



Women and Wine

An Editorial by Kevin LoVullo, host of *Spiel the Wine*

Women and wine, two words that go hand in hand very well. Both have similar characteristics but also can be quite diverse. Both have exciting stories that make them fun and interesting. Both bring joy to one's life like almost nothing else can. Nearly 70% of wine consumers in this country are women. Many will say they enjoy a glass of wine after a day of work, while others will say they enjoy it while preparing dinner. As W.C. Fields once said, "I enjoy cooking with wine, sometimes I even put it in the food".

I have learned that female winemakers are prevalent in the United States and have made some of the finest wines in the world. I recently had the distinct pleasure of interviewing Alessia Antinori. She and her two sisters are the first women to take over the Antinori family wine business, which traces its tradition of winemaking to the year 1180 and has traditionally been owned and operated by men. All three women are hard-working, passionate, intelligent, and globally respected visionaries – they are a true testament to the characteristics of women today.

Women I have met, including my wife of 25 years, are infatuated with wine labels. Truthfully, many winemakers should invest in better techniques rather than in colorful labels with silly names. In other words, don't judge a wine by its label.

Forty-eight percent of women today are intimidated when purchasing wines in a store or ordering wine in a restaurant. The remedy for that is to do research by reading wine descriptions and rating scores that local wine shops provide. The descriptions are a great starting point when establishing a relationship with a favorite wine shop or restaurant. Some of the wines women prefer are white wines like Pinot Gris (Grigio) and Riesling. I have found that women in their 20s are consuming more wine than ever and prefer the more fruity taste and the higher alcohol levels of a Shiraz or Zinfandel. Women in general tend to be more practical than men and gravitate toward the value white wines from Italy, New Zealand, and Argentina. I truly believe those regions are exploding right now, with an ever-growing variety of exciting choices for women to enjoy and share.

For thousands of years, the wine industry has been dominated by men. The few women who worked in the industry did so more by chance than by choice. In France in the 18th and 19th centuries Veuve Cliquot and later Madame Pommery, also known as the “champagne widows,” inherited wineries from their husbands and revolutionized the industry.

Cliquot is credited by some historians with developing an aging technique called “riddling,” which is still used in champagne production to improve the clarity and quality of the wine. Madame Pommery developed the driest and most popular forms of champagne, brut and extra brut, to appeal to English tastes and to tap new overseas markets. In the process, she transformed her small business into a world-renowned champagne house. But as both businesswomen and pioneers, the two women remained the exception to the rule until now, because today is a much different story.

By virtue of their passion, drive, and diverse approaches to the business of winemaking, women have emerged as a defining force in the wine industry. And I am proud to say many women have taught me a great deal about wine over the years, and I am happy to share my thoughts with you.