KS We're going to be discussing Tim's experience as being a sommelier and working in restaurants and businesses in Virginia as part of the Wineworkers of Virginia Project. [00:01:11] Hi Tim!

[00:01:12] TC Hi. 
#WanderingSomm

[00:01:16] KC Let's start with the beginning. We got your full name. So, tell me about the Wandering Somm, that's your business.

#RestaurantConsulting #WineLists #Wineselections #Stafftraining

[00:01:26] TC It's a consulting company that I started in 2012 to give myself the platform by which I can help many different businesses with their new training of staff or selections for their food retail or restaurant. Essentially what I do with the consulting is I can create wine lists for new restaurants or restaurants who are looking to revamp their wine list, or go into retail stores and help them out with their selections. Staff training in both retail and restaurant settings.

[00:02:07] Dog barks, KS Mom comes in, everyone greets each other, brief conversation.

[00:05:01] KS Slight interruption there, as my mother showed up. So we were talking about how your work with the consulting company that you started, Wandering Somm, in 2012, and how you would do revamping wine lists for restaurants, doing trainings, different things like that. Can you repeat what the general gist of it is?

#WineHistory #WineKnowledge #WineTheory #SellingWine #Beer #Soda #Winetastings

[00:05:23] TC It was set up so that I could for different restaurants or retail shops or anyone—I actually do private events as well, private tastings in houses and things. But for the businesses it's about making selections, training staff on how to sell, history like this, knowledge, theory, as we call it, and how to sell products, certain ways to attack certain segments of beverages, wines, beers, soda. Train staff on that, and then conducting in-store tastings or restaurant tastings.

[00:06:10] KS I'm just writing notes for myself so that when I go back over the tape, I can remember where you talked about certain things easier. So, I'm not like saying bad things about you or anything. [00:06:24] Obviously!

[Laughter]

[00:06:29] KS So that started in 2012, and so you do that in addition to whatever your 40 hours a week is.

[00:06:36] TC Well, 60, but yes, I do, part-time. It’s something that actually, personally,
I'm trying to build up a little bit more, focus more time on than on the other stuff, so that it can be my full-time job.

[00:06:58] KS Right because it would take some building up and getting the word out that this is what you're actively doing, and then to get it to a sustainable capacity.

[00:07:09] TC That's the idea.

[00:07:12] KS So how long do you think you’ve worked in restaurant, food, wine, beverage?
#Charleston #SouthCarolina #RestaurantFamily

[00:07:20] TC I grew up in restaurants, from the age of about 6, literally grown up in them. We lived in Charleston, SC, and my parents split up and they each got second jobs. They both worked at the university hospital. My father was an accountant, my mom was in medical records, and then when they split up they got second jobs. My dad did the books and tended bar for a pretty big well-known bar in downtown Charleston, and my mom managed a restaurant in Charleston. So I was spending most of my time with my mom after school or weekends or any time necessary, I would end up hanging out in the kitchen or the dining room. It was very much a family feel to the restaurant, Holidays, we would get together every year and make chocolates and candies and things together, the entire staff. So it was a very inviting and all the restauranteurs in town were all friends, and so there was a lot of going from one place to the other and parties. One year on my Mom's birthday, we decided to throw a big bash in somebody's backyard. [00:08:26] The best baker in town made a cake that was like this big [gestures], there was a roaming violinist and ice sculptures, and it was just like her 38th birthday, it was nothing major. They just wanted to throw a party and her birthday was an excuse. There are pictures of my brother and I floating around wearing tuxedos
[00:08:44] KS laughs.

#Charleston #SouthCarolina

[00:08:45] TC Wandering around this beautiful back yard.

[00:08:48] KS How old were you when that happened, you think?
#Charleston #SouthCarolina

[00:08:51] TC I think I was about 7. I'm 30 years younger, so if it was her 38th birthday, I was 7 or 8. I guess I would have been 8 because her birthday's after mine.

[00:09:01] Another time we took a camping trip out to hunting ??[Name of town, park? ] I think it was called, and it was probably 30 people, and they were all restaurant people. It wasn't a hot dogs and hamburgers kind of trip, it was lobster, steaks, and amazing desserts.

[00:09:22] KS You were like, “these are the people for me!”

#Alexandria #Virginia #DelRay #OldTown

[00:09:24] TC Exactly. And that's really essentially what happened, I kind of got the bug. When I started working myself, I've worked in a deli washing dishes at 15 I think, and then started cooking in a kitchen and being a busboy at 16, and then a waiter at 18 because that was the law, and then a bartender at 21, and so I've kind of been around
food and wine. I've done wholesale wine sales for a couple companies in the area. [00:09:53] I had my own retail shop, briefly, in Old Town, and then ran another shop in Del Ray for a year and a half.

[00:10:03] KS What was the name of your shop?

TC It was called the Le Tastevin [spells]. It's that little bowl that the old French [dudes??] would wear with the little box, it's called a tastevin. The idea is like in [00:10:24] Cake and Cod? and sellers in Europe and France, before electrical lighting when you have a candle only feet away, it was used to inspect the clarity of the wine, and also just to taste it. It had all these little divots and things that would catch the light in different ways so you could look at the wine and then taste it, then spit it out. [Looks around.] [00:10:49] Oh, I don't have it with me. I have one business card from the business, and it's this really cool design that my friend did that it was kind of a stylized taste of it, and that was the business card. [00:11:03] We opened it in 2010 and I left it after about a year. I parted with my business partner after a year and that's when I went over to Planet Wine in the neighborhood restaurant group, and we were in that shop for a year and a half. Which was quite a big shop, and it acted as the wine list for Evening Star, the restaurant next door.

[00:11:29] KS That's a neighborhood restaurant. They have the Evening Star cafe and what else?

TC So Evening Star and Planet Wine are right next to each other in Del Ray. Down in Old Town they have Vermilion, and I was actually there for about a month until they asked me to go run the shop. At the time, they had Tallula and Eat Bar, which closed down, it was Arlington, technically. I always get those areas mixed up. And then they expanded into the one down by the water, it's the Old Firehouse, they have that place. They've since opened up many things in DC. Many things. Kind of an empire of sorts.

[00:12:21] KS I know a few of those.

TC It was interesting. There was a funny story about that I was actually thinking about this morning. It was the day of our grand opening, which was about 2 weeks after we had actually opened, but we were getting the mayor to come and cut the ribbon and stuff, and he only had a certain day. The grand opening was about 2 or 3 weeks in, so we were open during the day, and then we closed down at night for this private party. Virginia law stated that we had to do that to be able to serve food. [00:13:28] During the day there was this couple. I'd put them in their late 40s early 50s and they were very interested in running the shop and asking a bunch of questions
and we had a lot of great conversation. [00:13:43] [00:13:44] It was just one of the many customers that we had that day. I had mentioned it, I'm like oh we're doing our grand opening party. I gave them something that said they could come in, because it had to be a private event for legal reasons, so you needed an invitation. They came back that night, I was mingling around and my business partner, Hannah, came over to me and she's like, she asked me a specific question, she's like, "Where's [00:14:07] Cabernet Franc from?" I'm like, well it's a blending grape in Bordeaux, and you find it in the Southwest as well as [00:14:17] Languedoc-Roussillon in the southwest. She's like, "These people are insisting that Cabernet Franc is a Virginia grape!" [laughing] [00:14:27] I went over there, and it turns out that it's the two people that I had a really great conversation with. Whatever they said to her, they got her ruffled, so then I went over to explain to them, "No, it's gained popularity in Virginia recently, but it's a European grape that it was brought over here." [00:14:48] It's a mixture of people. There are some people who absolutely love Virginia wines, and do their best to only drink Virginia wine when then can. That would include the fruit variety, the fruit blended variety of wines, usually on the sweeter side. Then there are some, interestingly enough, that are 100% against Virginia wine. They would never get a Virginia wine. They would never think to Virginia wine if they weren't strongly suggested to.

