



Okanagan red wine starting to develop 'signatures'



CBCnews.ca CBC – Wed, 2 Dec, 2015

On The Coast's Master of Wine Barbara Philip says that while the Okanagan Valley is still in a mode of experimentation when it comes to planting grape varieties and making different styles of wine, a few are emerging as "signatures" for their respective regions.

She says the north and south parts of the Okanagan Valley are establishing their own identities, and they present an interesting possibility for the future of the Valley's wine industry.

"There's a big distinction between the north and the south, especially when it comes to ripening red grape varieties," she told On The Coast host Stephen Quinn. "The north [has] Pinot Noir that's coming out of Kelowna to Okanagan Falls, and to a lesser extent, Gamay, but medium-bodied, cherry-scented reds with fine tannins."

"And from the south, where of course they grow lots of stuff, from Grenache, to Cabernet Sauvignon to Merlot, I'm finding the most interesting wines and the most consistently good wines are the Syrahs."

Here are four of Philip's picks for great Okanagan reds.

Blue Mountain Gamay Noir. Okanagan Valley. 2014. \$27.00

"Blue Mountain established itself as one of the very first boutique wineries focusing on wines made from estate fruit and in a more finessed style. The medium body of the wines reflects their position in Okanagan Falls, just north of McIntyre Bluff. The Gamay would be perfect with an appetizer board made up of charcuterie and local cheeses."

Spierhead Pinot Noir. Okanagan Valley. 2014. \$23.00

"Based near Kelowna in the north of the Okanagan, Spierhead has decided to focus on Pinot Noir for their red wines. This is their juiciest offering with medium body, red fruits and floral notes. Serve it with teriyaki pork chops."

Burrowing Owl 'Athene'. Okanagan Valley. 2011. \$32.99

"Cabernet Sauvignon's firm structure and herbal notes are joined by the luscious dark fruits of Syrah in this blend. This was one of the stars in a tasting we did of BC wines for Italian producers last month. Try it with mushroom risotto."

Nichol Vineyard Syrah. Okanagan Valley. 2012. \$40.00

"Nichol Vineyard was the first BC producer to believe in Syrah and now many professionals are agreeing that the variety makes some of the most interesting wines in the province. Blue and black fruits are supported by ripe tannins."

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