

ROCK JUICE WINES March 2018

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).

2016 Mas Candi 'Roig Boig' Pétillant Naturel \$20

Region: Peñedes < Spain

Grapes: Field blend of Xarel-lo, Turbat, Monica, Sumoll, Cannonao + other random grapes

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic/biodynamic farming, white clay/limestone/flint soils, 50 year-old vines, no added SO₂; 300 cases

Winemaker: Toni Carbó

Roig Boig is Catalan for "crazy red", but with a beautiful dark pink hue and only 10% alcohol, we're going with funky winter sparkling rosé. Toni Carbó started Celler La Salada in 2012, on his family's estate calcareous clay soils, which ring with life; they've farmed sustainably for generations, completely untouched by chemicals. Carbó's 2016 Roig Boig – a co-fermented blend of 10 red and white native varieties, bottled fermented then capped to preserve the natural bubbles – is clean, fresh and lightly sparkling, with tart acidity, spring water minerality, and floral berry fruit. Easy, fun and so crushable.

2016 Tiego Teles Raiz White \$22

Region: Vinho Verde < Portugal

Grapes: 85% Loureiro + Trajadura, Padernã

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming; 15 – 30 year old vines, sandy granite stone soil; grapes are co-fermented for 2 days in large tanks, then aged for 10 months in large, wide cement vats, in contact with fine lees; 19ppm SO₂ at bottling; 12% ABV

Winemaker: Tiego Teles

It had always been Tiago's dream to own his own vineyards, and in 2012 he got the opportunity, when, in partnership with his father, he planted himself in the Bairrada (one of Portugal's best growing regions) and bought back the land that had previously belonged to his uncle. And now he's making a few cuvees of deeply personal wine, with local grapes, minimal intervention and amazing brightness. This wine comes from the Vinho Verde region, which is vast, but he's in a small pocket in the region of Arcos dos Valdevez, 30 km away from Galicia, in a valley that's sliced in half by a river. Northern winds keep it cool by day, and the surrounding mountains insulate it, keeping it warmer at night. A freshness you can taste in this wine, which is alive - spritzy, tongue tingling even, with bright lemon-lime, wet rock and salty notes. Like drinking a can of Fresca on a fast boat, with the salt spray mingling with the delicious juice in your mouth. Except it's not sweet or sticky at all, just super refreshing and delicious. Love Tiego and his wines!

2015 Fredi Torres 'Silice' \$24

Region: Ribeira Sacra < Galicia < Spain

Grapes: 80% Mencía, 20% Albarello, Merenzao, Garnacha Tintorera and other white varieties

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming with biodynamic practices; mixed shale, granite and sandy soils with quartz; 60-year average vine age; some whole cluster, fermentation and aging in large foudres; 12% ABV

Winemaker: Fredi Torres

Silice Viticultores is a homecoming project for winemaker Fredi Torres, who comes from Galicia but made a name for himself in the much more famous region of Priorat. Galicia is Spain's rare cool climate growing region that gets a ton of rain. Ribeira Sacra, a mountainous region of northern Galicia, sits high up on limestone slopes, with an elevation that rivals the steepest of Germany – one of the reasons this little corner of Spain is producing some damn good wine! This is a super interesting blend of red and white grapes, with amazing freshness, and juicy red fruit and floral notes. Bring it on with some pork shoulder, empanadas or roasted winter veggies.

2016 Subject to Change Wine Co. Bonofiglio White Blend \$26

Region: Russian River Valley < Sonoma < California

Grapes: Marsanne, Roussanne

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: CCOF certified organic, dry-farmed vines on the loamy soils of the old Russian River bed; 10% carbonic fermentation: picked early, at 19 brix, then direct pressed; half of the juice is fermented in neutral French oak, the other half in stainless; 10% of Roussanne goes through carbonic fermentation; bottled after 5 months, unfiltered/unfiltered, with zero added SO₂; 177 cases; 11.8% ABV

