

Symposium for 150 Japanese Winemakers and Sommeliers Mount Fuji, Japan

December 2004
Robert Parker

One of the objectives on my trip to Japan was to visit the viticultural regions of that country and taste the first modern-styled Koshu, a historic Japanese varietal that has some *Vinifera* DNA in it. Denis Dubourdieu, the famed oenologist from the University of Bordeaux, worked with the Grace Winery to make the 2004, a non-chaptalized, 100% steel fermented offering that demonstrates tremendous potential for this varietal in Japan as well as important commercial implications for its sale elsewhere in the world. It possesses a character not dissimilar from an Albarino or Gewürztraminer. 2004 is the first modern vintage as Koshu has traditionally been made sweet and with skin contact, not a good thing since this is one white varietal that has tannin, much like Gewürztraminer.

I conducted a symposium of wines that were either totally unoaked, or were aged in neutral oak because Koshu, if it is going to be commercially successful internationally, cannot be aged in wood. The following wines were selected for this tasting, which, based on the numerous questions asked, was a complete success. I wanted to include a great diversity of unoaked wines, from the **Trimbach Gewürztraminer**, to a modern Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand, to an older-styled Semillon from Australia's Hunter Valley, to a crisp Riesling from Australia's Clare Valley. We then moved to neutral-oaked wines that were slightly richer and more concentrated. The stars of the tasting included the **Baumard 1999 Savennières Clos du Papillon**, **Château Reynon 2003 Vieilles Vignes** (by the way, a great value), the **Trimbach Riesling Clos Ste. Hune** (an extraordinary expression of *terroir*), and **Pascal Cotat's 2003 Sancerre Les Monts Damnes** (an amazingly, concentrated, opulent Sancerre that requires consumption over the near term).

VINTAGE	WINE	RATING
Totally Unoaked Wines		
2003	Annie's Lane Riesling	89
1997	Tyrrell's Vat 1 Semillon	87
2003	Lusco Albarino	89
2004	Kaituna Valley Sauvignon Blanc	90
1998	Trimbach Gewürztraminer Cuvée des Séigneurs de Ribeaupierre	?
Wines with Old Oak Only		
1999	Domaine des Baumard Savennières Clos du Papillon	91
2003	Château Reynon Vieilles Vignes	89
2003	Pascal Cotat Sancerre Les Monts Damnes	94
2002	Weingut Emmerick Knoll Unterloiben Riesling Ried Loibenberg Smaragd	90
1999	Domaine Trimbach Riesling Clos Ste. Hune	93
2000	Domaine Zind Humbrecht Tokay	90
2004	Koshu Grace Vineyard	(87-88)