

ROCK JUICE WINES ⚡ September 2019

At the very least, all RJ wines are farmed organically/biodynamically (certified or verified practicing), fermented only with native yeasts, and produced with no additives except a small amount of sulfur (50ppm or less).

2018 Danilo Marcucci 'Brioso' Sangiovese Rosato Frizzante \$24

Region: Monte Melino < Umbria < Italy

Grapes: Sangiovese

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Zero-input, organic farming, made in the ancestral method with one fermentation in the bottle; zero added SO₂; 12% ABV

Winemaker: Danilo Marcucci

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? Pretty pink pet'nat from our winemaker crush, Danilo Marcucci, that isn't as frothy as it looks – it's like an iron fist in a velvet glove, with concentration, power and red wine tannins.

Danilo Marcucci is one of the most outspoken and authoritative natural winemakers in Italy, and widely regarded as a true master of the craft – and in some circles, the wine whisperer. He travels the length of Italy working as a consultant to several wineries, but instead of trying to leave his own stamp on each project he collaborates with the owners to maximize the expression of their own fruit and terroir (try to explain this one to the French!) Each wine has its own personality but uniquely represents its place and the people behind it. Luckily, he married into a family, the Conestabile della Staffas, who happened to own a bit of land. This is a minor understatement as this noble Umbrian family formerly oversaw hundreds of acres of agriculture in the 1700s, producing over 10,000 hectoliters of wine. Production gradually declined and the two World Wars effectively ended it altogether, with the last wine produced in 1956. The property and vines were left untended, but no chemicals were ever used. Enter Danilo. Years after marrying heiress Alessandra, he finally focused his efforts on the family property, rehabilitating the vineyards and making wine with the indigenous varieties that had been growing there. Like the Sangiovese that goes into his Brioso fizz, a wine that happened by accident -- one morning a few years back he noticed that wild boars had been eating the grapes in one particular vineyard spot, so Danilo decided to harvest those grapes on the spot to save them from the boars. Because the grapes weren't super ripe, he decided to make a frizzante wine with them, which was so delicious and popular that it became a regular thing. THANK GOD. Because it is the pet'nat that so many aspire to be. An effervescent journey into deliciousness, a glass of strawberries and rocks dipped in gold glitter, the purest essence of red Sangiovese fruit delivered in a million tiny bubbles. F**ING SUPERB.

2018 Domaine de L'Achillée Crémant Quetsches Alors \$23

Region: Alsace < France

Grapes: 95% Victoria plums + 5% Riesling

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Biodynamic farming; plums are macerated and foot trodden, the juice is fermented naturally, and then the second fermentation in bottle starts with a liqueur of Riesling juice; 333 cases; 5.5% ABV

Winemaker: Pierre and Jean Dietrich

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? Pet'nat of plums that tastes like next-level kombucha and makes you feel like you're doing something healthy for your body? Yes please, we'll take another glass of delicious pink antioxidants!

We know what you're thinking...plum wine? That swill they give you for free at the end of the meal at cheap sushi joints? Bleh. Because that's exactly what was going through our minds. Until we tried this bright, hazy plum fizz bottled under crown cap from a small biodynamic estate in Alsace. Brothers Pierre and Jean took over the farm, farmed biodynamically since 2003, from father Yves in 2016 – the same year they stopped sending grapes to the cooperative and started bottling everything themselves. As well as vineyards, the estate has six hectares of fruit trees, so the brothers decided to experiment, and last year made 4,000 bottles of this plum crémant, a refreshing magical elixir that makes the perfect Indian Summer late afternoon pick-me-up (tested)!

2018 Oyster River Morphos 'Morphos' Pétillant Naturel Rosé \$23

Region: Maine < USA

Grapes: Merlot

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic farming; hand harvested, no added SO₂; 11% ABV; 200 cases

Winemaker: Brian Smith

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? Fuzzy, cloudy, raspberry-hued pet'nat of Merlot from Long Island, made in Maine, with zero additives, that looks like a pink snow globe of Christmas on Mars -- need we say more?

