



The Wine Caravan : Tales from The Spice Route

Description

In capacity of the President Delhi Wine Club, I put together a uniquely wonderful wine dinner for the club members at the renowned Ethnic Asian Restaurant at New Delhi called as **The Spice Route**. Located in the historic Hotel **The Imperial**, this is one of the preferred destination for those seeking culinary adventures of the **Pan Asian Spice Route**.

Diplomat Guests

This 331st Delhi Wine Club Dinner saw a full house attendance. We were also honoured to have the **Ambassador of Moldova** and the **Ambassador of Georgia** as our esteemed guests for the evening.



From L to R as you see the image: Ambassador of Georgia, Subhash Arora & Ambassador of Moldova

The Wine Flight

The flight of wines for the evening included one sparkling and three still wines.



Details of each of these wines are given out in succeeding paragraphs, but first hereâ??s the exceptional Menu of the event:

The Exotic Menu : A Veritable Feast



Starter Course Wine : Villa Sandi Il Fresco Treviso Prosecco Brut DOC

This first wine served at the evening was a **DOC Prosecco** from the **family owned winery** called as **Villa Sandi**. This winery draws inspiration from the eponymous **mansion** which it acquired in 1975, but the origin of which goes back to the year 1620.



Villa Sandi. Image by ISWacademy

Villa Sandi Mansion : Palladian Architecture

This mansion is designed on the lines of Palladian architecture which incorporates the features of the **classical antiquity** viz a wide facade, high Corinthian columns, massive arches, broad windows, majestic staircases etc. Villa Sandi's vineyards spread around this beautiful mansion provide a picturesque view.

The Wine : Villa Sandi Il Fresco Treviso Brut Prosecco DOC

That's a longish name for this Prosecco, so let me break it down for you. The opening words **Villa Sandi** indicate the name of the eponymous winery as brought out earlier in the post.



Villa Sandi Prosecco

The next two words or the phrase **Il Fresco**, means **The Fresh One** in Italian, which highlights the fresh style of this sparkling wine. **Treviso** is the DOC area in extreme northeast Italy from where this Prosecco comes from.

And finally the word **Brut** at the end is a **wine term** which signifies the residual sugar level in the wine. **At 5 g/l**, this Italian bubbly can practically be considered as a **dry wine**, where **dry means absence of sugar**.

This Prosecco was served to the guests in the open courtyard adjacent to the main restaurant which had an oriental architecture and feel about it.





Everyone loved the light and refreshing feel of this Prosecco with a range of delectable snacks as part of the starter course.

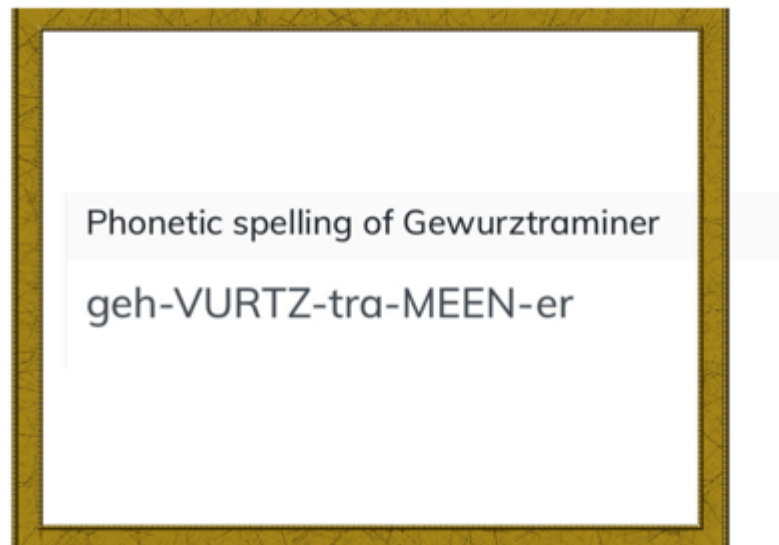
Cold Appetizers Course Wine : 19:59 Single Varietal Gewürztraminer



This was the second wine of the evening and the first one on the table for the sit down dinner. Here **19:59** implies the **product line** of these wines which includes only **the single varietal wines** which means that every wine is made with a single grape variety and thereâ??s no blending with other wines.

Forbes : Donâ??t say it, just drink it

Now Gewürztraminer as a word can be very **difficult to pronounce**, itâ??s almost a **tongue twister**. But then itâ??s a delicious wine, so much so that a **Forbes** article about this wine is titled â??**Donâ??t say it, just drink it**â?•.