[00:15:21] KS So you're saying, particularly at that time, in 2010, it was a hard line between pro-Virginia wine and anti-Virginia wine.

#RedWine #WhiteWine #SparklingWine #PinotNoir #PlanetWine #Baltimore #Maryland #TonyForeman

[00:15:30] TC Absolutely very. Anti. It was one of the things that I experienced. Because of the way my store was laid out, I had 40 whites and 40 reds and they were basically in a row. Because it was small start-up, 40 whites, 40 reds, 10 sparkling, and 10 dessert, and that was it. We eventually put in some beers. I've always been a proponent of setting up wine lists or shelves or whatever, progressively. Meaning your lighter styles at the top or the beginning, and then they get progressively bigger in style or weight or complexity as you go through the list or the section. I think it makes it easier. Some people might come in and say, I'm looking for Pinot Noir, but other people, most of the people, I've found, in the retail setting, would come in and say, I'm having this for dinner tonight. It's always easier to pair with a style of wine, I think, generally, than it is with a specific. Because you can get 20 different Pinot Noirs, and they're all going to be different. In some cases, drastically different. So instead of coming in saying “I want a Pinot Noir!” It's “what are you eating, or what are you pairing it with?” [00:16:40] I converted Planet Wine a little bit where it was a little more regional. Within the regions, I restructured them to that same progressive style. The one thing, the big change that I made and I think that this is important—it was true at my town in Maryland, as well, years before that. Around the 2000s I was a manager at a wine shop in Baltimore. [00:17:07] You could say I learned it from Tony and Doctor J [??]?. They set up the wine so each space had its own category of styles with catchy words. You know, fruity and floral, or bright and clean. That's the way we split it up. That was the beginning of my, now that I think about it, it's probably where I got it from. And to me it makes more sense.

[00:17:32] KS Do you remember what the name of the Wine Shop was?

#CharlestonRestaurantGroup #cindywolf #PetitLouis #Charleston #South Carolina
Annapolis #Bin201

[00:17:36] TC Bin 604. It was part of the Charleston restaurant group. Tony Forman and Cindy Wolf had Petit Louis in Charleston at that time. That's a Baltimore empire, between the two of them they have probably 6 restaurants, and a wine shop called Bin, like 201, whatever, in Annapolis.

[00:17:58] KS I feel like there's a Bin something in Silver Spring, now.

VirginiaWine #CaliforniaWine #Texas #Michigan #Washington #OregonWine #Bordeaux #Burgundy

[00:18:05] TC I don't know that it's the IRS, but it might be. The idea was 604 was supposed to be our street address, but then things got shifted around so it wasn't our street address anymore, so it was kind of confusing [laughs], but originally it was supposed to be that. And they tried to do the same thing in Annapolis. So with the Maryland wine at that time, around 2000, and specifically when I went to Planet Wine after I left my shop, I think it's important if you segregate wines of that region into their own section, they'll get ignored. I felt strongly about integrating them back into the shelf where they belonged. You know, stylistically, and not saying, "this is our Virginia wine section" because people will say, "nevermind, let me go to the Californias." Because it's what they knew. In an attempt to educate them about the quality and level of wines that are available in Virginia, you had to put them next to their peers from California, Oregon, Washington state, Texas, Michigan, or even Bordeaux or Burgundy.

[00:19:12] KS So that brings up an interesting thing. I’m now realizing when you go to grocery stores and you get wine, it’s this shelf for California, and there’s a shelf for New Zealand, and, maybe. French is definitely by itself, Italy might be by itself. It’s a weird way to group wine when you start getting into totally different flavors.

[00:19:37] TC Exactly.

[00:19:39] KS That’s interesting. I wonder why?

Italy #France #Champagne #Rhone #FrenchWine #ItalianWine

[00:19:42] TC I think it comes from a different time where American wine in general wasn't as respected as Italy and France, specifically Bordeaux, Burgundy, Rhone. Champagne. People wanted to be fancy or be getting the right thing to impress. But now as the world market has opened up more, I think that there are quality wines coming that are available here that are coming from everywhere. So you don't have to say, "I need a good wine, I have to get a Burgundy." Maybe that might have been more the issue, 50-60 years ago.

[00:20:26] KS I think that was probably it, and it stayed that way because of tradition, and the stores are all set up the same way.

WineRegions #WineGrapes #PricePoint #arrangingwines

[00:20:35] TC Right. And I get that, and I get the idea of separating them out into their places of origin. The conversation, whenever you're starting a wine list for a restaurant, in the philosophy of the restaurant it's: how do you want to set it up? Do you want to set it up by region, do you want to set it up by grape? I always find that the middle ground is this progressive style. Some people set it up by price point. Literally the least expensive
to the most expensive. I think that's very outmoded, but you go into restaurants, and you'll still see that they'll be listed from least expensive to most expensive. In some cases, yes, but you could argue that it's not always true that the least expensive wine is going to be the lightest and most simple and the most expensive is going to be...it's not always necessarily the case. You can get some pretty big wines from France, Spain, Italy that are everyday wines that are cheap...

[00:21:29] TC Yes.

#winelist #wineonTV #wineinmovies

[00:21:29] KS I don't know if they do it anymore, but I feel like I've seen in TV or movies, when somebody's, looking at the wine list, and they'll say, I don't know, something in the middle. Because, assuming that the price point... [00:21:43] [laughter] [KS] is midrange, the middle of the list. It's something that's taken for granted.

#pinotnoir #sommelier #winesteward #training #trainingsommelier #trainingstaff #redwine #mediumbody

[00:21:49] TC: Doing the way I do it, I'm not the only person who does it, obviously, there are a lot of people who set up their lists this way. It's just the way that I think makes the most sense. I think it also begs interaction. If someone just wants a pinot noir and they go to the pinot noir section and order a pinot noir, they're not necessarily going to be happy with it. That's where the idea that's a wine steward or a sommelier comes into play. When I'm training staff, I always tell them: when I give you the tools to sell these wines, that's not just the knowledge of the wines themselves, but the wine list is set up in this fashion. So if they're looking for a medium-bodied red wine, you go to the middle of the list. You can tell them that and let them choose on their own or kind of guide them. Or you can not tell them that and keep that to yourself and make yourself seem a little more knowledgeable. Then you might actually be. Fake it till you make it.


#Virginia #PlanetWine #RedWine #Virginiawine #WinePricing #Grape #PricePoint

[00:22:45] TC: That's always an option. One of the big things I did, I took probably the less than 20 red wines that we had from Virginia at Planet Wine and I integrated them back into the shelves into the respective locations based on either grape and then weight category. The funny thing that came about with that...I don't mean to name names, but there was one particular wine from Virginia, it's considered to be one of the better wines. Right after I'd done this, it took a large, sizeable price increase. It was about $16 and they made it go up about $24 or $25 bucks on the shelf. The price point that had sat in the mid-$30s, it stood up to and was better than its peers in its category for its grape variety or style, weight. The second that it took that increase, it didn't stand up to its peers anymore, and I actually ended up dropping it from the shelf. Because there were other things that I felt better exemplified the style and the region and the grapes at a better price point.

[00:24:13] KS: So the comps in that level were eclipsing it at that point.

#CaliforniaWine #California #WashingtonState #WashingtonWine
TC: I would say this wine would definitely stand up against anything made from the same grape from California or Washington state, but the second that you increase the price by $25... there's a big difference between a $30 something dollar and a $50 something dollar wine from California and Washington state. You go to a whole new level. It's a highly-awarded wine, it's a well-known wine, but at the time I didn't feel that it held its body as well anymore, and there were other things that I wanted to bring in, so I let go of it.

TC: And that's kind of an example of doing that progression and having to think about how it stands up against its peers.

