

ROCK JUICE WINES ⚡ December 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).

2017 Umathum Rosa \$20

Region: Neusiedlersee < Burgenland < Austria

Grapes: Zweigelt, Blaufrankish, St. Laurent

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Biodynamic farming; fermented and aged in large neutral oak casks, with a portion of stems added back into the wine as it ferments; 12.5% ABV

Winemaker: Josef "Pepi" Umathum

NEW VINTAGE ALERT! 2017 is in the house, and better than ever! Austria, for good reason, is better known for its white wines than its reds. It's hard to compete with such an incredible wealth of Riesling and Grüner Veltliner that thrive in the mineral rich, stony soils. But Pepi Umathum loves the Zweigelt grape, and is working to bring it some glory. A disenchanting landscape architecture student, Pepi jumped at the chance to take over his parents' winery, which they founded in 1958. From the initial 10 acres of land near the vast lake Neusiedlersee in Austria's center, Umathum grew his family's holdings to nearly 90 acres. He has been practicing strict selection massale (a method of propagating grape vines using cuttings from an entire vineyard rather than selected clones) to replant his vineyards since the late 1980s, along with organic viticulture. In 2005 he converted completely to biodynamic farming and winemaking, and now he's even keeping a flock of sheep in his vineyards for manure and pest control. This is the perfect winter rosé, bright pink in color (from these dark, thick-skinned grapes) that drinks almost like a light, chill-able red, and tastes like a basket of forest berries and spiced cherries.

2016 Il Torchio Vermentino \$23

Region: Colli di Luni < Liguria < Italy

Grapes: Vermentino

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: organic farming, 12 continuous hectares, 9 planted to vine. Sand, silt and skeletal soil on steep slopes, fermented in cement tanks, aged on lees for 9 months and then in bottle for 9 months before release.

Winemakers: Edoardo Tendola

It was the early and unexpected death of their grandfather that brought Gilda and Edoardo Tendola back from graduate school to take up stewardship of Il Torchio. But perhaps because of this they dug their heels in and learned quickly, also applying the extensive knowledge he had passed along to them as children. Within a couple of years, they had the estate back on its feet, improved with changes like organic farming and lowering sulfur additions to the bare minimum. They have become one of the new darlings of the Italian natural wine world with their youth and vigor – and they particularly stand out in Liguria where there is strong local demand for the wine and little interest in change. The demand is high for a reason though – vineyards are on steep slopes next to the sea which supplies cooling winds in the evenings and deposits salt on the grapes. The Il Torchio bottling is Gilda and Edoardo's flagship, their pride and joy, coming from the best grapes in the highest vineyards. It is aged on lees and then even longer in bottle, so not only does it have the salty minerality associated with Liguria but it adds a sultry creaminess from the lees aging and more developed nutty almond notes with a good dose of wildflowers. So good with seafood platters, smoky baba ganoush and toasted pitas.

2016 Domaine la Grangette Picpoul Noir 'Cocoriko' Côtes de Thau \$20

Region: Côtes de Thau < Languedoc < France

Grape: Picpoul Noir

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming; limestone soils; light pneumatic pressing maceration/fermentation in stainless steel tanks. The wine was then fermented and aged in stainless steel; 12.5% ABV

Winemakers: Christelle & Mathieu Caron

Domaine la Grangette, located between the Mediterranean Sea and the Cevennes region five km from the sea, was founded in the Middle Ages to grow cereal crops to feed the cavalry of the nearby castle. Much of the estate is still untouched pine forests, but they also have Picpoul vines, and are the only domaine growing all three colors – white, pink and red. RED Picpoul, huh? This is the center of the Picpoul de Pinet appellation, famous for its white wine, and red Picpoul is generally used as a blending grape for Chateaufort du Pape wines, never as a standalone variety. Why the hell not, I wonder? Because it makes such a cool wine - crisp and crunchy, fragrant with Morello cherry and white pepper, strawberry and Mediterranean herbs, with a juicy texture and soft tannins.