NEW VINTAGE ALERT! We featured 3 vintages of Brian Smith's killer Pét'Nat of native American grapes Seyval Blanc + Cayoga, from the ultimate US cold climate, Maine. This is his rosé Pét'Nat of Merlot from Long Island. Like the white version, this cloudy, fizzy wine is

extremely charming, low in alcohol (11%) and full of life. Brian lets this wine ferment slowly in his naturally cool cellar over several months. He sums up his hands-off ethos: "I believe my role in the winemaking process to be more nature's assistant than winemaker. We add nothing and take nothing away from the natural chemistry of the fruit." Made using the ancestral method for bubbly, Morphos is bottled before fermentation is complete, trapping the CO2 that gives it a natural fizz, and the spent yeast, making the raspberry pink hue softly hazy, like the tail end of a sunset with wildfire smoke in the air. Like now. Brutal. But the wine is delicious, dry and savory with a hint of green spice (duh, Merlot). Sort of like watermelon kombucha with the tiniest hit of jalapeno.

2016 Fattoria Cappa 'Etabeta' Frizzante Rosé \$21

Region: Castellina Marittima < Tuscany < Italy

Grapes: Vermentino, Sangiovese, Syrah, Rebo

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Biodynamic farming, only horses used in the vineyard, no machines; alluvial soils; Vermentino fermented first in open vats, then the rest of the varieties added a week later. A portion of the must is removed and kept chilled. Everything rests in stainless and concrete vats until early February when the reserved must is added and wine is bottled with a crown cap, unfiltered and unfiltered with no added SO2. The must finishes fermenting in the bottle until there is no residual sugar to eat; 11.5% ABV

Winemaker: Andrea di Maio

Fattoria Kappa started in 1999 when two Austrian friends, both wine lovers, were on holiday in Italy and found themselves lamenting the (sometimes questionable) quality of high-priced Italian wines and decided to start their own project in the Maremma, Tuscany's own wild west (except that it's southern). They were adamant about working in a very traditional way, no machines or spraying in the vineyards, no additives, including SO2, in the cellar. This is their lightly fizzy rosé, a blend of red and white varieties done in the Col Fondo method, a traditional way to make bubbles using the preserved must of the grapes to start a second bottle fermentation, crown caps and no disgorging. The color is a beautiful rose gold, the bubbles soft and fleeting, but the palate is vivid with bright, juicy red fruit and a ripe melon finish. In a world of rapidly rising pet'nat prices, this biodynamic beauty is a steal!

2018 Denavolo Catavela \$24

Grapes: Malvasia Aromatica di Candia, Marsanne, Ortrugo, Trebbiano Romagnolo

Region: Colli Piacentini > Emilia-Romagna > Italy

Vineyard / Cellar Stats: Organic/biodynamic farming with serious biodiversity in the vineyard; calcareous soils; fermentation in steel with a 7-day skin maceration; bottled unfiltered/unfiltered with zero-added SO2; 9% ABV

Winemaker: Giulio Armani

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? Orange wine for everybody! Nothing weird or overly tannic here, Catavela is all light, fresh, floral, salty goodness in a drink-the-whole-bottle-yourself 9% ABV package.

Giulio Armani has a lot of experience making natural wine. He has been the winemaker at natty wine stalwart La Stoppa in Piacenza for a long time. But we're really loving the wines from his own side project: DENAVOLO, from a small isolated vineyard high up in the hills of Emilia-Romagna. Perched precariously on the top of the foothills in the far western portion of Emilia-Romagna near Piacenza and not far from the sea, his vineyards start at 300m and top out at 750m. Here, the vines produce very small berries with high skin to must ratios, a fact Giulio leverages to make white wines with extended skin contact. This also allows him to use zero additions in his winemaking. With only 7 days on the skins, Catavela is Giulio's baby orange wine, with just a kiss of tannin and texture underlying the vivid, aromatic stone fruit, salinity and minerality. This wine is very transparent – you can taste the limestone, the wind, and the sun, and also Giulio's skill in making such a refreshing, all-purpose and squeaky-clean orange wine that nobody would call weird. Serve chilled but not icy cold.