KS: Looking now forward in time, how would you think the relationship with retailers and restaurants towards Virginia wine has changed?

TC: Just like anything that's getting better, there's more and more information about the quality and the history of Virginia wine, and people are starting to take it a lot more seriously. For quite some time, Virginia has been the 5th largest producer of wine in the country. For a while it was tied with Texas, and then it took over. And it remains the 5th, it might even be the 4th. I know NY State was right in front of it. I haven't looked at those numbers recently.

TC: As people start to learn more about it, and what's available, and, as wine-makers start to perfect what they're doing, as well, some people are realizing that certain grape varieties don't do well in certain regions of this state. So they're dropping the grape variety. In all of the research I was doing for opening the shop in 2010, and all of the wines I tasted, I was doing my best to learn as much as I possibly could about Virginia wine. 1) Because it was right on the brink of getting a lot more recognition and 2) I had a wine shop in Virginia, so it made sense to at least be knowledgeable about Virginia wine. At the time, and I could be wrong about this, but my impression at the time was, Viognier for white and Cab Franc for red, and that's what everybody thought of. And now there's been so much more grown and produced and experimented with that that's no longer the case. Or maybe it's just my focus has changed. But I really think that people are starting to open their eyes toward a lot more varieties. As an example, you take Sauvignon Blanc. Everybody says that Virginia's not good for SB, because of the type of grapes SB is and because of the weather and the soil and everything we have here.

KS: Can you specify what it is about this climate? In the future, people may be listening to this and we have a whole different kind of climate.

TC: But there are at least one off the top of my head that I would say is an outstanding winery. Glen Manor, outside Front Royal, produces a really nice Sauvignon Blanc that I work with. I had at it Ovio. I work with it as often as I can. Ten years ago, people would say you're absolutely insane to try to grow SB in this state, in this climate.

KS: Can you specify what it is about this climate? In the future, people may be listening to this and we have a whole different kind of climate.
[00:27:53] TC: Currently the climate here, the soil type is very fertile. People are always focusing on the most fertile with the most amount of water that you could possibly get to grow whatever. But that's exactly the opposite of what you want for grapevines. You want grapevines to have to struggle. It's part of the process of a grape vine growing that it needs to be stressed to produce good grapes to make good wine. I always joke with saying when I lived in California you drive down the road and you'd see lemons, limes, tomatoes, avocados, grape vines. Then it starts all over again. All of these things aren't supposed to grow next to each other! [laughs.] But obviously California makes a lot of great wine—that's a different conversation.

#RdVVineyards #RutgerDeVink

[00:28:47] TC: Rutger from RdV, he said he'd search soil composition studies and look for places that were considered to be the worst for growing. "That's where I want to go!"

#Soil #Humidity #Rain #BadSoil

[00:29:04] TC: That's pretty common. You want adverse conditions for the soil. As far as the climate, the climate is really humid, rains a lot, rains a lot in the late part of the growing season, which you don't want for grapes. In most cases it ruins grapes. There's a lot of different types of rock and fungus that grow in humid conditions that make it really difficult and so a lot of physical work has to go into it. It's still very much a hard place to grow grapes, and not necessarily in a good way. You want the bad soil, but you like a really nice climate. And the climate here is just a little too wet, a little too humid.

#vineyard #grapes #harvest

[00:29:52] KS: Right now, it's September 5th and quite a lot of the vineyards are pulling their grapes now. They're harvesting last week or this week or maybe next week. They're squeezed in. Today is sunny, yesterday was sunny, but before that was cold and rainy, and it's meant to be cold and rainy again. So they have this short window to pull all that stuff in before it gets ruined.

#climate #europe #wind #leaves #pruning #shade #sun #grapevines

[00:30:20] TC: The much more moderate climate of California, that makes it a lot easier and they do the same thing where they have to search out difficult plots of land, if you will, soil-wise. Generally speaking it's a difficult place to grow because of the climate. But there are some stories of people saying, "The climate is just like where I came from inX in Europe," so they've tried to plant. It just takes a lot of work in the vineyards before you can get to the winery. Cutting excess fruit at certain times, or setting the grapes at a certain level on the ground so you can get some radiant heat without getting too high and getting too wind-blown, or pruning leaves back so that you don't get too much humidity that stays, or enough shading depending on what your relation is to the sun. There's a lot of stuff that goes into that and there are things you can do in the vineyard that mitigate the problems with the climate. %%

#orchards #fruitorchards

[00:31:36] KS: What I've heard from some people too is because orchards were so successful here, a lot of people took that as an indication how with the minerality in the soil and things like that that made the fruit taste good, also because the blossoms wouldn't be damaged in the early frost. They were all on the south-facing side of the mountain like
that. I think that was part of it too is that the peaches can do well, then probably the grape
vines would do well as well
#oregon #washingtonstate

[00:32:07] TC: I think that's kind of a problem. There are several stories of in Oregon and
Washington state that I've heard where it's the same kind of thing. Fruit orchards were
pulled up and grapevines were put in. Usually successfully.
#gravensteinapples #apples #extinct #extinctfruit #sonoma

[00:32:22] KS: Gravenstein apples, an apple that was particularly famous in Sonoma.
Before anybody thought of doing wine, that was where you got Gravenstein apples from.
Now they're almost nonexistent because all the land has been turned over into grapevines.
Now people say that they have this memory of this apple but they said nobody's growing
it or selling it because the land got to be too valuable for growing grapes.

[00:32:56] TC: I've heard similar stories. Not that a piece of fruit would become extinct,
that's really sad.
#applevarieties #virginiawine #cabernetfranc #viognier #winemaking

[00:33:05] KS: There's a lot of apple varieties that have gone out of production because
of agriculture. I think Virginia wine even though you're saying Viognier and Cabernet
Franc were sort of the old hat of Virginia wine-making, it's still new for a lot of
consumers.

[00:33:25] TC: Oh yeah.

[00:33:26] KS: I'm wondering if part of it is that consumers are broadening what kind of
wine they're open to drinking and they're a bit more knowledgeable.
#wineries #virginiawineries

[00:33:39] TC: I think that's definitely part of it. Because again with the history of
Virginia and the technology that's happening. I know that there are now just over 300
wineries in Virginia. If you go back 15 years…They've been popping up very quickly
over the last two decades, even the last 10-15 years.

[00:34:13] KS: Probably the biggest boom has been in the last maybe 10 years. [TC
agrees] It's been astronomical.
#grapevarieties #italianwine #frenchwine #chardonnay #spanishwine #barboursville
#pinotnoir

[00:34:21] TC: As more people come and try new things there are going to be some
misses and definitely some hits. A lot of those things have to do with people
experimenting and trying new grapes. Grape varieties for whatever they studied, or
wherever they're coming from, think would go well in a certain area because…if the soil
produces a microclimate, because of whatever else. I think the average Virginian would
be surprised to know how many different grape varieties are actually grown. You've got a
lot of Italian varieties, French varieties all across the place. Chardonnay more so than
Pinot Noir. I'm not exactly sure why. As far as quality, it's more Chardonnay. [laughs.]
Spanish varietals and definitely Italian varietals in Barboursville. Growing several
different Italian varieties. There are so many here.
[00:35:27] TC: I think it's technology. People can control things more and more, and get specific about what clone of grape variety does best in certain conditions and they can match those two things together. So it's technology in a broader sense. DNA matching in the mid-90s, when they started doing that with grape varieties around the world. It gives you more specificity as to what you're getting. Now you're talking about these different specific clones of specific grapes. You get dozens and dozens of different Cabernet Sauvignon clones or Pinot Noir clones. Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, I think are most popular of having cloned varieties. People will actually list Pinot Noir 777, they literally will list that on their bottles, in some cases. But I was just reading something about a specific clonal variety that was intentionally started working. Some Virginia producer they were working with, a specific Cabernet Sauvignon variety because they knew that it would do well in this climate. Maybe it was Sauvignon Blanc, but either way. As that technology comes out it allows people to control things a little more so they can negate the negative factors of growing and then in a difficult area.

