



2005 Zind-Humbrecht

Tuesday, June 16, 2009

Reception Wine: 6:00 PM, Formal Tasting: 6:20 PM

[Toronto Board of Trade](#) (4th Floor), 1st Cdn Place,
(Entrance off Adelaide St. between Bay & York)

Members' Fee: \$50

Guests/Non-Members Fee: \$60

A sampling of the best Alsace has to offer!

The Toronto Vintner's Club is pleased to present a **rare tasting of exclusive Alsatian wines** from one of the oldest producers in the region. The Humbrecht family has long winemaking traditions, going back to the Thirty Years War (1620). The Domaine Zind-Humbrecht was created in 1959 with the union of family owned properties of Zenon Humbrecht and of Emile Zind. It is known as one of, if not *the* best producers in the region.

The region itself, only 120 miles long and 30 miles wide, incorporates both the French and German influences. Nestled between the Vosges mountains and the rest of France to the west and the Rhine and Germany to the east, Alsace is really a mini-kingdom unto itself. Although it has changed hands four times over the last few hundred years, it remains under French control today, showing a French style of winemaking with many German aspects thus producing a true blend of the best each has to offer resulting in what can only be called Alsatian.

The region produces only 7 varietals; Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, Sylvaner, Vendange Tardive and Selection de Grains Nobles. We are pleased to present 3 of these varietals from various vineyards owned by Zind-Humbrecht including some Grand Cru.

These biodynamic wines are a wonderful expression of this producer's reputation for exacting vineyard and winery practices, with high density planting, alcoholic fermentation in oak and avoiding malolactic fermentation. Their belief in the biodynamic principles, a radical extension of organic techniques, has them organising vineyard tasks according to the phases of the moon and burying cow horns to improve the vitality of the soil.

The 2005 vintage is not just another new vintage but a **great one**, equal and perhaps superior to the much lauded 2001 vintage. According to Humbrecht himself, "had we had the challenging October of 2004 in 2005 as well," he says, "most '04s would be better than the '05s." But as things turned out – October 2005 having been the second warmest after 2001 in the last decade – Humbrecht believes that in the long run these two collections will prove well-matched in overall quality.

We are thrilled to be able to offer you comparisons of Zind-Humbrecht's vineyards for their Rieslings and Pinot Gris as well as a very special Gewurztraminer. Please see the list of wines and notes overleaf.

Register/buy tickets online at <http://www.onlineregistrations.ca/tvcevent6/> You must register online and then can pay by credit card or by cheque. The cheque-payment option will be disabled at midnight June 9 after which only credit card sales will be accepted until June 14 or when the event sells out. Cheques must be received by no later than June 12. You will be sent an email confirmation once you have completed your registration. If you tried to register but did not receive a confirmation, please contact torontovintners@onlineregistrations.ca. Processing may take up to a minute or two so be patient. Be careful not to register twice.

TORONTO VINTNERS CLUB INC.
www.torontovintners.org
2005 Zind-Humbrecht Wines and Notes

Clos Hauserer Riesling \$35.00/bottle

The 2005 Riesling Clos Hauserer was another of Humbrecht's reluctant fermentors, from very ripe and rot-tinged grapes, but thanks to high acidity 22 grams of residual sugar only subtly make their presence known. Vanilla, licorice, sage, quince and peach preserves, orange zest, and brown spices are the key notes in this rich yet almost aggressively penetrating Riesling, but there is also an undeniably chalky undertone to its blazingly citric as well as honeyed and bitter-sweetly herbal finish. The tactile sense of citrus zest and herbal pungency really extends the finish, yet without turning downright bitter. Humbrecht considers his 2005 Riesling bottlings from Clos Windsbuhl, Brand and Rangen to be not only superior but possessed of greater aging potential than this Clos Hauserer. That is not how I perceive this unusually strong and concentrated Clos Hauserer, which I wouldn't be surprised to see benefit from 12-15 years in bottle.

Clos Saint Urbain Pinot Gris \$85.00/bottle

The 2005 Pinot Gris Rangen Clos Saint Urbain is less influenced by botrytis than most of the estate's 2005 Pinot Gris, and the wine finished at 15.3% alcohol and 28 grams residual sugar. Peat, humus, grapefruit zest, and smoldering leaves as well as peach preserves inform this wine's pungent nose. But for all of its sheer girth, power, and almost hyper-typical Rangen pungency, this displays remarkable clarity and freshness. That – along with the wine's sheer density – keep its complex, profound, honeyed finish from becoming ponderous and keep heat to a minimum. Humbrecht feels that this can be a twenty year wine, and I am inclined to concur.

