



Snippets in Time

AT **MARBLED & FIN** IN CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, **TRES COKER** EMBODIES THE IDEA OF THE SOMM AS STORYTELLER **by Helen Mitternight**

The Angel Oak is the largest tree in Charleston, South Carolina, measuring more than 66 feet high and more than 25 feet in circumference. Some consider it magical. No wonder, then, that there's a wine label named for it. Launched in 2009, it's owned by the same people who operate the hottest new steakhouse in the Holy City, Marbled & Fin, which naturally showcases these wines.

Marbled & Fin sommelier Tres Coker says that the Angel Oak line, which hails from investor Nigel Cooper's SignoSeis vineyard in the Valle de Uco in Mendoza, Argentina, began primarily with Malbec and Torrontés; it grew to include Pinot Noir and blends of Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon as well as Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvèdre. "The wines make great pairings for your steak and other cuisines. They have rich body while maintaining a crisp, bright quality," she explains.

Beyond Angel Oak, Coker aims to bring in wines that will pair with the "marbled" side of the restaurant's menu (red meat) as well as the "fin" side (fish). "How I work is I like to know what people like, and we go from there," she notes. "You can tell someone what a pairing is, but if it's not something they like in the first place, it's not going to work for them. If people are open to pairings, well then, that's really exciting and they can move through different types of wine to pair with the marbled and the fin."

This isn't Coker's first steakhouse. She learned to love wine when she was working as a server at Hawksmoor in New York City, where sommelier Lauren Hoey encouraged her to learn more about wine. Coker became a sommelier and, with Hoey's encouragement, she kept educating herself; in fact, she recently passed her Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) Level 3 exam. "I'm still learning every day, even

days that I have free. I'm quite new to this, but it's really exciting," she says.

Reflecting her interests, Marbled & Fin's list includes a section titled "Curated Picks," featuring wines that Coker has selected not only for their flavor but also for the sustainable practices and stories behind them. "Right now, I'm loving the Ladeiras do Xil As Caborcas," she notes. "This is a project between two winemakers who go and find special terroir throughout Spain. The wine has a perfect balance of body. It has structure but it is elegant, and you get these really fresh forest fruits, white pepper, and violet. It's a great price for a wine from a 'Grand Cru' site."

Ultimately, Coker adds, "We try to select things that are from many different places in the world, iconic as well as more niche areas. These are all some form of artists capturing a really special snippet in time and bottling it for people to experience." 