



O P I M I A N NEWS

What is Member Value? | A Rose by Any Other Name | Master's Corner Revisited

**UP CLOSE
AND PERSONAL
WITH AXIAL
VINOS**





FRANK IANNI, CEO

Frank joined Opimian as CEO on September 1st, 2015 after a nationwide search. His vision and leadership have been a hallmark over a 30 +

year career successfully leading multi-national, midsize and smaller organizations in Canada, the US, Europe and Asia to new heights. Frank is the strategic driving force and architect behind the recent rejuvenation and member-centric strategies of our great wine club, working in harmony and conjunction with his dedicated management team and support staff at Opimian. He is an expert regarding national and international business development and sustainable strategic growth, has a lovely wife of more than 30 years, two beautiful daughters and a grandson.



JANE MASTERS MW

Jane joined Opimian in 2010. She tastes, selects and writes about all the wines featured in Opimian's Cellar Offerings.

Based between France and

London, UK, Jane personally knows the winemakers and visits every region offered. She passed the Master of Wine exams in 1997 and is now Chairman of the Institute of Masters of Wine.



CARL BIRD

Carl has been a fixture at Opimian for over 15 years. He started out as a member, then took over the Northwest Territories (well, Opimian's chapter

there) as Area Representative. In 2015, he moved to Montreal - his hometown - and joined the team at the head office as Area Representative Liaison and Opimian Wine Concierge. He answers members' questions in Answers UnCorked.



REFER A FRIEND AND RECEIVE A \$100 COUPON



You know someone who is looking to cultivate their curiosity for the world of wine and would be interested in joining Opimian? Well, we want to hear about them!

Simply:

1. Visit opimian.ca
2. Enter the name and contact information of your wine-loving friend in the form provided
3. We will follow up to answer any questions they may have
4. When they join, you and your friends will each receive coupons* with the total value of \$100

*4 coupons worth \$25 each which can be redeemed on 4 different cellar offerings.

ABOUT THE COVER

Founded in 1999 by Dutch wine enthusiast Louis Geirnaerd and his wife Eugenie, Axial Vinos produces and distributes Spanish wines that celebrate creativity. Given that this month's Cellar Offerings feature six of Axial's labels, we decided to speak with the wine company's Export Area Manager Alba Salesa about how they're rethinking tradition in the Old World.

Alba provides some insight into the wines, delves into Axial's selection process and explores what we're talking about when we talk about "creativity".



Introducing Lia Daborn, Opimian's newly appointed Area Representative for Fredericton, NB

Opimian is pleased to announce the appointment of Lia Daborn as Area Representative for our Fredericton New Brunswick chapter.

Lia's interest in wine likely began in University when she completed her undergraduate studies in Siouthern France. With wine all around but with limited understanding of the varietals available, Lia took it upon herself to learn as much as she could by herself.

This set the foundation of what would become a life-long passion for all things wine. Applying her hard working and professional attitude to further her education in not only the wines of Southern France but around the world. Last spring she successfully completed the Level 1 WSET certificate and plans to continue her journey in this certification program.

Although Lia has only been an Opimian member for a few short years, she has however in this short time has had the opportunity to attend many events and has enjoyed even more Opimian wines.

Enjoying all that Opimian has to offer, and wanted to invest even more time and energy into the world of world, becoming the next Area Representative for the Fredericton chapter seemed like an idea opportunity.

Lia is already busy with her new role and is finalizing her calendar of events for the balance of the 2017 and 2018 years and looks forward to meeting all Opimian's across the province of New Brunswick.

If you have any questions for Lia we invite you to reach out to her at fredericton@ar.opim.ca



Fredericton Area Representative
Lia Daborn

Introducing Opimian's newest chapter, Okanagan British Columbia.

As Canada's largest and most trusted wine club it only seemed fitting to create a new chapter in the Interior of British Columbia's Okanagan region.

With a huge passion for wine in the area but no Opimian events to attend, we began our journey of finding a passionate individual to become the first ever Area Representative for the Okanagan. After a 5 month search we are pleased to introduce Brian and Jan Pritchard.

You might say that Brian was almost destined for the role of AR because Opimian runs deep with his family; his the brother of Northern Alberta Area Representative Steve Pritchard and son of Opimian Hall of Fame member Oryn Pritchard.

Brian has had a passion for wine for many years having dabbled in wine making and of course enjoying some of Opimian's finest wines from his dad's cellar for more than 30 years which is why he decided to settle his roots in Kelowna, BC.

Brian is a recently retired professional engineer and longtime senior manager with Shell with a knack for planning and sharing his knowledge. For the last three years he has lived in Europe and traveled the world which has broadened his horizons of the wines of France, Italy, Croatia, Greece as well as some family favorites of Australia and New Zealand.