Clos Saint Urbain Riesling \$85.00/bottle

The 2005 Riesling Rangen Clos Saint Urban – as seems in recent years to be the grapes' wont in this site – fermented completely dry, yet there is but a modest 13.3% alcohol. Peach, wood smoke and intriguingly musky, meaty notes on the nose are followed by a dry but juicy rather than austere palate, with faintly bitter citrus rind, wood smoke, salt, and iodine character leading to decidedly pungent, penetrating, clear, slightly tart, and invigorating finish. This is an athletically spare Riesling with a striking balance, best not revisited for several years and likely to justify more than a decade in bottle.

Clos Saint Urbain Gewurztraminer \$85.00/bottle

Given the wine's enormous ripeness and significant botrytis, the wonder is not that the Humbrechts considered labeling their 2005 Gewurztraminer Rangen Clos Saint-Urban as "Vendange Tardive," but that they decided against it. At 14.7% alcohol and 47 grams of residual sugar, this is one big wine, whatever else you call it. But, as in all of the most exciting instances of vintage 2005 here, high acidity and extract keep it from being either alcoholically top-heavy or overbearingly sweet. Aromas of salted, air-dried beef, oriental spices, litchi, celery root, rose petal and quince jelly lead to a correspondingly complex palate impression of powerful richness, oily texture, and a striking, forceful finish in which toasted almond and vanilla join the more typical cast of Gewurztraminer flavor characteristics adumbrated in the nose. This will be fascinating to follow over at least a 10-12 year period, although future finesse or elegance would contradict its nature.

Clos Windsbuhl Riesling \$69.00/bottle

With the 2005 Riesling Clos Windsbuhl we have not only very ripe flavors but also a hint of noble rot. Yet, neither the alcohol (13.75%) nor residual sugar (11 grams) is in itself noticeable. Old vines and 2005 vintage character – plus, Humbrecht insists, his biodynamic farming regimen – have resulted in uncanny balance. Lemon zest, honey, and musky, bittersweet narcissus and iris in the nose lead to a dense, overtly chalky and concentrated as well as pungently zest palate, wreathed in persistently bitter-sweet flowers. Crabapple, grapefruit, and brown spices inform a pungent, slightly tart, chalky, and quite severely penetrating finish. This is impressive but urgently in need of a few years in bottle before properly assessing its long-term potential, which is almost certainly to be considerable.

Heimbourg Pinot Gris \$35.00/bottle

Like this vintage's Rotenberg, the 2005 Pinot Gris Heimbourg was rendered from pathetically small yields (110 cases total were produced) of botrytized fruit after (60 case of) an S.G.N. had been selected out. (These 170 cases – plus a small portion consigned to the generic Pinot Gris – were all that could be harvested from a total of four acres!) Having finished with 25 grams residual sugar, this tastes significantly drier than the Rotenberg, an impression reinforced because here the 14.9% alcohol has a drying effect in the finish (although there is little outright heat). Persimmon and grapefruit zest a romas presage an expansive palate with dried fruit character, and pucker-inducing pungency, full and dense, but also both creamy in texture and shot through with lemony acidity. The finish of this enormously-concentrated wine is sweet-sour today, but it is a wine to lay away for at least ten or a dozen years.

Rotenberg Pinot Gris \$35.00/bottle

The 2005 Pinot Gris Rotenberg is fog- and botrytis-prone even in years when other sites tend to retain healthy fruit. In this instance, even after an S.G.N. was culled, the remaining fruit ("so little of it, you wondered whether it was worth harvesting," comments Humbrecht) presented a challenge to the yeasts, and at 14.9% alcohol and 34 grams per liter residual sugar, they abandoned fermentation. Peach, pineapple and persimmon preserves drenched in honey and baking spices inform every aspect of this dense, powerful, hugely rich – indeed, just plain huge wine. But there is also a mysterious meatiness as well as an inexplicably fresh juicy pit fruit and citrus streak that keeps this from becoming heavy. It finishes with remarkable spiciness and penetration and freedom from heat. One can confidently predict fifteen or more years of fascinating development.

Brand Riesling \$29.00/bottle

Humbrecht picked (in both senses of the word) his 2005 Riesling Brand to be Vendange Tardive, and even as it neared its first birthday and was still fermenting, he confidently ordered labels for a wine that in the end was not to be. In unprecedented extra-innings which he says "left me speechless," the yeasts rallied and took Humbrecht's "Vendange Tardive" all the way down to seven grams of residual sugar (and up to 15.5% alcohol), delivering the dry finished wine for Christmas! "In retrospect," he says, "I have no regrets" about not having intervened to stop the fermentation, and indeed this displays exceptional balance and expressivity. An almost Rangen-like smoky note along with yellow plum, peach, almond extract and positively heady musky florality in the nose set the stage for a voluminous, rich, nutty, plummy, spicy palate, with fine acidity lending a surprising degree of vivacity, although the saline, pit-fruited, floral finish here also evinces considerable heat. I would bear in mind the potential for tinder when considering how much of this strikingly concentrated wine to cellar.