

Ottimista Enoteca-Café Newsletter

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Ciao Melissa,

Happy May everyone.



I for one am very happy to say *arriverderchi* to April and its showers, and welcome May with its promised flowers - perhaps because I've got the want-to-be-back-in- Italy- blues, having just returned from two weeks in the old country. Jerad, my partner in crime at Ottimista, and I attended VinItaly, the annual tradeshow for the Italian wine industry, and traveled around Northern Italy visiting various producers afterwards. It was an amazing, overwhelming, and extremely educational experience, from which we emerged completely saturated (there *is* too much of a good thing when it comes to bread and pasta, something I tend to forget when in Italy), yet uniquely inspired.

Having attended VinItaly in 2005 when Ottimista was just in the initial planning stages, it was a very different experience to return this year. We now had a crystallized vision and a real sense of what our customers want, and were able to navigate through the vast sea of wine (4500+ producers) to find ? and arrange to bring in - some unique gems. You'll soon see these, as well as new Italy-trip-inspired food items (like these crispy pan-fried agnoletti, above) and special events (like the LaSalette tasting tomorrow), on the menu pronto.

Click on the link below to learn more about our adventures in Italy. And come visit us at Ottimista soon!

Ci vediamo presto!
Melissa

Introducing cooking classes with Mark



Ottimista is kicking off a new series of cooking events, led by chef Mark Young. Sessions will consist of demonstration, discussion, and eating of the subject matter, accompanied by wine tasting and discussion about wine pairings.

Join us for the inaugural event, **Risotto 101**, on Saturday May 20 from 2-3:30pm. See the events listing below for more details, and look for an expanded class schedule on the website soon.

Upcoming Events

All events will be held on Ottimista's front patio. Tasting, educational materials and small bites are included. Attendees also receive 10% off wine bottle purchases the day of the event. To sign up for events, please email melissa@ottimistasf.com or call 415.674.8400. Credit card required for class registration. Cancellations must be made 48 hours in advance.

Tuesday May 9, 6- 7:15 pm



Meet the winemaker tasting: La Salette, Valpolicella

Join us on Ottimista's patio as we taste the range of La Salette wines with the Scamperles, the family behind the label. LaSalette is one of the top producers from the Valpolicella valley, the area of Amarone production. Don't miss this unique opportunity to taste several different styles of Valpolicella and Amarone wines and meet Monica and Guilia Scamperle.

Cost: \$20 per person, drop in guests welcome

NO CLASS SUNDAY MAY 15 IN OBSERVANCE OF MOTHER'S DAY ? CLASS WILL BE HELD SATURDAY THIS WEEK

Saturday May 13, 3-4:30 pm

Italian Lessons & Vino: Back to the basics

This session will cover the basics of Italian conversation, perfect for new students and a great refresher course for returning guests.

Cost: \$45 per person - Includes lesson, wine tasting & nibbles.

Tuesday May 16, 6-7:15 pm

Tasting: Lesser-known DOC & DOCG of Piedmont

You probably know Barolo and Barbaresco, the big Daddy reds from Piedmont in Northern Italy. But what about Gavi, Moscato, Dogliani or Roero? Join wine director Jerad Ruhl for an exploration of the excellent but less widely known wine appellations of Piedmont, which boasts more DOC and DOCG wines than any other region in Italy. You'll try 4-6 wines, and learn what makes these wines special enough to earn the highest seal of approval from the Italian government's control system.

Cost: \$20 per person ? Includes tasting

Saturday May 20, 2-3:30 pm

Cooking with Mark: Risotto 101

Chef Mark Young will show you basic techniques for making classic risotto and simple variations, and even teach you how to use leftover risotto for rice balls. Learn to make Ottimista's Truffled Wild Mushroom Risotto; Arancini (fried rice balls stuffed with cheese); and another seasonal risotto. We'll taste wine as we go, discussing optimal wine pairings with the risotto, and enjoy the fruits of our labor at the end.

Cost: \$35 per person - Includes lesson, wine tasting & risotto

Sunday May 21, 3- 4:30 pm

Italian Lessons & Vino: A Tavola

Learn conversation skills and vocabulary related to food and the culture of the table, a topic central to the Italian way of life.

Cost: \$45 per person - Includes lesson, wine tasting & nibbles.

[Tuesday May 23, 6- 7:30 pm](#)



Trunk Show: Lassos & Laurels

Ottimista is happy to host a reception for up-and-coming jewelry designer Joelle Maynard of Lassos & Laurels. Her delicate creations of semi-precious stone and fine metal can be found at San Francisco boutiques including Ottimista's neighbor, Bryan Lee. Enjoy wine and crostini while browsing Joelle's unique collection of earrings and necklaces, all reasonably priced between \$50-250 per piece. You'll also receive 30% off retail for all purchases at the

event.

Cost: This event is complimentary, but an RSVP is appreciated.

[Sunday May 28, 3- 4:30 pm](#)

Italian Lessons & Vino: Making Friends (part 2)

More on how to meet, greet and get to know each other in Italiano.

Cost: \$45 per person - Includes lesson, wine tasting & nibbles.