Clot de L'Origine 'Le P'tit Barriot' Blanc \$21

Region: Roussillon < France

Grapes: Syrah

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: certified organic farming, clay, limestone and shale soils, unfiltered & unfiltered, bottled by hand, minimal added SO2 at bottling; 12% ABV

Winemaker: Marc Barriot

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? This is pure Syrah, but instead of the expected claret red color, it is as crystal clear as an alpine stream...Syrah vinified white!

Marc Barriot came to wine later in life but once he found it, he jumped in the deep end. His journey to starting Clot de l'Origine led him to Australia, the US, and all over France. After apprenticing in Bandol for four years he scooted southwest around the Mediterranean coast to the town of Maury in the Roussillon, finally finding a plot of land and a place he could settle down. He started with just one vineyard with old vines, but now has 17 in total, all farmed organically from the very beginning. Nothing else is added in the winemaking process except a tiny amount of sulfur. Marc had been making his entry level 'Le P'tit Barriot' into an inky red, chewy and well-loved red wine but just a couple years ago shifted gears and turned some of the production into a blanc de noir – or a white wine made from red

grapes. Winemaking precision is required for little tricks like this! – the grapes must be pressed directly and spend as little contact with the skins as possible, so they don't pick up any color. Since he doesn't filter or add anything else to the wine, Marc had to be even more on it to make this work. And it does! It is tart, and red-fruited, but crystalline, as if the essence of Syrah was distilled into a snowflake. Super delicious and intellectual, guaranteed to impress your wine geek friends...

2017 Cantina Indigeno Rosato Calanchi \$24

Region: Abruzzo < Italy

Grapes: Montepulciano

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming, limestone "Calanchi" soils; spontaneous fermentation in open vats and skin contact for one day, 8 months in fiberglass; bottled unfiltered/unfined with no added sulfites; 11% ABV

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? A bunch of things you don't usually find in the same equation: fizz + big boy grape Montepulciano + zero additions (- mouse) = wild, dark pink, lightly effervescent rosato that drinks like a baby red and is natty AF but even your sister in the OC would love!

Cantina Indigeno is small project from a group of three friends in Italy's Abruzzo region, focused on making fresh, low-alcohol, highly drinkable natural wines from local grape varieties. Their vineyards are planted on a mix of sand and clay, some facing the Adriatic Sea and others, like the grapes for this wine, are way up high (500m) at the foot of the Gran Sasso mountains. Everything is organically farmed and, in the cellar, it's spontaneous fermentation, indigenous yeasts, no temperature control, no filtration and absolutely zero additions. Playing with a combo of stainless steel, fiberglass and amphora, they read each cuvee and decide which vessel best suits the fruit in that vintage – like children, no two are alike. As my friend Giovanni, the importer of this wine, says, "drinking their wine is like listening to a Punk band. Definitely never boring ... always wild and electric." Like this Calanchi cuvee (named after its particular type of poor limestone soil) – it's a refreshing low-fizz, dark pink rosato that is definitely wild, but doesn't stray too far into funk zone.

2018 Meinklang Osterreich Weisser 'Mulatschak' \$22

Region: Neusiedlersee < Burgenland < Austria

Grapes: Welschriesling, Pinot Gris, Traminer

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified biodynamic farming (Demeter); sandy loam soils with rocky topsoil; 5-7 day maceration on skins, spontaneous fermentation in stainless steel with indigenous yeasts, then 4 months in stainless steel sur lie; bottled unfined/unfiltered with 25ppm added SO₂; 11.5% ABV

Winemaker: Werner, Hannes and Lukas Michlit

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? Everything about it screams Unicorn! Fuzzy, peachy opaque in color! Certified biodynamic skin-macerated aromatic orange wine from Austria!

The Michlit family were farmers on this land before World War I, when this part of Austria still belonged to Hungary. They have always worked a fully integrated farm with animals (cows, chickens, pigs, sheep and horses), orchards and grains in addition to grapes. They practice crop rotation, and nothing goes to waste. After the war, the farm was broken in two and their village ended up across the border in Austria meaning they had to give up their parcel in Hungary. Parents Anneliese and Werner proudly reclaimed this after the fall of communism, which worked out very well when it became clear that not just one, but all of their three sons would stick around to carry on the family business! Mulatschak (which means xx) is a skin-contact white, on the light side (5-7 days), using very aromatic varieties, which seem to work really well for an orange wine – the time on the skins tames the aromatics, highlighting the savory, salty qualities, and tends not to pick up too much tannin. Hazy and fuzzy like an apricot, this wine hits you with a delicious salty wave of cantaloupe, apricot and goldenberries. And just 11.5% alcohol!

