

Spirits World

By Alexandra Crow and Manos Angelakis.

Grappa & Pisco Update.

Grappa, and its South American equivalent Pisco, are becoming very fashionable.

What used to be a poor man's drink, keeping the farmers and vintners warm in the winter, is now a high quality/high priced spirit. Much is created from intact grape clusters or single varietal grapes, as opposed to mixed-grape "vinacce" – the pomace left after the grape-juice has been pressed off to make wine – and is now aged in oak barrels or barriques for a number of years instead of being a clear liquid bottled right after distillation; high quality grappa and pisco have come to their own. Colored a golden to a deep golden hue and highly aromatic, the aged distillates are starting to vie cognac and single malt whiskey for the attentions of the cognoscenti.

In the past few months, we were fortunate enough to taste the exquisite product of two particular brands.



From Italy's Canelli hills, bottled in a range of ages from 10 to 30 years, comes **Bocchino's Grappa della Cantina Privata**. This is the result of an idea conceived by Lazaritto Bocchino after WWII, whose company is still considered as one of the most important distillers in Piedmont. Currently, Antonella and Carlo Bocchino, the fourth generation of the family, supervise the operations of the distillery that still uses single pot alembics to create both single varietal and blended long aged grappa. Their best grappa is created from a blend of 65% Nebbiolo and 35% Moscato d' Asti, both from exceptional vintages, aged in French 225-liter oak barriques. One year before bottling, the grappa is transferred from the barriques to a large oak cask to perfectly balance the nose and palate.

The age range is: 10 years, 15 years, 16 years, 22 years, 29 years and 30 years. The 10-year old comes packaged in an individual wooden box or a carton of six bottles. A special wooden pedestal displays a bottle each from each age.

From our tasting notes:

Grappa della Cantina Privata, aged in barriques for 10 years. 375ml. bottle, 45° proof. The color is medium gold with amber hues. Nose: tobacco, cloves, and boiled chestnuts with notes of chamomile and honey. The palate is very smooth, dry and herbal, with notes of fennel, chamomile and cloves. MSRP \$110

Grappa della Cantina Privata, aged in barriques for 30 years. 375ml. bottle, 45° proof. The color is intense golden with amber highlights. The nose is rich, with tropical spices of cinnamon and ginger; notes of raisins, chamomile, vanilla and acacia. The palate is satiny smooth with hazelnuts and toasted almonds, chamomile, honey and dried stone fruit. An outstanding product. MSRP is over \$400.

Both these grappas should be treated with the same respect given to a top-of-the-line cognac or a single malt.



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