

# **Vomdes Barrel Seminar February 2007**

## **A barrel, what does it really do?**

- **Provide a container for your wine.**
- **Provides a slow introduction of oxygen into the wine. A gasket.**
- **Color stabilization.**
- **Introduces (removes) interesting and not interesting flavor components into and from the wine.**

## **Shapes, sizes and their respective advantages. 225 l, 228 l, 500 l**

- **Burgundy traditions 228 l.**
- **Bordeaux traditions 225 l.**
- **Puncheons 500l. (and larger)**

## **All barrels are not created equal**

- **Bordeaux. Toasts are in general not as hot or heavy.**
- **Burgundy. Toasts are hotter and faster (in some cases).**
- **If I order Medium + from cooper A, it will not be the same as one from cooper B.**

## **All coopers are not created equal either**

- **Wood aging (seasoning) reducing the moisture content from about 42% to between 8 and 18%.**
- **Toasting methods & traditions.**
- **Forest selection (grain quality)**

## **Understanding French vs. American oak**

- **French oak is a different species of wood (Quercus. Sessiliflora or Robar )**
- **American oak is Quercus Alba.**
- **American oak contains about 10% raw wood tannin, French on the other hand has about 7%.**
- **Grain structure differs greatly.**

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## **Tree anatomy 101**

- **Think of an oak tree as bundle of tube or straws running vertically with groups of fibers called RAYS running in a radial pattern from the outside in. this arrangement gives oak strength as the fibers and tubes overlap.**
- **Oak is also “ring porous” meaning it has different types and sizes of tubes laid down at different times of the year.**
- **Darker rings denote spring growth and light rings the summer growth. The spring growth is more rapid than the summer growth.**

## **Tyloses are the difference**

- **Tyloses is the material that connects and plugs the tubes and vessels. Allowing this wood to be more watertight than others.**
- **French oak has less tyloses therefore is less dense. (more porous)**
- **American oak has more tyloses and is much more dense.**
- **The more tyloses the harder the wood. American wood can be milled whereas French wood must be split then milled.**

## **Grain**

- **Trees that grow in the center of a stand of trees grow straight and tall.**
- **Trees at the edge of a forest grow wide and fat and fast.**
- **Most trees are 100 years old.**

## **Barrel prices and why**

- **Waste. There is more waste with French oak than with American. Grain structure being a major factor.**
- **Wood seasoning**
- **Importation**

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## **The Art of Toasting**

- **Bending (forming the shape)**
- **Different profiles in loose terms**
  - **Low to Medium toasts brings more spices and natural aromas of vanillas.**
  - **Medium to Medium+ toasting results in more coconut and roasted flavors and aromas.**
  - **Higher toast levels impart a deeper smoke feeling and burnt caramel notes.**

## **Heat vs. time**

- **As heat is applied wood sugars leach out and caramelize.**
- **Collections of compound become active and others decay.**
- **Penetration into the stave is a factor of time vs. grain.**

## **Head toasting**

- **When to and when not to.**
- **Methods of head toasting**
  - **Open fire.**
  - **Electric toaster oven.**
  - **Torching.**
  - **Direct heat contact (non-flame)**

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## **What do you smell and taste?**

- **Vanilla**
- **Pencil shavings**
- **Coffee**
- **Roasted nuts**
- **Cedar**
- **Coconuts**
- **Veggies (Green peppers)**
- **Raw wood (fresh cut wood)**
- **Whisky**
- **Colas**
- **Rail road ties (very resinous)**
- **Fruity essences**
- **Dry cooking spices (East Indian)**
- **Tea**