2018 Broc Cellars GOT GRAPES Valdiguié \$27

Region: Mendocino < CA

Grapes: Valdiguié

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming at two dry-farmed North Coast vineyards: Rosewood, with sandy clay loam soils at 400 ft elevation in the city called 10,000 Buddhas in Ukiah & Ricetti Vineyard, also in Mendocino; grapes are destemmed and fermented on the skins then pressed sweet into tank where they finished fermentation and aged in neutral French oak barrels for 6 months; zero added SO₂; 12% ABV; 400 cases

Winemaker: Chris Brockway

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? Zero-zero Valdiguié *glou glou* that tastes like a grapey romp through a cranberry forest.

Like our Donkey & Goat friends and so many natural winemakers in Cali, Chris operates more like a négociant in that he don't own any vineyards (nearly impossible in CA), but manages the farming for most. He works out of an urban winery in Berkeley (an old ink factory that he transformed) across the street from a cement plant and a motorcycle-repair shop. Also, like many vintners these days, he didn't

start in wine, but found his way moving to California to study oenology, first at UC Davis, then at Cal State Fresno, from which he emerged with the technical skills to make conventional wine. It wasn't until he read Patrick Matthews's [Real Wine: The Rediscovery of Natural Winemaking](#) that he began to explore the possibilities of making wines focused on vineyard health and as little manipulation as possible in the cellar. Chris is definitely one of California's OG natural producers, but his wines ride the classic line, palate wise. He says, "I'm not trying to out-weird anybody or obscure anybody," he said. "We're trying to get back to a more traditional concept of what wine used to be. Also, we like to drink wine, so lower alcohol is important." A [NYT article](#) from a few years back nicely spins the Broc story, and describes the New California négociant model as "a future that depends on vision, hustle and entrepreneurship rather than, as in Napa Valley, inheritance or making a fortune in another business to finance wine ventures. It's a vision that may seem cutting edge but in fact is a throwback to California's past, both stylistically in terms of Broc's wines and financially, in terms of its shoestring budget."

This Valdiguié was originally picked for rosé, but Chris decided to keep a small portion to make this lighter French-inspired red which begs to be chilled. It's a happy, crunchy cranberry juice box that feels so perfect for early fall!

2018 Domaine Miolanne Volcane Rosé \$20

Region: Côtes D'Auvergne < Loire Valley < France

Grapes: Gamay, Pinot Noir

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic farming, volcanic clay-limestone soils; vinified/aged in stainless steel, 25+ year old vines; 12% ABV

Winemaker: Laure Cartier and Jean-Baptiste Deroche

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? This is what happens when a volcano melts a glacier and the river runs pink...

NEW VINTAGE ALERT: Husband and wife Laure and Jean-Baptiste come from a history of organic viticulture and recently took over Domaine Miolanne, converting the estate to full organics and making simple, honest wines that showcase the uniquely volcanic terroir of the Auvergne. There are two huge extinct volcanoes in the area, now preserved as national parks, the Domaine Miolanne sits smack dab in the middle of the two. And you can taste that volcanic soil so clearly in this ethereal, almost glacial, rosé, which sports the prettiest of orangey-pink hues. Floral and delicate with a smoky quality, it's Provençal-esque in style and makes a fantastic aperitif or picnic wine. Or pair up that flinty note with some grilled seafood!

2017 Apostolus Thymiopoulos Xinomavro Rosé \$24

Region: Naoussa < Macedonia < Greece

Grapes: Xinomavro

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic + biodynamic farming; x soils; grapes are de-stemmed before a 12-hour maceration then a 6-month native yeast fermentation in stainless steel, then rests in neutral 500-liter barrels for a few months before bottling, unfiltered/unfiltered with minimal added SO₂; 13% ABV

Winemaker: Apostolus Thymiopoulos

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? Certified organic and biodynamic Greek rosé that undergoes an insane six-month natural fermentation followed by a four-month dip in neutral oak, resulting in an incredibly complex, layered wine that punches way above the standard rosé class.

