

Tasting Renowned New Comer “Oceano” Wines




Rachel Martin cut her wine teeth in the mid 2000's with her involvement in the founding and management of the well-respected Boxwood Vineyards in Middleburg, Va.



Rachel Martin and husband, Kurt Deutsch.

The winery is owned by her stepfather John Kent Cooke, son of the late Jack Kent Cooke. John formally presided as president and owner of the NFL Washington Redskins until its sale to current owner Daniel Snyder in 1999. Rachel currently resides in New York with her son and partner/husband Kurt Deutsch. She has utilized her wine education in enology and viticulture from Napa Valley College, her experience at the University of Bordeaux School of Enology and her experience at Boxwood Vineyards to start a new wine venture, Oceano Wines, near San Luis Obispo, CA.

 Martin, who owns 60 percent of Oceano and qualifies as a certified-woman-owned business, has produced and released two vintages of chardonnay and one vintage of pinot noir. Grapes are sourced from the Spanish Springs Vineyard in an area called the San Luis Obispo Coast, which hopefully soon will receive AVA status.

Martin showed us an interesting chart illustrating “growing degree days” that compared cool Central Coast and Sonoma County grape-growing areas. Pinot noir and chardonnay thrive in cooler climate areas. San Luis Obispo Coast claims the least amount of growing degree days among cool climate grape-growing regions — a paltry 2,018 of “growing degree days” compared to 2,580 such days in Russian River Valley’s pinot noir and chardonnay vineyards.

Spanish Springs Vineyard is 1.5 miles from the frigid Pacific Ocean. The fog and cool wines in this maritime region dominate the climate.



Marbue Marke

Oceano purchases about 10 tons of chardonnay fruit and 6 tons of pinot noir from the 100-acre Spanish Springs Vineyard and trucks the grapes to the Napa Valley where they are vinified by winemaker Marbue Marke at a custom crush facility. Marbue, a native of the West African Country of Sierra Leone and a graduate of University of California Davis, has extensive experience as a winemaker for an impressive list of Napa and Sonoma wineries.

We recently met with Martin to taste her current offerings.



*The Oceano Chardonnay San
Luis Obispo County Spanish
Springs Vineyard 2016*

The Oceano Chardonnay San Luis Obispo County Spanish Springs Vineyard 2016 (\$40)

was Oceano's debut wine. As with many current higher end chardonnays this wine leans away from readily apparent oak notes and showcases ripe fruit, bright acidity, and an underlying minerality. Just a hint of oak belies the barrel fermentation and aging in French oak. This delicious white wine features citrus and tropical fruit elements in the nose and mouth. Only 350 cases were made and may be difficult to source.

The soon-to-be-released **Oceano Chardonnay San Luis Obispo County Spanish Springs Vineyard 2017** (\$40) also expressed delightful citrus and tropical fruit notes, bracing acidity and a lovely creamy finish that lingered. Barrel fermentation and 11 months in French oak (30 percent new) added an elegant feel to this wine. Martin believes this wine should age well for up to 6 years.

The stunner of our tasting was the **Oceano Pinot Noir San Luis Obispo County Spanish Springs Vineyard 2018** (\$50). This soon-to-be-released wine is a top 10 pinot noir for us for the year. Bright, but ripe elements featuring plum and cherry notes with a pleasant note of spice in the finish. Medium bodied and balanced this debut pinot noir is a winner.

Hess' Argentina wines

We've been admirers of Donald Hess founder of Hess Family Wine Estates for many years. In addition to Hess wine holdings in California they also produce notable wines brands from two high-altitude growing regions in Salta in Argentina's Calchaqui Valley.

The Colome Estate Torrontes Salta Argentina 2018 (\$15) is a delightful example of



*The Colome Estate Malbec Salta Argentina
2016*

the potential of this grape variety. Intense floral notes of roses, palate-cleansing acidity, with a base of citrus flavors create a beautiful tasting package.

The Colome Estate Malbec Salta Argentina 2016 (\$25) is impressive for its bold meaty, blackberry nose and flavors The wine displays a certain rusticity but with soft tannins making it ready to drink now.

Hess also produces wines under the Amalaya label in Salta. We were very impressed both with the quality and price of the **Amalaya Brut Nature Salta Argentina 2017** (\$12) sparkling wine. With 80 percent riesling and 20 percent torrantes this impressive sparkler presented apple and peach elements in a very harmonious package. Bravo!

More roses



*Bonterra Organic
Vineyards
Mendocino
County Rose
2018*

Bonterra Organic Vineyards Mendocino County Rose 2018 (\$16). Fresh and bright red fruit flavors are dashed with nice citrus notes to make a pure and simple rose.

- **Michel Chapoutier Belleruche Rose 2018** (\$17). From the Cotes du Rhone, this producer uses the classic blend of grenache, syrah and cinsault to create a round and effusive rose with strawberry flavors and balanced acidity.
- **Raeburn Rose 2018** (\$20). We like the wines from this producer. Th is rose from the Russian River Valley leans primarily on pinot noir and grenache is made in a Provencal style with minimal skin contact. Pure and fresh raspberry notes.
- **Vega Sindoa Garnacha Rosado 2018** (\$13). From Navarra, this beautiful rose has cherry and strawberry notes with good acidity.
- **Scharffenberger Brut Rose Excellence** (\$23). This tasty blend of pinot noir and chardonnay provides a soft mouthfeel with raspberry and strawberry notes. Fruity and delicious.

Tom Marquardt and Patrick Darr, MoreAboutWine, posted on SouthFloridaReporter.com, Oct. 7, 2019

Additional Wine reviews on MoreAboutWine

All photos are randomly selected and do not indicate any preferred wine

You can send questions to Tom Marquardt <mailto:marq1948@gmail.com>