Winemaker: Alex Pomerantz + Brad Friedman

A new wine from my friend Alex's new label, temporarily called Subject to Change (until they figure out what to really name it). This is not your typical Marsanne/Roussanne blend – they pick super early, preserving the freshness and acidity of the grapes, and let 10% of the grapes go through carbonic fermentation. Which is VERY unusual. Alex explains, "We got a lot of pushback from the grower on when we were picking - he thought it was way too early. We spent a lot of time with him, walking the vineyard, sitting in the bed of our pickup truck, drinking beer, gaining his trust – we almost have to sell our growers on the type of wine we make, as they're not used to it. The funny thing is that it's actually very beneficial to them when we pick early, before the rot, mildew and bird damage set in. The result? Instead of a rich, round, oily Rhone-white blend, you get nervy, bright stone fruit and citrus, balanced with savory, herbal, tea notes. While less than 12% ABV, it has enough texture and body to pair with food but is entirely crushable on its own. Like a not-sweet, thyme-infused lemon drop cocktail, all hazy and golden, literally glowing in the glass and beckoning you to take another sip..."

2016 Vale da Capucha 'Fossil' \$24

Region: Lisboa < Portugal

Grapes: Arinto, Gouveio, Fernão Pires

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming with some biodynamic practices, Kimmeridgian soils, de-stemmed, fermented in stainless steel and aged on lees for 20 months

Winemaker: Pedro Marques

"Portugese Chablis" is how we'd describe this unique Portuguese wine, made of native grape varieties grown on rocky Kimmeridgian soil – best-known for giving Chablis wines that famous chalky minerality. This area, a sea bed over 150 million years ago, is made up of deposits of tons of calcified seashells, infusing the soil with a huge limestone component. Imprints and fossils are still uprooted in the vineyard to this day, hence the name of the wine. Young winemaker Pedro Marques was certified organic in 2012 and is establishing a tradition of quality and purposeful winemaking in this region formerly known strictly for quantity. Because of the excellent terroir, he can add texture and body with time on the lees and in bottle before release. It's all salty, chalky goodness with intense minerality and a creaminess that screams for tinned sardines, baked oysters or saffron-inflected risotto.

4 Kilos 'Motor America' \$23

Region: Mallorca < Spain

Grapes: French Fogoneu, Callet

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: organic, farming, 'Call Vermell' soils – the local name for the typical reddish, iron-rich and porous soils. Destemmed, foot trodden, fermented and aged in clay vats, 50-year-old vines; bottled unfined/unfiltered with no added SO₂; 11% ABV

Winemaker: Francesc Grimalt

Francesc is a Mallorcan winemaker known for working with native grape varieties. His partner Sergio Caballero is a musician and director of the Sonar music festival. Together they started 4 Kilos in 2006, garagiste-style, vinifying their first vintage in milk refrigeration units on a sheep farm (Mallorca has lots of these). By the next year they were able to 'upgrade' another old sheep farm into a winery to make their line-up of 3 wines, all from indigenous varieties grown organically by small farmers. The carbonic, no-added-sulfur Motor America, named in tribute to Francesc's father who worked in the auto industry, is straight-up juicy raspberry punch that demands to be drunk. It's a rare red wine that is satisfying as an aperitif but totally works with a range of food. Pop a bottle while you're cooking, then another with your lentil salad or smoked duck – at only 11% alcohol and NO added sulfur, it won't make you feel like a troll the next morning.

2016 Friend & Farmer Verdejo \$18

Region: Castilla < La Mancha < Spain

Grapes: Veredejo

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Demeter certified biodynamic; chalky clay + alluvial soils; immediately pressed after harvest / fermented in stainless steel tank and barrels; bottled with light filtration and zero added SO₂; Vegan certified; 12.5% ABV

Winemaker: Juan Antonio Ponce

Certified biodynamic, no-added-SO₂ Verdejo that is squeaky clean and delicious, for this price? LOVE! A partnership between the Parra brothers and La Mancha's top natural wine producer, Juan Antonio Ponce (aka The Prince of Bobal), the Friend & Farmer project began as a way to celebrate their home of La Mancha by raising biodynamically grown grapes and making high-quality, restrained wine at an approachable price point. This is a bright, refreshing and crisp everyday white, with lovely citrus and mineral notes, and a clean, oak-free finish. The most perfect house wine – stock up!