Naoussa is in Macedonia, one of the northernmost regions of Greece—a cooler region by Greek standards, and the high-altitude Fyteia, where Apostolus' biodynamic vines live, is even cooler. Here the family farmed grapes for generations but ultimately sold off all but a few, which grandson Apostolus took over after studying enology in Athens and began making wines with the family name on them in 2003. He makes mostly 100% Xinomavro red wines (the only grape allowed in this PDO) but shaves off a few barrels to make this seductive coppery-hued rosé. No mere porch pounder, this is a serious wine, with intense minerality, structure and layers of crunchy red fruit, herbs, orange peel, and wet earth. Yes, it costs more than that aisle cap at Whole Foods but splurge people, you are worth it – this wine is worth it!

2018 Two Sheperds Picpoul Blanc, Windmill Vineyard \$22

Region: Dunnigan Hills < Yolo County < California

Grapes: Picpoul

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic farming; gravelly alluvial soils; aged in 50% stainless steel, 50% neutral barrel for 8 months; bottled unfiltered/unfiltered with minimal added SO₂; 150 cases; 11.4% ABV

Winemaker: William Allen

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? Picpoul (rare in Cali) that is varietally-correct (that acid!) and crushes the oyster pairing as well as its French cousin, with more complexity and less heat.

William slings software by day, but his heart is in France. He was making wine in his garage and blogging about it, mostly Rhône varieties,

for years before going pro with Two Shepherds, his two-person (and many animal) micro-winery. He works from purchased grapes, careful about organic, and models his wines on the French styles he loves, making tiny lots of old world, low-intervention bottlings from cool climate sites. Like Picpoul, a varietal native to southern France whose name means 'lip stinger' (referring to the grape's typical raging acidity), of which he made a whopping 6 barrels or 150 cases, one of his larger production wines. William says, "Picpoul has been on my "hit list" for years, but it has taken until 2018 to be able to find the right source and availability". Hence his joy in finding Windmill Vineyard, originally planted by Steve Matthiason, with rolling hills planted to Rhone and Bordeaux varieties alongside a glorious array of fruit trees. And our joy in finding a Picpoul from California (and certified organic!) that actually tastes like Picpoul, with mouthwatering acidity, zesty citrus aromatics, wet rock, gingersnap and minty spice. With surprising weight that belies its lean 11.4% frame. Your new go-to crisp white!

2018 Vini Conestabile Case Sparse Umbria Rosso \$23

Region: Umbria < Italy

Grapes: Sangiovese, Cilieggiolo

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: zero-input, organic farming; 3 days skin contact then aged in stainless steel until bottling in the Spring, with zero sulfur additions and no filtering or fining; 12% ABV

Winemaker: Danilo Marcucci

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? A light, bouncy red potion from Umbria that mesmerizes, leaving you starry-eyed and thirsting for more.

WINEMAKER RECAP: Danilo Marcucci travels the length of Italy working as a consultant to several wineries, but instead of trying to leave his own stamp on each project he collaborates with the owners to maximize the expression of their own fruit and terroir (try to explain this one to the French!) Each wine has its own personality but uniquely represents its place and the people behind it. Luckily, he married into a family, the Conestabile della Staffas, who happened to own a bit of land. This is a minor understatement as this noble Umbrian family formerly oversaw hundreds of acres of agriculture in the 1700s, producing over 10,000 hectoliters of wine. Production gradually declined and the two World Wars effectively ended it altogether with the last wine produced in 1956. The property and vines were left untended, but no chemicals were ever used. Enter Danilo. Years after marrying heiress Alessandra, he finally focused his efforts on the family property, rehabilitating the vineyards and making wine with the indigenous varieties that had been growing there.

