

Molly's BOTTLE CLUB - December 2023

happy holidays!!

TreMat 'Vinell'

from: Santo Stefano, Treviso, Italy

winemaker/ farmer: Gianni Bartolin

grape(s): Perera, Verdiso, Bianchetta & Glera

facts & random info:

It was a year ago that I wrote a wine crush about this place and this wine. And it was after a visit where I had just spent some time with him and a few other people in his vineyards! Now another vintage is here and I am just as smitten!

Hand-harvested grapes for "Vinell" are left to dry using the 'appassimento' method - a gentle approach that lays the grapes out to naturally dehydrate 6-7 days . The slightly dried grapes are then crushed and macerated on the skins for four days followed by a gentle press to remove the skins. The remaining juice is left to ferment spontaneously in old wooden casks on fine lees for six months. The wine is bottled for secondary fermentation in bottle using must from the same vintage - this method is called col fondo and is classic for the region. Typically, these wines stay local and the filtered, sterile Prosecco's that are often slightly (or more) sweet are the ones that get made for other markets. For me - i love col fondo style which lends a bit more character and structure!

tasting notes:

like biting a bartlett pear with crisp citrus acidity and hints of white flowers that clung to your shirt after a walk through the vineyard. Fresh minerality with a surprising structured mouthfeel and a very lovely balanced finish.

pairing ideas: fresh goat cheese on a cracker with a pear compote on the side!! or slightly under-ripe brie with warm bread!

I tasted it with latke's the other day and fresh applesauce - thought I'd gone to heaven!!

Anne Santi 'Raspato'

from: Umbria, Italy

winemaker/ farmer: Francesco Annesanti

grape(s): Sangiovese & Aleatico

facts & random info:

Raspato has several labels as a playful nod to the village life

"Raspo" is stem in Italian so the name is a reference to the whole cluster fermentations Francesco employs for this Pet-Nat

The property was cultivated by Francesco Annesanti's grandparents so like most peasant properties of the past, it's goal is self-sufficiency - in addition to the vines, the land has olive trees with rotating crops of cereals and legumes

grapes are hand-harvested

Typical Pet-Nat - bottled before the primary fermentation is complete, so the fermentation process continues in the bottle to produce a natural spritz

tasting notes: slightly cloudy with an orangey-pink hue

delicate & long lasting bubbles for a Pet Nat!

green apple, white peach, unripe melon bring on all the freshness

bright cherry, ripe strawberry and a touch of toasty bisquit adds complexity - cleaner and less funky with a nice mineral finish

pairing ideas: Christmas morning with latkes, homemade applesauce & really good, crispy bacon!

sipping while talking with friends - maybe add some fresh goat cheese and crackers for the perfect pairing!

black-eyed peas and crispy bacon bits with a healthy dollop of creme fraiche

Piližota Babić 2016

from: Šibenik, Dalmatia, Croatia

winemaker/ farmer: Ivica Piližota

grape(s): Babić

a genetic cousin to Plavac Mali, Babić is an ancient varietal that is mostly grown in Dalmatia

facts & random info: on the Adriatic coast of Croatia is a magical place called Šibenik. I discovered it on the way to visit Kornati. The 15th-century stone Cathedral of St. James is decorated with 71 sculpted faces and the views are INSANE!

It is also where I met Ivica and walked in vineyards that absolutely blew my mind! These vineyards are rugged with a limestone foundation on slopes that range from 50 to 300 meters in a matter of a few vines.

The vines see some of the warmer temperatures in Northern and Central Dalmatia but with incredible views that come with cooler nights and constant salty breezes that whip around the hills and cool the grapes resulting in amazing diurnal shifts!

Hand-harvested and de-stemmed grapes

first fermentation is in open stainless steel vats where the juice spends about 10-days with the skin resulting in an amazing tannic structure.

Aged in stainless steel tanks for a bit then the juice goes into large used Slavonian oak barrels of 600 liters for about 6 months - Ivica feels that this slight oxygen exposure will soften up the rustic before bottling and I agree.

tasting notes: WOW! right out of the bottle there is so much ripe dark fruit (blackberries, blueberries, dark plums and figs). Deep tannic structure with the typical earthiness known of the Babić grape. Some aeration - swirling or even a decant - brings a complexity and balanced weight that is simply gorgeous. Silky smooth tannins that yield to mouthwatering acidity. Figs, tobacco and Dalmatian herbs with salty sea breezes prevail!

pairing ideas: my first experience of this exact wine with food was a Dalmatian dish called Pašticada - basically a beef stew served with gnocchi. But this isn't your average beef stew! it is the "back end of the cow" cooked all day long with celery root, figs, plums, parsley root, thyme, carrots, onions, apples, bacon, bay leaf, chocolate, rosemary, red wine - I'm sure I forgot something but basically, that's the gist. It is absolutely incredible and typically served only for wedding feasts & other special occasions.

another famous dish for the region is roasted potatoes and roasted lamb cooked on a spit or (more typically) under the "peka" a dome-shaped pot cover that is cooked over a fire so the skin cooks a crisp perfection and the meat inside is tender and loaded with juices then the whole thing is sliced over top the roasted potatoes

another great pairing - cured meats with ripened or hard cheeses

Domaine Ozil 'Barry'

from: Ardeche, Rhone, France

winemaker(s)/ farmer(s): Jean Daniel & Thomas Ozil

grape(s): 70% grenache noir and 30% syrah

facts & random info: the chosen use of Vin de France or Vin de Table for a lot of winemakers including Jean Daniel & Thomas is an intended snub to the bureaucracy of the French governing body that oversees wines, cheeses, etc. Because these farmers do spray poison in the vineyards or use certain additives (including yeast strains), they are often denied the ability to use the name such as Rhone or Ardeche. So even when the wines are 'approved' by the AOC, many winemakers will choose to use Vin de France or Vin de Table as a snub or even as a solidarity with fellow winemakers who has been told to dump out wine.

The brothers Jean Daniel & Thomas are 4th generation and began producing their own wines about 10-years ago. Prior to that and for the generations before, the grapes were sold to the local coop.

The estate (really it's just a farm) also grows peaches, olives, vegetables & lavender - the goal is biodiversity as well as really good wine!

tasting notes: “gorgeous spicy, red fruits with tinge of forest air on a cold hike” those were my first notes!!

And now having a reminder taste (teehee!) I stand by those notes - plus bramble-berry, ripe raspberry, dark chocolate with savory, herbal notes - absolutely crushable when slightly chilled & first opened but utterly stunning the next day (if you can save any)!

pairing ideas: i literally just drank the last few drops with some Rush Creek Reserve cheese which was freaking so good!! like seriously, google it if you don't already know it cuz it will blow your mind if you like gooey, stinky cheese.

I think a traditional Christmas dinner would also be a great fit! herby, roast chicken with potatoes!!