

The Second Leg of a Marketing Journey ~ BTT in Boston, New York, and Baltimore

Jo Diaz

BOSTON HISTORICAL

The first Petite Sirah tasting was held at Clio Restaurant in the Eliot Hotel on Commonwealth Avenue, in Boston's historic and fashionable Back Bay neighborhood. Our elegant venue had a great turnout, as word had begun to spread that the Blue Tooth Tour was primarily being hosted by wine industry luminaries, and it was a "must do." In this room alone, there were (alphabetically) Jim Concannon, Louis M. Foppiano, Derek Holstein, Bob Swain, and Dan Teldeschi ... each pouring his own Petite(s). Other wineries were represented by their key people, including David Bruce, Mettler Wines, and Pedroncelli Winery. Some vintners brought more than one wine from different appellations, pre-releases, ports were being offered, and we had older vintage, library selections. Because this tour had so many legends on hand, it was attracting similar legends in other areas of the business. Wine writers, wine educators, sommeliers, wine industry decision makers, and consumers (who had found a way to the inside edge) were beginning to attend in greater numbers. The presentation of Petite Sirah - What It Is & What It Isn't - was finding a very receptive audience. This event was punctuated with luscious appetizers, with the primary focus being stuffed mushrooms, assorted artisanal cheeses, and a chocolate tidbit. Our host Beth Iannelli had dishes prepared that naturally complemented the different Petites (different as regards to terroir, clonal variances, winemaking techniques, etc.).

BOSTON HYSTERICAL

Really, what isn't historic about Boston, except for the Ted Williams Tunnel? There's something to be said for a New Englander going home. It felt great to start in Maine with my daughter Katie

and her family. But, there's not much to be said when 81 degrees in California turns itself around to 18 degrees in New England in a matter of hours. Ah, Boston in March as I remembered it! Back to the Chalet ("Shallot"). In a waterless motor home, we checked out of our hotels, facing the next leg of our journey (waterless... so pipes wouldn't freeze and burst). The cast of characters were mostly seasoned faces (the Concannons, Russ Livingston - our hero/driver/driving force - and Dan Teldeschi.) We said good-bye to Lyla, but gained Melanie Diaz, Derek Holstein, and his daughter Clair (college shopping). Our first run, Boston to NYC, had many happy people on the Chalet, and this was no doubt our saving grace... On Tuesday morning, after a quick rest from the night before and being filled with Starbucks coffee, we all boarded the motorhome. So many people with so much wine and so much luggage, we traveled down I-84 into New York City. This heavy load is no doubt what saved us! Just before we entered New York City, we approached an underpass tunnel that read, "11'7". The Chalet is a 12 foot high vehicle. We saw the sign about one second before entering the tunnel with absolutely no ability to NOT go forward. Holding our breath, we came out the other side having passed our first test... relieved and smiling!

NEW YORK CITY HISTORICAL

Held at 3 West 51st Street adjacent to the 5th Avenue Club, this venue's reading room offered an elegant, perfect night for welcoming guests. Our host Klaus W. Shoenebeck had delicious foods circulated during the event. Already in New York, Patty Bogle joined us to pour her wine. Being in this city is always a great excuse to catch a hot new show, or to



visit a deliciously exciting restaurant like Django. At Django, Jose Amonte (beverage manager for the restaurant) was more entertaining than any Broadway production, extending his extreme gracious hospitality.

NEW YORK CITY HYSTERICAL

As we approached Broadway and 51st Street, Cowboy Russ leaned out his window, exclaiming to a hotdog salesman, "Howdy, partner. Is this New York City?" The man answered, "Yeah, where ya from?" Cowboy said, "Texas! How much are them there hotdogs?" The light turned green, and off we went, realizing that we were solidly "back on the bus." No Willie Nelson yet, but we did come into town singing Broadway show tunes, "Oh what a beautiful morning!" Russ called the Manhattan Police Department, and paid advance metered tickets, so we could leave the bus facing Radio City Music Hall overnight.

