

Italy California Burgundy Champagne Vinous Table Rest of the World

Piedmont Report

Talking Spirits with Nicolas Palazzi

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I was introduced to Nicolas Palazzi and his spirits at Eleven Madison Park, where I had one of the greatest meals of my life a few years back. Then Wine Director John Ragan poured me a glass of Palazzi's single-cask 1951 Devant la Porte Grande Cognac and I was hooked. Originally from Bordeaux, Palazzi is essentially a *micro-negociant* specializing in spirits. Palazzi purchases casks of Cognac, Sherry, rum and Pineau des Charentes, finishes the aging, and bottles the spirits under his labels. I have had a chance to taste a number of Palazzi's single-cask Cognacs, many of which remain unreleased, such as the L'Artisan du Cognac No. 23, 25, 50 and 58, each named after their respective vintages, and they have never been anything less than outstanding. These current releases are from Palazzi's joint venture with Equipo Navazos, who are well known to sherry lovers for their extraordinary wines. Palazzi also markets a variety of aged Pineau des Charentes under his Paul & Marie Fils label. Production is tiny, so if you see anything from L'Artisan du Cognac, Paul & Marie Fils or Navazos Palazzi don't hesitate. These are magnificent, artisan spirits that deserve just as much attention as the best small production wines from anywhere in the world. Readers might enjoy the short video I shot with Nicolas Palazzi right after this tasting.

The pale-colored **Brandy de Jerez Solera Gran Reserva**, a single barrel of Spanish Brandy aged in a Fino sherry cask, is laced with smoke, orange peel, pear, almond, flint and white stone fruits. Sweet spices, a hint of American oak and bright saline notes appear on the vibrant, dry, bracing finish. With time in the glass, some of the more angular contours soften nicely. The Solera Gran Reserva spent

three years in a brandy cask followed by three and a half years in the Fino cask from which it was bottled. Smoke, tobacco, worn-in leather, dried plums, earthiness and orange peel are some of the many notes that meld together in the **Single Cask Montilla Old Brandy**. Soft, open and caressing, the Montilla Old Brandy is at once plush and generous, yet it also maintains gorgeous freshness. The flavors are nicely evolved and mature, but there is no sense of heaviness or sweetness here at all. This cask of 50+ year-old Brandy was aged in an Oloroso barrel. The **Cask Strength Rum** is a 5 year-old Caribbean rum that spent 10 years in Oloroso casks. Rich, powerful and wonderfully smoky/spiced scents saturate the palate in an exotic, intense spirit loaded with class and complexity. Orange peel, hazelnuts and cloves give the rum a kick of acidity to balance the soft, plush texture. Readers need to take their time. This is a contemplative spirit that will seriously reward patience. There is no need to rush, but plenty of pleasure awaits those who can find this exceptional rum.



-Antonio Galloni

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Navazos Palazzi

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