

Molly's BOTTLE CLUB - February 2021 red blends to cozy up with

Francois Chidaine Touraine Rouge

from: Touraine, Loire, France

winemaker(s)/ farmer(s): Francois Chidaine

grape: Côt (aka Malbec), Pineau d'Aunis, Cabernet Franc

facts & random info: located just north of the Cher river near the villages of Montrichard & Chissay-en Touraine, the soils here are gravelly loam with some chalky limestone and clay - perfect for growing chenin blanc (Francois' primary grape) but also particularly suited well for the indigenous varietal Pineau d'Aunis!

Vines are 40-80 years old providing great concentration in the fruit.

Côt is local dialect for Malbec but as Malbec has become synonymous with Argentina, a lot of producers in France have gone back to using the word Côt.

Pineau d'Aunis is an indigenous grape that is one of my absolute favorites! According to wikipedia, it was a favorite of Henry Plantagenet who had Pineau d'Aunis wine first brought to England in **1246**. I'm not sure why this grape has gone out of favor but it has and there is precious little left planted in France.

tasting notes: Good dark concentration of fruit where no one varietal dominates and each one compliments the others. The faintly mineral nose shows notes of pepper melded with the red fruit and leads into a wine with medium tannins, good concentration and length. Not a heavy wine and one with plenty of character, and bright acidity

pairing ideas: braised meats, blue cheese burger!!

even a veggie burger with blue cheese and tater tots (trust me!)

lamb ragu with polenta

also just drinking without worrying about it worked well for me :-)

Pedro Parra 'Pencopolitana' Pais/Cinsault

from: Bio Bio Valley (secano interior de Yumbel), Chile

winemaker(s)/ farmer(s): Pedro Parra

grape(s): Pais & Cinsault

facts & random info: In 1758, the city of Concepción was completely destroyed by a great Tsunami. In the years and centuries that followed, Pencopolitano came to mean "citizen of Concepción, my city, Capital of the Itata Valley and terroir for all of my wines."

This city is now industrial and not exactly the place you would think to find an incredible wine. So you can imagine my happiness when I tasted this wine :-)

and Pedro Parra is such an incredible man who is a bit obsessed with soil. In fact, he is one of the world's leading soil experts particularly as it pertains to vines - he has even written a book about soil and its effects on wine (if you are a super geek like me, you should read it - it's amazing!!!).

Granite soil, dry-farmed ancient vines with a constant sea breeze.

This lovely blend is aged in untoasted foudres (super large barrels) and cement tanks for one year followed by eight months in bottle before release. This wine is honest, intense wine with a great personality that shows it's humble roots (just like Pedro).

tasting notes: this is an intensely savory wine with hints of smoky bacon, salty toasty nuts and an elegant texture that is both light and balanced. Fresh red fruits and a back palate that explodes with salinity and minerality. Every time I taste this wine I find something else to ponder - even if you don't love it, you'll think about it (kinda like my high school boyfriend - sorry if that's oversharing!)

pairing ideas: grilled anything! I know who wants to be outside right now??? but just in case, you have a grill inside - this would be great with a simple grilled steak.

I drank it with French Onion Soup done veg style with loads of mushroom - it was incredible! the brightness cut the fat of all that cheese and richness!

Solar Fortune 'Noble Cru'

2 vintages to compare - you know how i love to do that!

from: Valle de Guadalupe, Baja California, Mexico

winemaker/ farmer: Santiago Lopez

grape: 30% Mourvedre, 25% Syrah, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Petit Verdot

facts & random info:

this vineyard site is at 1,100 ft elevation in the northernmost section of the Valle which is about 15 miles from the Pacific - this part of the valley is called Francisco Zarco.

It's crazy - the confining walls are so tight at this point that they create more of a canyon than a valley and the vines are surrounded by OLD live-oak trees, shrubs and almost desert like conditions. But then the ever present sea breeze comes up through the canyon one we are reminded that the sea is close!

sandy soils of decomposed sandstone and some red clay

This creates a unique microclimate where the temperature differential between the mountainsides and the valley floor generates a nearly constant breeze eliminating the risk of cluster rot or powdery mildew. This also creates the naturally high acidity of all the Solar Fortune wines and their very prevalent floral components.

While these vines may be a bit young (planted in 2007), they are starting to come into their own and I continue to be impressed with the wine Santiago is producing.

Fermented in stainless steel tanks for 2 weeks and then racked off to neutral French oak barrels and aged for 12-14 months.

2014 - Hurricane Odil ripped through the Baja in September this year which was super bad timing for harvest. Lucky for these grapes (and us now!), the canyon shielded most of the grapes from too much damage.

2015 - HOT year! you know it's a fascinating thing but history shows us that hot years produce the longest lived wines. I don't know why that is and even the experts debate it. I guess for now we'll just have to drink the wine and ponder on it :-)

2014 tasting notes: red fruit - think plums and red pie cherries. Cloves, cinnamon & vanilla bean round out the fruit. Slightly green notes like stems or capsicum shows the

effects of the weather this year! Balanced tannin but maybe a little young.

2015 tasting notes: dark plum, slightly over-ripe blackberry, leather, spice!! dare I say bacon? there is a hint of over-ripeness here but one I think will age out. Maybe slightly out of balance right now but for a hot year wine, this baby is good.

Decant if you can!

Both these wines could age another 5+ years and the 2015 maybe even longer!

pairing ideas: Mushroom & Oaxaca cheese (from that guy at the Ballard market!)
quesadilla's!!!!

or just Oaxaca cheese with a little Macha (the peanut chile sauce that I dream about!)

Grilled lamb loin with olives and rosemary

Pork Loin with cherries & olives

side note - when I drank (ahem! tasted) these at home, it was about 66 in my house and I was cuddled up with my pups - it was perfect!! sooooo please do not drink this wine too cold! Santiago's wines tend to do better when at room temp (like 65 or higher). I've noticed when tasting them cold (like outside these days), they tend to be slightly out of balance with super high acidity that makes 'em a little tangy.