

Molly's BOTTLE CLUB - February 2022 pink

Domaine Emile Balland 'Les Beaux Jours'

from: Loire, France

winemaker/ farmer: Emile Balland

grape(s): Pinot Noir/ Gamay

facts & random info: Just across the river from Sancerre, lies a relatively unknown region called Coteaux du Giennois. Blessed with both chalky and flinty soils, it is here that Emile has the majority of his vineyards. And although the family has deep, deep roots here (they've been making wine here and in Sancerre since the 1600's), Emile didn't start his own domaine until 1999.

Vines are 50+ years old

Saignee method - "to bleed" which is a traditional method of making the red wine a bit more structured as well as providing a fresh delicious rose. It literally means that the rose is made by taking juice from the red wine process - the juice left behind is more concentrated and the juice taken becomes a yummy, refreshing rose!

Emile is very tall especially for a Frenchman (just an interesting fact)

tasting notes: one of my favorite rose's in the world is Sancerre rose - but with climate change affecting the Loire in the form of horrific hail storms, Sancerre rose has become almost extinct <insert big drippy tears>! So when I tasted this wine for the first time, I was freaking blown away! Secondary follow-up tasting also blew me away and so when I saw that it had come back to Seattle I was sooooo excited! Seriously, this wine is offering a LOT of Sancerre rose vibes! Simply put - this blend of Pinot Noir and Gamay is glorious!

Lovely and fresh! Loads of bright red fruit - think Rainier cherries, alpine strawberries and slightly under-ripe raspberries. Then the classic earthy, peppery notes of a Sancerre rouge kick in with all that smoked mushrooms and grilled plums! A mouth-watering zesty finish leaves me wanting so much more!!

pairing ideas: Mushroom, wild rice stuffed delicata squash

Golden Gardens sunsets by the bonfire (don't forget to bundle up this time of year)

it is the perfect day-sipper paired with nothing other than chatting before dinner!!

Domaine L'Astre 'Flamenc'

from: Port-Sainte-Foy-et-Ponchapt, Dordogne, France

winemaker/ farmer: Aude Duval & Sylvain Ohayon

grape(s): 50% Sémillon + 30% Cabernet Franc + 20% Cabernet Sauvignon

facts & random info: Sylvain was a winemaker in the Medoc and Aude worked in a wine store in St. Emilion but it was in Argentina that they met and fell in love. When asked why they quit their jobs to start their own project (pardon the translation) -

“One day, we have wished to make sense of our life: Create a wine so good that by drinking it you feel beaming with friendship and kindness. One would taste a terroir. One would essentially feel all the work of Nature.”

well, you can see why I fell in love with them on the spot!!

The vineyards and cellar are on the border between Dordogne and Gironde in the Purple Périgord (so called for it's autumn leaves and the grapes of the region) - SW France between the Loire Valley and Pyrenees mountains

Vines grow on limestone cliff in a hilly landscape surrounded and protected by a forest

Natural yeast (of course)

direct pressing

white and red grapes are mixed

fermentation and aging in old barrels (6-7 months)

No filtration or fining prior to bottling.

tasting notes: absolutely beautiful and very light salmon color gives way to bright red fruits - rainier cherries, ripe raspberry, field strawberries & minerality

complex with a depth not often found in a rose!

a very well-balanced wine with complimentary acidity and structured tannin

pairing ideas: This is the land of foie gras, truffles, geese and duck! and this is a rose that could stand up to those rich dishes.

also loved it with a grape, blue cheese pizza I made in my new Ooni!

La Valle del Sole Rosato

from: Marche, Italy

winemaker/ farmer: Alessia and Valeria Nicolo

grape(s): Montepulciano

facts & random info: The sisters, Alessia & Valeria, are 4th generation winemakers and while the entire family is involved, the sisters have taken the reins!

Located within the medieval township of Offida

Vines are at around 300 metres above sea level - this area is midway between the highest mountains of central Italy and the Adriatic Sea. The Gran Sasso (2,914m) to the south-west creates constant ventilation and high day-night temperature differences which the grapes love!

tasting notes: more of a medium bodied rosé : ripe blackberries, mulberries and sour pie cherries - forest floor, savory herbs and a wonderful gravelly mineral finish that really lingers in the mouth. Almost a light red rather than a rose!

pairing ideas: grilled lamb with cherry chutney!

classic Abruzzo traditional dishes - simple meat lasagne or fresh pasta with a tomato sauce or venison simply prepared with polenta & ragu

Artana Wines Tavkveri Rose

from: Artana, Kakheti, Georgia

winemaker/ farmer: Taso Akhvlediani

grape(s): Tavkveri

a rare, indigenous female vine which must be interplanted with hermaphroditic or male vines to pollinate. MIND BLOWN!

in this case, it grows in the vineyard with other indigenous varieties and pollination occurs with bees and the wind.

facts & random info: it is said that Georgia is the birthplace of wine and archeological discoveries have been found that indicate it was 8,000 years ago that wine was made here. Georgians practice a particular way of winemaking, making wine in a conical clay vessel known as a Qvevri. Specifically, the wine undergoes both an extended fermentation and maturation in Qvevri; it's a so-called Amber Wine. Although Amber wine most often references 'orange' wine, in Georgia, Amber Wine refers to any wine entirely made according to the old tradition, whole bunches of grapes (with stalks) run into a satsnakheli (a wooden trough typically carved a single piece of wood). The juice then runs into the Qvevri where it ferments and ages. Modern technology now allows it to be bottled but in the old days one used a device fashioned out of gourds to extract the wine from the Qvevri. The filled gourd was passed around as the daily allotment of wine for each person in the household.

at Artana, Anastasia and Mariam have inherited the family vineyard and have continued growing biodynamic grapes, and crafting natural, raw, real wine.

The grapes are picked by hand then foot-trodden (so as not to damage the pips or seeds). The sisters follow the tradition of the must or juice going directly into the Qvevri. Once the fermentation is completed and the cap of skins, seeds & pips starts to sink, the filled Qvevri will be capped with stone or glass lids for the malolactic or 2ndary fermentation; the covers are then sealed hermetically with limestone clay or earth, and left in the ground until spring (typically late March or early April). Bottled unfinned & unfiltered.

tasting notes: WOW! definitely more of a light, chillable red than a rose - red berries, hibiscus, wild elderberry & green plums Raspberries, red currant, cherry and cranberry for days on the palate. A tannic structure that definitely showcases the clay Qvevri and balances the bright fruit acidity.

pairing ideas: classic food in this part of the world is a long braised beef stew with prunes or baked mussels with herbs and potato

i loved this wine on its own but also with hearty cheese and toasty bread!