

WHY Wine

## Comforting Thai wines in difficult times

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As I write this article, the sky of Bangkok is clearing. The dark cloud of stagnating black smoke has gone, finally. Rubber tyres, cinemas, telephone booths, ATMs, shopping malls, an apartment building - all consumed. The curfew will be lifted, the skytrain and metro will run again, and we shall in time forget what happened.

The ATM will spit money again and we shall continue to say that corruption is OK as long as there is something for me in the deal. And the Thai people, no matter the colour of their shirts, will probably still allow some people to manipulate them.

As you can guess, there have not been many wine opportunities this past week, but among the few wines I was able to taste was a rose with zero degrees of sugar made by GranMonte "hand in hand with wine lovers from winescale. com" for the aid organisation of that name.

Called Zrose (pronounced 'zeroes'), it has a new label and a big Z to indicate that the wine was made for the Winescale charity. I'm not sure exactly what the charitable aspect is. Maybe allowing a group of people to drink good wine. Why not, since this is a peaceful activity.

With an alcohol volume of 11 percent, it reminds me of what I used to drink long time ago when I was hitchhiking in southern France and when local rose, often private production and never bottled, was cheaper than mineral water. This wine will go very well with all kinds of spicy food.

GranMonte Pater Familias and owner Visooth believes he should produce more to be sold as for charity in Thailand. "After all we went through, we should be allowed to drink a bit, forget for a moment what happened, and be merry," he says. Not a bad idea.

Another wine that landed on my table in between hours of curfew was a 2009 Monsoon Valley Muscat from the Hua Hin Hills Vineyard of Siam Winery. It is a fortified wine, which I believe I mentioned in a column a few months ago.

With its 15 percent per volume alcoholic strength, it serves a different purpose to the Zrose; it is good as an aperitif and no less good after a meal. The few guests present asked for more, but it comes in 37.5-centilitre bottles and there was no more to be had.

Oh no, here they go again! A new case of pinot noir fraud! The criminal court of the city of Narbonne is bringing in the chairman and director of a co-op called Coursan Armissan. The co-op recently distributed 10,000 hectolitres of forged pinot noir, and not just pinot noir.

You name it, we have it: merlot, syrah, cabernet sauvignon and sauvignon blanc - in reality some 135,000 hectolitres of cheap stuff. All it took was for the blessed noble names of better grapes to appear on the label and the customers were lining up.

In this case the wine was not sent to the USA or any other exotic country but directly to the French consumer. To change wine into wine is hardly a miracle, but at a time when French wines have to battle with wines from around the world for the attention of amateurs, you can bet that the judges will show little indulgence toward the cheating co-op.

Maybe we shall have better news next week. Let's keep hoping, as it will be better for our health.

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