



## ACID FREAKS UNITE!: TASTING NOTES FROM IN PURSUIT OF BALANCE 2012

04.01.2012

I may be mangling the quote a little, but I swear I saw someone on twitter the other day say something along the lines of: "It may be possible that there's a wine out there with too much acidity, but I have yet to taste it."

I couldn't agree more. For me, acidity (and perhaps more specifically, the perception of acidity -- since they are a little different) is a crucial component that can make or break a wine. I love wines that have higher levels of acidity. They make the mouth water, they give life to the fruit, they make me want to swallow and swallow some more. This is true no matter what the grape variety, but it is especially true with Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.



The organizers of the In Pursuit of Balance tasting that took place in San Francisco a couple of weeks ago would say that acidity is a key component in the overall balance of wine, and when there is not enough acidity, a wine can be out of balance.

This is the second year of the IPOB tasting, which continues to field some of California's top Pinot Noir (and now also Chardonnay) producers. Organized by Jasmine Hirsch, of Hirsch Vineyards, and Rajat Parr, owner of RN74 and the wine director for the Michael Mina Group of restaurants, the tasting is an attempt to highlight what the organizers feel is a style of winemaking that goes underappreciated in California.

I wrote my March column for Jancis Robinson (available to subscribers only) on the philosophy behind the tasting, and some of the controversy surrounding it, so today I'm focusing on the wines themselves. Regardless of the organizing principle behind the tasting, what really matters is whether the wines were any good or not.

And they were. The quality of wine on offer at this tasting, just as last year, was extremely high. Some of my favorite producers were on hand, and I was also introduced to several wineries whose wines I now adore (in particular Red Car, Ceritas, and for the second year in a row, Chanin).

Of course, the key question to answer is "were all the wines balanced?" For the most part, I'd have to say that most of them were. But without getting into philosophical territory (for that is where questions of balance certainly lie) I can say that the wines on offer, with a few exceptions, all offered great acidity. They were generally fresh, lively, and bright, and therefore a joy to taste.

This tasting has established itself as one of the better wine tasting events in San Francisco. Now that the organizers have secured a larger and better (really, fantastic) venue, and better managed the overall logistics, it

is an event that I can recommend without qualification to anyone who enjoys wines on the leaner side of life, or who is interested in tasting what some of California's most cutting-edge winemakers are doing with Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Yes, there is a future for California Chardonnay.

### **WHITE WINES WITH A SCORE AROUND 9.5**

#### **2010 Sandhi "Rita's Crown" Chardonnay, Santa Rita Hills \$55**

Light gold in the glass, this wine smells of bright lemon curd and wet stones. In the mouth the wine is explosively juicy with a neon lemon quality that mixes with an equally saline kelpy gorgeousness that is difficult to describe. A hint of resinous aroma enters the finish. Utterly fantastic, and one of the better California Chardonnays I've had in my mouth in some time.

#### **2010 Sandhi "Sanford & Benedict" Chardonnay, Santa Rita Hills \$45**

Somehow my tasting note for this wine got deleted (damn iPad) much to my disappointment. The wine was phenomenal.

#### **2010 Sandhi "Bent Rock" Chardonnay, Santa Rita Hills \$45**

Light gold in the glass, this wine smells of lemon curd and wet stones. In the mouth, delicate acidity lets flavors of lemon curd, pastry cream and liquid wet stone flow across the palate in an utterly sexy, silky stream. Fantastic texture and great flavors. Outstanding.

### **RED WINES WITH A SCORE BETWEEN 8.5 AND 9**

2010 Sandhi "Evening Land Tempest" Pinot Noir, Santa Rita Hills \$55

2010 Sandhi "Sanford & Benedict" Pinot Noir, Santa Rita Hills \$55

2010 Sandhi Pinot Noir, Santa Rita Hills \$36

The logo for Sandhi is written in a fluid, elegant cursive script. The letters are connected, with a prominent 'S' at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail on the 'i'.