2016 Quinta Boavista Rufia 'Orange' \$23

Region: Dão < Portugal

Grapes: Jampal 50% + Malvasia Roxa, Encruzado, Cerceal Branco, Malvasia Fina, Bical, Arinto

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: certified organic farming; granite soil; 7 days maceration on skins in an open tank, then racked to old barrels, where wine spends 9 months on the lees and goes through natural ML; bottled unfined/unfiltered with 22ppm SO₂; 12% ABV; 113 cases

Winemaker: João Tavares de Pina

João is a passionate non-interventionist winemaker – making him somewhat of a freak in the highly industrial, large co-op driven Dão region of Portugal. He believes that to be truly organic means to do as little as possible in the vineyard and winery. He hasn't done anything but cut the grass in the past 2 years, relying on wildflowers like chamomile and lavender to defend the vines against fungi and disease, and harnessing the sun and the wind to produce all of the energy the estate needs. (Apparently being completely off the grid is a no-brainer when you're in the middle of Portugal, as the grid is pretty shitty). In the cellar he also does essentially nothing - no new wood, no fining, filtering, not even temperature control. You might be confused, as we were, why this bottle has the same label as his white (with an incorrect list of grapes). Well, it seems that João got into a fight with the Dão appellation - they wouldn't approve an orange wine for the DOC, so, as a big middle finger to them, he labeled it with the white wine label and capped it in orange to distinguish the two wines. For this and many other reasons, he kind of hates the appellation - to him they represent everything that is wrong with the wines of the area: too formulaic, too quantity-focused. As he puts it, his family's been making wine here for 200+ years, the appellation has only existed for 80. This is an orange wine (white juice left on the skins long enough to take on some color and texture) made mostly from Jampal, a near-extinct Portuguese variety, and a field blend of other native white grapes. Not too tannic or weird at all, it's totally approachable and delicious – pleasantly rustic yet bright and fresh, with sweet-tart fruit notes of persimmon, tamarind, quince, and pear.

2016 Cellar Pardas 'Sus Scrota' Sumoll \$22

Region: Peñedes < Spain

Grapes: Sumoll

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming, 60-year-old vines on limestone, loam, calcareous clay and sandy soils; aged four months in cement before bottling unfined/unfiltered with <20ppm added SO₂; 12.5% ABV

Winemaker: Ramon Parera

As the demand for international-styled, full-bodied (jet fuel) reds has grown (thanks, Robert Parker), many of the native grape varieties in wine regions all over the world – but especially in Spain – have disappeared. This has been the fate of Sumoll - an underdog variety (and total pain in the ass

in the vineyards) that produces light, low-alcohol, subtle wines that are completely out of fashion with the Spanish wine marketing council and the international press. But this is totally our jam, so we're grateful that the two guys behind Celler Pardas, a winemaker/farmer team, are doing their part to preserve Sumoll (pronounced "su-moy") by making three different wines from the grape - a rosé, the fancier Collita Roja, and Sus Scrofa, the everyday drinker. FYI, *Sus Scrofa* is Latin wild boar, the creature who's menacing face adorns the label. Low-octane and refreshing, with juicy red fruit, and a rustic, homespun mouthfeel, this wine transports us to warm, sunny days, with bright flavors to cut through this end-of-winter grey.

2013 Celler Joaquim Batlle "Foranell" Picapoll Alella \$27

Region: Alella < Catalunya < Spain

Grapes: 100% Picapoll

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming; steep hillside vineyards, granitic topsoil with limestone subsoil; 8-10 hours of skin contact, fermentation and aging in stainless steel, one year on lees; bottled unfined/unfiltered with <25ppm SO₂; 13% ABV

Winemaker: Quim Batlle

There is a common misconception that red wines age better than white, and even that white wine is not to be aged at all. Not true! Some of the best wines for aging are white – Savennieres, German Riesling, Chardonnay... Spain shows off a version of its own with this super fun discovery, a Picapoll from Catalunya, just 20 minutes from Barcelona. Quim Batlle is a one man show: owner, farmer, and winemaker, and one of the first modern vigneron to stake his place in the D.O. of Alella (now ultra-trendy). This wine has a few years of bottle age, giving it nutty, complex aromas; in your mouth, the flavors bounce around between overripe pear and pineapple, a lingering saltiness, the strong backbone of minerality, and a chalky structure. It has evolved in the best way imaginable – to become better than it was 3 years ago, no question. This is a white for the table, and would be amazing with mushroom frittata, or roast pork or chicken.

