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Unfiltered

Andy Roddick should stick to tennis rather than cooking, upside-down grapegrowing, Dr. Melfi's rosé and a new wine label gets political...sort of

Posted: Wednesday, August 29, 2007

• Despite their six-figure paydays, lucrative endorsement contracts and all that time spent outdoors in warm, sunny places, tennis stars seem only to want to work in the hospitality industry. A few months ago, we reported on **Jim Courier's fledgling wine-steward skills**, and now comes word that a handful of tennis pros, in New York for the U.S. Open, pitched in last week at the Dacor Taste of Tennis benefit for the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, at which restaurateurs and tennis players teamed up to serve signature dishes and wines. **Chef Marcus Samuelsson**, who grew up in Sweden watching his countrymen **Bjorn Borg**, **Stefan Edberg** and **Mats Wilander** dominate the courts, was ably assisted by **Andy Roddick** in preparing a berberé-crusted lamb dish with mango couscous, while **Donatella Arpaia** of Anthos and davidburke & donatella had Slovakian player **Dominik Hrbaty** on hand to help her distribute cheesecake lollipops. Did he seem like a skilled cook? "Not really, but he smiled a lot and he looked like **Colin Firth**," said Arpaia. Insert cheap, tennis-based joke about "scoring" and "love" here ...



Al Bello/Getty Images

Andy Roddick won't be appearing as a contestant on *Iron Chef*.

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• Train your grape bunches to grow upside down, with the tip facing up, ferment the harvested grapes in an antique 400-liter glass pharmaceutical amphora, bottle immediately and bury the bottles for a year in the earth, protected from mold by a patent-pending bottle and closure. Then sell the finished product for around \$2,700 a bottle. Sounds like a story Unfiltered should have reserved for the April 1 edition. But *Vino Erectus* is a reality, brainchild of Italian wine collector and insurance agent-turned-vintner **Franco Ariano**, who plans to make the 250-bottle first vintage of the Sangiovese blend in 2010 from his 2-acre vineyard, located in Saludeccio, near Rimini in the region of Emilia Romagna. According to Ariano, the benefits of training grapes in the "erectus" position is a freer-flowing vascular system, earlier ripening and less tightly packed, better-ventilated bunches. Ariano gets the thumbs up from the 13th century Italian poet **Dante Alighieri**; in his *Divine Comedy*, the poet speaks of a perfect world in which all fruit grows up toward the sky. Less poetic, when approached for comment, is **Riccardo Cottarella**, one of Italy's finest consulting enologists. "The problem is," he said, "our biggest efforts these days are aimed at slowing down the ripening of the grapes, to get a better overall balance." Ariano's motives? "I want to write just one page in the history of wine," he said. Unfiltered suggests that, for \$2,700 a bottle, consumers might expect at least two.



Dr. Melfi always looked at the world through rosé-colored glasses.

• HBO's hit TV series *The Sopranos* might be over, but **Lorraine Bracco** (aka Dr. Jennifer Melfi--mob boss Tony Soprano's calm, collected shrink) isn't slacking off. She recently launched a rosé, the ninth wine under her Bracco Wines label. "It's really dry, not sweet ... I love it" the actress told Unfiltered. Made from Negroamaro grapes sourced from two Italian vineyards near the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, the wine will retail for about \$14 a bottle when it hits stores in spring 2008, said Bracco's business partner, **Paul Davis**. About 500 cases of the rosé were made, and the wine will be sold in New York, Florida and Nevada. New York's power set got to sip the stuff ahead of everyone else, during the wine's Aug. 26 launch party at real-estate mogul **Andrew Borrok's** Hamptons digs. If there happened to be an after-party at Bracco's nearby Southampton home, those guests probably got to pull the corks on the good stuff. "I tell everybody to just go down [to my cellar] and pick out whatever," she told *Wine Spectator* last year. Unfiltered is still waiting for an invite.

• A couple weeks ago, Unfiltered let you know about a [recent taste test](#) in which diners at a French restaurant were given the same wine (Two Buck Chuck), though half the people were told the wine was from North Dakota and the other half told it was from California. The diners who thought the wine was Californian rated it higher and even ate more of their food. As it happens, Sonoma winemaker **John Tracy** had just changed the label for his Owl Ridge brand, so his PR rep, inspired by the taste test, decided to send out an e-mail containing side-by-side images of the old label and the new one to about 900 members of the media. Again, same wine, different bottle (though no taste test this time around, unfortunately). Based on looks alone, the redesign won 75 percent of the vote. "Too many wineries are going 'sleek'," said one naysayer who preferred the old label. "Heitz has never been hurt by remaining rustic." Unfiltered particularly enjoyed one response in favor of the new design—"I vote for the new label (and you know how much an Iowan's opinion matters at this time, in the campaign season)"—and hopes that person gets a free bottle or two to drown his sorrows if his candidate doesn't make the cut.



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