

A.I. Selections

Beauty through balance in a sommelier's portfolio of small-batch wines

By Karen Day in Food-Drink on 23 March 2012



Acid Inc. may suggest an illicit obsession, but for sommelier David Weitzenhoffer and his partner Laura Supper, the name (professionally called A.I. Selections) relays their passion for wines higher in acidity—a key component for an exceptionally well-paired meal. "You can feel acidity in wine usually as that sort of prickling sensation toward the front of your tongue," Weitzenhoffer explains. "To me acidity does several things with food but the most important is that it gets its claws into the flavors that are already on your palate and marries the flavors in the wine with that of the food. It also has an important role

in cutting richness, and balancing out high acid dishes like crudo, tomatoes, vinaigrettes, etc."

Wanting to learn even more about the fine art of such balance from beginning to end, Weitzenhoffer left his post at Lidia Bastianich's renowned restaurant Felidia and moved to northwest Italy, where he worked with artisanal producers around the vineyards of Piedmonte. Four years ago he put this knowledge to serious use and began importing these small-batch wines to restaurants in New York, San Francisco and LA.

With just about 40 producers in their portfolio—most of which are organic or biodynamic—Weitzenhoffer and Supper concentrate on finding wine that is a reflection of the people making it, working off the ethos, "Good wine; good people". They seek out conscientious farmers who know their terroir and distinctly cultivate their vines, leading to wines that have a clear focus and excellent finish. "Some of these artisan producers are making wines with more soul and character, great age-ability, and most importantly wines that are more food appropriate, all the while creating a wine that comes from a specific place—a wine that couldn't come from any other place than their little piece of earth," says Weitzenhoffer. [...]

[...] For white wine, Weitzenhoffer says he is a "sucker for Chablis", which is made from Chardonnay grapes, but "due to the sea shells in the soils has a great minerality, and chalky character that makes it ideal for all sorts of early courses—trout, various crudo, pea soup, oysters!!!" He recommends Chablis from the mother-and-daughter team at Château De Béru, an organic farm situated on the clay and limestone slopes of the Chablis Grand Cru foothills.

