



O!

Oregon arts and culture, lifestyle, literary arts, music and film articles

Sponsored By:



Matt Kramer »

Matt Kramer: From obscure grapes come great wines

By Special to The Oregonian
May 29, 2010, 10:01AM

It's not a coincidence that some of the best and most interesting Oregon wines are from relatively unknown grape varieties. Witness the exceptional quality of the tempranillo wine from Abacela winery in the Umpqua Valley. Or the auxerrois from Adelsheim Vineyards. Or the pinot blanc and gamay noir from WillaKenzie Estate.

These and others (muscat ottonel from The Eyrie Vineyards, for example) demonstrate that what works best in Oregon is far from settled. Sure, pinot noir is here to stay. But Oregon winegrowing is in its infancy and there's a long way to go before it's clear which grape varieties respond best in various locations.

De Ponte Melon "D.F.B. Estate" Dundee Hills 2009 -- Want proof that one of the best wines made in Oregon isn't pinot noir? Try this dry white wine from the melon grape variety.

Never heard of melon? Then perhaps you've heard of the French wine Muscadet, the wine of choice in many Parisian brasseries to accompany oysters and shellfish. Muscadet is 100 percent melon. A really good melon -- which is really to say Muscadet, as it's pretty much the only game in town for this grape -- should be utterly dry, crisp, refreshingly acidic but not excessively so, with an entrancing whiff of anise or licorice. It's never weighty or alcoholic. And nothing about the wine calls for oak, so it almost never sees any.

All of these attributes are on display in this just-released 2009 **De Ponte Cellars** melon from Dundee Hills. Created from vines that are now more than 25 years old, this is superb melon that can take on just about any French Muscadet you'd care to compare it to. It's one of the best dry white wines made in Oregon, never mind the grape variety.

Worth noting is that although the winery submits this wine has an aging potential of just "two to three years," experience with the best Muscadet wines suggests a great melon can age for upward of a decade or even longer. That said, like all good melons, 2009 De Ponte Cellars melon is tasty now. And yes, it's best when served with shellfish or mild cheeses. Not much is made,



View full size

De Ponte Melon "D.F.B. Estate" Dundee Hills 2009

SEARCH ARTS & CULTURE LISTINGS

Movies Music Food Events Search All

Event Type

Next 7 Days

Search

Submit Your Events | Oregon Entertainment

INSIDE O! with The Oregonian

- [Oregon Living](#)
- [FOODday News](#)
- [Health & Fitness News](#)
- [Homes & Gardens](#)
- [Kiddo Oregon Parenting](#)
- [O! Oregon Arts & Culture](#)
- [Oregon Pets](#)
- [Travel News](#)
- [Oregonian Newspaper](#)
- [Feedback and Questions](#)

Browse by month:

Select a date

GO ▶

MOVIES

Mad About Movies Blog by Shawn Levy

- [Hello, I must be going](#)
- [Review: The King and I in 'Looking for Eric'](#)
- [Levy's High Five, May 28 - June 3](#)

[MORE MAD ABOUT MOVIES BLOG »](#)

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Financial Controller
Quinalt Indian Nation - Taholah, WA

Pharmacy Manager - (Job Number: 020147)
Kaiser Permanente - Salem, or

Property Insurance,

COLUMNISTS

Matt Kramer
Oregonian Wine columnist
[30-Day Column Archive](#)



Latest Columns

- [Recession delivers bargain reds](#) 1:00 a.m. PT
- [Two Euro wines \(both avoid oak aging\) set benchmarks for their types](#) 1:00 a.m. PT

[ALL OREGONIAN COLUMNISTS »](#)

Underwriter/Risk Manager/Marketing & Placement

McGriff, Seibels & Williams - Portland, Oregon

Director-Financial Services: Providence St Vincent Medical Center

Providence Health & Services - PORTLAND, or

[More Jobs](#)

Search All Jobs

Post Your **JOB** now

just 680 cases. Get it while you can. \$22.95. (Distributor is Young's Columbia.)