[00:36:57] KS: So, part of the success or the boom recently in Virginia wine-making has to do with technology and having better control over the parts and pieces?

[00:37:07] TC: Yeah, the success of it. Maybe not necessarily the number of them, but I think the successes have increased because…

[00:37:15] KS: As variables?

[00:37:18] TC: I think so. Or at least variables that can be controlled a little bit more, because of the information that winemakers have now.

[00:37:30] You said you grew up in South Carolina?

[00:37:32] TC: [Mentions name of a city???] and then I moved up to Connecticut when I was 10.

[00:37:38] And then that's where I started working in restaurants when I was a teenager.

[00:37:45] TC: I came to the DC area in '97 with my sister and my nephew. I had come to meet her here, because she was in need of assistance. We lived up in Takoma Park. I knew I needed to live somewhere close enough to DC that I could get downtown and make DC money [laughs]. [00:38:12] My trips to Virginia at that point were to see friends, or to check out certain places. When I went to California in 2008, came back in 2009, I was in Santa Barbara, and I came back. From California I pretty much lived in Northern Virginia straight from then until 6 months ago when I moved back into DC. Aside from my shop and then the other shop I mentioned, I opened several restaurants in the area. And in most cases, actually in all cases, doing the wine lists there. With my own shop is when I really started looking into Virginia wines.
KS: Did you notice either in your consultation work or when you were working in a specific restaurant that there was an uptick in demand for Virginia wine, either from the customers, or from the restaurant owners, chefs?

TC: In my experience, if I had a say in a list, if I was in that kind of place, I was the one who was saying it. The way that I see it is, in the business, the trend so much now is the farm-to-table and locally-sourced this and that. It never made sense to me when people didn't want to do the same thing for their beverages. So any time since coming to Northern Virginia again, in 2009, any place that I have a part in or any place where I had say, then I would always ask, why aren't you doing more Virginia wines? And I know that it is somewhat cost-prohibitive, because Virginia is still at that point in their evolution with wine where there's a lot of bad to mediocre wine. And those are the inexpensive ones, and sometimes maybe even the expensive end. There's a huge jump from decent to good as far as price point goes. So it can be somewhat cost-prohibitive. You could never do an all-Virginia wine list. When I lived in Santa Barbara there was a restaurant in town that only did Santa Barbara county wines. And they had a huge list, because there could, because there were a ton of producers. Santa Barbara’s a relatively new region for the state, but there were still a lot choose from. Virginia's getting there. I think they'll get there very soon. But I don't think they're quite there yet. If you want to have a serious wine list, then, it might be snobbish to say this, but when I mean "serious" I mean no fruit-blended wines. Those are their own category.

TC: When I had my wine shop, the next thing I wanted to do were two projects: when the people vacated upstairs, I was going to make us a self-storage wine locker with a tasting room. The other thing I wanted to do was I wanted to find somebody to partner with and open a Virginia-only tasting room in Old town. Where they have like a nice amount of Virginia wines but also have wines from around the world. I wanted to do little small plates and Virginia-only wines and it would be a constantly rotating thing. I never got to.

KS: For the tourist traffic, I would think that would be good.
way to showcase the nice stuff. the spot that I took over on King street was the Prince Michel tasting room. And I took over their lease, because they decided [TC tries to remember name again.] [00:43:06] We took over their lease and then turned it into the wine shop. [TC tries to remember name again.] They have their tasting room over in National harbor. They have all of the wines of this winery and a couple other locals and then the rest of it's from around the world.

#earlymountain

[00:43:25] TC: So they're partnered with something like Early Mountain. Did you go up there yet?

[00:43:32] KS: I haven't talked to them yet, but I know who it is.

#thibautjanisson #virginiawine

[00:43:36] TC: There's a group of about 10 or 12 producers that work together to promote each other. So you go to Early Mountain's tasting room, and they have their competitors, other Virginia wines available there. I know one of them is the Thibaut-Janisson, the sparkling. It's him and Early Mountain and I think 3 or 4 others. [TC tries to remember names.]

#risingtides #redwine

[00:44:20] TC: But it's a good way to cross-promote. It's like Rising Tides, it's all darks? I think they're at a stage where Virginia wine producers need to work together. I think they do, generally speaking.

#redtruckbakery #warrenton #marshall #route29potatochips #virginiasaltworks #virginiafoodproducers #virgiyawineproducers #shoplocal #localproducts #localwine

[00:44:42] KS: I've noticed things like the Red Truck bakery has a story in Warrenton, and a store in Marshall, VA. They'll carry Route 29 potato chips, which are a Virginia brand, and they'll carry other Virginia Saltworks, Virginia whatever. It does seem to be that idea of we know we all have to make a name for Virginia food producers or wine producers.

#virginia #maryland #virginiamarylandrivalry

[00:45:10] TC: I think that that's going to only help everybody. I think it's important to come together as a community and make sure that they're in different places. I'm surprised by that. Virginia is ahead of Maryland, but the thing I find funny is it's impossible to find Maryland wines in Virginia, and Virginia wines in Maryland.

#dc #washingtondc

[00:45:32] TC: You can go to DC and find more. But I would think that as a region, they'd want to promote each other a bit more. And work together.

[00:45:41] KS: What do you think of that? Is it just the old Virginia-Maryland rivalry?

#blackankle

[00:45:44] TC: I think it might be! But it's really weird how, like I said, back in 2000 when I was introduced to the Maryland wine. I went to a couple of the wine festivals which shows you what's around, but it's not really serious event. That's where I got to know some of them. I had a couple favorites. This was before Black Ankle which is
considered the best or one of the best Maryland wines.

[00:46:17] KS: What is it called, Black Ankle?

[00:46:18] TC: I think it has to do with the piece of property that it's on. Some sort of formation that's called Black Ankle, that's where they get the name from. And it's considered to be one of the best if not the best Maryland producer. Up until recently, you couldn't find it in Virginia, and vice versa with VA wines in MD.

#protectionistpolicy

[00:46:41] KS: So the protectionist policy maybe

#rdv #rdvwines #freindsandfamily #somm #sommelier #lostmountain #rendezvous #rdv #virginiawine #stigma #localwine #europeanwine #americanwine #pretension #pretentious #hospitality #badwine #california

[00:46:44] TC: In some wine, maybe. Why buy Maryland, when you can buy VA? But there is a large segment of people who will stay away from VA wines. Just a couple weeks ago, I was taking care of a couple in the restaurant, and they wanted a bigger wine. We have the RdV Friends and Family. It's something they started making fairly recently. Just for restaurants, for by-the-glass in restaurants. Because they have their two: Lost Mountain and Rendezvous are really higher end. They're the only other things they produce. Friends and Family was then for the somms, for the people who were buying, but specifically for restaurants. And it was at the time the biggest we had by the glass. I make a joke about it that you have people taste it first and I don't tell them what it is. I intentionally won't tell them it's a VA wine. And there are some people who actually say, "it's not the VA wine, is it?" and I'm like, "please, I'll give you a taste, just trust me. It's not what you think!" So there is still that stigma. A good segment of the population of people who think that VA wine isn't good. I try to dispel that notion as much as possible. It really isn't true anymore. I don't know if it's this idea...I want to seem fancy. I want to seem like I know what I'm talking about. That whole other conversation about the stigma of the sommelier. The stigma of pretension around wine. Which I personally and professionally hate. I abhor that concept. People who act that way shouldn't be doing this, because it's about hospitality. We learn as much as we can so we can impart that to people. You don't want to be exclusionary. But I try to dispel that notion. Admittedly, there are a lot of bad wines produced in Virginia. there are a lot of bad wines produced in California! [00:48:58] All over the world, there are bad wines, obviously. There are many really good productions in VA that people should be taking note of. And people are starting to learn.

