

# mondovino and us

t

he film *Mondovino*, which played last month at the Full Frame Film Festival in Durham, explores the connection between wine, business, and society. In an interview with the *Washington Post*, filmmaker Jonathan Nossiter discussed this connection: “Every aspect of society is reflected in the wine world — rich and poor, peasant and aristocrat — if you take the temperature of the wine world, you’re taking the temperature of the world at large.”

And the temperature is rising for small winemakers, who find themselves on the hot seat. They face aggressive competition from global conglomerates--represented in the movie by Robert Mondavi--that are intent on remaking the wine industry in their image. The conglomerates advocate a single international standard of how wine should taste--a standard that’s reinforced by large marketing budgets and the eager participation of media such as the *Wine Spectator*. They expand their empire by purchasing vineyards in Europe, Australia, even South America, and re-formulating the wine to fit their marketing plan.

[Since *Mondovino* was made, the trend towards consolidation in the wine industry has only

BY: RUFFIN SLATER, GENERAL MANAGER

increased. In December, Robert Mondavi was acquired by Constellation Brands, an even larger conglomerate with not only major wine brands (Rufino, Woodbridge) but also beer (Corona, St. Pauli Girl, Tsingtao) and spirits (Black Velvet, Fleischmann’s) labels.]

At stake for small producers is the potential loss of a way of life that in many cases goes back centuries.

For these winemakers, the emphasis is not on producing wine to match a marketing formula, but rather on the cultivation of the vine, and the unique flavor produced by their particular region. The pressure on these winemakers to succumb to the new wine order is enormous, but there are pockets of resistance. For example, in Languedoc, France citizens voted out of office a mayor who

supported the purchase of a large tract by Robert Mondavi, and Mondavi was sent packing.

At stake for us as consumers, is the loss of the opportunity to choose wine that is associated with a particular place. However, just like the citizens of Languedoc, we too can buck the trend. We don’t have to purchase re-formulated wine from impersonal corporate giants. We can assert our own buying power and purchase wine from independent winemakers who remain committed to their craft.

Jim Stock, the “Haw River Wine Man”, is a local wine importer. Jim seeks out winemakers who are dedicated to producing limited quantities of the finest quality wines and who share a passion for “terroir”, or “sense of place”. Jim provides Weaver Street Market with several wines from small producers in Italy. One is Abbona Barbera, which is produced by the Abbona family, who have a long history as winemakers in the Piedmont region.

Weaver Street Market is committed to bringing you wines from small producers like the Abbona family. We will increase our efforts to source these wines, introduce you to the producers, and identify them in our wine department. Working together, we can help keep independent winemakers in business, and continue to enjoy the richness that comes from a wide variety of authentic wine choices.