[Find out more....](#)

New Lunch Hours

We have changed things around a bit Tuesday- Thursday in order to offer the full menu all day, with no lapse in service between lunch and dinner. Friday, Saturday and Sunday hours have not changed. So now you can have your gnocchi at lunch too! Starting May 1st, our new hours are:

Tuesday-Thursday 2:00pm ? 11:00pm

Friday 12:00pm ? 2:00am

Saturday 11:00am ? 2:00am

Sunday 11:00am ? 10:00pm

Jerad's wine picks: May

Most of Ottimista's wines by the bottle are available for to purchase and take home, at 20-30% below the on-premise wine list. And each month, wine director Jerad Ruhl features two wines at a special price. For May, we think you'll enjoy:

1998 Tinazzi, Ca? de? Rocchi, ?Dugal Barrique?, Veneto

This wine is a blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon and 50% Merlot, aged in the

standard small French barrels more commonly used in California. This gives the wine a slight international roundness without diminishing the Dugal's sense of place. Now, before you hardcore ?classic? Italian wine lovers stop reading, give me a chance to explain. For one thing, Cabernet and Merlot grapes have been used in northern Italy for almost 400 years. And trust me, this wine shows much of the ? classic Italian? style - higher acidity, minimal oak influence, hints of earth and winter spice to complement the dark fruits. Just try to find a Bordeaux blend from France or California with this much integration and complexity for this price. Only a limited quantity of this wine is available.

Retail: \$24



2005 Renard Rosé, California

This bright pink wine, a blend of Syrah and Grenache with about 8% Viogner, is made in the classic saignee method, which literally means "to bleed". This is the process of draining or bleeding off some of the grape juice during the maceration stage of fermentation, leaving you with a beautiful garnet-colored rosé wine. But enough with the technical stuff - the Viogner makes the aromas

literally jump from the glass, while helping tame the harsh tannins of Syrah and Grenache. Bayard Fox has done it again by making an amazingly complex and dry rosé. This not the pink wine you drank in high school or college - Renard's rosé is a serious wine that can be easily consumed on it own, but also pairs perfectly with most light summer fare.

Retail: \$14

Both wines available by the glass here at Ottimista. So come in and give them a try before you take some home!

Join our mailing list!

Scenes from VinItaly



For a vicarious view of VinItaly and traveling through Italy on the wine circuit, [click here](#) for an article and photos posted on Ottimista's website.

Don's Corner: Varietal Adventures

Aglianico 101



The other day out on our patio I had the pleasure of meeting a young woman who was absolutely thrilled to be drinking a fine Aglianico without having to visit Italy to get it. She told me all about her long relationship with the grape and her visits to various producers in Basilicata, the home of the great Aglianico del Vulture, and definitely not a usual stop on the Italian tourist parade, even for a wine



lover. Her passion for this majestic southern Italian red is something that has been catching on amongst enophiles in the states for a few years now. For those who haven't yet had the pleasure of making its acquaintance, I've decided to make this month's column a kind of "Aglianico 101" to get you up to speed.

Its story begins in a typically Italian (meaning a hotly and enthusiastically debated) way, involving several different versions of supposed histories. Historically believed to have been brought to Italy by the ancient Greeks, more recent theories suggest that it may be one of the hundreds of wild vines that have always existed on the Italian peninsula and that it was merely "discovered" and named by the Greeks. In either case, it has surely been around for a very long time and has surprisingly existed in relative obscurity until very recently.

In their landmark book "Vino Italiano", Joe Bastianich and David Lynch credit a single producer, Mastroberardino, with introducing the varietal to the modern wine market. In so doing, they proved that serious red wines could be made in the south. Their wines from the Taurasi DOCG zone in Campania have been called "the Barolos of the south", and Taurasi is still one of the only southern reds to warrant serious comparison to the more famous wines of Piedmont. This makes sense when you consider the massive, tannic and tarry nature of a great Taurasi, which is also present in Barolo. There are even similar tobacco nuances in the bouquets of both wines. However, the fruit profile of the great Aglianicos is decidedly darker, leaning more toward black fruits rather than the dried cherry fruit normally associated with Nebbiolo. This distinction is one of the main reasons that new world wine drinkers, especially those of us in California, so easily identify with Aglianico. The dark berries in this wine seem familiar to those of us used to drinking new world versions of say, Syrah or Bordeaux varietals.

You can even assume, and you would be right, that the intense heat of the southern Italian sun produces a ripeness of fruit similar to what we get in California. The big difference however, is that in the best Aglianico regions the nights are much colder because of the altitudes at which these zones lie. This produces a wonderful acidity and finesse on the palate that our little hills near the California coast can't match. Many of the vineyards in Taurasi are in fact are over 2000 feet, and in Basilicata an 1800 foot elevation is not uncommon. This, in combination with the notoriously slow ripening nature of Aglianico, means that the grapes are sometimes harvested in the snow in late October or early November. Strange to think of this kind of climate so far south, but it is this unique combination of environmental factors that makes these wines so powerful and so sexy. Currently Ottimista is proud to offer several exquisite Aglianicos, including the 97 Taurasi from Mariana, one of the best I've encountered " and we're currently doing it by the glass! So, if you would like to see what all the fuss is about, just come in and enjoy some with a steak, or a smoke even.

Salute!

[Find out more....](#)

Bon Appetito!

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