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## Questions of Taste

By [Purva Mehra](#) | September 16, 2010 | [Leave a Comment](#)

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"Wine can be a very pretentious subject and often, the hardest thing about wine is the vocabulary," says Lindsay Groves, The Oberoi's new head sommelier. "A lot of the pretension is a result of the lack of knowledge." Groves believes that "style-based" menus, like the one she's created for [Ziya](#), the Oberoi's fine dining Indian restaurant, are "not only good to educate consumers about wine but also allow people to experiment with wines". At Ziya, the wine catalog is categorised according to the taste and texture of the wine as opposed to its region. Diners can choose from "fruity and aromatic" wines, "light and crisp" ones, "voluptuous mouth-filling whites" and "full and muscular reds".

Twenty-eight-year-old Groves studied oenology and viticulture in her hometown of Ontario. A passion for travel and eagerness to explore new wine regions brought her to a wine fair in Mumbai in May last year, soon after which The Oberoi hired her for a year-long stint as their in-house sommelier. Groves, who began working at the hotel in July this year, spoke to us about her favourite Indian wines, wine snobbery and the advantages of being a female sommelier. Edited excerpts:

### **Do people expect female sommeliers to mostly recommend light whites?**

Not really. I'm a great fan of younger, more structured wines, but I have noticed that people here tend to prefer older ones. For instance, they're quite averse to Super Tuscans, which are full-bodied wines with firm tannins.

### **Do men refrain from seeking help while choosing wines?**

Men have a more straightforward idea of what they like and don't like. Women tend to get more chatty, ask a lot more questions and are very open to suggestions. With men, I suppose I have more of an

advantage as a female sommelier because the sense of competitiveness doesn't creep in as opposed to with a male sommelier. With the latter, men tend to be quite stand-offish.

### What are the signs of a wine snob?

An unwillingness to try new wines and only sticking to branded ones. A lot of people also say they don't drink Indian wines. I never understand this, how can you expect to learn if you can't expand your horizons? The people who brag too much are often the ones who know the least. Wine is such a vast area of study. It's an ongoing learning process. There's always someone who will know more than you in a particular area.

### What are some of your favourite Indian wines?

Sula and Grover are producing high quality products. We're in the process of finalising our Indian wine selection for Ziya, and in the process I've come across some great small scale producers like the [Good Earth Winery](#), [Vallonné Vineyards](#) and the [York Winery](#), all of which will feature on Ziya's wine list.

### What sort of wines pair well with Indian food?

It's commonly assumed that a Riesling is a given for Asian food and that the cuisine can't be paired with reds. But that's a lot of nonsense. New world wines or wines that have an intense concentration of fruit are really suited to the intensity of Indian food. The key is to stay away from intensely tannic wines and stick to the fruit driven ones. I'd say medium to full-bodied whites and lighter-bodied reds are a good bet.

Tags: [Lindsay Groves](#), [Special Top Story](#), [The Oberoi](#), [wine](#), [Ziya](#)

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Wow! Way to go Lindsay, you go girl. You inspire me with your confidence, you are so right, learning about wine is a never ending journey. One must be very open minded to experience the world of wine which is like the universe itself, still uncharted as a whole yet while some stars shine more than others, there are those ones that we have yet to discover. So keep looking, keep looking for the stars, keep falling, keep falling in love anew day, after day! Best of wishes to Lindsay, she is a spark, lucky Ziya for letting Lindsay bring it to everyone gently and light their wine passion. Cheers and hugs. Jolanta

Jolanta Budziak | 2010-09-18 07:37:41

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