

THE WINE GUY

Winemakers strut their stuff outside Classic's tent

The Grand Tasting Tent at the Food and Wine Magazine Classic at Aspen is always a lot of fun, but much of the action happens outside the tent.

This year, for example, I was invited to take part in a vertical tasting (sipping different vintages of the same wine) of Treana red and white wines. The red blend contains cabernet sauvignon, merlot and syrah from Paso Robles. The white is a marsanne/viognier blend from the acclaimed Mer Soleil vineyard in Monterey County. Winemaker Austin Hope brought every vintage he has produced of both, dating back to 1996 for the red and 1997 for the white. What was most impressive was how well the older wines had developed.

In what has become something of an annual Classic tradition for me, I spent time with Katrin Naelapaa, director of Wines from Spain. The big news is the emergence of several lesser-known regions and the re-emergence of another as quality wine producers. Some



RICH MAURO
Gazette wine columnist

label and now this fresh, brightly fruited blend of tempranillo and graciano.

At another special event, Moët Hennessy USA held a tasting to showcase recent releases from eight wineries in its impressive international portfolio. Check these out:

- **Martin Codax 2002 Quatro Pasos.** From Bierzo in the northwest, this winery has produced a tasty wine from the indigenous grape mencia. Naelapaa likened it to cabernet franc, but the bright cherry fruit and fresh style reminded me of beaujolais.

- **Finca Museum 2001 Real Reserva.** From the region of Cigales, this winery produces a Crianza and this robust Reserva from old vine tinto fino, the local variant of tempranillo.

- **Ondalán 2002 Reserva.** The biggest story in Spanish wine this year may be the re-emergence of Rioja. The members of the Martinez Bujanda family have been in the forefront of that progress, particularly with the Conde de Valdemar

a remarkable 2003 Unfiltered Chardonnay and an excellent 2001 The Puzzle, a 50/50 merlot-cabernet sauvignon blend.

- **Terrazas des Los Andes.** Terrazas began producing varietal wines in the 1990s. The 2002 Afincado Vineyard Malbec demonstrated that this grape really thrives in Argentina.

- **Cheval des Andes.** A joint venture between Terrazas de Los Andes and Chateau Cheval Blanc, the 2002 blends cabernet sauvignon, malbec and petite verdot into a wine that rivals the best of Bordeaux.

- **Domínio de Valdepusa.** Spanish producer Marques de Griñon offered a sleek 2000 Emeritus (cabernet sauvignon, syrah and petite verdot) and 2002 Petite Verdot, showing what Spain can do with French grapes.

Most (though not all) of these wines are distributed in Colorado and should be available at larger wine and liquor stores.

Reach Rich Mauro at 636-0194.