He is very excited about this opportunity of representing Opimian in our newly founded chapter and looks for to meeting you all at one of the many events that he already has planned.

We invite you to welcome Brian and Jan to the Opimian family



Okanagan Area Representatives
Brian and Jan Pritchard



WHAT IS “MEMBER VALUE” IN A PRIVATE WINE CLUB



Member value: it's shaped by both very personal and external factors. What defines it for us is often accumulated through our life experiences as well as our exposure to products. For some of us, when it comes to wine, value means getting the lowest price on a bottle at a local liquor store. For others, the true value of the wine experience encompasses much more.

When you become a member of the Opimian wine club you benefit from a unique, exclusive and innovative blend of products, services and experiences, all of which defines true “member value”—member value that stands apart from any other private wine club.

As Canada's most trusted wine community, Opimian offers high quality, unique wines with great value from exclusively partnered vineyards around the world. All wines are sourced by our expert wine team, which includes, of course, our MW Jane Masters, now chairperson of the Institute of Masters of Wine. Jane's sourcing prowess, valuable tasting notes and high-quality standards when tasting potential Opimian wines are greatly appreciated by our community.

Indeed, Jane's expertise combined with newly introduced innovations such as our wine concierge service (which helps you, a member, navigate through our many wine selections by answering your questions or connecting you with exclusive Opimian vineyards—and even helping coordinate travel experiences!) are added values found nowhere else.

Our goal at Opimian is to support both existing and new members who wish to join us on this journey of cultivating wine curiosity.

Opimian will continue to focus on ensuring that members receive great value, discover unique and exclusive wines, connect with our community of other Opimians and producers as well as count on us to simplify their wine selections.

This is the shape of what “member value” looks like at Canada's largest, yet most accessible private wine club.

So, if you are a member, reach out to us and the entire Opimian community, go to an event, order some great wines from our Cellar Offerings or plan a trip to one of our vineyard partners with our help.

Invite someone to join our unique community and share our curiosity and passion for wine.

Let's continue to grow our great wine club while appreciating the member value we continue to enhance and share.

Frank Ianni
CEO
Opimian

THE AGING WINE PUZZLE

Wine is one of the few consumer products that can improve with age. This is part of what makes wine special. Appreciating old wines is not a new phenomenon; the Romans considered the best Falernian wines merited aging for 15 to 20 years to be at their peak. Bottle aging was pioneered in England by connoisseurs of claret and port following the introduction of glass bottles and corks in the 17th century.

All wines have a life cycle. The time from which a wine is made to when it is ready for drinking can be a matter of months to a number of years. Many white wines and most rosés are best while young and fresh. Of course there are always exceptions to these rules. Even the majority of red wines do not substantially improve after a couple of years in the bottle. It is only fine wines that have the intrinsic capability to be aged. Indeed some wines only express their character and appeal after sufficient aging in barrel and subsequently in the bottle. Often straight after bottling, wines are said to be suffering from bottle shock; they are closed, with little aroma or bouquet. For many wines it takes just a couple of months for them to come around. A wine's development is not linear. A bit like toddlers and children, wine's growth is in spurts and can be unpredictable. Predicting how a wine will mature is based on experience of how similar wines and vintages have developed in the past; but no two vintages are identical. Each vintage has its own style and development in bottle. A wine may reach its peak and remain at its optimum for a number of years. It may then retire into old age gracefully over time or simply drop away. And of course storage conditions will have an impact on how a wine evolves. Temperature, exposure to light and oxygen and even vibrations all have an influence. So what happens as a wine matures? It develops a more complex bouquet with a softer more mellow palate. The taste and maturation of red wines is attributable to the transformation of phenolic substances - tannins and aromatic compounds. Oak often develops becoming more intimately part of the whole rather than an obvious flavour. It's a bit like a good casserole that improves after 24 hours, the flavours become more entwined. Over a greater or shorter period of time the best wines continue to mature to an optimum level of expression when they are ready for drinking. They can stay at this level for a short or long period of time. Some wines can taste mature and continue to delight for years or even decades. In the past, drinking and maturity guidance was often given as young wines were so tannic and aggressive as not to be approachable when young. One had to wait for the wine to soften in order for it to be a pleasurable drink. Red wine was deemed fully mature when it

had dispensed with all its harsh tannins. Indeed there have been vintages that were considered good but which never came around remaining hard and tannic into old age. Nowadays top quality wines can be concentrated, young and pleasurable to drink early. Research on tannins, ripeness of grapes, vinification techniques and use of oak has enabled this. The wines can be delicious and approachable at the same time as having the concentration and balance to age. They may not have acquired maximum complexity of flavour but give immense satisfaction straight away. Assigning Maturity and Drinking guidelines can be a bit of a finger in the air job. A judgement based on experience for sure, but which is not infallible. Wines can have many



