

Re-discovering Idaho Wines: Cinder Tempranillo 2012, Snake River Valley, Idaho

By Hoke Harden, December 10, 2015



The Snake River Valley of Idaho continues to impress with the quality of its red wines. Yet another example of my re-discovery of Idaho wines was the totally satisfying Cinder Wines Tempranillo 2012, Snake River Valley.

Winemaker Melanie Krause has done a superb job with this variety, creating a fresh, lively, enticing red-berry-fruit delight. You won't have to worry about what to do with leftover wine, not with this bottle. There won't be any leftover wine, so plan to share it with a friend and compete for that last glass.

It's that good. Want another opinion? Here it is.

Tempranillo, that classic Spanish workhorse grape, the base of Rioja and many other areas, has been officially 'discovered' in the U.S. West Coast wine regions, and creeping well into the inland portions of Eastern Washington and Idaho's Snake River as well.

Some of those first expressions were inconsistent and often clumsy as the winemakers found their focus on this new variety, but one of the admirable qualities of this grape is that it accommodates a winemaker's desires with great flexibility: It can be a charming little quaffer or a blockbuster for the cellar.

The Cinder Tempranillo 2012 is a bit closer to the charmer than the blockbuster, yet clearly shows the finesse and depth possible with Tempranillo. My own personal standard for New World Tempranillo has always been that of Abacela, the winery in the Umpqua region of Oregon that produces a lighter "Fiesta" version along with their Estate Bottling, and has always hit the spot with the variety. Cinder now sits alongside the Abacela. Tempranillo this good, and from two far different areas, presages a tremendous potential, if wine drinkers are savvy enough to discover and demand this level of excellence.

Cinder Tempranillo 2012 is, in many ways, similar to a mid-range Tuscan Sangiovese or Chianti, with that same vital sensory instant appeal, that sheer likability intrinsic to the variety, leaning more on lively acidity (without shrieking) than daunting tannins for its structure, never masking its essential red-fruit nature---lavish with bright cherry tempered with the tartness of raspberry, with black fruit lurking slyly underneath with the promise of greater depths, teasing with black olive and mushroom earthiness.

The only thing to give cause for hesitation is the going price of \$30. But, honestly, that's the exigencies of being in an outlying region, focusing on small batch/high quality, and having to pay the bills. Making well-crafted wine is not an inexpensive endeavor these days. Buy the Cinder Tempranillo 2012, and you won't regret the cost once you taste it.

