

THE MINERALITY FACTOR – by Dani Licata

Before this wine seminar, I thought that minerality meant a certain flavor in wine that tastes like minerals. I said to myself, how interesting to experience the sweet flavors of wine, its acidity and its alcohol, in tandem with something described as mineral. What is that like? I imagined crisp, clean notes found in white wine when I pictured minerality and I was excited to learn more from this wine seminar. Now, I would describe minerality as an element within the wine that evokes an essence of its home land, through flavor and/or aroma of wet stone.

Minerality occurs when wine grapes are grown in environments such as gravel, loam, and volcanic ash, which cause the roots to have to worm their way through adversity to get what they need in order to grow. This is actually good for the roots because it forces them to struggle and as a result, they are much stronger for the effort and much more likely to survive harsh conditions in the future. And as the Master Sommelier Andrea Robinson mentioned, the roots love to dig through these types of rock just to get a sip of water and some nutrients. The result of this effort that we can experience is the flavors, scents, and textures that are left in the wine. Efforts at the root to find water prompt the roots to burrow through the soil, incorporating and absorbing their surroundings, which we can literally taste because it all leads to the creation of a mineral element in the experience and complex layers for us to enjoy.

In reality, I have only just burrowed through a surface layer myself, in regard to the process as there is much more to the mineral tastes, scents and textures than I have mentioned. I learned that because minerality is not varietal-specific, in fact we can experience it in a multitude of ways. It can be a delicate expression like the Silverado Geo, a cabernet sauvignon whose minerality is impacted greatly by the preservation of native land surrounding the vineyard and by its growers paying special attention the pick time of the grapes. They go to these great lengths in order to maintain the acidic tension needed so that it can truly show its minerality. The result is subtle, almost herbal aromatic notes that harken back to the compressed volcanic ash of Mt. George where these grapes were grown.

Minerality can also be vibrant and intense like the Murrieta's Well, a Wente Sauvignon Blanc. Philip Wente describes its minerality as an element of its bouquet saying, "It's undeniable that there's that aromatics, you just feel like you are smelling the wet stones in the soil as you're enjoying the wine." Master Sommelier Andrea Robinson refers to the aroma as smelling like the wet, white gravel of her grandmothers driveway after it rained.

To me, minerality now means much more than before, including a new way to experience something which I already love, enjoying a glass of wine.