It basically means that we should not get into the linguistic challenge of pronouncing this wine name correctly, rather we should sit back, relax and enjoy the aromas and flavours of this beautiful aromatic wine.

A Red Wine Disguised as a White Wine

Because of its rich mouthfeel, robust body and a good structure, Gewürztraminer has also been called by one of the Master of Wines as **a red wine disguising itself as a white wine**. Having savoured it in this wine dinner, I do agree with that fully.

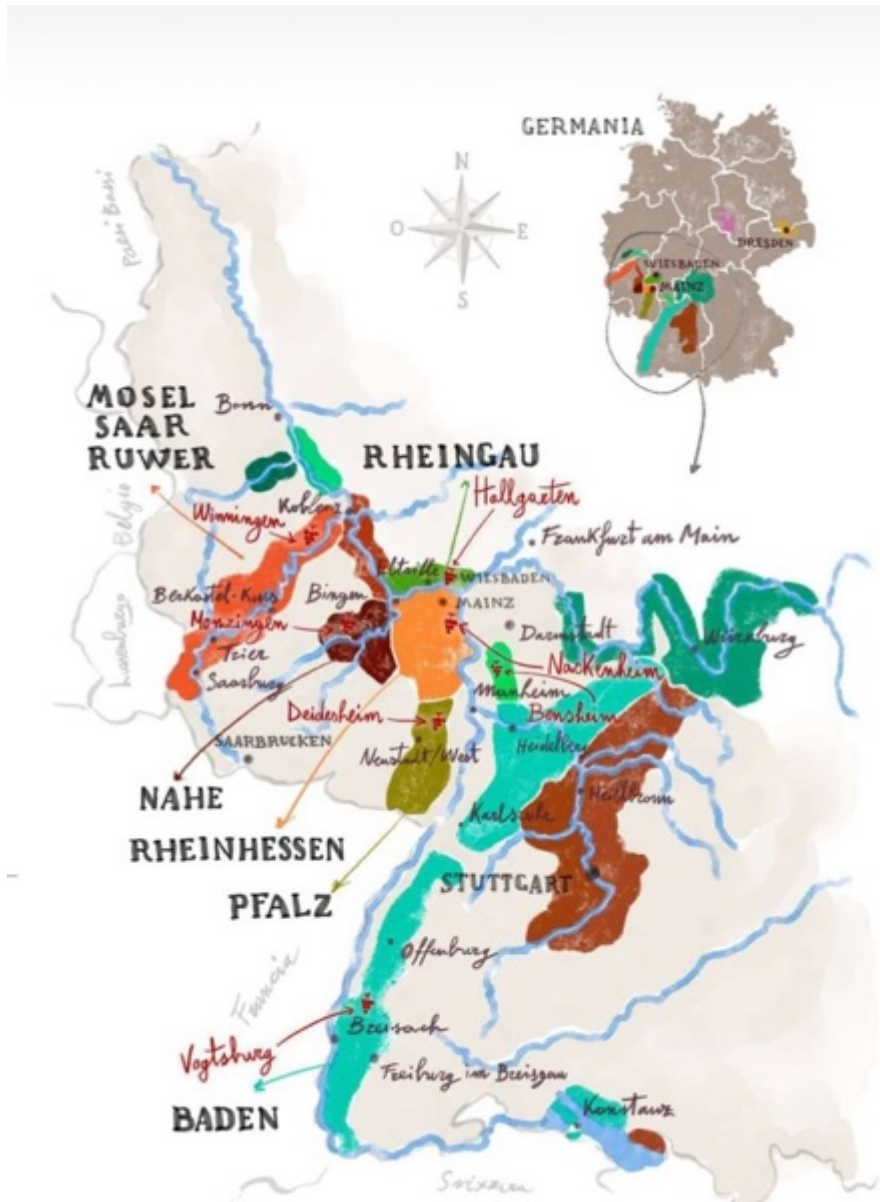
A Spiced Traminer

Gewürztraminer as a word is made up of two parts – **Gewürz**, which means **spiced in German** and **Traminer**, which refers to a place in Northeast Italy known as **Tramin**. So the name actually means **A Spiced One from Traminer**•

A Touch of Royalty

Although Tramin as a word, finds a place in the name of this wine, however it is **not the birthplace of Gewürztraminer vines**. Its origin can be traced to Piedmont region in Northwest Italy. Back in history, a **Duke** called **Karl Fredrich** brought the vines of this grape from Piedmont and planted these in Tramin. The royalty status of the Duke helped Gewürztraminer to gain fast popularity in its new home.

That was back in time, however now Gewürztraminer is made in many wine producing countries. The one served that evening was from the **Pfalz wine region** in Southwest Germany.



