

## **FROM THE GRAPEVINE**

B [JOEL M. FISHER](#) with Sara Fisher Chapin



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This year's **VinItaly** event touched down at the Beverly Hills Four Season Hotel as its Los Angeles stop on the trade group's grand U.S. tour. Turnout was smaller than comparable events I've attended, and consisted of both Italian wineries with domestic distributors and those seeking distribution arms. Overall, the event provided a fascinating look this day at what's going on with the Italian wine industry.

After browsing around, my first stop was at the table of **La Cantina Pizzolato SAS**. Their medium-bodied *2002 Raboso Riserva* tossed of warming raisin notes and light tannins. From **Sartori di Verona** and the **Casa Vinicola Sartori SpA**, I enjoyed the *2002 Regolo Rosso Veronese IGT*, but the real winner was their *Amarone Della Valpolicella Corte BRA*. Amarones are a true winter wine, almost port-like with their rich spice and sweet raisin notes. This bottle was a *reposito*, meaning that it got a second fermentation in Slovenian Oak after its first two years of aging.

An Umbrian company, **Vigne & Vini SRL** poured Primitivo selections. Between their *2002 Primitivo Manduria "Papale"* and the *2002 Primitivo "Moi"*, I found the latter to be the better, with solid fruit on the palate. Also enjoyable was the winery's *2004 Primitivo IGT Tarantino "Tatu"*, a Primitivo-Aglianico blend.

I moved on to Sicilian wines, and specifically, to our old friend **Donnafugata SRL**. Their *2004 IGT Sicilia-Sedara* is a fruity, medium-bodied red made entirely from 10Nero D'Avila grapes. I liked it, as I also liked the *2003 DOC Contessa Entellina Tancredi*. This nicely balanced blend of 70% Nero d'Avola and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon was deep and smooth. Last but not least, the *2003 DOC Contessa Entellina 'Mille E Una Notte'* is a big wine from southwest Sicily. This bold brew, consisting of 90% Nero d'Avola, opens up nicely and proves positively velvety on the palate.

Last, I ventured on to try **Tesori Wines**, from Campomarino. The *2005 Cantina Borgo di Colloredo* proved a good release. Made entirely of Falanghina grapes, this dry white showed good fruit and a dry finish.

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For the last decade I've had the pleasure of attending the annual Fall Trade Tastings of Southern Wine and Spirits event, put on by **Southern Wine and Spirits** and their American and Pacific Wine subsidiaries. Every year it feels like a reunion of sorts, with old friends and familiar faces crowding the hall in Universal City.

**B.R. Cohn Winery, Beckmen, BV, Chateau Gloria, Ferrari-Carano** and **Moon Mountain** were well represented, as per norm. Tony Glorioso – the Western Division Manager of **Rosenblum Cellars** – was on the scene. His *2004 Zinfandel Paso Robles* had lots of style, with an abundance of good fruit. I also enjoyed the *2005 Viognier Kathy's Cuvee* and the *2004 Syrah Rominger Vineyard*.

The familiar face of **Paterno Wines International's** district manger, Jessie Casanova, poured some stars from **Chapoutier**, including their luminous *2000 Chateauneuf Du Pape "La Bernadine" Rouge, Gaja* from Italy. Also of note was **Jossmeyer's** wine from Alsace, which has improved steadily over the years. **W.J. Deutsch's** Jason Hayes poured, with the assistance of five others, a whopping 55 wines. The array was impressive.

In addition to all these familiar figures, there was an infusion of some much-appreciated new blood as well. **Churchill** was there, pouring a wonderful *1997 Vintage Port*. **Nicolas Potel** showed off a notable *2003 Gevrey-Chambertin*, and **Pol Roger** tantalized with a non-vintage Champagne.

I look forward to seeing all alums – seasoned or new – at next year's event.

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*(Contributed by Sara Fisher Chapin)*

The first words of Hungarian my husband and I learned were *fehér, vörös* and *borok* – white, red and wine, respectively.

We were in Budapest this November, the first stop on our Central European vacation. After a long day of sightseeing amidst a light sprinkling of snow, we happily settled our tired feet and frozen ears at a wine bar and restaurant our hotel had recommended, named **Borbíroság**. The intimate brick-walled place was crowded with locals clustered around small tables bristling with wine bottles and glasses.

Thankfully, our waiter knew some English, and between his language skills, our phrase book and the international language of gesturing, we managed to have an exceptional experience. Borbíroság is dedicated to the art of pairing. Strings of numbers appear after each dish on the menu, which correspond to a numbered wine list. Options are given so every palate has room to explore.

We started with a goose-centric appetizer, consisting of a smoked goose sausage, pâté and goose cracklings. This decadent dish paired wonderfully with Hungary's famed 'Bull's Blood' wine. The *2004 Aldás Bikavér*, by **St. Andrea Pincézset**, proved to be the best wine of the night. Peppery but well behaved, the wine's dark berries rolled seamlessly into smooth tannins.

With our main course we tried a *2003 Caber Noir* from **Malatinszky Kúria**. This blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir had an enticing nose, but simply couldn't deliver. Too sharp and thin, it didn't do much with my lackluster duck breast entrée. It faired a bit better with my husband's superior venison goulash.

We capped off the meal with a liquid dessert. My husband tried a great *2000 Cabernet Sauvignon Szüretlen*, also from the Malatinszky Kúria winery. It was a startling inky black, and proved the reverse of the Caber Noir – it possessed a disappointingly astringent nose, but a knock-out taste. Lush berries bloomed on the palate, and its nice finish was enlivened with light tannins.

My final glass was Hungary's other famed type of wine, the Tokaj. I chose a semi-sweet variant of this white wine, from the Tokaj-Hegyalja region. (This region consists of 28 villages, mostly in Hungary, with a few spilling over into Slovakia.) The *2003 Oremus Mandolás Furmint* lived up to the Tokaj reputation. Chilled and crisp, with nary a hint of oak, this lovely wine threw off delicate notes of peach and fresh grass.

Borbíroság's wine list was so extensive we could have happily whiled away many more hours and Hungarian forints there, but we had to end our evening. If you happen to be in that part of the world, we strongly recommend looking up this place. If you're more of an armchair traveler, you can explore their wine lists at [www.borbirosag.com](http://www.borbirosag.com).

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We wish you a very happy holiday season. Be merry. Be well. And be adventurous when picking out your holiday libations!

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Joel M. Fisher PhD writes a monthly column for the [Chefs de Cuisine Association of California](http://www.chefsofca.org), was the wine instructor for the Culinary Arts Department, [Art Institute of California Los Angeles](http://www.artinstituteofcalifornia.com) until becoming President of LAWineFest Inc. He is Director of Public Affairs for Avalon Hollywood, and as a partner in [WineVineandDine](http://www.winevineanddine.com) conducts wine tastings, wine dinners, and wine-and food pairings throughout Southern California. His email address is [joel@winevineanddine.com](mailto:joel@winevineanddine.com). Sara Fisher Chapin continues to enjoy her eclectic freelance writing endeavors, on top of her full-time job in the marketing/e-learning industry.