

Molly's BOTTLE CLUB - August 2021 chillable reds for summer

Stephen & Mathilde Durieu 'Mere Grande'

from: Beaujolais, France

winemaker/ farmer: Stephen & Mathilde Durieu

grape: Gamay

facts & random info: the Durieu family has been growing grapes & making wine in Beaujolais since 1755

Stephen worked in his family's vineyard as a small child and when he decided to remain in the family business, he studied and made wine under the tutelage of Brouilly legend Jean-Paul Lapalu (fact: this is where he met Mathilde).

In 2000, Stephen & Mathilde began to build their own domaine by piecing together a few holdings from family and friends. Eventually, they were able to secure a small and very humble winery in St. Etienne-des-Ouillères; lucky for them, this tiny little spot allowed them to discover a historical plot of Gamay planted in 1918.

A riff on an old French nursery rhyme that is a favorite of their daughter Louise (aka Lou) became the name for the new winery and viola' Lou. Y Es-Tu? was born. No de-budding or green harvesting which keeps the grapes from getting too ripe as global warming is affecting even Beaujolais.

Mere Grande is made from the vines discovered - planted in 1918, these vines are over a 100 years old!

Seaweed powder is used, if needed, to guard against mildew and harvesting is done by hand.

Grape sorting is done in the vineyard to leave behind all debris (stems, slightly dried grapes, etc) as mulch & compost.

Carbonic maceration happens for 10 days or so and then fermentation finishes in concrete and very old barrels

There are no pumpovers, no punching down - no human influence during the making of the wine other than the picking & sorting.

Bottled when ready with little to no sulfur added.

tasting notes: dark fruit (black cherries & blackberries) with spice and dark chocolate: complex, earthy notes give the fruit structure. Elegant, soft tannins and slight herbal notes linger long after the wine is finished. Serve slightly chilled to bring out some red cherry and more acidity.

pairing ideas: grilled halloumi with lamb & cherry salsa!!

Damiano Ciolli 'Silene'

from: Olevano Romano, Lazio, Italy

winemaker/ farmer: Damiano Ciolli

grape: Cesanese - ancient varietal being revived by two brave souls - Andrea Occhipinti & Damiano Ciolli

facts & random info: 35 miles south of Rome and nestled up against Orvieto, there is a magical place called Olevano Romano. Here we find the land of hot springs, volcanic soils plus the largest volcanic lake! And although Vulcini has not really been active for hundreds of years, she is still considered 'active'.

In antiquity, wines from Lazio were considered the world's best, reserved only for emperors and those close to them. This is epitomized by the 'Opimian vintage of 121 B.C.,' so age-worthy that they were served at a banquet for Julius Caesar 60-years later to honor his Spanish conquests!

Sadly, tastes changed and vines were ripped out to be replaced with hazelnut trees used to make Nutella. The land suffered (still does) vines suffered, of course, so did the wines. But there is a movement in these hills to stop the planting of hazelnut trees for The Ferrero Group to produce Nutella. The herbicides & pesticides used to spray the trees are killing the local wildlife, damaging the local ecosystems and wreaking havoc on Lake Bolsano. In defiance, locals are planting organic gardens and supporting the regeneration of Cesanese, Aglianico & other local varietals to make the wines that may yet rival the ones so highly prized in the old writings. Lake Bolsano was created during one volcanic event and now repays the area by creating its own microclimate which keeps the region warm during winter months and cooler during summer months. Vines love this!!!

Etruscan artifacts are a regular find here! and just driving around, one can clearly see the ancient walls, aqueducts & even find old pieces of pottery or coins while walking in the vineyards.

It is in this magical place that the vineyards are planted in volcanic soils 450 meters above sea level.

Vines are nearly 100-years old.

Damiano is young but 5th generation of winemakers so one could argue that winemaking is in his blood. He is the first of his family to bottle and sell outside the neighborhood!