#italianwine #californiawine #frenchwine

[00:49:18] TC: Like I said, I still think it's going to take a little bit of time. And there are always going to be holdouts. I mean there are some people who swear they'll never drink French wine, or Italian wine, or California wine, or whatever. People will always have "their things" but generally speaking, like you said, information and the knowledge is increasing as more people talk about it.

#sommelier #sommeliertraining

[00:49:44] KS: Let me switch gears a little bit and ask you about your training that you went through to become a sommelier.
#somm #sommthemovie #movie #hollywood #thecourtofmastersommeliers #england #europe #us #winesteward #wineserver #restaurants #service #certification #certifiedsommelier #theinternational sommelier guild #credibility #mastersommelier #certifiedsommelier #diploma #education #training #course #studyingwine #wineexperts

[00:49:54] TC: There are a couple organizations around the world that offer different certifications or classifications of knowledge. They're more popular partially because of the movie Somm. Is the Court of Master Sommelier which started in England in Europe. Then a US branch came several decades ago. Now it's changing a lot, partially because of the popularity of the movie. And the restaurant business. Because sommelier specifically means a wine steward, a wine server. So that has to do with service in restaurants. So technically sommelier is only someone who works in a restaurant. You can't take a course and call yourself a sommelier, or you're not supposed to. It's frowned upon if you're in the industry or go anywhere near the industry or call yourself a certified sommelier if you haven't completed the minimum of certain courses. [00:50:58] The International Sommelier guild is one, The Court of the Master Sommelier, which is now the most popular. Even in the last several years. I've been in restaurants all my life, I've been studying wine for over 20 years. Beverages, but wine. And it was only after I had my wine shop that I was starting to feel a pressure to have a diploma, a piece of paper that said I knew what I was talking about. This is a way of proving myself or giving myself a bit of credibility. Because I saw it starting to happen. So I signed up for the intro course and that was January 2011. Then a couple months later, maybe March of 2012 I passed my Certified. And the Court of Master Sommelier now, that changed right before I started. There are 4 levels: Intro, Certified, and that's when you can call yourself a Certified Sommelier, then there's Advanced, and Master. And the movie Somm was about these guys trying to go for the Master Somm. And it gets progressively harder, obviously.

#masterofwine #wineandspiriteducationtrust #wset #thesis #defense #certificate

[00:52:08] TC: Not to say that my Certified was easy. It's going to get progressively harder as you move on. And that's above service. There's the MS—Master Sommelier, and then there's the MW Master of Wine. MW wine course is more about teaching and writing. MS is more about service in restaurants. That's the ending general distinction between the two courses. I also have my advanced certificate from what's called the Wine and Spirits Education Trust, WSET. It's an advanced certificate with merit. There are two levels that have to do with how well..there's a pass, pass plus, and pass plus plus. So it's with merit and with distinction. Something like that. And that's there are four levels to that, so I'm on the third level, and the next is called Diploma level, and that's the fourth level. There are 8 units that are divided up that you have to pass all of them. After you do that, you're invited to write a thesis, a 10,000 word thesis. If your thesis is chosen, you go in front of a panel of MWs and they quiz you.

[00:53:31] KS: Defense?

#certificate #redwine #whitewine #assesswine #blindtest #smell #taste #look #winequality #qualitywine #thegrid

[00:53:32] TC: Exactly. So I'm the second level, I'm certified Sommelier, and I have a certificate from WSET. This MS, the Sommelier course is there are three parts to it that
they test at this level. It's theory, general knowledge, wine tasting, and service. You have to be able to pass those three to move to the next level. So you have to be able to look at a red wine, a white wine, and you have to be able to look at it and you assess it. They call it the Grid.

#service #winepairing

[00:54:17] TC: You have to assess what it looks like, smells like, tastes like, and you put all of that information together and you guess at what it is. You have to get those two wines correct. It doesn't have to be the exact grape, but you have to be on course with what you think it is, and what your final assessment is. Initially it's to give you the tools to be able to assess a quality wine, what it might be, and then assess its quality from there. And then what it's going to taste like, what it looks like, what it tastes like, what it will go with, and the whole idea of service.

#blindtasting #certification #rajatparr #wineproducer #california #michaelmina #michaelminarestaurantgroup #somm #Sommthemovie #wineries

[00:54:56] TC: There are some guys out there. They're anti-certification. They think that blind tasting is a parlor trick, and you don't need to be getting these certifications. These are people who [laughs] who know a lot. Like one good example is a guy named Rajat Parr. He produces wines in CA. He used to work for the Michael Mina group. He's quoted in the movie Somm, and he has several of his own wineries now that he's making wine for. He's against the whole certification. Maybe I shouldn't say that, I can't speak for him. He's chosen not to go down that route. This is a guy whose knowledge is pretty vast, not unparalleled. He knows a lot. He's experienced a lot, he's tasted a lot, he knows what he's doing, and he chooses not to take part in this process. But the rest of us either want to or have to.

[00:56:07] KS: Mere mortals. [laughs.]

#vintagewine #winetasting #Certifiedsomm #mastersommelier #winepairing

[00:56:08] TC: Exactly. We either want to or have to on some level. I forget the numbers but to be a Certified Somm, you have to taste a couple hundred thousand dollars’ worth of wine in your life. When you get further and further up, that number goes up...like a million dollars’ worth of wine by the time you're a master sommelier. You have to be able to pick out 50-60 year old vintages of certain things just by sight, smell, and taste. To be able to do that, you have to have tasted a decent amount of wine. Even at the certified level, at the lower level of certified, you have to have tasted a good amount of wine to build up that muscle memory, that knowledge of what things are supposed to be like. Then what's in the glass, and why it would go with a certain dish and not another dish.

[00:57:06] KS: There could be so many variations from year to year. I don't even know how that...

#market #winemarket #winesales #sellingwine #foodpairings #teachingwine #writingaboutwine #aestheticsofwine #markettrends #restaurants #retail

[00:57:12] TC: It gets more specific as you go on. At my level, you have to get the wine within three years. Is it 1-3 years old, is it 3-5 years old, 7-12. The MW master of wine course is based more around aesthetics or teaching and writing. Because of that, you have
to know a lot more about market. Whereas Master Somm deals more with food and wine pairings. Master of wine, I remember the essay questions at the end of the advanced course was you had to be able to talk about why wine would pair with a certain thing. There are also questions about the market, the viability of a certain wine in a certain place, or a certain type of menu. It's more about market you get more into the figures and numbers of the market trends and things like that, the further you get up with an MW. Whereas Master Somm is about restaurants, master of Wine is about more retail. It's generalization.

#purchasing #winepurchasing

[00:58:33] KS: Or doing maybe purchasing for a big group or something?

#blindtasting

[00:58:37] TC: Exactly. You care more about the numbers with an MW course. The retail helped me a lot in that sense. They even taste differently. You still have to do blind tasting with MW, but afterwards the words they use are different, the focus is slightly different. But they're getting a little closer more recently.

#somm #sommthemovie #brianmcclintic #masterofwine #restaurants #sales #retail #wholesale #pouringwine #sparklingwine #openwinebottle #servewine #pourwine #certified #certification #masterofwinecertification

[00:59:05] TC: The wholesale aspect of it, the retail aspect of it helped a lot with the MW course was my living in restaurants my whole life. The irony is that I actually had been in wholesale and retail for several years prior to taking my MS course. I was so nervous when I was pouring the wine. They did a sparkling wine, you have to open it properly, serve it properly for a fictional set-up. The guy from the movie Brian McClintic administered my certified. This is before the movie came out. It was just a couple months before the movie came out.