NV Marco Zanasi Lambrusco di Sorbara \$19

Region: Lambrusco di Sorbara < Emilia-Romagna < Italy

Grapes: Sorbara

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: organic farming, clay soils, fermented in stainless steel, held at low temperature and only bottled upon demand to preserve freshness, 30 year old vines; minimal SO₂ at bottling only; 11% ABV

Winemaker: Marco Zanasi

Marco Zanasi took over his family estate, started by his father Bruno right after WWII, and has taken their Lambrusco from above average to stellar. Farming organically, he uses modern technology but only in a way that supports the old traditions that his grandfather and great-grandfather championed. He's managed to avoid the jammy, sugary fruit bomb style that Lambrusco embraced in the 70's and 80's, instead making modern, elegant wine, like this Sorbara that is tart and herbal and utterly charming. Sorbara is the lesser known grape variety from the region, and the quick press that is Lambrusco with the grape's less-pigmented skins makes a pink wine. THIS IS NOT ROSE. Lambrusco is lightly sparkling – just enough to

cleanse your palate after a bite of cheese and salumi (the traditional pairing) – but the Bruno Zanasi has that extra layer of herbs, spice and pomegranate that makes it imminently drinkable. We've said this before, but we also love that Lambrusco manages to remain impossibly affordable! One day the price will go up, when light, fizzy reds (finally) get sexy – but until then, we'll keep guzzling this delicious juice all day long...

DRINKING NOTE: chill this like you would a white wine and drink straight from the fridge.

2016 Samuel Tinon Furmint 'Birtok' \$23

Region: Tokaj < Hungary

Grapes: Furmint

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: organic farming, tuffa, obsidian, with limestone and clay rocks from the Határi vineyard and loess solis from Mt. Tokaj, vine age up to 90 yrs, pressed directly after harvest and fermented and aged briefly in old Hungarian oak barrels, 11.8%

Winemaker: Samuel Tinon

Cristin here: Samuel Tinon, a Frenchman who married a Brit and worked in Chile, Australia, Texas and Italy, brought the world with him to Tokaj, and now he's taken Tokaj and brought it to the world. Its Cristin again with this month's story. I had the luck to visit Samuel and his wife, Mathilde at their home in Olaszliszka (Tokaj) and have lunch with them and their three children but that is not the reason why I love his wine. No matter whether its dry or sweet, each bottle makes you seriously contemplate why you would ever drink anything else. Its delightful, of course, but more than just delicious – it's a journey through past, present and future in a bottle and it makes you think. They've just started producing the Birtok - a blend of their two different vineyards – less serious, but with all of the depth of flavor of his single vineyards. It's got a smokey minerality you expect from these volcanic soils, but an unexpected saltiness that makes it go down a little too easy. Über textural with ripe fruit that doesn't overpower – the mouthfeel is huge and takes this patio sipper to the next level. Serve not too cold, with green curry, roasted butternut squash or a salad with lemon vinaigrette.

2017 Delinquente 'Screaming Betty' Vermentino \$20

Region: Riverland < Australia

Grapes: Vermentino

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic farming, x soil, fermented and aged in stainless steel with 2 months lees contact; bottled unfinned/unfiltered with minimal SO₂; 10% ABV

Winemaker: Con-Greg Grigoriou

We first met twenty-something Con-Greg Grigoriou of Delinquente at RAW, the natural wine fair in LA this year. He was charming, but his wines sealed the deal. Which is surprising, considering where they're from: Southern Australia's large, industrial farming region called Riverland, akin to California's central valley, where any wine produced is large-scale, commercial plonk that is definitely not organic. But he wanted to prove that his homeland, a sea of BIG WINE, was capable of producing pure, terroir-driven, "smashable" juice, as he puts it -- and perhaps pave the way for others artisan producers. All of his fruit is certified organic, since 2009. The wines are all tiny production and single-vineyard, fermented in stainless steel with wild yeast, with edgy labels from his pal, local Adelaide street artist Ankles. He focuses on southern Italian varietals, because he feels they work well in the warm Aussie climate. We approve. This Vermentino is light, refreshing and herbal, with the signature saltiness you find in Sardinian Vermentino. And super fun. How could you not smash a bottle of this 10% alcohol crisp, organic white with a punky label that costs \$20? Checks all sorts of boxes.

