

Friday 5th September: *Caroline Henry* discovers new dimensions of Pinot Noir

We started our second day in Switzerland with a unique tasting experience comparing aromas in ten award-winning Pinots from the Mondial des Pinots 2014 with aroma profiles in the perfume industry.

According to Richard Pfister, the winemaker-perfumer who took us on this journey, all smells consist of one or more molecules. For wine this is even more complex, as several different and often unrelated molecules may be present. Subconsciously we will relate these odours to smells we know from our day-to-day life when we try to describe the nose of a wine. We will again associate the wine with the same molecules when we taste it, to describe its aromas. Aromas are smells which we perceive through our mouth, which is interesting as these same molecules, as pure smell, may be perceived completely differently.

As we are all different we will describe the nose and aromas of wine differently as well. However, a lot of these descriptions are related even though they may seem different at first glance. The molecules in a lot of these descriptors are similar, creating groups of dominant elements. In his book *The Perfume of Wine* Pfister defines the ten dominant elements as: spice, floral, animal, woody, lactic, empyreumatic, fruity, vegetal and mineral.

For this tasting, Pfister had picked one smell of each of the dominant elements which he believed was also present in the wine. We first had a few minutes to evaluate the wine before Pfister talked briefly about the dominant element he felt was most present in that wine. After his explanation, these 'stand-alone' odours – which ranged from redcurrant, chamomile, black pepper to even the very rare grey amber – were passed around on a blotter paper for us to smell and compare to our notes.

Decomposed like this, the perfume of Pinot Noir took on a completely new dimension – at least for me. It made me realise that in wine tasting there is no such thing as black or white. Instead we have a complex and interrelated world of lots of different shades of grey.



Perfumes of Pinot explained by Richard Pfister. Photo by Caroline Henry.

Footnote: Richard Pfister is an oenologist who has been working in the perfume industry since 2003. His work is mainly centred on gaining a better understanding of the perfumes of wine. In 2013 he bundled his experience and research results together in a book *Le Parfum du Vin: Sentir et Comprendre le Vin*. The book is available in French from Amazon, Fnac or in Switzerland from his website: <http://www.oenoflair.com>.

Friday 5th September continued: *Rebecca Murphy* descends the walls of Clos de la Cochetta and revives with the wines of Varone

Our first visit in Valais was to the breathtaking Clos de la Cochetta vineyard acquired by the Robert Gilliard wine company in 1957. Driving along the banks of the Rhône river looking up the steep mountainside the Gilliard name is prominently painted on a stone wall. This dry-stacked stone wall is more than 65 feet tall, certainly one of the tallest of its kind in the wine world.

We drove up into the mountains and came to a stop near a small entrance with an ornate metal gate with *Domaine de la Corzette Gilliard* in gold letters. We walked through the opened gate, following metal rails toward a light, which was at the end of a tunnel. When we stepped out into the light we were on the side of the mountain where the stone walls we had seen from below held back the steep terraces of vines. We were standing on a level area where a small metal cart sat on the rails.

Our host, Marek Moos, who handles marketing, explained that this was the pre-crush area where bins of hand-harvested grapes were collected. In the past, those bins were carried up the terraces by workers or stacked on a large, rectangular metal frame hanging from a cable and pulled by that cable up to the collection area. The bins were then placed on to the metal cart and pushed through the tunnel to be loaded on to trucks to be delivered to the winery. This process used to take at least a month. Today the bins are picked up by helicopter at various spots in the vineyard to be delivered in a ten-minute trip to the winery. Harvest today takes maybe two weeks and the grapes are fresh and in good shape when they get to the winery, making the cost of helicopters worth it.

We then walked down to pergola-covered outdoor dining area. We were standing on a terrace at the bottom of the stone wall we saw when driving up the mountain. Here we were served a typical wine country lunch of assorted cheeses, dried meats, tiny pickled chanterelles and bread. We were treated to the two white wines from this vineyard.