



PREMIUM BARREL BROKER

MARCHIVE FRENCH & AMERICAN OAK | BB EASTERN EUROPEAN OAK | EBC AMERICAN OAK

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Regional Palate Difference: An Unofficial Study

When we organized a barrel trial with Trione Winery in Alexander Valley CA we planned on it being a sales tool to show how French and Eastern European barrels contribute different flavor characteristics to wine. Little did we know that it was going to turn into an interesting experiment examining regional palate differences. We put a 2012 Zinfandel in a new Medium Toast Marchive French and Eastern European barrel for 18 months. The wine was put into barrel the same day, racked barrel to barrel, and bottled the same day, leaving the only differentiating factor the wood itself. I know because I helped bottle it (and only managed to break one bottle). Tasting the final product, it was hard to believe that this was the same wine. The Zin in the French oak barrel had a nice cedar aroma, delicate nuanced fruit and leather characteristics while the Zin in the Eastern European barrel had a more subtle aroma but big bold plum and BBQ venison flavors.



Bottling Zinfandel barrel trial

The first place the trial was put to the test was for a group of enology students at Walla Walla City College. The favorite, by a 2/3 majority, was the French. A week later we were at WiVi in Paso Robles, CA and the Eastern European was the clear favorite, also by a 2/3 majority. I brought the samples with me to Texas where Eastern European also won but by a slightly smaller margin, 65% to 35%. At the same time Phil was in Virginia pouring our barrel trial and it was just about 50-50. Last week we were both in Ramona, CA for 'A Grape Day in the Back Country' and the final total was 80% French 20% Eastern European. Most recently we poured it at Congressman Mike Thompson's Anniversary event at Hall Winery in the Napa Valley and it ended up being 60% French and 40% Eastern European. Now, all these percentages of preferences were when we told people they **had** to pick one or the other as their favorite. I heard a lot of people say that they liked the aroma of the French but the body of the Eastern European.



'A Grape Day in the Back Country' in Ramona, CA

When they only had a little bit left in each glass I recommended blending them together and that was most people's favorite, probably 75% of the time.

As an Environmental Science major I require viable experiments to have large sample sizes, blind comparisons, controls, etc., and to be honest some of these were overall generalizations based on feedback. Many times people knew what they were tasting when they were choosing favorites and that could have played a role in their choice. I put this data out there with the full disclosure that there was very little truly scientific in the way that this information was collected but either way I found it extremely interesting and figure others would too.



Here's a list of the regions with preferences:



-Walla Wall, WA

French Oak 66.5% Eastern European 33.5%

-Paso Robles, CA

French Oak 33.5% **Eastern European 66.5%**

-Texas (North and Central)

French 35% **Eastern European 65%**

-Virginia

French 50% Eastern European 50%

-Ramona, CA

French 80% Eastern European 20%

-Napa Valley, CA

French 60% Eastern European 40%