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## SAN FRANCISCO WINE TRADING COMPANY

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May 19, 2014 · by akonecki · in TASTE · Leave a comment

I squeeze into a narrow space at the San Francisco Wine Trading Company’s stand-up bar and within moments, an empty wine glass is set in front of me. A printout listing the day’s tasting—wines of the Languedoc—promptly follows. To my left, a laughing, boisterous couple barely gives each new pour more than a passing twirl and sniff before resuming their chatter. The couple on my right though, two casually dressed middle-aged men, is engaged in active critique.

“This one finishes a bit abruptly. Not bad though for the price.”

“Hmm... it has a similar blend of grapes—Syrah, Grenache, Carignane—as the last one, but this one is definitely more forceful.”

My eavesdropping is interrupted when the gentleman who has been bouncing between clusters of tasters, deftly switching out bottles as he goes, approaches me with the first selection.

“We’ve got a nice one to start things off. A clean, unfussy rosé that tastes great and goes with everything.” He smiles and makes a generous pour as he simultaneously greets a customer by name and shuffles a group over to make room for him at the bar.

I sip, willing myself to detect the watermelon and wet grass listed in the tasting profile. Tasty and refreshing though it is, I don’t (my palate is decidedly undeveloped—probably due to cheap wine that generally constitutes my weeknight imbibing), so I instead turn my focus back to my neighbors, currently a taste or two ahead and sipping a wine the color of dark sweet cherries.

“This one’s a Kermit Lynch” says one of the men as he leans against the bar and swirls his glass.

Not even pretending I wasn’t listening, I turn to them and inquire about the significance of Kermit Lynch. Not only did this fellow merit their mention, but I noticed his name enjoying a place of prominence on the bottle label as well—a 2010 Corbières Reserve la Demoiselle from Domaine de Fontsaïnte.

Neither seems to mind my intrusion into their discussion, and they take turns telling me about the wine importer’s legacy in bringing attention to smaller, artisan wine producers from Italy and France. At the corner of the bar, a short, thin woman in bright layers pauses from taking notes on her tasting sheet to chime in. Soon, our little group is off and running discussing the housing crisis, the impossible-to-get reservations and must-visit restaurants, and the latest tech bubble that continues to stretch ever tenuously over the city. I progress from the round and juicy 2012 La Bastide from Coupe Roses, to the bold, grab-your-tongue-and-pin-it-down 2010 Fitou “Cadette” from Domaine Les Mille Vignes, but am too engrossed in conversation to do the proper swirl, slurp, and spit of a proper tasting. Indeed, not a drop of those generous pours makes it to the bucket, and by time I reach the end, I not only leave the store with a new list of restaurants to try (if I can crack the OpenTable fortress that is), but a bottle of Kermit Lynch-approved 2010 Corbières to keep the party going once I get home.

\*

Just a block up from the rumbling tracks where the MUNI L line curves down Taraval Street through the residential Sunset district, the San Francisco Wine Trading Company has been in business since 1976, and has a devoted clientele to prove it. Weekly tastings every Saturday 2 – 5:30pm and Sunday 2 – 5pm find the store buzzing with chatter as customers clink glasses, nibble cheese and charcuterie (there’s a small but well-stocked cooler conveniently on-site), and taste their way through an incredible array of wines from around the world.

SFWTC is located at 250 Taraval Street (at Funston), and is open Monday through Saturday, 10am – 6:30pm, and Sunday, 11am – 6pm. The staff is incredibly friendly and helpful (I once told them I needed a wine that was “classy, yet interesting enough for adventurous art-types”—yes, that is the criteria I gave them, poor souls—and they managed to nail it, with a smile, and within budget) so stop in for a visit if you can. If not though, they also have a very thorough [website](#) where you can place orders for shipment.

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