



Giuseppe Carrus, writer/editor for Gambero Rosso magazine, and Mark Newman, U.S. representative for the publication's eponymous parent company, at the Tre Bicchieri event in Los Angeles.

# Raise a Glass (or Three)

## GAMBERO ROSSO'S TRE BICCHIERI TASTING TOUR WRAPS UP IN LOS ANGELES

story and photo by Rich Manning

**IF A WINERY POURS** at a Gambero Rosso Tre Bicchieri event, it must be producing wines of high quality. That's not hyperbole—it's a prerequisite backed by awards. When the famed Italian media group invites a company to join its traveling trade tour, it means one of those producer's wines has likely earned the coveted "three glass" rating. At the organization's March tasting at The Reef event space in Los Angeles—the final stop on a four-city tour that included New York, Chicago, and San Francisco—73 of the 76 wineries represented poured at least one wine that fit this bill.

The award itself isn't just some accolade that looks nice on a website, either: Earning a Tre Bicchieri is the culmination of a process akin to surviving a viticultural gauntlet. Each year, some 45,000 wines are considered for the distinction, their potential plaudits hanging on the opinions of 70 tasters. Last year, only 451 wines claimed the title. "Earning a Tre Bicchieri award is

a huge achievement for an Italian winery," explains Mark Newman, a U.S. representative for Gambero Rosso. "It's kind of like winning the Super Bowl, the World Series, the Masters, and the Daytona 500 at the same time."

The distinction tends to cause a particular fervor among the F&B directors, distributors, and merchants that attend the Tre Bicchieri tour annually. This may be why one of the most buzzworthy wines out of the more than 200 labels poured at this year's fête was a 2016 Gewürztraminer from Cantina Kurtatsch. The buzz wasn't one of derision; instead of drawing remarks like "What is *that* variety doing here?" and other dismissive quips, the wine was an intriguing must-try due to its Tre Bicchieri status. (Spoiler alert: It was rather delightful.)

The L.A. stop unfolded for several hours before the Gewürztraminer or any of the other award-winning selections even touched a glass. Newman and Giuseppe

Carrus, writer/editor for Gambero Rosso's namesake publication, led a handful of attendees through a master class on Emilia-Romagna, espousing on the history of the region's co-ops—which number roughly 1,000—as well as its penchant for creating approachable wines with good value.

The wines sampled during these sessions, while delicious, aren't Tre Bicchieri honorees. Yet, according to Newman, they can be a vital part of the tour, as they give Gambero Rosso the opportunity to encourage industry enophiles to expand their selections beyond the usual suspects (e.g. Super Tuscans and Chiantis). "When we hold these master classes, we usually focus on a region that's less known in order to increase the knowledge of how fabulous they are," he says. "There's obviously great familiarity with Tuscany and Piemonte, but it's important to us that regions like Emilia-Romagna or Sannio get their share of the spotlight. It's a constant effort, but it's worth it." ❏