

Newsletter Blog

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

Sommelier's Travels - Siam Winery, Thailand

Despite the development in technology, social media and interconnectedness we still rely predominantly on what we see and read when exploring a world from the comfort of our living room armchair. It is, therefore, very difficult to get a feel of something with smells, taste, texture and sound; these being the senses I felt were missing in my rational appreciation of something as bizarre as Thai wine. It's great looking at pictures, reading reviews or listening to others opinions, but one fails to truly grasp something until experienced by oneself. Hence the decision to engage in a mad-cap expedition to Thailand's southern wineries and vineyards.

After research and writing, it was about time to discover the truth behind Thai wine, its vineyards and its wineries. Like so many of us say, the proof is in the pudding and what better way to get to the bottom Thailand's mysterious wine culture by actually going there and scouting the areas - not to mention the wines themselves.

And, from the off, it was a journey that did not fail to disappoint. Like the road to El Dorado - a road less traveled and barely known - finding a capable guide to the first winery was near impossible and finally resorted in a taxi ride and some DIY navigation via GPS. After countless embarrassing pull-overs for directions (more on the behalf of the taxi driver than me) Siam Winery finally appeared in the heart of a rural Thai village, surrounded by metal fencing and protected by a guard post. After being admitted, my sense of awe of the lush grounds decorated by a stylistic lake divided by a beautiful pagoda was only matched (and even surpassed) by that of the driver, his open mouth and continuous mutterings of amazement - he had clearly never been *here* before. Other than the affluence was the vastness of the area made-up of warehouses, steel tanks, tractors, pick-ups, forklifts, crates, packed boxes and unused wine bottles galore waiting patiently for filling and labeling. Whatever was being done here was on a grand scale and no doubt about it.

Starting with a brief video presentation and a glass of table grape juice we started the tour of the wine houses. Lead by the Thai cellar master, his descriptions of the wine making process alongside the different equipment used in each stage, was in depth and impressive. Grape crushers, de-stemmers, 10,000 liter stainless steel tanks, beautiful French oak, a bottling and labeling plant, and even their own racking room following the *méthode champenoise* were all present in this impressive display of wine making on an industrial scale.

Finishing the tour - having also been shown the Spy Wine Cooler bottling plant - it was time to taste the wines. Three of Siam Wineries Monsoon Valley range were presented; a Colombard, a White Shiraz and a Shiraz. The Colombard (my favorite) was surprising balance of acidity and fruitiness. With tropical fruit on the nose, its character held in the mouth through the soft acidity and did not turn out to be flabby. Light with a beautiful florality in the finish, it was a refreshing and pleasant. Not to be out done, however, the red Shiraz was another mouthwatering surprise; a subtle nose of fresh fruits and showing a dry, light mouthfeel with the same subtle fruit in taste. Both of these labels proved that the 'sickly-sweet' stereotype of New Latitude wines could not farther from the truth.

I know what your thinking - no vines! Find out about Hua Hin Hills vineyard (under the Siam Winery company and its growing area for all their grapes) in another installment of 'Sommelier's Travels'.

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