#gender #genderandservice #winepairing #nervous #krugrose #rose #gloriaferrer #sugar

[00:59:47] TC: So he's sitting at a table alone and he says, "This is my wife across from me, and this is our friend Tom, and his wife." And male, female matters because you have to go in a certain order with pouring, the host, and things like that. They set up this fictional thing, and you have to open a bottle of sparkling and pour it properly. The whole while, they're asking you cocktail questions, food and wine pairing questions, as you're pouring. And I hadn't done this service. I had done it for many, many years prior, but I hadn't done it for a while so I was afraid. He actually wrote on my score sheet in big letters, "RELAX" because I was clearly nervous because I hadn't done service in a long time. I was rusty with opening a bottle. You know, they tell you this is a bottle of 2000 Krug Rose, or whatever they gave me, and meanwhile it's a $9 of Gloria Ferrer which is higher in sugar, so it was a little more ...

[01:00:53] KS: So you don't know if it's going to spray off in somebody's face!

#bubbles #sugar #highsugarwine #godmother #godfather #pinksquirrel #cocktails #oldfashioneddrinks #vodka #cremedememthe

[01:00:55] TC: I remember shaking with opening. Because of the bubble that comes up with the higher sugar wine, it's gonna bubble up more. So I'm trying to pour in one
constant little stream and this tiny little opening of a champagne flute, my hands shaking! [TC laughing.] He's asking me what's the primary spirit in a godmother and I have no idea! [TC laughs]. Because I'm not 90 years old. The last time somebody drank a godmother or a godfather it's vodka by the way, I looked that up after. I immediately went outside and found cell reception and googled it. "Damn it!" [TC laughs.] I'm like, "I'm not sure about that one, let me ask my bartender." Because you're supposed to role play to a certain extent. And he's like, "well, if you had to guess." And all I could think of was a Pink Squirrel. So I'm like, "creme de menthe?" I think that's what I actually said. I was too nervous. That was fun.

[KS laughs.]

#advancedsommelier #sommelier #seminar #exam

[01:02:03] TC: I do want to go for my advanced. But now the process, because of the popularity and so many more people who come into restaurants because now it's much more fashionable to open a restaurant than it used to be. The intro level never existed, they added that. Now to weed professionals from casual observers they have a seminar, and you have to apply to the seminar, and you usually don't get in for 2 years, and then you can't take the exam for another year or two after that. It's getting more and more difficult on that side.

[01:02:36] KS: So they're weeding people out?

#jjprum #johjosprum #tribeca #tribecagrill #nyc #newyorkcity #riesling
#urzigerwurzgartenvineyard #germany #vintage #vintagewine #redshoulderranch
#germanwine #shafervineyard #hobby

TC: In a sense. When I took my intro, there was a guy who was retired at the ripe old age of 40, and worked in some industry where he made a ton of money to live off of the rest of his life. He was taking an intro course because he had an interest in wine. The first day I saw him he bought a really nice old bottle of wine at the restaurant down the street from where we were taking the course. The second day of the course, it was while we were waiting for the results at the Tribeca Grill in NYC, that’s where I took the intro. We went downstairs and a couple of us got some food, ordered a glass of wine while we were waiting for the results. He bought a JJ Prum German Riesling 1977, I forget which vineyard, it might have been an Urziger Wurzgarten because that's always been my favorite. And he bought 2 other bottles, a Shafer Red Shoulder Ranch, probably $600-$700 of wine, and he was sharing with everybody. He was pouring a glass for himself and he was like, "just taste this." He clearly had enough money where this was just an interest that was a hobby. I guess they're trying to weed out those types. They have room for them--I'm sure that those types make them a lot of money as a company. As far as people who are actually in the industry, they're trying to make it harder, to weed people out.

[01:04:22] KS: So how does it work? You said the restaurant is downstairs, is it always in the same place? Is it different places?

#jayyoumans #masterofwine #capitalwineschool #dc #washingtondc #wset #pauls
#paulswine #paulswineandspirits #paulsliquor #liquorstore #wisconsinavenue
#languedoc #classes
[01:04:30] TC: It moves around. The WSET they have schools in DC. It's the Capital Wine school. A guy named Jay Youmans who is an MW and he's been an institution in the DC area for wine. It's on Wisconsin Avenue above Paul's. He's in the building above that. I've done several of his classes. I was just there for something on the Languedoc last week. I'm going to look at the rest of my MW with him.

[01:05:30] KS: would you have to get in, get accepted?

[01:05:33] TC: You have to apply. On the early stages you apply, you pay your money, you have to join for the Court of the Master Sommelier, you have to join the Daily Somm. And that's an annual fee. And they give you information and training materials and things like that. As you go further up, it gets harder. Like I said. I have to sign up for the seminar and then I'll find out in June if they accepted me to the seminar. Then I would have to pick what place. They have them very often in Texas, one here, they always move around to try and go to different regions a couple times a year. To come to people. So it's not like one university you have to travel to. They do them all over the country, there are certain cities that seem to be their favorites. They'll only hold the higher-level exams once a year in certain regions. Which is the other reason you have to wait to do your next level.

[01:06:40] TC: When I got my certified, the intro was at Tribeca Grill in NYC, the Certified I did out in Virginia Beach. And we're supposed to do it at the Convention Center, but something happened with licensing where Virginia wine laws, we weren't allowed to have that many bottles open at once in the space because of the license or because of the restrictions of the space. So we actually went next door to a restaurant. it was literally across the street, and two or three of the people from that restaurant were actually taking the exam as well. So he opened up his restaurant early. We all went over to the Convention Center and went, "what's going on?" They're like, "go across the street." They can do it different places, it's just a matter of how they set it up, or what time of year it is. They have partners that they will constantly work with, or hotels.

[01:07:45] TC: So they do come to you, to make that easier. But it ain't cheap, so it's nice they do that.

[01:07:50] KS: How much? If you don't mind my asking, how much did it cost to do like one of these levels.

[01:07:57] TC: It's usually hovering around between $900 or $1500 per. My certified was $1200. The next one is going to be about the same just for the seminar. If I get accepted the exam is separate, about the same. Now for the advanced level, they divided it up. There's a class we have to take and then you take another later date if you're accepted, you take the exam.

[01:08:37] TC: It'd be, by the end of it, probably 8 grand. It's beginning to add up. It's no joke.
TC: It's nice when you work for somebody to get your education, so they will pay for it.

KS: Do they sponsor it? Is that common that they would sponsor somebody to go through?

TC: Because usually you have to be working in a restaurant. In most cases, it's a badge of honor if you have a certified somm or an advanced somm. There are a lot of them in DC now. I'm part of a couple different tasting groups, and we're all certified advanced, going for the next level. A lot of them work in the really nice restaurants in town.

KS: What's the tasting group?

TC: In most cases, it's peers, people who are going for certified or advanced, or people who are in the business, we get together and we practice. We obviously we drink wine. We do blind tastings. Usually everybody brings wine to taste. So everybody brings a white and a red on a chosen theme. Sometimes it's general accepted varietals. They're at least nice enough to do this, they're going to test you on the most common varietals. They're not going to test you on some obscure varietal from some corner of the world that no one's ever heard of. You have to know about that, usually, for the written exam, and you have to be able to tell them all about that, but you don't have to taste the wine from there. There are certain accepted varietals, and that list is growing. So you have to bring an accepted varietal white and red or on a theme and then we all take turns going through The Grid, is what it's called. Going through the different sections of breaking down the wine by sight, smell, and taste, and what we think it is. Then we'll stop and well go around the table and see if anybody agrees or disagrees. So it's just a discussion about wine, and then we'll also do in the midst of all that theory, while we're tasting, go around. Sometimes they devolve into games of show and tell. Especially you get certain personalities that are prevalent in the sommelier business. But they're informative. You find a group that works well for you, they're people on your level or near your level that you can actually get something from, or you can give to. You practice. Building up that muscle memory, tasting blind and then trading stories and trading information. "I was studying this region and I read this, and I thought this was really interesting." It's a pow-wows of sorts. It's fun.

