

HERE IS OREGON WINERY SPOTLIGHT

Possessed Wines preaches patience, magic and local oak

Michael Alberty

For The Oregonian/OregonLive

I didn't know about Carmine Campione's 30-year wine career, his relatively new Possessed Wines brand or his wine tour business until recently. Now I suggest you benefit from my oversight by tracking down his wines. Or hit him up for a road trip.

Possessed Wines is best known for: its biodynamic practices in all phases of wine production. According to the Biodynamic Association, "biodynamics is a holistic, ecological, and ethical approach to farming, gardening, food and nutrition" that is based on the work of philosopher and scientist Rudolph Steiner. A cartoon snapshot of biodynamics is "turbocharged organic farming."

"I make clean wines without adding any 'funky monkey' stuff, and I don't want to use fruit from vineyards where they use things like glyphosate," Campione said. Glyphosate is the active ingredient in products like Roundup.

Key insight: Campione ages his wines in barrel for extended periods before releasing them to the public. "Something magic happens to a wine between 14-16 months in barrel, but many winemakers, for various reasons, stop at 10 months," Campione said.

Campione said that he also realized American consumers typically drank a bottle of wine within 24 hours of purchase. When someone opens a bottle of one of his wines, he hopes they will have a better, more balanced drinking experience than



Carmine Campione of Possessed Wines is a Willamette Valley winemaking veteran.

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they would get from a younger wine.

"I also like pushing some wines in the barrel just to see what they can do in terms of long-term aging," Campione said.

One example of this philosophy is a pinot noir that Campione made in 2015. The wine is in bottle now, but not before spending 54 months in barrel, albeit French oak was used this time. This delightfully mature pinot noir tastes like a red raspberry tart crossed with vanilla crème brûlée.

Innovation: Campione uses barrels made with Oregon white oak, *Quercus garryana*, to age his wines. Some barrels were purchased from Oregon Barrel Works in McMinnville,

others Campione renders himself.

"I've had people say in my presence that Oregon oak isn't right for these wines, but I'm a big fan who thinks it's totally right," Campione said. Part of the attraction for Campione is local sourcing, which he tries to do whenever possible.

The other attraction is the vanilla quality imparted to his wines. According to Campione, while the vanillin imparted by American oak barrels from other states can be too aggressive for Oregon wines, "I think the vanillin of the Oregon oak is delicious."

"Must try" current release: 2016 Possessed Wines Eola-Amity Hills Syrah (\$39 - 12.3% ABV). I was expecting vanilla perfume. Instead, I got an elegant, balanced, smooth-textured syrah with aromas and flavors of blackcap raspberries, violets, blood orange citrus and a touch of dark chocolate. OK, perhaps there was a bit of vanilla in there somewhere.

History: Soon after leaving the U.S. Army, Campione visited his sister in the summer of 1989. The sister was married to a cherry orchardist who managed an Oregon farm with vineyards. While helping plant new pinot noir vines in the vineyard, Campione fell in love that summer with the Oregon wine industry.

Campione's first Oregon wine jobs were with Redhawk and Evesham Wood wineries in Salem. At Redhawk, Campione made a name for himself by crafting an inexpensive pinot noir called "Grateful Red" that earned praise and gaudy point scores from various wine publications, including Rob-

ert Parker's Wine Advocate.

Over the ensuing years, Campione has worn many hats while working for wineries on the West Coast, from Merryvale and Harlan Estate Winery in California to Cherry Hill Winery and Domaine Serene in Oregon.

In 2016 Campione launched Possessed Wines, where he makes from 500 to 2,000 cases annually. The winery's name was chosen because Campione thinks making wine involves a bit of magic. To capture that feeling visually, Campione commissioned artist Patrice Federspiel to create his label.

What we don't know: "I think I am the first accredited biodynamic viticulturist and winemaker in the United States," Campione said. Campione began applying the principles of biodynamic farming in 1989. Then, Campione attended The Evergreen State College from 1992-1994 and 1996-1997 to earn degrees related to biodynamic viticulture, winemaking and cellar work.

Biggest success so far: "Having my Oregon Winemaker Tours named the top wine tour in the Pacific Northwest by LUXLife Magazine and, according to Corporate LiveWire, the best tour anywhere," Campione said.

Where to buy: While Possessed Wines is exclusively direct-to-consumer for the moment, some of their wines are served at the Multnomah Athletic Club.

By appointment only, 18 El Greco St., Lake Oswego, possessedwine.com or 503-991-9767.

malberty0@gmail.com