2017 Purity Mourvèdre 'Quench' \$24

Price: \$24

Region: Nevada County < California

Grapes: Mourvèdre

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming; xx soil, foot trod, aged in neutral barrel; unfinned/unfiltered with zero added SO₂

Winemaker: Noel Diaz

Purity Wines is the project of Noel Diaz, whose background is in the restaurant business. After nearly 20 years working in both front and back of house, he gravitated towards the wine side and eventually became the wine buyer at the restaurant where he worked. Through connections from friends he explored all sides of the wine industry and eventually settled on winemaking, which is great for us drinkers, as he is one of the most dedicated hands-off, full-transparency and gifted winemakers we know. He shares the full story of how each wine is made on the back label, broadcasting his mission statement on Purity's website front page: "Crafted from grapes of uncompromising quality, with minimal intervention and great deference to soil, place and vintage." The quench! Mourvèdre, from the Oakstone vineyard high in the Sierra Foothills is energetic owing to the granitic geology but elegant with bright red fruit, an earthy almost animal like aroma, and supple tannins. It's a true product of the season where vines shut down due to a long heat spike towards the end of the season, leaving the elevated acid with low potential alcohol. This Mourvèdre is the bright, chillable juicy winter wine we crave, with dark fruit, fennel and a tart grapefruit edge.

2017 Enderle and Moll Baden Weiß & Grau \$22

Region Black Forest < Germany

Grapes: Weißburgunder (Pinot Blanc) + Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris)

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified biodynamic farming, loam and slate soil; grapes are picked and fermented together in ceramic vessels; bottled unfinned/unfiltered with zero added SO₂

Winemakers: Sven Enderle + Florian Moll

Former punk rockers with big beards, Sven Enderle and Florian Moll met in wine school and reunited post internships to start up their winery in the Black Forest foothills. Now they're big on the on the natural wine circuit, working with some of the region's oldest vines, having evolved into wholesome biodynamic farmers -- with a motto that translates into Nothing Without Pain. Just when you think it couldn't get any weirder, we bring

you this very orange wine, skin fermented Pinot Blanc + Pinot Gris -- which actually tastes universally delicious (my 76-year-old neighbor loved it) and not weird at all. Grippy yet lush, tart and juicy with bright acidity, notes of fuzzy peach skin, apricot, white flowers and wet stone. Would be excellent with cheese – go salty and firm and accompany with nuts and some dried apricots for the win.

2017 Domaine Brand Cuvée Fleurs Maceration \$30

Region: Alsace < France

Grapes: 80/20 Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified biodynamic farming; granite soils; 15 days maceration, 8 months in stainless steel; bottled unfinned/unfiltered with zero-added So₂; 12% ABV

Winemaker: Philippe Brand

We featured Philippe's Gamay/Negrette wine, one of our favorite finds of 2018, last month. Now he's back in the Rock Juice lineup with this unusual and totally fabulous red/white blend. Quick refresher on Philippe's story: he joined his father in the family estate in 2006, pushed him to take the organic estate even further, into biodynamics and working without any additives. Since 2015 they've been Demeter-certified and add no So₂ -- and the wines have never been better. While this wine is mostly Pinot Gris, the maceration with 20% of the red Pinot Noir colors it bright fuschia with a neon glow, appearing closer to red than orange. There is an initial floral rush at first sip, then it gets all crunchy with red fruits, and finishes with Sweet-Tarts and acid. So much light, energy and unabashed joy in this wine, like a unicorn shrooming down a rainbow. Teeny tiny production, grab while you can.

2016 Antoine Sunier Régnié

Region: Régnié < Beaujolais < Burgundy < France

Grapes: Gamay

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic/biodynamic farming; 55+ year old vines on granitic and alluvial soils around an elevation of 1,200 feet; whole cluster, carbonic fermentation with a little pigeage (foot trodding), then manually racked before aging in a mixture neutral Burgundian barrels and concrete tanks for 8 months; bottled unfinned/unfiltered with 2ppm So₂ (trace amount)

Winemaker: Antoine Sunier

Antoine grew up in Dijon, and watched his older brother, Julien, go into the natural wine biz. Julien, another RJ favorite, makes some of the best cru Beaujolais out there, working organically and without sulfites -- and inspired his little bro to get into the game. Antoine left his desk job in 2012 and dashed off to study enology in Beaune, interned with a few organic estates, and finally purchased a house equipped with a small cellar in 2014. He may be new on the scene, but his wines are old-school and pristine (and priced well below where they could be). Antoine's fruit from these three plots were delicately picked by hand in 2016, but there wasn't much left to harvest—hail destroyed nearly 80% of the crop! Luckily, he was able to make a small amount of Régnié in 2016, which has the gravitas of a Burgundy at a Beaujolais price. Dense yet refreshing, with a rich core of sweet red fruit, earth and spice cake notes that are lifted by juicy acidity. IT TASTES LIKE CHRISTMAS, I SWEAR! Forget the milk and cookies, leave some Régnié for Santa!