We drank a bottle of this wine with Danilo himself this summer in Umbria, while listening to him talk about how he tries to coax the minerals out of the soil to marry with the yeasts on the grape skins to create a sort of alchemy that not only presents as "terroir" but also helps stabilize and preserve the wine without additives. It was transformative, like going to church (for wine) and seeing the light. This rosso from his new project, Case Sparse, was also mind-blowing in its purity and simplicity -- especially after days of drinking big Umbrian reds in 100+ heat. It tastes like cinnamon Red Hots-infused cherry juice sprinkled with forest floor dust, and the texture is so silky and sexy that you literally purr with delight. Somehow, Danilo has managed to capture the earth, fruit and soul of Umbria without the weight that often comes with. SERVE CHILLED.

2017 Domaine Les Hautes Noelles HeHo Rouge \$19

Region: Cotes de Grandlieu < Muscadet < France

Grapes: Cabernet Franc, Grolleau Noir, Gamay

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic farming, sand & clay over mica-schist soils; Grolleau Noir and Gamay go through carbonic maceration, Cabernet Franc is vinified traditionally; aged in tank; 12% ABV

Winemaker: Jean-Pierre Guedon

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? Three of our favorite grapes play nicely together in this half-carbonic light red blend from the staunchly white wine Muscadet region.

Founded in the 1930's, Jean-Pierre's organically farmed estate is in the Cotes de Grandlieu sub-zone of Muscadet, near the mouth of the Loire as it joins the Atlantic. We love their super salty classic Muscadet, but this light red was a surprise hit. Peppery with tart, crunchy red fruit, soft tannins and a nice acid backbone, HeHo is the affordable, versatile red that will take you from grilled cheese to BBQ to late night jam session. Easy and delicious, especially with the slightest chill.

2014 Henri Milan Les Vallons \$25

Region: Provence < France

Grapes: Grenache, Syrah, Mourvedre

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic farming with biodynamic practices; blue marls, calcareous screes, clay soils; whole-clusters macerate for 5 days together, grapes are pressed and fermentation finishes quickly after. Rests concrete for 4 years; bottled unfiltered/unfiltered with zero additions, not even SO₂; 13% ABV

Winemaker: Henri Milan

Domaine Milan occupies prime real estate near Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (tiny French village famous for being painted, a lot, by Van Gogh), with immaculate vineyards framed by the Alpilles mountains that provide climatic protection for the vineyards. Here, the gregarious Henri Milan crafts elegant wines using no chemicals, no additives, no commercial yeasts and, in some cases (like this Brut rosé) no added sulphur. Domaine Milan was created in 1956 by Robert Milan and later taken over by Henri, his son, in 1986 – although Henri got his start much earlier, planting his very first vine at 8 years old. Henri led the conversion to organic farming in 1987, and also decided to separate the domaine into several plots (called Clos) like in Burgundy, to make micro-terroir wines that showcase the potential of each soil type. His 'Les Vallons' bottling is pure Provence, with lavender, herbs and garrigue flirting with soft ripe fruit and a mineral edge, all wrapped up in a taut package. With a few years of bottle age, this wine is in a perfectly plush place, so ready to drink now, especially with a slight chill.

2017 Domaine de Pave "Different" \$19

Region: Saint-Pourçain < Loire Valley < France

Grapes: 100% Tressallier (AKA Sacy)

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: organic farming; high altitude vineyards on alluvial soil/sand/gravel soils; vinification in stainless steel tanks; unfined/unfiltered with minimal So2 at bottling only; 12.5% ABV

Winemaker: Julien Nebout

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN WINE? Have you ever heard of Tressallier? Neither had we. Phylloxera wiped most of it out, so there are very few vines planted in the world. Unicorn by default...

Tressallier, also known as Sacy, is a French grape local to the Saint-Pourçain appellation that generally gets blended in with Chardonnay, due to the shortage of the variety after phylloxera blight in France (there are only 50 acres planted worldwide to this grape). So, pure Tressallier is a rarity, which is sad because it's so freaking good, especially in Julien's hands. Electrifyingly bright with crazy minerality and just a touch of creaminess, it's bone dry and tastes like lemon muddled with thyme and underripe stone fruit. Sort of like Chablis, with a texture and minerality that tastes like you're drinking glacial water filtered through crushed oyster shells.