KS: That’s got to be an interesting thing too…between the different groups saying “oh, that group's a joke!” I could see there's maybe some rivalry stuff going on?

TC: There definitely is. You know who are more serious. There are some groups who get together and its study group as an excuse to get together and drink with your friends.
KS: Nothing wrong with that sometimes!
#fun #pleasure #social #advancedsommelier #mastersommelier

TC: No, and there are situations where sometimes it's really informative, and
sometimes you really didn't get anything out of it except to have a little fun and a little
wine. There are others that are very serious and very matter-of-fact and business-like.
Those are usually people who are on the higher. It's a lot more serious as you go up the
ladder. People are going for their advanced and going for their master, and those groups
are pretty intense. Just because of me and my philosophy on food and wine, I like those
groups every once in a while, but right now I'm not so serious about it that I need to be in
one of those groups. Sometimes I find them intimidating and off-putting. [laughs.]

KS: How would you summarize, elevator speech of what your philosophy of
food and wine is?
#hospitality #enjoyment #food #philosophyoffoodandwine #philosophy #finedining
#pretension #service #italiandining #italianrestaurant #italianwine #expensivewine
#foodpairing #berrolo

TC: We need food for nourishment. So when you get to a certain level of
going out and spending your money on a certain level of food that is worthy of that, I
think it's about enjoyment. What I grew up in, there is my Italian heritage, and just the
type of restaurants I grew up in, I don't like the pretension. I don't like the stuffiness. I've
worked in fine-dining restaurants where you can't speak and you have to keep your hands
behind your back. I've done that. I prefer now. It's about enjoyment. It's about having
fun. Again, hospitality is very very important in the restaurant industry. I think it's
something that's lost in a lot of places. I think it's something that's faked poorly in a lot of
places. I think genuine hospitality is an amazing thing. Part of that is making guests feel
like you're on their side. When you're trying to shove information down somebody's
throat, that's not being on their side. Or when you're trying to gouge them for the most
expensive bottle, you're not on their side. I often feel guilty because I go for the wine and
people may joke like, nothing in the three digit range, if I'm suggesting a bottle. And I'm
like, that's fine. Especially working in Italian right now, and I have worked in Italian a lot
for the last several years, you don't need to spend a lot of money to get a really nice bottle
of wine. It's just a matter of the characteristics of what you're eating and how it's going to
pair. A lot of times when people ask prices on bottles, I don't even know what the prices
are. Like I said, "Oh, it would be really good to have a Berrolo with that." No wait. We
only have that in the 250 dollar Berrollos. Let's look for something else.
#quality #qualityfood #qualitywine

TC: It's more about the enjoyment. You could tell when someone does want to
spend a lot of money, if they're trying to show off. And that happens. And you can tell
when people are really nervous about what they're going to spend. I'm a little more
sensitive to that person. you know, somebody saves up and this is the one place they're
going for the month, I'm not trying to take all their money, I want to make sure that they
have a good time, and when they go out the next month, maybe they'll come to see us
again. It's more important to me about the quality of the food, the quality of the wine, and
the quality of the experience. Is the most important thing to me. I've gotten more relaxed
and casual in my later years. I think that goes hand-in-hand.

[01:16:21] KS: You definitely see this, very eager people who in learning something new, and you want to distinguish yourself, like I know stuff! It can be a bit showy, I think.

#smiling #smile #hospitality

[01:16:34] TC: I probably was like that at a certain point in my education. I think it's more about the experience, it's more about making that connection. I think it's important to have a smile on your face and be happy in those types of situations, because there's no reason to be any other way.

#mastersomm #mastersommelier #training #masterofwine #mw

[01:17:01] KS: What do you see going forward, you've talked about wanting to do the master somm?

#blog #blogging #wineblogging #website #consultingcompany #wineconsultine #teaching #writing #writingaboutwine

[01:17:09] TC: And Master of wine. My intention was to get them both done by the time I was 45. But I've opened too many restaurants and done too many 80 or 90 hour work weeks to really be able to do that. That and they added these other levels to the MS, so that's definitely not going to happen. I will always be a waiter, no matter what else I'm doing, in a sense. But I am finally more interested in the MW course of teaching/learning. I think that with my consulting company and focusing on that more, time to get into teaching and writing. Time to get into wine writing, on some level. I'm in the process of finishing my website for my company and starting a blog, a new daily or weekly thoughts on wine, reviews, things like that. I feel like that's important to start up.

[01:18:17] KS: It does happen that a blog leads to something.

[01:18:22] TC: I've been asked to for a couple different wine groups and publications locally, I've been asked to do a couple articles along the way. And enjoyed it. So I think I'm going to expand on that.

#map #virginiamap #winemap #tourism #virginia #virginiasforlovers #virginiawineisforlovers #virginiaforwinelovers #guidedtrails #vineyards #virginiavineyards #virgiawiine.org #virgiawiineboardmarketingoffice

[01:18:38] KS: I have in my hand here a map that was produced by somebody Virginia Wine is for Lovers, Virgiawiine.org the Virginia wine board marketing office, and I've noticed they've done a lot of these guided trails and different things and divided it by regions and done lots of stuff. They're incorporating it into tourism and stuff like that. It's a big money-maker for the state of Virginia. For tourism and economic development.

[01:19:15] TC: Virginia is for Lovers, now they've expanded it, they have a whole other section is Virginia is for Wine Lovers? [KS agrees.] [01:19:23] It makes sense. I wonder how much this has changed since publication?

[01:19:31] KS: have a 2017 as well somewhere.

[01:19:34] TC: It'd be funny to compare the two and see how many people are on the map.
KS: I've heard that they're going to take this paper map and make it into an app, and they're not going to have a paper map anymore. But I think there's still quite a lot of people who'd like the paper map.

[Recording paused for a break.]

KS: A lot of the people that I talk to have come to this life late. They've done something else, didn't know what to do with their lives and fell into wine. I just recently bought Naked Mountain a few years back. Naked Mountain is, Markham Delaplane so kind of closer. Early Mountain's further out west.

KS and TC discuss if Naked Mountain and Early Mountain are the same thing.

KS: Just a couple more questions. Then if there's things you think of later that you'd like to add, or things we didn't get to, or if I have questions I can follow up with you at another time. There's always something you forget.

KS: What is something unexpected or that people don't really understand about the type of work you do with wine?

TC: It's funny to me how many people, it's probably true of everything, to be in other people's shoes. People assume that it's all fun and just drinking. I tell people what I do or I mention, they're like, "oh, I'd love to have that job!" Actually, it's not just drinking wine. That is an aspect of it, yes. When I was young and I washed dishes at the deli, I couldn't eat a deli sandwich for 5 years because of all the smells and what I ate for that period of time, and I was done. So there's an aspect of some of the fun being taken out of wine consumption. Because you're always assessing it. You're always thinking about it from a professional point of view. I always used to joke, after a long day at the wine shop, all I want to do is go home and have a beer. [TC laughs.] I don't want to smell wine, because it's all over my hands. I don't want to think about wine, I don't want to talk about wine. I want to drink a beer and not think about anything wine-related. So there's an aspect of it that ruins it because you do have to have a certain love or passion for it that doesn't go away, no matter what. I definitely feel like I have that. But a lot of people assume that it's all just fun and games. There's actually a lot of other work. There's a lot of study, there's a lot of memorization of certain things. It's not just about the wine tasting, and the muscle memory. You have to know all the grapes of the region, you have to know how they can differ, you have to know all the regions.

KS: So do you subscribe to magazines? How do you keep your knowledge up with current stuff that's going on?

