

Journalists vs. Bloggers

The Lines are Getting Blurred

BY AMANDA MAYNARD

There has been a history of hostility between print wine writers and the relatively new world of wine bloggers. Well-established personalities such as Robert Parker have attacked bloggers in the past, using the best tools they know: words.

Since speaking out at odds with the blogger community, they have both adjusted their attitudes and now accept the group and welcome them to the fold. They (and others) have realized that bloggers are now a part of the wine realm, which was made further apparent by the third annual Wine Bloggers' Conference.

Held in Walla Walla, WA, from June 25th–June 27th, the conference brought together long-time and brand new bloggers from all across the country (and some even further) to talk about wine, blogging and the role of bloggers in a changing wine world.

Of the bloggers in attendance, quite a few are impressive, making the line between wine writing and wine blogging all the more blurry. A prominent figure, widely known through the blogosphere, is *The Palate Press*, run by Meg Maker (editor) and David Honig (publisher). It is the only free wine magazine fully online. They don't offer print editions but it is much more like a magazine than any other web-only wine blog; bloggers of all experience levels submit their story ideas to the site and they publish a large number of articles each week. They have created a community of writers in a central location, producing the best content possible for a free online magazine.

Another outlet that is forging ahead with great content is CataVino.

net, a Spain-based wine blog run by a husband and wife team. Ryan and Gabriella Opaz are originally from the States but packed up everything and headed to Spain in 2005. They started up Cata Vino and it is now a rich source for information pertaining to Spanish wines and culture.

Along with the many wine bloggers, print-based wine writers joined in. Steve Heimoff, editor of *Wine Enthusiast*, gave the keynote to welcome everyone to the conference. He talked about writing and blogging and the rivalry that has, in the past, been heated. He's joined the blogging ranks and straddles the line of blogging and professional wine writing himself.

Lettie Teague of *The Wall Street Journal* also joined for another talk towards the end of the conference. The convergence of those who write for a living and those who write for hobby was something to notice and appreciate, as this wasn't always the case.

With very professional and well spoken people on both sides of wine writing, it's becoming harder and harder to find the difference between wine bloggers and wine writers.

The question posed at the conference was whether there is a difference between them. Are bloggers inherently different than those who write for print publications? This article is published both in print and in our blog format. On the side, I write my own wine blog. Am I now somehow a different writer because this has been published?

To comment on this column or to learn more about how Beverage Media can help with a website for your store visit BevSites.com, or contact Ian Griffith at 617-864-1677. Follow us on twitter at twitter.com/bevsites.