2016 Mas de Libian Bout D'Zan Rose \$18

Region: Cotes du Rhone < France

Grapes: Grenache, Cunoise, Syrah

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified biodynamic farming; mixture of clay-limestone, galets roulés and sandy soils; 6 months aging in used barrels, then 4-month natural fermentation in bottle; minimal added SO₂ at bottling only

Winemaker: Hélène Thibon

NEW VINTAGE ALERT: Bringing you the 2016 of this crisp, coppery rosé, grown biodynamically by the three sisters who run Mas de Libian, a family estate that dates back to the 1600s. They took over the organic farm, set on a plateau in the rocky terrain of the Ardèche region of the Southern Rhone, from their papa, who had the girls helping out in the vineyards from a young age. The family horse still pulls the plough through the vineyard. No chemicals are used, and very low yields are the norm. The Bout d'Zan (the name referring to a traditional French licorice candy, and is also a nickname the sisters use for their father) is made in the classic Provençal style, with all three varieties being delicately pressed into tank after a short maceration. The result is a structured and complex rose that reminds me of a vibrant baby Bandol. Savory and herbal, with sage and rosemary and lively, crunchy red fruit. Perfect for these late winter days, but with legs to take it through spring and beyond.

2015 Mas Candi Carborries \$24

Region: Peñedes < Spain

Grapes: Sumoll, Mando, Xarel-lo

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic farming; calcareous clay soils, 50 year-old vines; Mandó and

xarel-lo macerated with the skins for 14 days, fermented in stainless tanks, then blended with Sumoll and aged 2 months in old barrels; bottled unfined/unfiltered with no added SO₂; 12% ABV; 300 cases

Winemaker: Toni Carbó

Another cool wine from Toni Carbó (who also makes the Roig Boig Pet'nat in this month's box) and his best friend/biz partner Ramón Jané, from Jané's family vineyards on the hills of Peñedes that have never seen chemicals. A blend of red and white grapes (a combo that keeps things fresh and energetic), this is clean, delicious, no-added sulfur Spanish glou-glou that we could drink all day, every day. Super refreshing with light but intense cherry and cassis fruit, and a salty, herbal finish. IMPORTANT SERVING NOTES: give it a slight chill - 30 minutes is perfect – and some air before drinking. Either decant, or pour out a glass and let it breathe. And finish the same day you open - it isn't the same the next day. Which shouldn't be a problem, as it is so light and juicy that it feels almost healthy...

2017 Subject to Change Wine Co. Carignane \$27

Region: Mendocino County < California

Grapes: Carignan

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic, dry-farmed 100-year-old vines; 50% whole cluster, foot trodden then pressed after 10 days to neutral oak; bottled unfined/unfiltered, with zero added SO₂; 121 cases; 12% ABV

Winemaker: Alex Pomerantz + Brad Friedman

One more wine from Alex and Brad, who seek out organic vineyards from unique terroirs all over NorCal, like this old block of Carignan from a vineyard runs along Feliz Creek, north of the town of Hopland in Mendo County. They do two picks, one at 20 brix, where they get 60% of the fruit, and the rest at 22 brix. Because it's a warm site, they had to pick at the crack of dawn, which required some sacrifice – and a sense of humor. Alex explains: "We camped out here the night before the first pick, tying up our hammocks up between the end posts of the trellises. We drank a bunch of wine, then got in our hammocks to sleep, when one of the posts gave out. I ended up stumbling around, drunk, in my underwear, trying to re-fasten the hammock to another post so I could get some sleep." But totally worth it, we think, as this strategic picking is key in maintaining the acid and freshness of the wine, while also getting enough of the riper, sweeter fruit. The result is a bright, balanced, light-bodied red that is dialed-down (read: not a fruit bomb) yet still shows the lovely purple fruit. Reminiscent of one of those great French village wines that we slurp by the liter, this unpretentious glass of red (or fuschia, to be exact), with a crunchy tannic structure, juicy fruit and a rustic hit of spice, is exactly what we want to drink

on a Tuesday night, with tacos or lentils. Or on its own, post-dinner, with some Netflix...