years ahead of them and so a low maturity rating; yet they can be delicious to drink now, hence a high drinkability rating. They may remain at the same ratings for a number of years. Or they may pass through a mute stage where they are less expressive, less pleasurable for now but with potential for the years ahead. More or less quickly they may move onto another level, open, complex and fully mature and may stay at this juncture for years (or not). Indicated drinking windows span the phases from delicious to drink

to fully mature before a wine hits the final stage when it is on its way out and losing its vivacity. Of course the only way to assess a wine's development is to periodically taste it. This is the reason why connoisseurs buy a case of wine and try a bottle every now and then. Then of course, there's our personal preference for and appreciation of young or more mature complex wines - each of us is different. Personally I love both. There is nothing more wondrous than drinking fine old wines. The flavours are so interwoven as to be indescribable, mellow, elusive, evocative with depth and magic. A recent evening sharing a magnum of 1959 Mouton Rothschild with friends over dinner was magical and unrepeatably. But I also love the power and concentration of a rich young vibrant Syrah or Cabernet, knowing that it is infanticide to drink it now but enjoying it nevertheless, imagining how it is going to evolve over time and hoping that I will be able to be disciplined enough to keep a few odd bottles to try again in the future! This is all part of what makes wine special.

HIDDEN TRADITIONS

OPIMIAN STEPS OFF SPAIN'S BEATEN TRAIL WITH AXIAL VINOS

When we think Old World, we think tradition. And while Axial Vinos certainly celebrates Spain's rich winemaking history, it also makes a big effort to introduce the world to profiles that shake things up. It should come as no surprise then that we were intrigued by the Spanish wine company upon our first sip. Like Axial, Opimian is attracted to wines that cut against the grain.

Cellar Offering 248 features six of Axial's most celebrated labels to Canada. Each wine has us rethinking Spanish traditions and offers a glimpse at winemakers often overshadowed by some of the country's bigger names. Providing us with some insight into the wines, Axial's Export Area Manager Alba Salesa recently spoke with us about these offerings as well as Axial Vinos' selection process.

Thanks for taking the time to chat with us, Alba. So how did you get acquainted with Opimian?

Jane Masters, your Master of Wine, came across to our stand at Prowein 2017. She tasted our wines and encouraged us to get involved with Opimian. We were lucky!

That makes two of us. Care to provide some musings on this month's Cellar Offerings?

Sure. Let's start with Albada. The name has a double meaning. Albada refers to the age-old songs sung by local vine growers; it also means "dawn." This wine emphasizes the cycle of the seasons and the new life that begins every year. It's a love letter to the generations of viticulturists loyal to the Macabeo and Calatayud regions. The wines are made with 100% autochthonous grapes such as Garnacha and Macabeo. These vines are all very old, some more than 100 years.

In a way, Albada perfectly illustrate what Axial thrives at and what Opimian constantly tries to bring to its clients: a reframing of traditions—shining a light on something timeless yet perhaps unexplored.

Absolutely. We put a lot of energy into recovering small, traditional wineries that otherwise might have trouble commercializing their products. In the '90s, it was exceedingly difficult to break free from the rigid Spanish winemaking traditions. We were the first ones who really dared to present to the world a with a more colourful picture of Spain.

Axial and Opimian share similar backstories in this respect. Opimian got started in the '70s because, at the time, wines accessible in Canada were mostly of the



checked-tablecloth variety. They didn't paint an accurate portrait of what the world had to offer.

Like Opimian, we love uncovering hidden gems. For example, we looked at wine regions such as Navarra and Calatayud and found these abandoned, high-altitude Garnacha vines exceeding one hundred years old. They were just sitting there. We couldn't help but jump on this opportunity to make something special. Quality, authenticity and culture are the three pillars of Axial's selection process.

Tell us about a few of the other hidden gems featured in Opimian's Cellar Offerings...

The *Javier San Pedro* is made from 100% Tempranillo grapes, which come from family-owned vineyards in Sierra Cantabria's impressive foothills. The San Pedro family has a centuries-old history of vine growing and winemaking. Bodegas San Pedro was dreamed up by Javier San Pedro Rández, who began working for his father's business at 14 and always wanted to produce wines that define his character. These are elegant, concentrated wines loaded with ripe fruit and complexity.

There's also the *Cátulo Tinto*, inspired by the romantic poems of Catullus from Verona and his passion for a Roman patrician named Clodia Metelli. His

daydream romance lends its name to this superb, delicate Garnacha-Tempranillo-Merlot from the organic vineyards of Navarra.