Altano "Douro" 2007, Symington Family Estates -- Speaking of unusual grape varieties creating distinctive wines, here's another contender. Altano is the brand name of a Portuguese red grown in the Douro Valley , where the port is created.

Here you have a blend of two indigenous red grape varieties: tinta roriz (70 percent) and touriga franca (30 percent). The Douro is a rugged, even harsh, environment with granite soils. The result is a ripe yet balanced red wine with a lovely floral scent, good acidity and an unmistakable mineral note. It's a terrific barbecue red of real refinement. The price is just \$8.95 a bottle. (Distributor is Galaxy Wine Co.)

Cerasuolo "Montepulciano d'Abruzzo" 2009, Torre dei Beati -- A perennial personal favorite. Every spring when I taste this delectable pink wine from Italy's Abruzzo region I am reminded that this is one of the consistently best rosés I know. So here it is again -- with no apologies.

This is a little darker-hued than most rosés, but the savor and scent are remarkable, with a touch of minerality along with berry tastes. By the way, the goofy, almost illegible front label is a handwritten poem composed by the winemaker, which reads (in Italian): "Beautiful. You are looking at me. You are promising love. It remains the memory of your perfume. – Rosa."

Whatever. This is great rosé, one of the very best. \$13.95. (Distributor is Casa Bruno.)

-- **Matt Kramer**

ADVERTISEMENT

- [Summer Rate Specials at Skamania Lodge!](#)
- [Our Willamette Valley winery specializes in Pinot noir & Pinot gris](#)
- [If your new home doesn't stand out, don't blame us.](#)
- [Armstrong Volkswagen is a Portland, Beaverton and Vancouver VW dealer.](#)

Great Wolf Vacation
Enjoy Family Adventure & Fun at the Great Wolf Lodge in Grand Mound!
www.GreatWolf.com/Grandmound/

Visiting Texas?
Learn More in the Official Texas Travel Guide. Order Now for Free!
www.TravelTex.com

Wines of the Month Club
We Guarantee Only Handcrafted Wines From Real Working Wineries.
www.CaWineClub.com

Sponsored Links

Recommend (0)

Print this

Email this

Share this:

Previous story: Hardman Cemetery reveals pioneer family's deep roots

Story tags: [altano douro](#) | [cerasuolo montepulciano](#) | [de ponte melon](#) | [matt kramer](#) | [muscadet](#)

Comments (0 total)

RSS

Post a comment

You must sign in to post a comment.

Sign in to OregonLive.com

Username

Password

Sign In

Don't have an account?

Register Now!

We've upgraded our community features on OregonLive.com

Learn more! »



Site Search

Search Local Business Listings

Go

[Site Map](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Contact us](#)







[Make us your home page](#)

[Home](#) | [News](#) | [Weather](#) | [Sports](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Living](#) | [Interact](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Autos](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Shopping](#) | [Place an Ad](#)

- [Your Photos](#)
- [Your Videos](#)
- [Blogs](#)
- [Forums](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Music](#)

- [Post a job](#)
- [Post a free classified ad](#)
- [Sell your car](#)
- [Sell/rent your home](#)
- [Apartments & rentals](#)
- [Claim your Business Listing for free](#)

- [Obits / Death Notices](#)
- [Business News](#)
- [Environmental News](#)
- [Contests](#)
- [Dining](#)
- [Movies](#)

-  [Subscribe to our content \(RSS\)](#)
-  [News alerts](#) | [Sports alerts](#)
-  [Twitter feed](#)
-  [OregonLive.com Multimedia](#)
-  [View OregonLive.com mobile site](#)
-  [View mobile product offerings](#)



[The Oregonian](#) - [The Oregonian Business Center](#) | [Hillsboro Argus](#)

© 2010 Oregon Live LLC. All Rights Reserved ([About Us](#)). Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement](#). Please read our [Privacy Policy](#). [Community Rules](#) apply to all content you upload or otherwise submit to this site. [Contact interactivity management](#).