2018 Il Ceo Rosato Pet'Nat \$22

Region: Trevisio < Veneto < Italy

Grapes: Gropella, Syrah, Merlot

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: biodynamic farming, ancestral method, not disgorged, no additives including SO2; 11.5%

Winemaker: Davide Andreatta

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN WINE? Gropella grape, who knew? But it makes a fun, funky pink pet'nat!

We love this zero-zero pet'nat from Northern Italy, but we love it a lot more after giving it at least a few hours (or overnight) if you have a good bubble stopper. The happy rooster labeled pink pet'nat has a lot of mouse at first, but rest assured, it blows off. It's dry, pretty, and bursting with bright red fruit. The perfect weird bubble to add to your collection.

DRINKING NOTE: Let her rest at least a few hours, if not overnight, before drinking to let the funk blow off. It is absolutely delightful the next day!

2017 Chateau Les Croisille Cahors 'Le Croizillon' \$18

Region: Fages/Luzech > Cahors > France

Grapes: Malbec

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: limestone soils in both vineyards, 8 months in concrete tanks, 30% carbonic maceration, certified biodynamic farming, cover crops, short maceration and early picking; 13% ABV

Winemaker: Bernard and Cécile Croisille

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? Malbec from Cahors in the natural, lighter, fresher style we want to drink is a rarity – even more so, one that is certified bioD – bring it on!

This family-run vineyard, now lead by Bernard and his wife Cécile, has been passed on to the next generation – and, as with many of our producers, the new generation brought about positive changes in the vineyard. Château Les Croisille converted to organic viticulture in 2010, with the goal of making fresher, lighter wines that still embrace the history of the terroir for these indigenous grapes. Their philosophy is, "wine is made in the vineyards, not in the cellar". This Malbec is really interesting because that 30% carbonic element gives it lift and brightness, but it still has the complexity of a traditional Malbec from the Cahors appellation. This deep-purple red is light and fruity though not over the top, with touches of juicy black berries, a hint of plum. It's smooth with the slightest grippy tannins, and it's

even better when slightly chilled.

2017 Gearhead Cabernet Sauvignon \$22

Region: Alamo < California

Grapes: Cabernet Sauvignon

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming on this plot of old 500 vines in an Alamo, CA backyard; foot tread, whole-cluster fermentation with daily punch downs, aged in 60-gallon neutral oak barrels; bottled unfined/unfiltered with no added So2; 46 cases; 12.9% ABV

Winemaker: Craig West

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN WINE? Organic, zero-zero California Cab under \$25 bucks that doesn't suck! In fact, it's a throwback to the 70's and 80's when Cali Cab wasn't manhandled to death and its beautiful fruit was allowed to shine.

Our buddy Noel of Purity turned us on to his buddy, Craig West, who makes wine at Noel's Richmond facility for his upstart natural wine label, Gearhead. Craig was a fisherman and a baker for Acme Bread, but when he met Noel and started helping him with production, he decided that this was his calling and pivoted to wine. Now he makes tiny lots of wine from organic farming, all foot tread, many with carbonic maceration, and all sans sulfur.

So, we were stoked to try Craig's Cab (not the usual reaction to new world Cab, which generally sends us running in fear of vanilla-ridden, high ABV, new-oak bombs), which was light-ish and glowing with all the good Cab feels: bright black fruit, eucalyptus, menthol and earth. There is some grip to the tannins, making this a fabulous food wine. But at 12.9% ABV, it won't overshadow your meal, and could easily work with a veg or white-meat dish. Craig's philosophy is simple: "Natural wine is grapes and love. It's not that hard. There's natural & there's unnatural, and I don't do any unnatural things to my wine." We love that, almost as much as we love this kooky label art, drawn by Craig's 10-year old daughter.

NOTE: Open this when you can finish the whole bottle over the course of an evening – it doesn't hold up well overnight. Also, serve at cellar temp or pop in the fridge for 20 before serving.

2018 Francesco Brigatti 'Selvalunga' \$25

Region: Colline Novaresi < Italy

Grapes: Uva Rara

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: organic farming, sandy soil, 45-year-old vines, harvested late September, 5 day maceration, destemmed, fermented and aged in stainless steel for 6 months before bottling; 13% ABV

Winemaker: Francesco Brigatti

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN WINE? Duh – Uva Rara. Even the grape's name, which translates as "rare grape", emphasizes it's obscurity.

