

Tom Bjornsen

Tom Bjornsen started his 27 year career in the wine business in 1981 with a job cutting cases and stocking shelves in a wine and liquor shop in Millwood, NY. He eventually rose to assistant manager, taking part in buying, promotions, hiring and training, and became an integral part of the store's success in the wild wine times of the mid 80's. It was here that he laid the groundwork for his life-long love of wine and food.

In 1989 he moved to Virginia, creating the position of Fine Wine Salesperson for Broudy Kantor out of Richmond Virginia. (Later to be bought by National Distributing). His duties here included training other sales members on fine wines, bringing new brands to the market, opening the Charlottesville Territory, overseeing Winemaker Dinners and events, and assisting in fine wine buying decisions.

In 1991 Tom left Broudy Kantor to go back to the retail and restaurant end of the business, this time as GM of Tastings of Charlottesville. He joined with Bill Curtis, owner of Tastings, to help create one of the finest and most unique wine destinations of it's kind on the entire East Coast. Tastings featured over 130 wines by the glass and the half glass, a full retail wine shop with over 2000 selections, and a full service, fine-dining restaurant under one roof. At the time, it was one of the only establishments of it's kind in the entire country, and certainly the first of it's kind in Virginia. They pioneered the concept of serving wines by the "flight", or a series of 3 or 4 half glasses of wines grouped by category, region, varietal or flavor profile.

In 2003 Tom left Tastings after 12 years to once again take a shot at the Wholesale side of the business, this time with Franklin Selections, a wholesaler out of Annapolis MD, who was just making inroads into Virginia. Franklin Selections was bought out by The Henry Wine Group, and he stayed on with Henry for 2 years, becoming the number 1 salesman for the state of Virginia for every month that The Henry Wine Group operated in Virginia.

In 2005 Tom was thrilled to join The Roanoke Valley Wine Company as their Virginia sales manager. He had known and bought wines from Rob and Beth Crittenden (and many of their sales people) at RVWC all the while he was at Tastings, and jumped at the chance to join their small, family owned company that had as it's focus, small, family owned producers from all over the world.

Since then Tom has seen the expansion of the RVWC sales force from 8 to 13 salespeople in Virginia; has assisted in the acquiring of countless new producers and brands that fit the Roanoke Valley Wine Company mold of small, family owned, organic-when-possible profile of fine wine producers and done countless Wine Dinners and Events all over the state of Virginia. He spearheaded the building of Virginia's premier portfolio of Grower's Champagnes including Michel Arnould, Gatinois, Coutier, Dehours, Voirin Jumel, Chapuy and Agrapart, and has helped make Virginia a hotbed of interest in Grower's Champagnes by spreading the gospel of small, artisanal Grower's Champagnes throughout the state.

Tom has traveled to most of the major wine-growing regions of the world, including France (he tries to spend a week every January in Champagne with Roanoke's producers) Spain, Italy, Argentina, Chile, South Africa & the West Coast of the US.