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WINE

The goddess Meditрина smiles upon vintages made to delight women

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You knew Bacchus was the Roman god of wine. But did you know there was a Roman goddess of wine? Her name was Meditрина, and she was the deity in charge of wine, longevity and health -- so concerned with our well-being that some say the word "medicine" came from her name.

Every Oct. 11 came the festival called Meditრinalia -- when the season's harvest was in and its first wines made, devotees would mix new wine with old, drink a copious share and pour a little onto the earth for the gods and goddesses.

Or so mythologists say.

And that's good enough for Susan Sokol Blosser, owner of Sokol Blosser Winery in Oregon's Dundee Hills. She has given the name "Meditრina" to her warm and generous blend of pinot noir, syrah and zinfandel. It has no hard, tannic edges, and she says it's aimed especially at women.

"Most wines are aimed at men," she says, because they eat more red meat, and want more powerful, tannic wines than women.

"Men are more interested in ratings, and proud to have a classy bottle in their cellars. Women are more interested in what kind of food it goes with."

Blosser praises the new spate of wine books aimed specifically at women, even those that might risk feminist ire by describing a versatile, all-around wine as "like a little black dress."

"Women, even professional women, don't know about wine," she says. "This can give them the skills."

Blosser herself seems to be seeking the title of, if not goddess, at least protector of the earth. She's given up chemical fertilizers and pesticides and earned a "USDA Organic" designation for her winery. She's taken it a step further by meeting the standards of LIVE -- the Low-Input Viticulture and Enology group. Her underground cellars meet the standards of LEED -- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. And her vineyards are designated "Salmon Safe" for keeping chemical runoff and silt from fouling the nearby salmon-rich Willamette and Colombia rivers.

"It's my sense of justice," she says. "We're depleting these natural resources so fast nature can't keep up."

Blosser says she tries to make "fun" wines and "serious" wines. The Meditრina is her fun red. Her fun white is Evolution, an intensely aromatic blend of pinot gris, muller thurgau, white riesling, semillon, muscat canelli, gewürztraminer, pinot blanc, chardonnay and sylvaner. It starts with intense aromas and that start sweet and finish dry -- making it the ideal with for spicy Asian and Pacific Rim dishes, she says.

Blosser says she believes her earth-friendly methods will become the norm someday. "Consumers want organic," she adds. "The only question is whether we're too late."

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

- **2003 Sokol Blosser Pinot Noir**, Dundee Hills, Oregon: intense, perfumy violet aromas; full-bodied, powerful flavors of mulberries and cinnamon; long, tart finish; \$30.

RECOMMENDED

- **Nonvintage Sokol Blosser "Evolution"** white wine (pinot gris, muller thurgau, white riesling, semillon, muscat canelli, gewürztraminer, pinot blanc, chardonnay and sylvaner): American appellation: lively aromas of lychee and orange blossoms, sweet citrus fruit, grapefruit-tinged finish; \$18.

- **Nonvintage Sokol Blosser ``Meditrina''** red wine (pinot noir, syrah, zinfandel), American appellation: warm and generous, with spicy cloves, bright black cherry fruit and mocha flavors; \$18.

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