



Alpha Omega Era 2013 – 95pts.

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“Where else have you been on your trip to Napa?” the man inquired as he poured me a taste of Sauvignon Blanc at 9 o’clock in the morning.

“Quite a few places,” I replied. “Reverie, Tedeschi, Alpha Omega – ”

“Alpha Omega?” the man cut me off. “Did you meet the Swiss Machine?”

The reference was clearly to Jean Hoefliger, the winemaker and GM at Alpha Omega winery, and indeed I had met him a few days prior. Though I understand that the nickname is intended to be complimentary, and while Jean Hoefliger is certainly Swiss, I would suggest that he is anything but mechanical. Rather, he is the very essence of humanity: charismatic and humorous, considerate, intelligent, and occasionally self-deprecating. Though he does his job with great precision, it is done with an artistry that could never be accomplished by a mere machine, Swiss or otherwise.



It’s an important thing to me never to let wine become the centerpiece of an experience; that may be why I enjoy Jean so very much. Over the course of our conversation, which included more than half a dozen people and as many wines, we didn’t talk much about what we were drinking. The beautiful wines paired very nicely with our dialogue, as they would with a good meal, but we didn’t let them steal the show. The humanity around the table remained the focal point at all times, and it’s my opinion that only in such a way can wine be truly at its best.

All that being said, however, when presented with a glass of the 2013 Era, though I tried to remain fully focused on the conversation and the company, both of which were excellent, I admittedly got a bit distracted for a moment. At first, I jotted simply “wow” in my notebook, followed by a few brief tasting notes. Later on, I did a little research. The blend of 96% Cabernet Sauvignon and 4% Cabernet Franc was sourced almost entirely from the infamous Beckstoffer vineyards, including To Kalon, and spent 22 months in the barrel. The result is magical. Deep purple hues and a complex nose of raspberry, blackberry, cocoa and licorice lead into a well-structured body of numerous dark fruits that gets slightly jammy before evolving into an extended, dry finish. Simply put, it’s one of the most extraordinary wines I’ve ever had.

After conversation and wine, we went to dinner, where I came to appreciate Jean Hoefliger still further as a complex person whose passion for wine is exceeded only by his love for other people. Both Jean and his wines are complex, sophisticated, and wonderful. This makes sense, given his belief that the personality of the winemaker comes through in the wines they make, a statement that clearly rings true at Alpha Omega.

I have every intention of doing more writing about AO, Jean, and his amazing wines, though for the time being, see if you can locate this one. It’s one of the best Napa Cabs I’ve had (and that’s saying something). 95 points on my scale, and highly recommended.

Mark

PS: Once you have successfully procured a bottle of Era, under no circumstances should you consider drinking it alone. Again, it’s best paired with people and conversation.