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Monday, December 14, 2009

Chateau D' Orignac Pineau Des Charentes



On a recent visit to Vinology in Ann Arbor, I had the opportunity to taste a fantastic fortified wine from France. Before I had the chance to try this beauty of a dessert wine, I was told Chris from Vinology was "showing this off" to customers who were looking for something a bit different. I was also told that after tasting this wine, customers were hailing Chris as their "hero" for introducing them to this gem. So, with high hopes, I tasted. . . and all I can say is that Chris is my hero!

A "fortified" wine is a wine that has alcohol added during different stages of fermentation. The addition of this alcohol has the effect of killing off the yeast and slowing the fermentation while at the same time boosting the alcohol level usually from 17 to 24 per cent (wine generally has an alcohol level between 8.5 and 15 percent). Sherry and Port are generally the best known fortified wines worldwide. From the Cognac region in France, Pineau des Charentes has young Cognac added to their wines before fermentation and then the wine is aged in oak barrel. In the Chateau D' Orignac, the Cognac is added to a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot and then aged for five years.

The Chateau D' Orignac is amber in color. On the nose you get hints of apricot and honey with nutty overtones. Initially on the palate you get the sweet taste of honey and peaches. Then, at least on my palate, you get a "pause" in taste and on the back of your throat you get an intense nutty taste that lasts for minutes. This is one of the most unique experiences I have had in tasting wine. Its the "pause" in my palate that got me. . . that, and the complete nuttiness on the back end that comes from the Cognac being added. If you have a chance to taste this, by all means do so. If you are in the Ann Arbor area, stop in to Vinology and see if Chris, "my hero", will serve you up a taste. You will not forget it!

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