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WHAT PEOPLE DRINK

Courtney Cochran ~ Author

interview by alan kropf / photography by ian andreae

Courtney Cochran is the author of *Hip Tastes: The Fresh Guide to Wine*, which received the 2007 Georges Duboeuf Wine Book of the Year Award. Courtney is a Certified Sommelier through the Court of Master Sommeliers and also has a Sommelier certification through the International Sommelier Guild. She has been profiled in a slew of magazines including *Vogue*, *Domino*, and *Haute Living*, and has appeared on various television and radio networks offering her perspectives on the world of wine. Courtney's inspired style and connection with wine culture set her apart as a truly unique voice in wine, a claim easily verified when the Mutineers met up with her at Cantina in San Francisco for photos and conversation.

What's the last thing you drank?

2008 Karl Joh. Molton Hattenheimer Riesling Kabinett, Rheingau. I've been loving German Rieslings lately because they're lower in alcohol than most other wines. This one's just 9.5%. Why does this matter? Because an unfortunate inverse correlation has become clear to me: as I get older, my tolerance for hangovers is decreasing, while alcohol levels in wines the world over are steadily increasing. Kabinett Riesling, with just a mild sweetness and consistently low alcohol levels, allows me to sip on wine throughout an evening and still stave off a hangover. Plus, it's great with a wide variety of foods.

What's the last beverage that rocked your world?

2007 Cep Vineyards Estate Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast. With mild, soft tannins and superb structure, it blew me away with its totally singular aromas and flavors – think seashells, mushrooms, sexy herbs, dried roses, mineral and spice.

What's the wine that got you into wine?

1997 Olivier Leflaive white burgundy. I was 20 and living in Paris attending the Sorbonne, anticipating a weekend with a pal who was staying with a branch of the Leflaive family in Burgundy. When another friend's car broke down en route on the périph-

erique outside Paris, I hitchhiked with a mean-looking French truck driver to the nearest train station. Extreme times called for an extreme measure. There was no way I was missing this once in a lifetime opportunity to stay with a legendary wine family.

This is the bottle I bought when I finally arrived in Burgundy, after a three-hour lunch with the family. I had arrived on the wine scene, and there was no turning back.

When you aren't drinking wine, what are you drinking?

Beer, usually. I'm not much of a spirits drinker, but I absolutely love the way a really peaty Scotch smells. It's transporting, in a funky, fabulous way.

What do you drink with breakfast?

Coffee, half-caff, with half and half, and a glass of juice. I'm not loyal in terms of juice brands and types, but I absolutely love Ritual coffee from San Francisco's Mission District.

What do you like for non-alcoholic drinks?

I love the texture and the length of fermented beer and wine, so drinks that somehow mimic this are favorites. Take, for example, Twelve, a new chef-concocted sparkling blend of organic green,

black and white teas spiked with fennel, bergamot and citrus. It marries effervescence with an interesting, dare I say complex, blend of flavors to create a beverage that I'd gladly sip in lieu of a "real" drink. Great for lunches.

What's the last beverage book you read?

Most recently, I picked up Jonathan Nossiter's much buzzed about "Liquid Memory" and threw it out after the first chapter. I found it pompous, pompous, pompous.

What's your wine supply like at home?

Pretty abbreviated, with high turnover. I don't really keep a collection at this point aside from a few really special bottles, and I'm constantly receiving samples and bringing things home from consulting clients that I need to taste in the near-term, so it's always changing. In the next phase of my life, I'll begin to build a cellar. I'm really looking forward to it.

Any go-to cocktails at home?

Hangar One Kaffir Lime Vodka, shaken and served neat in a cold martini glass with a sprig of fresh basil. Absolute freshness, and it goes down so easily you don't even realize you're well on your way.

Photo taken at Cantina in San Francisco, CA >

