

Over the last few years, the members and guests of Winetasters have winnowed down a large list of varietals to two red favourites. Here we stand (or rather sit), prepared to compare and contrast Syrah and Merlot from around the world. This is a comparison of power versus elegance. Merlot is our feminine grape, all berry spice and delicate in disposition, with gentle tannins and velvety mouth feel. Often used as a blending grape, it reaches its full potential as a stellar stand alone in the commune of Pomerol in Bordeaux, most notably at Chateau Petrus. It is also seen in Ontario, California, Italy and Chile as well as many other countries in various incarnations. It can be ultra-premium, rich and dense, or simple table wine perfect for the ubiquitous hamburger. Syrah is considerably more butch. Brawny in its youth, it rarely is described as elegant, instead intense, complex and dense come to mind. It is grown worldwide in cool and hot climates. It can exhibit finesse in cooler sites, but many winemakers are seduced by the power that this grape can lend to their wines when it is very ripe.

Our adventure starts with the classic Pomerol from Chateau Rouget. This benchmark wine is from the accessible 1999 vintage and the youthful signatures of winemaking should have fallen away to reveal the red berry fruit core embellished with the leathery overtones of middle age. Our other Old World Merlot is from Italy - 2005 Merlot, Conte Brandolini from the Vistorta estate in Friuli. Conte Brandino Brandolini was educated in Bordeaux and returned to Italy and updated his family's plantings and winery with the aim of making world-class Merlot. The estate was no stranger to Merlot. It has been planted in their vineyards for 100 years. His wine is one of the most sought after among Italian Merlots. Turning to the New world, Chile offers us the reliable and delicious 2006 Merlot, Cuvee Alexandre from the famous house Casa Lapostolle. This is their top cuvee, brimming with berry fruit and spice. Washington State has often exhibited stunning, ripe Merlots. The 2006 L'Ecole No. 41, premium Estate, Merlot from the famous Seven Hills Vineyard in Washington State promises a hot climate wine that should show us dark berry fruit aromas and great structure.

Our adventure with Syrah is a discovery of masculine-styled wines. Our benchmark is from the famous home of Syrah, the commune of Cornas in the Cotes du Rhone. This great vintage 2005 Cornas comes from the small producer Eric & Joel Durand. Their wines often see Robert Parker 90+ scores and promise black fruit and pepper spice in a dense tannic core. Our second old-world wine is from Portugal. This 2005 Herdade Paço Do Conde Reserva is made with a significant amount of Syrah with a touch of Touriga Nacional, Cabernet Sauvignon and Tempranillo in the cepage. It promises black fruit and chocolate flavours with fine oak spice. Turning to the New World, the 2007 Landmark "steel plow" represents the California contingent from Sonoma Valley. The "Kivelstadt" single vineyard wine is planted to Central Coast Syrah clones and is organically managed by the original viticulturalist who planted it in 1998. It promises classic white-pepper spice and dark fruit aromas and flavours. No Syrah tasting would be complete without an Aussie Shiraz. The 2006 Kilikanoon Testament rounds out the new world contingent. This is Barossa Valley Shiraz at its best. It promises great density and opulence, driven by plummy, roasted fruit aromas and spicy oak (and a Parker 94 point rating). Merlot and Syrah may not be a common comparison, but this promises to be a great tasting.

**As always with our tastings, this event will be strictly non-smoking, and we request your cooperation in not wearing any scented after-shave or perfume.**

Date: Wednesday, January 13, 2010  
Time: 6:30 p.m.  
Limit: 132 people

North York Memorial Community Hall  
5110 Yonge St. (under library)  
North York Centre Subway

Cancellations accepted up to Friday January 8, 2010 — Alan Gardner (416-961-7005 **evenings**). **No reservations by phone, please.** No confirmations will be issued—you will be contacted only if we are sold out. First come basis. Non-members may attend at guest rates, but preference will be given to members.

Tear and Enclose

Cheque payable to:  
Winetasters Society of Toronto  
c/o Alan Gardner  
102 Summerhill Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4T 1B2

Names: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ W (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque Enclosed for: Syrah vs Merlot

\_\_\_\_\_ Members @ 34.00 each \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Guests @ 41.00 each \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I wish to sit at a New Members Table with an expert to answer my questions.

Total \_\_\_\_\_