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COMING WINE EVENTS

Harvest Stompede

September 12-13, 2015

Hunt for the Reds of October

October 23-25, 2015

Toast the Season

November 7-8 & 14-15, 2015

Holiday Sale

December 5-6 & 12-13, 2015



Leelanau Peninsula
WINE TRAIL

www.lpwines.com

ON THE JOB

MATTHEW CITRIGLIA, MS

By Annette Gallagher Weisman

If you've seen the documentary *Somm*, you can appreciate how difficult it is to pass the fourth and final examination given by the Court of Master Sommeliers (CMS). It's only a slight exaggeration to say that anyone who passes that final exam should have his or her nose insured.

"Master Sommelier" (MS) is a title, not a job, so it isn't necessarily someone in a restaurant who creates a wine list and wears a silver *tastevin* (pronounced "taht-van"), or tasting cup, around his or her neck. In fact, the MS distinction is one of the few internationally recognized credentials for individuals in the beverage sales and service fields.

Matthew Citriglia became a member of the Court of Master Sommeliers in 2002; it's a prestigious, non-profit organization founded in England in 1969 whose focus is on hospitality and the service of all alcoholic beverages. At this writing, he is one of just 229 Master Sommeliers worldwide, 32 of whom are women.

Growing up in Mentor, Citriglia got an early start in the beverage business by stocking the shelves of his father's small store with wine, beer and soda at age 14. By the time he reached 17, he had read his first book about wine – Alex Lichine's *Guide to the Wines and Vineyards of France*. "I found it fascinating to read and then find all these celebrated wines on the shelf of my dad's store," he says. By 22 he had opened his own wine shop and later gained more knowledge and experience by working in both restaurants and wholesale.

Currently, Citriglia is director of education for Vintage Wine Distributors based in Columbus, as well as president of the WineMentor, Ltd. and serves on the Board of Directors for the Court of Master Sommeliers. For CMS he has many functions including helping to create and implement the new "Certified Sommelier" exam as well as overseeing the development and launch of a new deductive tasting workshop. One of the most rewarding responsibilities he has for CMS, he says, is to mentor candidates going through the MS program, which requires in-depth study of alcoholic beverages, deductive tasting to evaluate and identify a wine varietal, and knowing the service and business aspects of hospitality.



Photo by Scott Cunningham

To prepare for the exams, Citriglia says, "You need to be a self-starter, not be afraid to fail, stay up later, get up earlier, sacrifice some fun and get a little lucky. It's old-fashioned hard work."

A day in the life of Citriglia is hard to typify as he travels in the US constantly, and overseas a couple of times a year. "I usually put 35,000 miles a year on my car and another 50,000 in the air." Whether he is judging a young sommelier competition, mentoring students about to take their final CMS exam, hosting a wine dinner at a five-star restaurant, or presiding over a two-day introductory wine course or deductive tasting workshop, Citriglia is one busy man.

At home, you won't find him sitting in front of the television. He doesn't own one. Instead, he is a registered yoga teacher and practices a wide range of yoga styles. He also enjoys snowboarding and "any intense activity that raises the heart rate and makes you feel alive."

Asked to speak and lecture often, Citriglia recently gave a talk about Italian varietals at Enoteca Emilia restaurant in Cincinnati, in which he said Nebbiolo and Brunello are some of the world's most undervalued wines. "You can buy a case or more of Barolo or Brunello," he says, "for what it will cost you for a single bottle of First Growth Bordeaux or Grand Cru Burgundy."

Citriglia calls Prosecco his version of beer. "Sparkling wine is wine and should be consumed as such. The fact that you opened your eyes this morning to live another day is the perfect reason to celebrate and end the day with a bottle of sparkling wine."

The road to becoming a Master Sommelier is hard, but the process taught Citriglia one thing, "Excellence or mastery can never be achieved, but we can master the pursuit of excellence, which never ends." 🍷