

Tasting Notes

Keepers of the Spirit Inauguration Dinner.
December 2017, Palais Princier de Monaco.

written by Mark Kaufman

I was honoured by the mandate to develop the concept of the dinner.

My main idea was to combine the tasting of the whisky with the one of the initial wine of the (finishing) barrel in order to better follow the roots of the taste.

Hence, the choice of the whisky for dinner has been very natural.

Both Glenmorangie and Glenrothes are intensively developing their range in the direction of “non - traditional” wine barrels and both, thanks to their “family” relations to Moët-Hennessy of LVMH and Berry Bros & Rudd (the oldest UK wine & spirits merchant) accordingly, have very intense connections to the wine world.

Glenrothes, on top introduced for the real whisky and wine lovers the special whisky “Wine Merchant’s cask” collection with direct link between wine and whisky.

Below are the notes for 3 most interesting wine/whisky pairings at the dinner.

1. The Glenrothes, The Wine Merchant’s Cask, Lustau #1, 55.2% pairing with Don Nuno Dry Oloroso, Solera Familiar , Emilio Lustau.

Bodega Emilio Lustau been established in 1896 and now is probably the finest global sherry producer in the world.

Fortified up to 20% alcohol (which effectively makes impossible the natural bacteria development) Don Nuno benefits rustic gold color from the oxygen exchange under fermentation process. It has “signature” Lustau flavors of chocolate, walnuts and chestnuts. Probably would better work with meat or game, other than with smoked salmon as at our dinner ... but still been fine and anyway been chosen as the preamble to the whisky.

This particular whisky was distilled in 1992 and been matured until 2014 in Hogshead casks with further introduction to ex-Oloroso Lustau sherry American oak cask.

As the result signature Glenrothes’s citrus toffee bouquet and lemon treacle palate have very elegant additions of chocolate and chestnut tones... Almost perfect whisky... however I always struggle to understand the reason for Glenrothes to include in the Wine Merchant’s Cask Collection such a high alcohol whisky. In my personal view the wine cask tones would be much more visible, should the strength be reduced to 40-45% from actual 55.2%, which makes them a bit too traditional and probably a bit less elegant, than they could be. But still ... this is extremely high quality and rare whisky, one could buy at just 200 GBP / bottle.

2. Glenmorangie Nectar d’Or (Sauterne cask finishing) and 1998 Chateau Yquem.

Despite the fact that Chateau Yquem and Glenmorangie are owned by the same LVMH group, I found no proof that there were Yquem casks used for the Nectar d’Or ... but should we need to taste Sauterne ... why not to drink the best one?

1998 vintage is definitely progressively reaching the peak of its development... however probably needs another 15 years for it to fully mature.

The taste is not as sweet as another very top vintages of Yquem, but I love its very balanced minerals in combination with apricots and white chocolate tones.

Nectar D'Or has the classic Glenmorangie aromas and tones of citrus and vanilla, but aromas of dates and tastes of ginger, dry apricots as well as white chocolate instead of "standard" Glenmorangie's dark one should definitely be the impact of Sauterne cask .

3. Glenmorangie Companta 2014 (Burgundy cask finishing).

This time we perfectly know which wine cask been used - the one from Clos de Tart Grand Cru.

Ironically Companta means "friendship" in keltic language which is probably not exactly the spirit of relationships between LVMH-Glenmorangie's owner Bernard Arnault and current owner of Clos de Tart Francois Pinault, who acquired this estate in 2017 ... so I doubt we would have the new release of Companta soon.

Nevertheless, the classic Glenmorangie dark chocolate and vanilla aromas and tastes are importantly developed by classic Clos de Tart red berries and forest tones in aroma and spicy cherries in the taste.

Highly recommend to buy, should one manage to find.