I can see we're both inspired by wines that tell a good story. What else do you look for during the selection process?

It all starts in the vineyards. We plan everything from vine growing to packaging. Supervision is key and we're there through every step of the process.

Also, we do our best to preserve Spanish wine culture. We like to emphasize traditional winemaking and try to introduce manual production as much as possible. At the end of the day, we have a big social responsibility. Overall, Axial has helped create more than 300 jobs and that's something we're extremely proud of.

Speaking of job creators, congratulations on the announcement of your new winery in Caniñena! What is it about this region that's so special?

The 2,800 square meter winery will be located in the village of Almonacid de la Sierra. The goal is to produce two million bottles of red, rosé and white wines every year with Tempranillo, Garnacha, Syrah and Macabeo.

While Caniñena is a region typically known for volume, we saw a great opportunity here for premium wines. Firstly, it's one of the oldest wine regions in Spain with some of the oldest Garnacha vineyards. What's more, the locals have wine in their blood—an unrivaled history of winemaking that we're committed to showing the world!



We're committed to helping you show it, Alba! Thanks so much for your time.

A worldwide exporter, Axial Vinos prides itself on sourcing and developing wines through a unique lens. Discover six of Axial Vinos' visionary wines exclusively through Cellar Offering 248 available until April 28



A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME...



Q

I am a big fan of Shiraz. I love the aromas and flavours. But I only rarely see any Shiraz from outside of Australia, other than sometimes from South Africa. My friend says that if I like Shiraz I would like Syrah. Can you tell me what the difference is?

J. Williams, Calgary AB

Dear J

You aren't the only one confused by this issue. Shiraz and Syrah are the same varietal of *vitus vinifera*. They are genetically equivalent to each other. In fact there are a number of varietals that have different names based on the region where they are grown.

Regarding your question about Syrah/Shiraz climate can play a large role in how the wines develop.

In Europe the most famous region that makes use of the Syrah grape is Northern Rhône in France. The climate there is at the coolest limit for producing good Syrah and the style of wine will depend a lot on the location of the vineyard. Lesser sites produce light wines with simple black fruit and herbaceous flavours and often slightly grippy tannins. In the Côte Rôtie and Hermitage the grapes benefit from the exposure of south-facing slopes. These wines are fuller bodied with berry flavours and hints of pepper. They are complemented by notes of meat and leather after bottle ageing.

Syrah is often blended with Grenache and Mourvèdre in Southern Rhône and Languedoc et Roussillon to provide ripe flavours and tannins to the blend.

Syrah, or Shiraz, has a well-established reputation in Australia. In regions with more moderate climactic conditions, such as parts of Victoria, Geelong and Heathcote they are medium bodied and more peppery than those from hotter climates. They can be intensely flavoured and complex, much like the style of wine made in Northern Rhône. In the hotter climates of Hunter Valley, McLaren Vale and the Barossa Valley the wines will have intense flavours of black fruit, sweet spices and notes of dark chocolate. Where oak is used flavours of smoke, vanilla and coconut can be present.

Syrah/Shiraz is also commonly used in other wine producing regions of the world. Good examples of a variety of styles of wine can be found in South Africa, California and Washington State. New Zealand (Hawkes Bay), Chile (San Antonio) and Canada (South Okanagan) are also beginning to produce elegant fruity styles with hints of peppery spice.

Whether a winery uses the term Syrah or Shiraz depends in large part upon the region. Throughout Europe Syrah is used almost exclusively as is Shiraz in both Australia and South Africa. In other New World Regions, the use will vary and will depend on the national origin of the resident winemaker.

Other grapes that are genetically equivalent include the following.

Tempranillo/Tinta Roriz

Tempranillo is the premier black grape of Spain but is known by several synonyms, the most common of which is Tinta del Pais. In Portugal it is known most widely as Tinta Roriz and, in some cases, Aragonez.

Zinfandel/Primitivo

Two other genetically equivalent, well known varietals are Zinfandel and Primitivo. Zinfandel is grown in over 10% of California vineyards and has attained quite a lot of fame from that region. Primitivo is a very important grape in the Apulia region of Italy (the heel). It is also known as Tribidrag in Croatia where it is believed to have originated.

So, while Syrah/Shiraz is probably the most famous pair of names for the same varietal, there are many others in the world of wine.

Vita Vinum Est,
Carl Bird | Opimian Wine Concierge | Montreal, QC

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If you have a question, please email it to concierge@opim.ca. Questions may be used in future issues of Opimian News. Material chosen for publication may be edited for clarity and fit.