

THAT LITTLE WINE BAR

James The Sommelier – America

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

I hate to admit it but... America

The British people's view of America is stereotypically and irrationally bad. Like a petulant child we tend to discount, discredit, abuse and wave off most of American culture like a spitfire when it suits us. Previous 'special' relationships between our two governments under the leadership of Big Ears and Mr. I-believe-that-fish-and-humans-can-live-in-harmony landed us in an inescapable conflict, and the recent recession... Well, put it this way, we have enough ammo to last us for the next hundred years. None of it is our fault, of course.

So, you can imagine the gut-wrenching squeeze induced when asked what we think of American wine. Not defeated at the first, Britons will immediately turn to two of our suddenly best friends-Europe and history. 'Historically, European wine is of a higher order and, therefore, far superior to American wines.' Said with a smile and a silent wish that it's the end of that line of questioning, faces (and possibly bowels) drop when the American laughs and says 'of course, no dispute. But what do you think of them?' In the face of such an affable personality, and upholding our own sense of fair play, Britons realize they have had it.



'It's good,' comes a whispered reply.

'Excuse me?'

'ITS BLOODY GOOD, OK!'

Had it indeed. American wine is up and coming at

terrifying, transcontinental speed. Behind a vanguard of producers from California, America is producing some of the best Chardonnays and Cabernet Sauvignons in the world. Chardonnays from Sonoma Valley, the Russian River and Napa Valley have introduced vibrant dry whites onto the international scene. These largely heavily oaked wines scream of a fuller body with more mature, tropical and smoky flavours. The old world may be the higher order, with Burgundy and Chablis holding the most prestige, but these areas are introducing a *new* order. Cali's reds have caused quite a stir, particularly its Cabernet Sauvignon. Areas like Mendocino and the famous Rutherford Bench produce recognizably full-bodied reds, so much so that Americans are left wondering whether that red from France or Australia really was a Cabernet Sauvignon. Too light, they say. Nurtured taste, say I.

Credit must also go to Oregon for braving the choppy waters of Pinot Noir. Infamously fickle and hard to nurture into a quality product, Pinot Noir is mastered by only a few. Burgundy, naturally, and south New Zealand are blessed with the tools capable. But East and West Oregon are producing Pinots of exceptional character. Added to which, they display a keen individualism key to the greatness of the grape - the expression of terroir. Juicy and succulent, the Pinots from western Oregon are standing as the Yin to eastern Oregon's Yang, the latter producing subtle Burgundy-styles of wine.

For more information about wine join our wine classes at That Little Wine Bar, 54 Chow Thye Road,
George Town, Penang

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