Pfalz Wine Region in Southwest Germany

In Popular Culture

Gewürztraminer also figures on many instances in big and small screen movies / shows. Prominent amongst these is the movie called **Hannibal**. A scene in this movies depicts the protagonist Mr Lecter (known to be a wine connoisseur) **pairing his Gewürztraminer wine with sea urchin Sashimi**.

Perfect wine for Asian cuisine

The best thing about Gewürztraminer is that it is **friend of Pan Asian cuisine**. The slight sweetness in the wine balances out the spiciness of the oriental cuisines be it Indian, Malaysian or Indonesian etc.



Thai Mango Salad & Micro Farmed Baby Spinach

The Spice Route **Chef de Cuisine**, Chef Mustian, who's an **expat Chef from Indonesia** did a commendable job while pairing the dishes in this course with the Gewürztraminer. Personally I loved its pairing with the **Thai Mango Salad & Micro Farmed Baby Spinach**. There were others who chose the Yellow Fin Tuna & Avocado Tartar & Raw Sliced Yellow Tail.

Hot Appetizer Course : 19:59 Single Varietal Pinot Noir



This **Pinot Noir** from the **Languedoc- Roussillon** wine region in Southern France was the next wine in the Hot Appetizer Course of the wine dinner. **Pinot Noir** also translates as **Pine Black** which refers to the small grape berries growing in compact bunches which look like a Pine Cone.



Languedoc Roussillon in Southern France. Image : Wikipedia

This wine region enjoys the warm Mediterranean climate due to its closeness to the sea on its south. At the same time it is also subjected to the cold and strong **Mistral winds** which flow across the region from its Northwest, flowing down towards the sea. Such climatic phenomenon creates a condition which is considered beneficial to growing the grapes, thereby giving good quality wines.

Pinot Noir is known for its light and delicate flavours and has a balanced structure. I paired this with the **Flaky Duck Handbag & Peranakan Chicken Curry Puffs**.



Flaky Duck Handbag & Peranakan Chicken Curry Puffs

Guests also had an option to pair it with the dish called as **Banh Knot Appe & Oreo Tempeh Lettuce Cups**.

Main Courses : Rutini Malbec

The King of the Wines in the wine dinner was without doubt the Rutini Malbec from Uco Valley Wine Region in Argentina.



Rutini Malbec

Rutini Wine House was started by **Mr Filipe Rutini**, an Italian immigrant who arrived in Argentina in 1885 and established a Bodega (winery) in Maipu not far from Mendoza.



Rutini Wine House

The winery first started planting vineyards around 1825 . From that initial beginnings, it has now become a major wine house in the Uco Valley.

Malbec

Malbec is today the **flagship wine of Argentina**. But this was not always so. Way back in time, the story of Malbec started in Southwest France in the **region of Cahors** where it was used in making of a **wine also called as Cahors**. In addition Malbec (also known as Cot that time) was also used as a **blending grade in the Bordeaux wines**. Now in both these roles Malbec could not attain much prominence.

The reversal of fortune for Malbec happened when its vines found a way to Argentina. The dry high altitude region in Mendoza with a continental climate proved to be a perfect match for Malbec.



Rutini Malbec comes from the Uco Valley in Mendoza wine region of Argentina

So much so that the Argentinian vintners soon started producing exceptional Malbec wines. The popularity of Malbec surged so much that soon it came to be known as the **signature wine of Argentina**.

Coming back to the wine dinner, I savoured my Malbec with succulent **Gindara Miso Cod**. With a burst of exotic flavours on my palate, this pairing proved itself to be the proverbial match made in heaven.



Succulent Cod Fish paired wonderfully with Malbec

The elaborate food menu in this course also included the **Ginger Garlic Glazed Pork Ribs, Thai Green, Vegetable Curry and Charred Greens.**





In addition to the above mentioned exotic Asian dishes, the guests were also offered **South Indian Malabar Curry & Maamisam Salna, Nadan Kozhy Curry** and **Bak Mie Goreng**, all served with **Rice & Malabar Parantha**.

Dessert Course

The grand finale of this exotic culinary experience was with the dessert course which had **Coconut Mango Chia** and **Crème Brûlée Pandan** with **Asia Petits Choux Black Sesame**.



Coconut Mango Chia



Crème Brûlée PandanAsia Petits Choux Black Sesame

With so much of deliciousness on the offer, the evening proved to be **a veritable feast in itself**. It was certainly one of our memorable wine events. I leave you here with some pictures from the evening.









Till next time and next event! Cheers !!

Col Mukul Manku (Retd) / Founder Wineglitz India / President Delhi Wine Club.