

## Torres and Antinori - the little guys triumph

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No, not that Miguel Torres and Piero Antinori are little guys themselves. They are two of the leading lights of the international wine diaspora. But they were at a recent blind tasting in Germany, full of heavyweight collectors, and each saw one of their better-priced wines triumph over much more expensive bottles.

Most dramatic were the Antinori results. About 50 of us were served the following wines blind: Col Solare 1997, Antinori's Meritage blend made from Washington state fruit at Château Ste Michelle; the mainly Sangiovese Tignanello 1990; the first vintage of Antinori's Bolgheri Bordeaux blend Guado al Tasso 1990; and the saleroom favourite Solaia 1990, Antinori's mainly Cabernet made in Chianti.

My favourite was the last wine, Solaia 1990, which was just as distinguished, deep and pure as I remembered it. For me, it was only a fraction ahead, however, of the first wine, which seemed remarkably similar but lacked just a little bit of texture, even though it again was pure, silky and vigorous. Piero even voted for this wine as his favourite and admitted afterwards he took it initially for the Solaia 1990. In fact it was Col Solare 1997, the rank outsider from the Columbia Valley, made from Cabernet and Merlot with a bit of Syrah. It was also the favourite of fastidious taster Stuart Pigott of Berlin.

It is instructive to compare prices for these wines. You can pick up a bottle of Col Solare 1997 for under £40 a bottle in the US (even if according to WineSearcher some *enotecas* in Italy may ask closer to £60 for it). Solaia 1990, on the other hand, costs between £110 and £270 a bottle - or £1650 a dozen from Fine & Rare of London W10.

The general favourite, on the other hand, was the Guado al Tasso 1990, although I found it a smudgier, less distinct wine with less obvious nobility. Mind you, it was made from vines that at that stage were just four years old, so in the light of that it did extremely well. The Tignanello 1990, incidentally, was tired, but exceptionally so, according to Piero Antinori who insists that other bottles tasted recently have been much livelier.

Our blind tasting of Miguel Torres reds confirmed the superiority of his blend of Catalan grape varieties grown in Conca de Barbera, Grans Muralles 1997 (about £45). It was obviously a much finer wine than either the Mas la Plana 1995 (£19) Catalan Cabernet or Manso de Velasco 1998 (£15) Chilean Cabernet. But I thought the Grans Muralles a far more interesting wine than Torres top-of-the-range Catalan Bordeaux blend Reserva Real 1997, well made as it is, which sells for around £70.

According to Torres' importer, UK stockists of this wine include Corney & Barrow's wine shop in London W11, James Handford of the Holland Park Wine Company in London W11, La Vigneronne of London SW7, the Waterloo Wine Company of London SE1, Wimbledon Wines of London SW19, the Wine Shop of Liphook in Hampshire, Noel Young of Trumpington outside Cambridge, Penistone Court Wine Cellars of South Yorkshire and R S Wines of Avonleigh, but the best price is likely to be the £37.59 per bottle charged by D Byrne of Clitheroe, Lancashire. See [WineSearcher](#) for stockists and local prices worldwide.