

# appetite

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Food • Wine • Luxury

*Spread the Love*  
HAPPY VALENTINE'S

**GIVE BREAD (AND MORE)**  
DISHING UP A WHOLE  
LOT OF LOVE

**CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK**  
THE UNIVERSAL APPEAL  
OF CHOCOLATE

**ALL JAMMED UP**  
HOMEMADE JAMS & JELLIES

**TROPHY SHIRAZ**  
AUSTRALIA'S MOST WIDELY  
GROWN RED GRAPE



**WHET YOUR APPETITE**  
HIROSHIMA, HONG KONG, KUALA LUMPUR, MUDGEES, OSAKA



**MEET** Rumiko Obata,  
Owner, Obata Sake Brewery, Japan

**I am the fifth generation** in a family of sake brewers and owners that began brewing sake in 1892 on Sado, an island that's one and a half times bigger than Singapore, with a population of 70,000 people.

**I was born...** in a sake brewery of course — and I still enjoy the smells, sounds and atmosphere of it all. I didn't know then but as a child, I was playing in the sake kura (cellar) where women are usually not allowed.

**Our brewery is located on Sado Island**, part of the Niigata prefecture, which is a microcosm of Japanese culture. Sado is excellent for nature walks, fishing and scuba diving. You will also find apples, grapes, kiwi, persimmon and rice grown here.

**I like the name Maho.** It's the name of one of our Manotsuru sakes that was awarded a gold medal at the international wine challenge in London last year. It's also the name of our previous brewmaster. Maho means '10,000' and also, 'plentiful padi'. Maho is also the name of my daughter although it's a different kanji character, which means a ship's mast.

**The best time to visit Niigata is in mid March.** That's when the sake festival takes place and an entry fee of 1,000¥ gets you the chance to taste almost all the sakes produced in the region. There is even a sake seminar in English and geisha performances as well.

**Apart from sake cellars, my two other favourite things** are movie theatres and libraries. The first because there is none on Sado and I had worked in film, and libraries because I love to read and I learnt English that way.

**I was a publicist** and I worked on *Basic Instinct* and *When Harry Met Sally* so they are my favourite movies.

**My most exciting project** right now is that of matching sake with international cuisine, especially Asian food. And if you get the chance, try cuisine cooked using sake lees. ☺

## QUICK SIPS

**WOOING TREE, PINOT NOIR 2007, CENTRAL OTAGO, NEW ZEALAND**

A powerful, impressive Pinot, with lots of intense sweet cherry, plum, currants and other red fruit flavours. The relatively high alcohol content gives the wine a plush finish. Enjoy it now with turkey or strongly flavoured meats, or put it away for a few years for a mellower drink.

Wooing Tree is named after a lone tree in a vineyard in Central Otago, where teenagers would park their car and neck under. It is owned by a local couple and their sister and brother-in-law, all with farming backgrounds and a passion for Pinot. Wine is made at a contract winemaking facility Vinpro in Cromwell by winemaker Carol Bunn and her team.

**SADIE FAMILY, COLUMELLA 2004, SWARTLAND, SOUTH AFRICA**

Intense with mint, chocolate, spice, black and red fruits, smoky and floral. A Syrah with 20 percent Mourvèdre, this wine is complex, luxurious, silky and complete. It is very impressive and approachable now but will continue to evolve.

Eben Sadie worked in Germany, Austria, Italy, Oregon and Burgundy before returning home to South Africa to start a wine business. Having no machines in the winery and relying on gravity feed and open wood fermenters have paid off. This is one of the best Syrah blends I have tasted from South Africa. ☺

## WINE DIARY

**FOR A LOVE OF RIESLING: WEINGUT EGON MÜLLER**

When one is making one of the best wines of Germany from old, meticulously tended vines, there is no need to look elsewhere. Or so fourth generation winemaker Egon Müller thought when he took over the Scharzhofberg vineyard and estate in Mosel that had been in his family since late 18th century.

Then one day, Egon visited his wife's uncle in Slovakia. At the uncle's family estate, he stumbled upon an old wine cellar holding containers of all shapes and sizes, including beer bottles — all filled with wine. Egon tasted some and pronounced that such wines 'could compete with the best dry Rieslings from Alsace or Austria'. So began a joint venture between the families of Egon Müller and the uncle, Baron Ullmann. Named Château Belá, it produces dry Rieslings.

Then one day, someone told him the Belá wines were the next best thing to Australian Rieslings. Thus challenged, Egon immediately set off Down Under to the Adelaide Hills, and before he knew it, he was making 2,000 cases of Australian Riesling in a joint venture with an Italian-Armenian wine producer and Adelaide wine retailer. The wine is called Kanta.

Whether from Germany or elsewhere in the world, you will notice that Egon Müller's wines are all adroitly balanced. The wines of Kanta have a New Worldly brightness of fruit, like truly well-made Australian dry Rieslings. A Belá wine (say, a 2006), meanwhile, shows off a citrus freshness allied with some toastiness, a hint of beans, earth and meat, a broad round texture and long finish. Savour a Weingut Egon Müller Scharzhofberger Kabinett and you will get ripe, preserved fruit characters, a hint of botrytis and layers of flavours. Reach for the flagship Goldkapsel Auslese Scharzhofberger and you are in heaven — perfect balance, complexity of aromas and flavours, and a long, long finish. ☺