DRINKING NOTE: This bad boy wants some air and the slightest chill - cellar temp (55 is ideal). If you serve this wine too warm ("room temp" is too warm) it won't be as pretty or perfumed as it should be. If you don't have a wine fridge, put the wine in the regular fridge for 30 minutes (or 10 minutes in the freezer) before decanting or pouring into big Burgundy glasses (or your fanciest tumbler).

2017 Kelley Fox Ahurani Pinot Noir 'Momtazi' \$30

Region: McMinnville < Willamette Valley < Oregon

Grapes: Pinot Noir

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Demeter-certified biodynamic farming; 100% whole cluster, aged in old Burgundy barrels; bottled unfinned/unfiltered with zero-added So₂; 13% ABV; 590 cases

Winemaker: Kelley Fox

After completing a B.S. in Psychology, with a minor in Biology and degrees in Biochemistry and Biophysics, Kelley was admitted to the PhD program in Biochemistry from the Oregon State University—yet never completed her doctorate. Instead, she made the decision to become an Oregon winemaker, which she accomplished entirely through the experience of working in the vineyards and cellars of the region, including time spent alongside David Lett of The Eyrie Vineyards, which deeply influenced her. Starting in 2005, she began work as the winemaker at Scott Paul while also pursuing her own dream of create Kelley Fox wines, which saw its first release with the 2007 vintage. Fast forward to today, where Kelley Fox Wines is definitely one of the under-the-radar Oregon producers worth watching, making wines that transcend the region and the stereotypes of domestic Pinot Noir. The Ahurani is made up of a selection of parcels at the top of the tallest hill in the Demeter-certified biodynamic Momtazi vineyard. Kelley describes the wine so poetically: "transparent crimson red with cool tones, the Ahurani has is a joyful wine, smelling of spicy red and blue fruits with a touch of minerals and a soothing freshness. In the mouth, there is a gentleness -- no claws or talons or gimlet eyes. This one is a friendly dragon. It has the power and delicious acidity typical of this wild vineyard."

2017 Lectores Vini Conca de Barberá 'Pomagrana' Trepat \$23

Region: Conca de Barbera < Catalonia < Spain

Grapes: Trepat

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: biodynamic farming: 10% ABV

Winemaker: Fredi Torres

Fredi Torres, former DJ, has his hands in a bunch of natural wine projects throughout Spain, like [this](https://rockjuiceinc.com/products/2015-fredi-torres-sota-els-angels-flow-blanco-emporda) <https://rockjuiceinc.com/products/2015-fredi-torres-sota-els-angels-flow-blanco-emporda> and [this](https://rockjuiceinc.com/collections/march-2018/products/2015-fredi-torres-silice) <https://rockjuiceinc.com/collections/march-2018/products/2015-fredi-torres-silice> featured in

past Rock Juice selections. Fredi is known for finessing elegant wines out of big, bodacious varieties like Carignan and Grenache. This is his Conca de Barberà project, a lesser known DO down in southern Catalonia. Or at least it's lesser known here in the States because most Americans only know the Spanish wines that are big, high-alcohol and red-blooded. Conca de Barbera is not that. Here, the main red player is Trepát, a light grape used to make ethereal, pale and herbal reds and rosés. Pert and mineral, with a refreshing 10% alcohol and just barely ripe, lively raspberry, cranberry, and (duh!) pomegranate fruit. Also, it's a tiny bit foresty smelling. Great pairing for fish, or serve with an assortment of snacks as your super fun and crushable party wine.

2017 Deux Punx Pétillant Naturel \$21

Region: Penedes < California

Grapes: Muscat

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming; made in the ancestral method, with one fermentation in the bottle, capped before fermentation is complete, capturing the natural CO₂ that makes it fizzy; **not disgorged, bottled with the cloudy stuff + no added SO₂; 12% ABV**

Winemaker: Dan Schaaf & Aaron Olson

Cool Cali Pet'nat made by two aging punks! Dan Schaaf, former skateboarder now water-resources engineer, and his partner Aaron Olson, former drummer in a punk band turned software engineer, have no intention of ever trading the security of their straight gigs for full-time winemaking. They met in 2005 and bonded over their shared punk attitude. Their motto: **"Deux Punx are the antidote the wine industry needs. Utter crassness! No training, no affiliations and plans to keep it that way. Punk rock ethos insist wines are made frugally and sold for honest prices."**

