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Interview with Peter Bell, Winemaker at Fox Run Vineyards

NYWGF: When was the moment you fell in love with wine/wine industry?

PB: As with many wine people, there wasn't a single epiphanic moment. But I came across a diary entry recently from 1975 (I was a prolific diarist as a teenager, before I realized I had nothing of interest to say; but looking back is a hoot). I was in Cambridge, England, and happened on a tasting of German Rieslings held by the Cambridge University Wine Club. I furiously wrote down the names of all the wines (half a pen's worth of ink, since they were German) along with some very rudimentary tasting notes. The guy who was running the event asked me which wine I liked best, and when I told him, he said, "Well you must have very good taste then." Some years later, I got serious about expanding my wine knowledge, and basically found it impossible to stop.

NYWGF: What's your best experience/event since you've been part of the industry?

PB: The answer to that would depend on what part of my adult life I was reminiscing about at the time. I've been very lucky to spend time all over the world with wine people. Standing in a dusty shed in Rutherglen, Australia, tasting 95-year-old fortified Muscat from a cask with the winemaker...walking from barrel to barrel in Burgundy tasting multiple expressions of Romanee Conti...downing bottles of unlabeled Bordeaux at the Chateau after picking grapes there for 15 days straight...smelling an aged Champagne and being reminded of the scent of the best imaginable lover. That's a start.

NYWGF: What's the one wine you can't live without?

PB: If Finger Lakes Riesling were to disappear, I would be a very unhappy individual. It's been my reason for being for going on 30 years, and it's the wine I came here to get good at, and I never tire of it. Second: Fino Sherry. It is the only wine I actually dream about, and that has been the case since I got the point of Sherry in the late 1980s.

NYWGF: What do you think is going to be the next big wine trend?

PB: Well, I hope the sun sets on the non-interventionist/natural/etc. wine trend, because too many of them taste like crap, and eventually people will wake up to that fact. Winemaking is, by definition, *fundamentally, centrally, exuberantly*, the product of intelligent human intervention.

So what do I see? A series of 'The Next Big Things'. It used to be massively oaked, buttery Chardonnays, and then we had domestic Viognier for a year or two, and then Moscato. No offense to anyone, but wine drinkers can do the trendoid thing with the best of them. A few products have had incredible staying power: White Zin, Pinot Grigio, what have you. I don't know. I suppose the thing that impresses me most is the eagerness of the youngest wine-drinking demographic to embrace any wine, as long as it tastes good.

NYWGF: What would your "words of wisdom" be to someone who wants to have fun with wine on purchasing/consumption?

PB: Go visit a few local winemakers, and say to them, "Teach me something." Then heed their advice.