

## BEHIND THE BOTTLE

# COREY CREEK 2007 GEWÜRZTRAMINER

*\$30 per bottle, 500 cases produced.*

BY AMY ZAVATTO

“Slightly dark; sweet and bubbly.” “Rosy, tingly acidity, very varietal.” “Like Belgian white ale.” “Like peach/pineapple juice.” “Slight tingle on the tongue...”

It was these words that Kelly Urbanik, 27-year-old assistant winemaker to Kip Bedell at Corey Creek Vineyards in Cutchogue, loved to read everyday during the fermentation of their 2007 gewürztraminer—a grape that certainly inspires a heightened sensory experience and the powerful descriptors to go with it. “There were two interns in charge of monitoring the whites, and they would write the funniest tasting notes because they were so excited,” she says. “When I think of our harvests, I think of the people who helped make the wine. It brings back good memories.”

We often talk about sense memory when we talk about wine. Aroma, flavor, how its color and clarity appeared to our eyes. For a winemaker, that sense memory is about more than just what is in a bottle; it’s an entire season of his or her life. The grapes of wrath, anxiety, anticipation, joy, exhaustion, pride, love.

“One of the cool things about working with wine is you only have harvest once a year, so it’s a very memorable thing. You remember certain things about it and you can totally relate them to the wine. The ‘06 will always be the year it was kind of rainy; it was a challenge. And ‘07 will be the year that we were swamped with fruit coming in and everyone was excited because it was such good quality.”

This past season at Corey Creek, Urbanik oversaw the making of the gewürz, and the interns who helped monitor its fermentation process. It was a blend of different lots from both the Corey Creek and Bedell vineyards; each has roughly two acres planted to the variety. “It’s actually kind of an early varietal,” Urbanik says. “Our gewürz came in before the chardonnay.” And while Urbanik admits to gewürz’s general easy going nature, it’s not a hands-off proposition by any means, noting that close monitoring of the grape’s acidity is vital. “It’ll get ripe. It’ll get ripe. And then you reach a point where the acid just falls out of the fruit, so you really want to get it when it’s ripe but it still has acid naturally. But this year we had great fruit. The growing season was perfect. There was not a lot of rain, and when it did rain it was always at the right time. There wasn’t a lot of disease pressure during the growing season or harvest time, so we didn’t see a lot of rot in the vineyards. All the fruit came in really ripe with high yields.”

What this meant for the 2007 gewürz was a great expression of gewürz-ness. Take a whiff and you’ll get the spiciness right away. You get pears spiked with ginger, and, after a minute or two, a concentrated, tropical note, like dried pineapples, and a lingering gentle

moment of summer honeysuckle. On the palate, it’s white pepper, honey, but good acidity to balance out the racy fruit and alcohol (13.7 percent this year, which Urbanik notes is a slightly higher percentage than last year’s gewürz, which was around 12.8 percent, due to the incredible ripeness of the fruit).

The grape’s inconsistent yields and penchant to rot in rainy years means that it’s not widely grown on the East End. Which is a shame since it’s so aromatic in good years that several Long Island whites blend in a touch of gewürztraminer as a strong, beautiful accent. Palmer, Martha Clara and Lenz also make gewürztraminers with Corey Creek and Lenz making the driest.

“We’re not trying to make sweet gewürz,” Urbanik explains. “Ours is more in the French style. It’s an awesome varietal because it’s very expressive, and there are so many aromatics. In the mouth it has so much texture. There’s an oiliness on the palate and it has lots of flavor and a broadness to it. It’s a wine that has a lot of natural character. When you compare it to something like chardonnay—chard you can do whatever you want with; you can manipulate it. Gewürz has a personality of its own. I really like working with it. It smells so good when it’s fermenting. It has all these floral aromas—rose petal, honey. It smells really fruity, this year especially. The blend turned out really nice and we’re pretty happy with it.”

Coming from Healdsburg, California, in Napa, Urbanik doesn’t take this good season for granted. “Everyone in California is like, ‘Oh, okay, awesome grape season again!’” she laughs, knowing that the whim of Northeastern weather can, at times, be nothing to smile about. “Here, Kip [Bedell] remembers all the variations [in weather and fruit] during every season. But that’s the cool thing about wine. It tells a story.” ☺

