

“Time to revisit Austria’s top varietal”

says **Larry Arnold**, after tasting the illicit Gruner Veltliner

On the west coast of this great country, Gruner Veltliner is like the prime minister. We all know he is out there but rarely get to see him out here. That was not always the case. I do recall a brief few months back in the 90’s when for some peculiar reason LDB shelves were awash with Austrian wines. It was a golden age for Gruner Veltliner but unfortunately the Branch was ahead of itself and though coveted by expatriates and those in the know, few were willing to buck up for a bottle. They languished on shelves from here to Kelowna until they were all but given away. Pity, these wines deserve a better fate and as fate will have it I recently had the opportunity to attend a small informal tasting of young, dry Gruner Veltliners smuggled in from Alberta and was pleasantly surprised by the overall quality of the wines.

Stylistically, I would put these wines somewhere between Pinot Grigio and a good crisp Loire Sauvignon Blanc. They were all boney-dry with fleeting aromas of spring flowers, pea pods and citrus with a hint of fresh cracked white pepper lurking in the background. On the palate the fruit dances around the acidity, which in some cases was searing but never overwhelming. My prognosis? It’s time retailers had another look at this fine varietal from Austria.

KURT ANGERER KIES GRUNER VELTLINER 2003 (AUSTRIA)

Winemaker Kurt Angerer is a man to watch. His wines are now counted amongst the elite of the Austrian wine industry and with one sip of this zippy young Gruner you will immediately know why. Fresh and clean with a

whiff of citrus, apple and fresh cracked pepper on the nose, a honeyed fruitiness on the palate and plenty of mouth-watering crunchy acidity. A real zinger!!!

SEPP MOSER WOLFSGRABEN GRUNER VELTLINER 2002 (AUSTRIA)

Very delicate with a peachy, floral nose, vibrant citrus flavours and a shocking amount of acidity that challenges but does not overwhelm the fruit. Hmmm!!!

WEINGUT FRANK GRUNER VELTLINER 2003 (AUSTRIA) \$15.00-18.00

Very crisp and very clean! So clean in fact that when you first stick your nose in the glass you might be forgiven for wondering what all the fuss is about, but give it a moment and there it is. Fleeting and subtle at first but as the air gets to it: lime zest and the innocent scent of wild flowers with perhaps a whiff of fresh cracked white pepper. The palate is light and ethereal but there is fruit, lots of it and always that shocking crunch of raw acid. Elemental and vibrant! Anyways there are not many Austrian wines available in British Columbia today but the few are worth the effort to seek out.

WIMMER-CZERNY FELSERBURG GRUNER VELTLINER RESERVE 2002 (AUSTRIA)

Located about 70 km west of Vienna, this small, family owned estate does not use herbicides or pesticides, producing only certified organic wines. This is a good thing! There is plenty going on here with upfront melon and apple aromas, good concentration with soft fruit flavours and a tartness that just keeps going and going!