Fermented in stainless steel and aged in concrete allows the fresh fruit characteristics to remain.

tasting notes: bright red cherries, ripe raspberries & red plums

some spice notes dance in tandem with hints of floral notes

juicy acid and grippy tannins give way to a tingly, yummy fruit bomb that makes me want to sip this again and again!

pairing ideas: grilled hanger steak or tofu with pepper sauce

a quick note about the following wines:

I do not, in any way, want to detract from the classic and amazing French & Italian wines in the club this month! Both are amazing and the people making them are incredible! I do want to acknowledge that the August club wines of Croatia and Slovenia are unique, deserving a pause from us. These are wines made by people who survived the Soviet occupation - lands taken from them that they still worked and loved even while not knowing that they would ever be able to own again. If you are old enough to remember when the Berlin Wall fell, you can perhaps remember or glimpse what it was like to live in those times. Some of these families lost everything and then lost even more during the Serbian war. and yet everyone I met in what was then Yugoslavia was warm and welcoming - sometimes we had to watch for landmines and pause for a moment of silence to honor a passed-on loved one or to listen to a story about the old days - every person was filled with warmth, love & eager to invite you in! Each moment was magical and most were filled with laughter. I am deeply humbled to have met and walked with these heroes. And I sincerely hope that when you are tasting their wines you can experience a glimpse of the love & warmth they offer - the wines AND the people!

Piližota Babić

from: Outskirts of Šibenik, Dalmatia, Croatia

winemaker/ farmer: Ivica Piližota

grape(s): Babić

facts & random info: mostly fertile red and brown top soil with finer brown clay stones, and a rugged and tough limestone foundation.

The vineyard locations are on slopes or semi-slopes, with an altitude level of 50 to 300 meters above sea level. These vineyards see some of the warmer temperatures in Northern and Central Dalmatia, with interestingly cooler nights and constant salty breezes that whip around this hill and mountain crammed area

This estate has been in the family since the 19th century. When the Soviets declared that no one could own personal property, the family was allowed to stay working the land including the vineyards but handing over everything to the state.

With the collapse of the iron bloc, the land was returned to the Piližota family and Ivica was able to take over the estate in 2002.

Hand-harvested, de-stemmed, with classic fermentation in open stainless steel vats, with approximately 10 days of skin maceration. Aged in stainless steel tanks and then afterwards put into large used Slavonian oak barrels of 600 liters for about 6 months in order to soften it up before bottling. Wine is coarsely filtered meaning you might find a bit of sediment but not huge chunks :-)

tasting notes: Ripe dark fruit - blackberries, blueberries, plums, and figs. Bolstered by the classic earthiness of the Babić grape, the body has weight and complexity. Everything about this wine is traditional Babić - smooth and firm tannins with mouthwatering acidity. Yummy gamey characteristics dance with the plump dark fruits and the structural components let the smooth finish go on and on and on!! The slightest chill (15-30 minutes in the fridge) brings out the fruit and lets the acidity shine!! Like a very friendly and intriguing Croatian, this yummy red wants to be your friend and come along to your next BBQ!

pairing ideas: anything grilled but 'specially wild game, grilled sausages or lamb! and if you really want get authentic, roasted lamb with potatoes!!

also amazing with cured meats and hard cheeses! or my personal favorite - around a bonfire (safely contained in your firepit or a camp pit, of course!) with a friend no matter what is being cooked!

Kobal Blaufrankisch

from: Haloze, Slovenia

winemaker/ farmer: Bojan Kobal

grape: Blaufrankisch

facts & random info: the Haloze appellation is located in Štajerska Slovenia and since Roman times, this area has been considered one of the top wine-growing sites in Central Europe. Most of the terrain in the Štajerska region is made up of very steep-sloped vineyards and narrow, wind-rich hill valleys. A diverse geological soil composition on these steep slopes consisting of marl (carbonate-rich mudstone containing clay and silt). The roots of these old vines are forced to go deep into the ground for needed water! These deep roots also absorb minerality which shows in all the wines at Kobal!

Bojan grew up in these hills and among the vines so it was natural for him to come back. He & his wife are restoring an old house and cellar while reviving old vineyards and planting new vines. They welcomed a baby boy a few months ago!

Hand-picked grapes are de-stemmed and then skin macerated for 21 days.

Fermentation happens in large open oak vats.

The resulting wine is aged in used barrique barrels for 6 months

Bottled unfiltered and unfinned

tasting notes: ripe blackberries, black mulberries and italian plums

dark chocolate with some baking spices; minerality and juicy acid combine with velvety tannins that leave your mouth watering.

chill it down to bring out some red fruits and plummy acidity!

pairing ideas: cured or smoked ham, grilled pork chops with some grilled plums, grilled chicken salad, grilled burgers and fries

any type of game - venison, wild fowl, wild boar, rabbit that is (of course!) grilled!

Personally, I loved just drinking it while listening to everyone argue about the best grilling techniques and snacking on some amazing hard cheeses!