



Grover Zampa Signet Tasting: How Different Wine Ageing Vessels Shape Wine Character

Description

By Mukul Manku

As wine enthusiasts, most of us are familiar with how grape varieties, climate and oak barrels shape the character of a wine. We may have had fewer opportunities however, to witness how the very same wine develops when matured in different ageing vessels. That is precisely what made Grover Zampa Vineyards recent **Signet tasting** such a fascinating experience.

Held at the **Captain's Cellar** at Hotel Taj Mahal in New Delhi, this unique tasting was a full house attended by wine enthusiasts and trade professionals.

A Sparkling Start

The evening commenced with servings of **Grover Zampa La Réserve Royale Brut**, which is one of the winery's flagship sparkling offerings. It is made using the traditional method (Méthode Traditionnelle) from 100% Chenin Blanc, with part of the base wine fermented in French oak barrels and then matured on its lees for over 30 months before disgorgement.



Grover Zampa La Réserve Royale Brut

Although this excellent sparkling wine was not part of the formal tasting flight, however it served its purpose beautifully as the welcome bubbly. It broke the proverbial ice, encouraged guests to mingle and relax, and set the perfect tone for the tasting session that followed.

The entire tasting session was led by **Manuela Lo Conte**, Wine Marketing professional at Grover Zampa Vineyards, who conducted the tasting in a professional and engaging manner.

A Distinctive Concept

The tasting offered an opportunity to compare two wines crafted from the same Shiraz varietal but matured separately in Amphorae and French oak vessels. It was a rare exercise that demonstrated how the choice of ageing vessel can influence texture, aromas, flavour development and overall expression. This was followed by tasting of **Spectrum**, Grover Zampa Vineyards flagship multi-varietal blend, providing a fitting finale to this exploration of vessel ageing. All wines were accompanied by small plates which complimented each wine very well, while also enabling the guests to appreciate the food pairing nuances of each wine.

Captain's Cellar at The Taj Mahal Delhi

Before I proceed with further nuances of this distinctive tasting, let me say something in ode of the venue – **Captain's Cellar at Taj Mahal**. Located in the very heart of New Delhi, this has quietly evolved into one of the city's finest spaces for intimate wine experiences.

Its warm, elegant setting and thoughtfully designed layout create the perfect environment for focused tastings, meaningful conversations and direct interactions, making it a favourite destination for wine

enthusiasts.

The Tasting

The tasting commenced with Manuela welcoming the guests and sharing the background to how and why this unique tasting was conceived. She explained the objective behind the exercise â?? to demonstrate how the choice of ageing vessel can influence the evolution and expression of the same wine.



Manuela Lo Conte

Before the wines were poured, she outlined the tasting sequence and encouraged participants to savour each sample carefully, paying close attention to differences in texture, aromatics, structure and overall balance. This introduction set the stage for an engaging and highly educational tasting experience.

Signet Amphora Shiraz

This was the first wine poured during the tasting session. This Amohora aged Shiraz immediately stood apart for its purity and freshness. Clay amphorae allow gentle oxygen exchange without contributing any oak flavours, enabling the fruit to remain vibrant while developing subtle savoury complexity.



Signet Shiraz (Amohora)

The wine displayed bright red and black fruit, floral notes and fine spices with a lively palate and elegant finish. It was perhaps the clearest expression of the vineyard itself.

Signet 2000 L French Oak Foudre

Next wine was also a Shiraz but aged in Large 2000 litre oak foudres, which influences the wine differently from traditional small barrels. Because the surface area of wood relative to the volume of wine is much lower, oak influence becomes more restrained while gradual oxygen exposure enhances structure.



Signet Shiraz Foudre 2000 Litre

This wine showed deeper concentration with darker fruit, subtle spice and refined tannins. Oak complemented rather than dominated the wine.

Signet Spectrum (Concrete)

The last wine during the tasting was *Signet Spectrum*, which is perhaps the most intriguing wine of the Signet Collection. It began as an experiment in which five grape varieties – *Shiraz*, *Cabernet Franc*, *Cabernet Sauvignon*, *Sangiovese* and *Muscat* – were planted together in the same vineyard block, harvested together, co-fermented and matured in a concrete egg vessel. Rather than showcasing a single variety, the wine expresses a true spectrum of aromas and flavours.

Concrete provides a neutral environment while maintaining a stable temperature throughout maturation. Its gentle micro oxygenation softens tannins without adding extra flavours.



Signet Spectrum (Concrete)

Spectrum appeared rounder and slightly richer, while retaining excellent freshness. The fruit profile remained precise, supported by a creamy texture and balanced acidity.

More Than a Wine Tasting

Beyond evaluating individual wines, the session served as an educational exploration of how winemaking choices influence style. Tasting these wines made it far easier to understand concepts such as oxygen transfer, vessel neutrality and oak integration.

It also underscored the spirit of innovation that is increasingly shaping the Indian wine industry, with wineries confidently experimenting with different winemaking techniques.

Winemaker's Approach

During the tasting, Manuela Lo Conte also shared insights into winemaker **Mathias Pellissard's** philosophy of winemaking for these wines. His approach is remarkably simple – after carefully designing every stage of the winemaking process, he steps back and allows the wine to evolve naturally, intervening only when absolutely necessary.

Such restraint reflects meticulous planning, technical expertise, and complete confidence in both the fruit and the process. The result is wines that express purity, balance, and a true sense of terroir rather than the hand of the winemaker.

A Milestone for Indian Wine

Grover Zampa Vineyards has long been recognised for pushing the boundaries of Indian winemaking. The Signet Collection reflects that spirit of innovation by inviting wine lovers to experience not just different wines, but different philosophies of maturation.

Author's Note

For those who attended, the tasting was a reminder that great wine is shaped not only in the vineyard but also by the many thoughtful decisions made during its journey to the bottle. It was an engaging and highly educational experience that demonstrated how subtle changes in the ageing vessel can produce remarkably different expressions of the same wine.

I hope you loved reading about this unique tasting experience. Till next time it's **Cheers** from my side.