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A Fresh Style Icon
to Entertain You

New NYC

by LEO SIPRAS

On your next visit to see the latest Broadway shows in New York City, make sure to book a stay at Distrikt Hotel, a newly constructed boutique hotel in the heart of Midtown Manhattan. The 32-story hotel pays homage to Manhattan's diverse "distrikts" with neighborhood-themed floors that go from the Financial District on the bottom of the building to Harlem on the top.

Distrikt Hotel

342 W 40th Street
New York, NY 10018
888.444.5610
distrikthotel.com

A special introductory rate
of \$169 per night extends
through April 2010

The hotel was designed by New York-based OTTE Architecture, who hired renowned artist Chris Rubino to create giant, back-lit collages composed of more than 10,000 pictures on each floor that represent iconic neighborhoods like Chelsea, The Village, Central Park, and Soho. The contemporary lobby features a 14-foot "living wall" of green plants arranged in the shape of Central Park. Each of the guestrooms mixes comfort and luxury, with plush Frette bedding and ECRU New York bath amenities.

Tech-friendly comforts include free Wi-Fi, iHome docking stations and flat-panel televisions. Stay in an upper floor room and enjoy sweeping views of the New York skyline and Hudson River. And don't forget to check out the stylish Collage restaurant with its signature cocktails, farm-fresh local produce and delicious microbrews.

New York City can be a tough place to find a hotel that gives you both style *and* affordability. Distrikt Hotel offers a perfect mix that could make it your home-away-from-home in the big apple.



Who Said Wine
Needs To Be Complicated?

Wine Basics

by PHILIP CUISIMANO

Spring is the season of transition and an opportune time to review the fundamental building blocks on which to expand our knowledge of wine. We do so in the hopes of helping to transition a blossoming wine aficionado into a more confident consumer. And, as for us seasoned wine-drinkers; none can deny the efficacy of review. So, with this in mind, we offer a crash course on the "Basics of Wine".

First, we must define wine which is in its elemental form simply "fermented grape juice". Fermentation is the chemical process by which sugar is transformed into alcohol. As grapes are crushed, their juice naturally begins to ferment and, if not arrested, will continue until all of its sugar becomes alcohol, leaving us with a rather nasty beverage. So, at some point, the fermentation must be stopped, resulting in a balance or ratio between the alcohol and leftover (residual) sugar. A wine's ratio of alcohol to sugar is often described in terms of dryness. A higher level of alcohol to sugar will produce a drier wine while one with a greater residual sugar will be less dry.

Now, we address the categorization of wine and this is at the crux of understanding the product. For all practical purposes, there are only three major categories.

Sparkling wines are fermented a second time. Sugar and a fermenting agent (yeast) are injected into a still wine, initiating a secondary fermentation. During this process, carbon dioxide is released, creating the signature bubbles.

Fortified wines is a category in which spirits are added to the wine, thus "fortifying" the beverage. In the case of Ports, the alcohol is added prior to fermentation while with Sherry, the spirits are introduced after fermentation.

Table wines, the largest and perhaps most ubiquitous class, are produced to go with foods and typically contain less than

15% alcohol. Now, for the really cool part; in general, there are only three types of table wine that are essential to know.

We begin with varietal wines; these take the name of the grape from which they are made and the consumer is guaranteed that a majority of the wine's blend is from that specific grape. Currently, in California, for the wine to carry the name of a grape on the label, at least 75% of the blend must be from that grape.

The next category is generic wine; these can be made from a single grape or a blend but the wine takes its name from the area in which it was produced. The designated wine region must have defined territorial boundaries while wine production is regulated by common rules established and enforced by an objective body. Well known generic wines include Chianti, Bordeaux, Barolo, Burgundy, Rioja, Rhine, and Moselle. The United States currently produces no generic wines.

Our final class of table wine is called proprietary. With these, a certain producer creates a wine (typically a blend), gives it a special name and that name (and wine) becomes the winery's property; no one else is allowed to use that name. Perhaps, the best known proprietary label is Opus One, a Cabernet-Merlot blend from California.

You have just completed your basic wine review. Remember, wine is simple. Do not allow yourself to be bullied or intimidated by those who choose to complicate what is easy; to this point, I recall the tale of the man to whom if you asked him, "What time is it?" he would proceed to tell you how to make a watch. Master the simple basic tenets laid out above and you will be well equipped to continue your journey into the world of wine.

Here is a mix of wines based on the choices we've been talking about:

Colli Senesi 2007

Chianti is a generic wine and this is a nice everyday quaff featuring a violet nose infused with peppers and spices. The taste is velvety with nice red berry fruits; the tannins are soft but the body is well built and sturdy. Serve with pasta and grilled meats, both red and white. \$21.94

Volker Eisele "Gemini" 2006

Gemini is the proprietary name given this wine from the Napa Valley producer, Volker Eisele. This is an interesting blend of Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc grapes that are grown organically. The cuvee is crisp and dry with notes of melons and mango; very tasty and refreshing. This is perfect for spring and summer. Try it with Asian cuisine. \$25.85

Calistoga Cellars Napa Cabernet 2006

This is a varietal wine comprised of 100% Cabernet Sauvignon (remember it only needs to be 75% Cabernet to take that name). A very nice wine, especially for the money, as this is produced from Napa Valley grapes and is aged in French oak. The wine is smooth with notes of plums, cherries, a hint of chocolate and a touch of oak, all in fine balance. Serve with red meats. \$24.63



Wines available at Spec's Wines, Spirits, & Finer Foods, various locations. Visit specsonline.com for the store nearest you.