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Wine Spectator Uncorked Blog, May 2010

America's Wine Pioneers

The more wines I taste from nontraditional winemaking states here in America, the more I find that good wine can be made almost anywhere

Posted: May 10, 2010 12:00pm ET

I have been trying to taste as many wines from different states as possible when I am back home in the good old U.S. of A. I am surprised with the very good to excellent quality of wines from many nontraditional winemaking states. It's obvious that California, Oregon and Washington do not have a monopoly on good viticulture and winemaking here.

I don't know if there is really a grassroots movement in America for fine winemaking, but with the advances in viticulture and winemaking, it seems that good wine can be made just about anywhere in the States. I have been impressed with wines from Arizona, Michigan, Virginia, New Mexico and Idaho. Are we becoming the United Vineyards of America? Tell me some of your secret wines from weird and wonderful places in the United States.

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I had dinner with sommelier and fledgling wine merchant Andrew Stover in Washington, D.C., a few days after the Wine Spectator Grand Tour, and I was impressed with his concept of brokering wines from all over America. The young vintner has set up a small company called Vino 50, whose motto is "celebrating the states of wine." He says that he is "devoted to promoting emergent American wine regions." I love the idea.

Stover already represents 60 wines from nine states. He does have some from California, but it's strange stuff made in funky-town places like a vineyard over the interstate in a subprime area on the outskirts of Los Angeles. Cool idea. I didn't have time to get the story on all of his wineries, but each has a unique history.

We tasted a good sparkling wine from Hawaii (although it was made from pineapples!), a pure 2007 Cabernet Franc from Michigan from a winery called 2 Lads that reminded me of a red from Tuscany's Bolgheri region, and a 2004 Syrah from Sawtooth winery in Idaho that could fit in Crozes-Hermitage, among others. The ones mentioned were very good quality. The Michigan CF was even outstanding.

Of course, hundreds of wines-maybe thousands-from California, Oregon and Washington are equal or better quality than the limited amount of wines I have tasted from other states in the past year. But there's something intriguing about this continued improvement in American winemaking. God bless America.