



ANDREAS LARSSON

Andreas is a Swedish sommelier who was elected World's Best Sommelier in 2007.

The Art of Single Dining

As much as I like to share great bottles, meals and memories with colleagues and friends, I have to admit that I do have a certain sweet spot for the luxurious pleasure of dining alone. I wouldn't go as far and say that I enjoy drinking alone, as it might evoke thoughts about miserably drowning one's sorrows in hideous amounts of cheap plonk.

No, let's focus on fine drinking! When you're alone, you get so much more time to think, to reflect, to taste. Nothing gets between you and your bottle and the wine gets the attention it hopefully deserves. You actually have the time to scroll through the comprehensive wine list of La Tour d'Argent without getting interrupted by toasting and discussing the originality of the Amuse Bouches. Nor do you need to democratize and agree on menu choices or wine budgets. No, it's all about your own pleasure – cause you're worth it!

In today's society where constant Wi-Fi, iPhones

and other destabilizing gadgets have made us into slaves who can always be reached, it's such a relief to escape from the digital world and deviate into a vinous sanctuary where one can have all the time for concentration needed to escape from our everyday obligations.

Nothing defines this better than my power lunch yesterday – after having just arrived in Paris, slightly tired after a morning flight, slightly hungry after a rather deficient airplane breakfast with white bread, artificial juice and dull coffee. With a full afternoon at my disposal, I suspected that I would soon end up in a bistro eating a steak frites quenched with a carafe du rouge.

Indeed I did, although this bistro was not that modest after all, considering their rather short, but utterly tempting wine list that offered a plethora of French classics at undisputedly modest prices. While sipping on my refreshing, balanced and profound glass of Charles Heidsieck while

scrolling the menu, I already decided on entrecôte grille avec frites et béarnaise. I couldn't escape my thirst for a good old claret, as it is so inextricably linked to this legendary dish that easily makes you forget what a zucchini or a vegetarian is.

My eyes finally fell on the 2001 Roc des Cambes, an undeniably great wine. It displayed the usual olfactory finesse with an aromatic complexity, very floral and fine with layers of red berries and minerals. Having the time to gently follow its evolution, it really opened up 2 glasses later, just as the viande arrived sizzling from the grill. At this stage, the wine displayed seductive aromas of truffles, sweet wild berries and even more intensity, with smooth tannins and a classical freshness.

I did enjoy this particular bottle just some weeks before this occasion, but guess what? My enjoyment was clearly enhanced this time, so much in fact that I didn't think twice about ordering a generous piece of truffle Brie to accompany the last delicate drops.

To summarize – finding these special moments is a great way of understanding and appreciating a wine in a different way. We must remember to integrate the “sheer enjoyment factor” when we drink wine. I immensely enjoy sharing great bottles with friends, but when you find yourself having the time alone on your business trips or on other occasions why not enjoy in style? Single dining is a true art that we mustn't forget...