TC: Of late, I've actually been bad about that, but generally speaking as much as I might not believe in the Wine Advocate or the Wine Spectator, (the Speculator, as it's often called in the business) [KS laughs.] You still have to know what things are trending. I find that if I'm not reading other people's tasting notes, in something like the
WA that's all tasting notes, they do go overboard with some of the terminology that's used. Again that pretension. Like back in the day when they would describe a Gewurztraminer as Lychee.

[01:25:53] KS: People don't know what a lychee tastes like!

#vocabulary #winevocabulary #taste #terminology #teaching

[01:25:57] TC: Exactly. So what's the point of using that word if you're not getting the point across? You have to find language that's going to make people understand. That being said, I find that I lose my words if I'm not reading tasting notes from other people because I shrink back down to red fruits, spice. There's so many things that could be happening, you have to be reminded of the terminology. It is a whole different vocabulary. I say when I'm teaching classes you have the vocabulary for it, you have the terminology that you need, you just have to connect the dots.

[01:26:42] KS: So you have a taste frame of reference?


[01:26:48] KS: But you may not be translating that to what you're tasting.

#soiltype #soil #growinggrapes #winehistory #wineregions #blueberry #marjoram
#oregano #taste

[01:26:50] TC: Exactly. The thing you want to do is go to a great grocery store with a great produce section and walk around and pick things up and taste and smell them. I do that sometimes too, and it's the same idea. It reminds me. Sometimes I forget what a blueberry tastes like. Amongst all the other things, if I haven't had a blueberry in a while, I have to think about it. Or I have to have one, to remind myself what an actual fresh blueberry tastes like. Sometimes you forget what things smell or taste like, and you have to be reminded. I get oregano and marjoram. You have to remind yourself of things. You recall it more easily the next time you're doing some kind of tasting. So it's a lot of little things like that. It is definitely a lot of new reading, it's a lot of reminding yourself if you've got a little rusty on a region, going back to that region and reading up on it again about the soil types about the grapes, about the styles, about the history. The regions.

[01:27:53] TC: It's constant reading, if you're really up on it. And it gets harder the more and more serious you get about it, the higher and higher up you go.

[01:27:59] KS: And that's not compensated. That's something you just have to do.

#profession #job #career #industry #restaurantindustry #restaurant #clopening #clopen #physicaldemands

[01:28:03] TC: That's you being good at your job. And keeping up. It's the minimum of what you need to do to make sure that you're doing your job properly. Sometimes certain things will get stale, and you'll have to move onto the next refresher shelf and move on. It's a constant process just to do your job well, it is a constant process. It's not just tasting, there's a lot of other stuff that goes into it. People go, "oh yeah yeah I was just kidding." Believe me, I understand. It's just about different personalities. I understand that I could probably never work in a cubicle. I don't know if it's nature or nurture, if it's who I am, or because I grew up in the craziness of restaurants, that I need some certain level of craziness, otherwise I get bored. I acknowledge the fact that I do work in a really
great industry and I have a lot of fun doing it, or I wouldn't do it. That being said, to excel at this profession, and it is a profession, it's not a job. To excel at this profession it does take a lot of work. You have to be committed to it. You have to have a certain level of passion that's going to drive you to keep up with it. [01:29:32] Right down to the physical work, a couple doubles in a row, late nights, and clopen, when you close a restaurant down, and you have to open it the next morning.

[01:29:44] KS: What do you call it, a clopen?

TC: “Clopen” is a term that's floated around. You're on a close-open. You don't get out until 1 am and you have to be back at 9 which means you don't get home until 2, and you have to get up at 7. So it can be physically exhausting as well. It takes a lot to keep up with that. I'm just not someone who could be comfortable very long having to go to an office. I've never had one. Aside from when I had the wine shops…

[01:30:26] KS: You were still interacting

TC: That's one of the things I love about the profession. For me, and I don't take it likely, is that one of the things I love is that every day is going to be different. Even if I'm going to the wine shop, I never know what kind of people I'm going to meet or stories I'm going to hear, or tell.

[01:30:53] KS: We talked about the things you trained for and study and develop in your palate. What are some of the skills that you use in your work that might be overlooked?

#restaurantgene #restaurantskills #hospitality #service #restaurantwork #skills #jobskills #taskmanagement #todolist #multitasking #patience #empathy

[01:31:12] TC: With training staff, I used to say there's a restaurant gene. Either you have it or you don't. There are people who worked in the restaurant business for decades, they do it well, but they don't quite get it, and there's some aspect of hospitality that they're missing. And there are people working for 2 weeks and there's just something about them that gets it. And in reality, I think anybody can work in a restaurant in a sense, but to be really good at it, you're a combination of personality traits that come together to make someone a really good restaurant worker. A couple of them are, you have to be good at task management, you have to be able to juggle a lot of balls at one time. Like I always say to people who are waiting tables or even in any situation, you constantly have a to-do list of 15 things and once you get one of them, or two of them done, you have two more that or three or five more to take their place. It's just a constant running to-do list all the time. If you don't get that, or can't do that, then you usually won't do well in a restaurant. It's a constant “I have to clear that table, I have to greet that table, I have to talk to them about the menu, I have to take her wine order,” it's constant. And you do have people who help you, support staff who help you. There are some things they can't do, or you have to say, "I need to tell them to do those 3 things while I do those 7." It's constant. You don't stop until you're done with the shift. I think there's a certain level of patience, a certain level of empathy that's necessary. You talk about a good waiter will know how to read a table, and to do that, you have to be aware self-aware, but also aware of what could be going on. Have to have an open mind in that sense. What could be going on--a certain level of perception that allows you to see what’s possibly going on. I have this theory that in my writing I want to develop, this idea of the psychology of hospitality. There's a lot of nuance and a lot of little things like this that come into play into doing
restaurant work well, doing hospitality well. I think it's really true. I think that it's important to be able to engage people in the way they want to be engaged. Connect with them. Like I said, if you're using terminology that they don't know, then what's the point? The whole point of communication is to understand each other. If you're using words they don't know, then why bother? It can be as simple as translating a word in an Italian restaurant where you're using Italian names for types of pasta. Quickly, because you don't have much time, but in a word they'll understand that doesn't seem like you're being condescending just because they don't know. There's nothing wrong with not knowing. I'm sure there are a thousand things about anyone's profession that I don't know anything about, why should they know about mine? That's why I'm a professional, I'm your guide, I'm here to help you through that. There are a lot of little things, personality traits. I meet an 18 year old who's just waiting tables for the first time, and I can see that they're very trainable, they're going to be good at what they're going to do. And I've seen people who're in their 30s, 40s, 50s, who've been doing it forever, management or waiting tables, and there's just something they don't quite get. That could be completely in my head, I could be wrong. But I think you see the people who are successful in the industry, and they always have these groupings of personality traits that come together to make a good effective restaurant worker. On any level.

[01:35:35] KS: It's a really interesting thing to study. You here about Alan Alda's recent work, he's been translating the what scientists and doctors say into normal people speak, and he runs seminars through this non-profit he set up to help doctors and researchers and scientists de-mystify what it is they're doing. So that when they have to talk, give a pitch to a Congressman, or a patient, or they're trying to get funding for something, whatever they can get, they have to unlearn all that specialization that they've learned to be able to present the same information in a simpler, more digestible way. So there's been quite a lot of work about that in these very technical specialized fields, though I could see the same thing being true. We're all translating for others what we're doing.

[01:36:35] TC: And to do that, I think it takes realizing what people might not know or the differences in of what people's experiences are, and what their knowledge is, to know where to start. It's a never-ending.

[KS wrapping up] Is there anything you wanted to add? Do you see yourself staying in the VA area? Is this the area you want to?

[01:37:22] TC: I've moved away for a couple things over the years, but I've always come back. I lived in, like I said, California for 18 months, Central America for 6 months, I was in Baltimore, Eastern Shore with my mom's restaurants. I always come back. So I think I have to just realize the fact that this is it.

KS: Thank you very much I appreciate it.

TC: My pleasure.