Gallo Moscato triumphs

1 Aug 2012 by Jancis Robinson

According to this report on Harpers website for the wine trade, 'E&J Gallo's Barefoot label has fooled MWs who think "big equals bad" after winning three trophies and five 5-star awards in the blindly judged competition What Food, What Wine?'. Gallo Barefoot Moscato did particularly well, apparently, in this two-day judging at Woodlands Park Hotel near Leatherhead outside London, winning the trophy as best match for both apple crumble and strawberries and cream. See the full results.

What Food, What Wine? is billed as the UK's first major food and wine matching competition. It is held under the auspices of husband and wife Masters of Wine Peter Richards and Susie Barrie with arch food and wine matcher Fiona Beckett as one of many well-qualified judges (pictured). You can read her general comments on the competition and what she has to say about matching wine to curry.

A considerable proportion of the wines tasted were over £10 a bottle. After discovering that the Gallo Moscato at £5 had done so well, chairman of judges Peter gamely commented, 'In the wine lover's mind there is a default setting "big equals bad", which is why it's always good to challenge your preconceptions once in a while'. See Susie and Peter's overall observations.

I read about the results of this competition this morning just after I received my monthly report from wine-searcher.com, which lists how many clicks there have been on each link from this site to this brilliant search engine. (Disclosure: JancisRobinson.com receives a tiny referral fee for each click.) I was very surprised to see quite how few clicks there had been on the *Find this wine* link with this 29 June wine of the week, Gallo Moscato - just five in June and 12 in July. This was far, far fewer than the number of clicks I would normally expect for a wine of the week, and a tiny fraction of the number of clicks for the relatively exotic, and expensive, likes of Bergström, Old Stones Chardonnay from Oregon and Alpha, Axia Greek red, for instance.

It may be simply that many people, especially in the US, know how widely distributed this brand is and don't need to look up a stockist. It may simply be that many people regard all sweet wines as beyond the pale. But it may well be partly the 'big equals bad' phenomenon at work.

Earlier this week I was reminded of one of the least savoury items in Gallo's portfolio. On Twitter I noticed that, almost incredibly, I now have almost 150,000 followers and described this as one of life's great mysteries. One of many very kind tweets in response was from Jim Kennedy (@jimrocka), who said he appreciated all that I wrote 'except for the Gallo promotion'. I replied saying I genuinely had been very impressed by the Gallo Moscato sold by Sainsbury's (though I don't know how it relates to the Barefoot version tested in the food and wine matching competition). He came back explaining, 'I'm politically opposed to the makers of Thunderbird.' Ah yes, that terrible high alcohol hooch for down and outs. If I ever propose Thunderbird as a wine of the week, you really are allowed to shoot me.