

From James the Sommelier -Keep it Simple...Stupid?

'Wine honors the soul, so honor it with yours'

There is always a cry to keep things simple. Whether it is wine, the stock market or sports, a re-occurring plea is to make it more accessible, understandable... simpler. And, in most cases, for good reason. In a day and age where everything is at a touch of a button and success and failures in everyday workings can be solely dependent on your Internet access, we are geared to expect things to be as easily apparent as possible. Nowadays, we have the right to know, instantaneously, the inner workings of most things- so that we can all be professional amateurs in any field- don't we?

The world of wine is under this pressure. People have become so frustrated with wine's elusive nature that they have asked, nay demanded, that wine be made simpler. For those potential professional amateurs among us this proposition would seem like a no-brainer- what a great idea!

Ok, lets humour this idea some more. Which part of wine would you like to be made simpler? The grapes? The names? The classifications? The tastes? The act of drinking it? Answers to this question would come thick and fast. I am sure wines would sell just as well if, instead of some obscure name, the bottle came with a normal name. I am sure we could do away with the different hierarchical structures each Old World country applies to their wines. I am sure people would still drink wine if it was just a case of putting it in a glass and gulping it down. All to some extent valid points but, when considered in the grand scheme of things, somewhat moot.

Like a game of cricket, wine's eccentricities and intricacies provide excitement when experiencing them. At Lords, the crowd would go wild if a batsman was being a bit liberal with his backing up and the bowler had to keep him in check with a warning stumping. Unheard of, never seen, unique, what cheek! Exciting. Gossip, hoots, chants, banter would ensue that encapsulate that most traditional of English games.

It goes the same way with wine. What reaction would a fruity, medium bodied Pinot Noir create among you and your friends? Or what about a light Merlot from France? Or, a chocolaty Cabernet Sauvignon from Chile? How about a bad Denominazione di Origine Controllata from Italy? Or, a surprisingly good Vin de Table from France? These sorts of surprises induce a stir and, most importantly, act as a catalyst for conversation. In a surprise-free Utopia the only comment may be 'Umm... yes. As expected.'

Of course, this does mean you need to know what these words and intricacies mean. All I can say to that, is, what better excuse to drink wine?! Undoubtedly, the more you immerse yourself in something the more you will find out about it and when you do have a workable knowledge of wine its charm will hit you.

If wine *was* presented in an understandable, obvious, simple way we would be inundated with amateur professionals, pretentious people with an opinion that would be unshakeable and deemed as fact. Thank God wine's eccentricities do not allow that.