

VINO

Do left-handed winemakers make better wine?

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Mollydooker might sound like a woman's name, but it's Australian slang for lefthanded. It's also the name of Sparky Marquis' Down Under wine company, so named because he and his wife, Sarah, are mollydookers. I recently spent some time talking with Mr. Marquis as he prepared for a wine dinner in Miami, giving each bottle his customary Mollydooker Shake.

Q: What is the Mollydooker Shake?

A: We use nitrogen to stabilize the wine, so the Mollydooker Shake gets the nitrogen out. Open the bottle, pour a little out into the glass, close the bottle, turn it upside down and then shake it. After that you will see a line of creamy froth on the top of the wine — that's the nitrogen that is released. Now you're all set to enjoy the wine.

Q: Your company recently made international headlines when a forklift dropped a shipment of Velvet Glove. What does it mean to you to lose such an in-demand wine?

A: Well, the biggest thing is to lose 462 cases, 6,000 bottles. It was one-third our total production, and possibly our best vintage. The container was being loaded, and the forklift picked it up from the top. One of the forks sheared, and it

fell to the dock, smashing everything. We were insured and all, but the wine cannot be replaced. The forklift operator told me he wished he had dropped the next container. I told him I wouldn't wish this on anyone, but why did he say that? It was a container of beach sand, he replied.

Q: Do left-handed winemakers make better wines?

A: It's all about passion and excitement. But I will say that left-handers are more artistic. Sarah designed all of our labels, and each one depicts a mollydooker. Two Left Feet is Sarah and me dancing; well, I'm stepping on her toes. The Boxer fights using two left gloves, and so forth.

Q: When did you decide you wanted to be a winemaker?

A: I grew up working in my parents' restaurant, but Sparky was going to be a photographer. Then I discovered I liked wine a lot. I went back to college to learn winemaking, and it has



Sparky Marquis demonstrates the Mollydooker Shake with a bottle of Velvet Glove.

become my only passion. I started on this journey 16 years ago and have worked with several different winemakers.

Q: How do you manage to create a balanced wine with such a high alcohol content and rich flavors?

A: Vineyard canopy management was my college thesis. Healthy vines create the best fruit, and the flavor of the wine is created in the vineyard. Our Marquis Vineyard Water-

ing Programme focuses on creating the most intense fruit flavors possible. We measure everything about the vine and the fruit twice a week in each vineyard, and regulate the water going into the vineyard to produce the highest fruit weight possible.

Q: What's next?

A: We're releasing a new sparkling shiraz, made in the champagne method, and couldn't quite figure out what to call it. So we had a contest to name it and received 6,000 entries. The winning name is Miss Molly — suggested

by a fan in North Carolina.

Q: Any last words for our readers?

A: Absolutely! Drink it now. We'll make you another bottle next year!

Some of my favorites from the wine dinner and tasting (all 2010 vintage):

■ Two Left Feet (\$25): Like all of the reds, the color is a rich dark crimson. It has deep flavors of berries, plums and currants, with vanilla and spice and a touch of oak, a fine tannin structure and long finish.

■ The Boxer (\$25): It has intense blackberry, fig and fresh berries in the aroma and flavor, with hints of spice and oak. Amazing complexity and a long lingering finish.

■ Enchanted Path (\$90): Dark purple in color, this shiraz-cabernet blend is a powerful wine with big fruit weight and an amazingly long finish. Vibrant fruit flavors of berries, blackberry and plum, mixed with anise and spices in layers on the palate.

■ Carnival of Love (\$90): Violet in color, this lush shiraz has aromas of dark plum, licorice and berries, followed on the palate with sweet fruit and hints of pepper and spice, and a long finish.

■ Velvet Glove (\$185): Mollydooker's high-end wine, this shiraz is dark in color and has a spicy berry nose and flavors of fresh raspberry, black cherry, plum and blueberries. Soft in the mouth but bursting with flavors that are elegant and voluptuous, it has a long, balanced tannins finish. ■



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