

Austrian Grüner Veltliner and dry Furmint from Tokaj were very much in the spotlight at a 'benchmark' tasting last week, hosted by Lenz M. Moser and Stefan Neumann MS.

The duo were on top form at Trivet restaurant in London for a contrast and compare masterclass where Hungarian and Austrian wines were shown alongside interesting / high end, and in some cases, more commercially successful – and also less impressive – wines.

One of these was Cloudy Bay, a wine which is known the world over for consistently delivering an overtly green, vegetal style.

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"The consumer wants to know what the wine will taste like and something they recognise," Moser said.

"New Zealand started from scratch in the 1980s. Now, it outsells Austria five times over. It's clearly doing something right, even if we [the trade] don't like such an obvious style."

The tasting included several of Moser's own wines, including a 100% Furmint from his Tokaj-based **Mád Moser** label, co-owned with local Rita Takaro and designed to be a 'reinvention' of dry Furmint. Plus, there were his **New Chapter** Wines, including a Grüner Veltliner, released for the first time in 2020 and made in tandem with Austrian rising star, Markus Huber.

Furmints were contrasted with several Chardonnays, including an exceptionally floral and subtle Chablis, which many mistook for the former.

The reverse was true, too. In a blind tasting, the Mád Moser 100% Furmint had many guessing Chardonnay, with honeyed, oily characteristics the result of blending across three diverse blocks, plus ageing in Hungarian oak.

"The goal was to make a complex, powerful and elegant style, which stays fresh. We're blending for structure here, not aroma because aroma disappears," Moser said.

Mid and higher-end styles were represented for benchmarking, too. These included a Californian Ridge Vineyards Estate Chardonnay and Marchesi Antinori's Cervaro Della Sala Chardonnay.

Beans Boughton MW, buyer at Alliance Wine, which represents several of the wines, added: "For a while now, the dry wines of Hungary have delivered similar quality to the infamous sweet styles. These comparative tastings challenge our pre-conceptions of Hungarian wines as a whole, elevating them in the context of other (better known) classic regions and styles. When you taste these wines blind along-side iconic names you can't help but say 'wow' when the wines are revealed. Their high quality and character really standout.

"What we see with the Mád Moser wines is classy terroir and excellent quality fruit married with renewed energy. Lens Moser's engaging tasting of the MM5 and the MM55 tells a story not just about his exciting joint project with Mad Wines but also about the future of Hungarian wine. At Alliance, we are delighted to start our relationship with Lens and very happy to be bringing in wines from both Mád Wines and Mád Moser to showcase the diversity of dry Furmint from Tokaji."

"It has been great to consider high end wines, alongside more commercial ones, in the same tasting," Neumann said, in conclusion. "Every day's a school day."

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Grüner Veltliner **Stefan Neumann** **Furmint** **Lenz Moser**

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