BALTIMORE HISTORICAL

The Baltimore Zoo has an elegant, old fashioned mansion, where event are set in a natural, peaceful setting. "The Mansion" has a huge wraparound, closed-in porch for all season events, giving us the feeling of an outdoor setting without the bother of Mother Nature. As guests arrived, our hosting began. I was delighted to see two of my favorite area writers. Having one of them attend would have been the bomb; but, to have both of them was absolutely fabulous! Tom Marquardt and Patrick Darr have been a wine writing team for many years. They've also been huge Petite supporters for a very long time, and took the opportunity to drive in from Annapolis. Patrick told me, "This is great!" Visiting with each vintner, they took copious notes. At each venue, there was at least one writer who noted what a unique idea we had, taking vintners on the road, basing it from a motor home, and bringing so many luminaries (all at once) to a specific location. The road warrior vintners' foresight (lead by the Concannon team) and commitment to the varietal, was not going unnoticed. In Phoenix, Garry Greenberg drove from Tucson (over 100 miles). Shirley Nelson drove from Sapello, New Mexico to Santa Fe (80 miles). Darryl Beeson of Dallas was willing to drive 250 miles to Houston to attend that tasting, until he learned that we

were going to be in Dallas. Darryl told me that the opportunity to be in the same room with so many important wine industry people would have taken him a few days to do in California, and it would have meant much more travel for him. Each person, who's fortunate enough to be connected to such a romantic industry, realized the magnitude of what we were doing, and wasn't disappointed. Many writers quietly slipped by, seemingly unnoticed, but in reality we noticed and appreciated each and every person who attended, and the opportunity that each represented. Petite Sirah was taken to the streets, and we were well rewarded by having the few, the proud, and the passionate come to tell us their stories, too. We gathered names along the way. We plan to continue the connections made. What we mostly learned is that Petite Sirah has many fans, going on the road with so many committed vintners was a tremendous benefit to the variety, and connections became much stronger on every level. The Baltimore Zoo event reflected more of the same... passionate people about a passionate, heritage varietal, on both sides of the table.

BALTIMORE HYSTERICAL

The East Coast leg of our journey was clear sailing, from Boston to Miami. As we drove from one venue to the next, we were blessed with another 10 degrees of solar warmth. By the time we got to Baltimore, the day was now in the high 40s... a welcome relief from Boston's teens. This colonial city was the third consecutive town in as many days. We seemed to be either on the bus, at an event, or trying to get in a few hours of sleep before we were at it again, smiling and telling the Petite Sirah story. The bedroom of the motor home got pretty heavy use. Driving for five, six, or eight hours was pretty exhausting. Helen's refrain became, "Wake up, Jim (or Dan), we're at a rest stop." With the exception of Cowboy (with his ongoing cup of coffee), we each drifted off, either in a book, a nap, or watching the lush, East Coast landscape whiz by. Before each event, the camaraderie was building, as we got to all reunite after a day of travel. Quietly, things were being planned on behalf of Petite Sirah. Louis Foppiano and I shared how what we had begun together, the P.S. I Love You group, was flourishing. We also took the down time to talk about this year's



Third Annual Petite Sirah Noble Symposium at his winery. Jim Concannon and I reviewed each prior event: how we did, and how we will be better next year. Russ Livingston and I talked about coming down the Mississippi River next year, having the event on the Mississippi Delta Queen, and what it would take to make it happen. At each event, I tasted each vintner's wines, so I could begin to distinguish between each style. John Monnich's Silkwood Petite has a nose of candy apple. Larry Mettler's Petite reminded me of my grandmother's raspberry jam. Patty Bogle's wine reminded me of chocolate covered cherries. Concannon's has an elegant fruit experience that easily complements food. David Bruce's Petite looks like ruby slippers. Foppiano's rocks with bold, intense flavors. Teldeschi's is a beautiful progression from the Zin that's made him famous. Guenoc's Port was always an exciting finish. Parducci's Pet has a silky elegance. Pedroncelli's has rich, developed fruit flavor, and Rosenblum's Petite is characteristically lush. These events were teaching us all about the variety, and we each took time to gather as much information as we could about the variety. It proved a delightful learning experience for all of us - on or off the bus!

Tomorrow is the final edition of BTT, with Charlotte, Orlando, and Miami's visits.

