

The Vine Guy - P.S. I love you! - Scott Greenberg

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The initials P.S. can represent a lot of things. Most commonly, it means Post Script, as in a follow-up to a previous message. Or it can stand for Petite Sirah, a diminutive, purple teeth staining grape that can be magically transformed into a red wine that delivers a combination of suppleness and power in each sip. In this case, it means both.

Last month, I hosted (and wrote about) a charity event that was held in conjunction with the Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington to raise money for the D.C. Central Kitchen. It was such a successful event that we decided to do it again (thus the “post script”) with the assistance of PS I Love You, a California-based organization dedicated to spreading the gospel about the greatness of Petite Sirah.

Assistance is really an understatement. Within two weeks of contacting Jo Diaz, PSLIY’s executive director, more than a dozen vintners jump on the fundraising bandwagon, each sending samples of their wares. Donors included Biale, Bogle, Earthquake, EOS, Ernhardt, Foppiano, Lolonis, Mettler, Rosenblum, Silkwood, Victor Hugo and Vina Robles. Surprise guest, Lou Foppiano, owner of Foppiano Vineyards (Sonoma County’s oldest continually owned family winery, founded in 1896), blew into town just to join us for a few hours.

If you’re not familiar with Petite Sirah, here is a brief primer. In the late 1800s, Dr. Durif, a French nurseryman, played matchmaker between Syrah and a little know varietal from the wrong side of the trellis, Peloursin. He named the new varietal after himself. Durif was later renamed when it was relocated to sunny California, where the varietal does very well in the moderate climate.

Petite Sirahs typically possess notes of black raspberry, blackberry and blueberry fruit (and occasionally black pepper) on the nose and palate. They also tend to be big wines with significant tannins and acidity because the berries are smaller and therefore have a higher skin-to-juice ratio. While most Petite Sirahs are meant to be drunk within a few years of their vintage, some have been crafted for the cellar and can last the better part of a decade. Petite Sirahs are very food-friendly and pair well with game fowl, flavorful meats such as roasted lamb and ox tails and, thanks to the acidity, fattier meats such as Osso Bucco and braised veal cheeks.

While I enjoyed all of the wines, space only permits me to mention a few of my favorites from the tasting. Retail prices are approximate.

2002 Silkwood Wine, Stanislaus County, Calif. - (\$35)

This wine has a very deep, dark purple color and exotic scents of cinnamon, cassis and licorice on the nose. Juicy and well-balanced with flavors of ripe blackberries and cassis with just a hint of pipe tobacco on the smooth, long finish.

www.silkwoodwines.com