We are all about championing little-known grapes, and Uva Rara fits the bill so perfectly – it literally translates to 'rare grape' – a grape that was traditionally cultivated as a blending partner for Nebbiolo. But what used to be the Kelly Rowland to Nebbiolo's Beyoncé is now a diva in her own right. Thanks to farmers like Francesco Brigatti's grandfather, who planted their first vineyard over 100 years ago, Uva Rara survived the whims of wine drinking fashion and is now getting her own star turn. Francesco's Uva Rara vines are 45 years old and their age lends some deep, spicy and slightly gamey notes, which are totally welcome since the rest is all crushable cherry, strawberry spritz and crisp acidity.

2017 Pasini San Giovanni Il Valtenesi' Gropello \$23

Region: Lake Garda < Lombardia < Italy

Grapes: Gropello Gentile

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic farming, biodiverse vineyards, fully carbon neutral and solar powered vineyard, coarse rocky soils on high elevation slopes of glacial Lake Garda, stainless steel, 12% ABV

Winemaker: Paolo, Sara, and Luca San Giovanni

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? Another weird grape – Gropello – makes this cherry spicy light red from an offbeat region of Italy.

Founded in 1958, Pasini San Giovanni is still run today by the family, now the third generation of winemakers. They work mostly with the Gropello grape, which can be traced to Sangiovese. With thin skins and light color, they produce this fresh, bright red with tastes of flowers, cardamom spice, and sweet cherry (kind of like an Italian version of Poulsard), and it's fresh fresh fresh! This pretty light red is a slam dunk for bringing in fall, and while it doesn't beg for food, it is a nice partner for everything from veg to soups to pasta dishes. PLUS, this fat-bottom bottle makes it look shorter, so you should probably just finish this with a friend (or alone) in one sitting. LONG LIVE EASY DRINKING REDS!

2018 Château de la Liquière L'unique Gaz de Schiste Pet'Nat Rosé \$19

Region: Faugeres > France

Grapes: 50% Grenache 50% Mourvèdre

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified biodynamic and organic farming, one hectare of land, schist soils and organic manure, hand harvested in small crates, direct pressing ancestral method, 6 months in bottle, disgorged; 12% ABV

Winemaker: Bernard and Claudie Vidal

WHY IS THIS A UNICORN? Certified BioD pet'nat from a one-hectare plot in Faugeres that comes in under \$20? Unicorn!

A fun bottle full of pink, dry pet'nat? Count us in! We are crushing hard on this bubbly from Château de la Liquière, and we love the clear bottle that lets you see just how tickle-me-pink this wine is! Bernard Vidal and his wife, Claudie have carried on their family's winemaking legacy since it's origin in the 1700's. With only one hectare of these grapes, there were only 2,500 bottles of Gaz de Schiste made--so get your hands on it! The nose is jammed packed with sour fruits, like raspberry and zingy currants, and on the palate its fleshy, but elegant with all those red fruits plus a little juicy watermelon. We want to drink this prettttty much all the time. The Tiffany blue and pink label doesn't hurt our love for this either...

2018 Poggio delle Baccanti Gragnano \$18

Region: Campania < Italy

Grapes: Piediroso

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Biodiversity in the vineyard, no chemicals used, extreme volcanic soils on the slopes of Mt. Vesuvio; fermented and aged in concrete, no added SO2; 12% ABV

Winemaker: Raffaele La Mura

Italians, it turns out, aren't big on vino with pizza. Beer, yes (Peroni, usually). Even Coke. There is one rather obscure exception: Gragnano, the frizzante red that comes from the town of the same name on the Sorrento Peninsula outside of Naples. Drunk young and served chilled, Gragnano has a touch of sweetness, a smoky finish, and a slight effervescence that cuts the fattiness of cheese and oil. Inky, grapey, and similar to Lambrusco, with smaller bubbles and a beguiling mouthful of flinty rocks, wild berries and morello cherry. Drink chilled – you want it as cold as a white wine!