

Legendary glassmaker creates unique Oregon pinot noir glass

by Bend Weekly News Sources

McMinnville, Oregon -- After two years of research, comparative tastings, and evaluation of prototype glasses, Oregon winemakers and Georg Riedel have arrived at a new shape of wine glass designed especially for Oregon Pinot noir. What began as a wishful conversation between IPNC Executive Director Amy Wesselman and Georg Riedel has now been given form, literally, and the first shipment of the new tulip-shaped glass is currently on its way from Kufstein, Austria.

Winemakers, wine writers, and sommeliers played a key role in the development of the glass through a series of workshops. During each workshop, participants compared an array of different glasses, from an unpretentious bowl-shaped glass to the magnificent, hand-blown Riedel Crystal Grand Cru Burgundy glass. After tasting and smelling from each glass, Mr. Riedel asked each participant to eliminate one glass from the set. Votes were counted, another wine was poured, and the process was repeated.

At the first of these workshops, the finalists unsurprisingly were Riedel Crystal's Vinum Burgundy glass, the Vinum Extreme Pinot Noir Glass, and the Grand Cru Burgundy glass. The glasses Riedel had designed for Pinot Noir all outperformed the other styles. But tasters were left with a conundrum. The Vinum Extreme glass did a great job of focusing the beautiful, fruity aromas of Oregon Pinot. But on the palate, the Grand Cru Burgundy glass was the clear winner, showing off the velvety texture of Oregon Pinot noir and softening the edges of younger wines. "Is it possible to design a glass that accentuates aromas, like the Vinum Extreme, but also delivers on the palate, like the Grand Cru Burgundy?" Ms. Wesselman tentatively asked Mr. Riedel. Mr. Riedel replied that he would need to develop additional prototypes to answer that question.

Ms. Wesselman shipped a selection of some of Oregon's best Pinot noirs to Austria for Mr. Riedel to work with in his own facility. Six months later, an answer was delivered in the form of a large-bowled, tulip-shaped glass that flares out gently at the top. This glass was presented along with 11 others in a workshop similar to the first. Tasters agreed that the slightly narrower opening of this glass seemed to focus aromas. Its flared lip reproduced the mouth-feel tasters had experienced with the Grand Cru Burgundy glass. Every single workshop participant agreed that the new glass offered Oregon Pinot noir lovers the best of both worlds.

"This is a significant development in the advancement of Oregon as a premier Pinot growing region," said Tony Rynders, winemaker at Domaine Serene. "It's all about having the right vehicle to show off our wines, and the group of winemakers and wine professionals involved in developing this glass unanimously agreed that it made an enormous difference."

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