It's certainly hard to ignore the parallels between their love of punk/skate culture and the back-to-basics, damn-the-man ethos of natural winemaking. Risk and freedom are deeply embedded in their DNA, as illustrated by their lack of formal training in winemaking, but love of DIY. "We didn't do the traditional internships, we're doing it piecemeal over the years," says Schaaf, adding, "Aaron and I have always thought about it that way, 'let's not be influenced, let's be outsiders a little bit.'" They started with 60 cases in 2007, and are now up to a whopping 700 cases total across 8 or so different wines.

aromatic fizz that smells flowery and honied but is bone dry with citrusy acidity and the prettiest citrus pop, like orange blossom flavored fanta. or tang mixed with apple cider.

NV Laherte Freres Champagne Extra Brut Rosé de Meunier \$55

Region: Coteaux Sud d'Épernay < Champagne < France

Grapes: Pinot Meunier

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic /biodynamic farming; 25-40 year old vines on calcareous clay soils rich in silex; 60% immediately pressed Meunier blended with 30% macerated Meunier and 10% still red Meunier; blend of equal parts 2012 and 2013 vintages with 2.5g/L dosage

Winemaker: Aurélien Laherte

With just 11 hectares of vineyards, Laherte Frères is a 'grower-producer' in scale and philosophy though they're technically classified as a négociant-manipulant because they buy a very small amount of fruit from an uncle's 2-hectare vineyard, which they farm yet don't technically own. The estate has been in the Laherte family since 1889 and is now run by Aurélien Laherte, who farms his vines organically biodynamically, and is fanatical about vinifying individual vineyard parcels separately. He loves Pinot Meunier, so he decided to feature this grape exclusively in his Brut Rosé, which is made in an unusual way. 60% was direct press and fermented as Blanc de Noirs, 30% macerated on the skins as brut rosé and 10% made as a straight red wine (most rosé Champagnes only opt for one of these methods of production), all done in barriques and foudres. Racy and rich but vibrantly fresh, this crazy pink wine is full of wild cherry, salty plum, cranberry and black pepper, finishing with a sharp streak of chalky minerality and intense acidity.

2013 Champagne Vincent Charlot 'Le Fruit de ma Passion' Extra Brut \$60

Region: Vallée de la Marne < Champagne < France

Grapes: Pinot Meunier, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Demeter certified biodynamic farming, 60+ year-old vines on two small parcels where soil is mostly chalk (known here as "craie"; aged in barrique for 8 months; 4.5g/L dosage; unfinned/unfiltered with minimal SO₂

Winemaker: Vincent Charlot

Vincent Charlot is among the small group (less than 1%) of biodynamic growers in Champagne, where all of his 4-hectare estate is Demeter certified. With the biodynamic tool kit, he is able to harvest grapes at perfect ripeness, using strict selection (in some vineyards only 30% of the grapes are picked) to end up with grapes that are sufficiently ripe to balance the intense acidity in the wine. Unlike the heavily manipulated juice of the region, Vincent Charlot is pretty hands-off in every respect. Cover crops instead of plows. No ML happens -- it's cold there, and he doesn't encourage it, preferring the raw edge of natural ripeness and acidity that remains without ML. It's a crazy beautiful wine, first hitting with a flash of lemon curd lightning, then frothing up like a mixture of Fanta and chalky rocks.

2015 Vignobles Verzier Chante-Perdrix St. Joseph 'La Madone' \$37

Region: St. Joseph < Rhone Valley < California

Grapes: Syrah

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic/biodynamic farming; 55-year-old vines on granite/sandy soils; 70% whole cluster press, 25-day fermentation, matures 18 months in old 500-litre oak barrels (70%), the rest in stainless steel vats; minimal SO₂ at bottling only; 13% ABV; 25 cases for the US

Winemaker: Philippe Verzier

Philippe Verzier, youngest of seven children, was not expecting to get the call at age 19 to return to his family's farm, called "Chante-Perdrix" ("singing partridge"), but that's what happened after his father's untimely death. He ditched his studies and took on the responsibility of 10 hectares of grapes, orchards, and grains, farmed organically since the 1960s and certified since 2010. While his father had been selling the grapes to the local co-op (a common practice after World War II), Philippe immediately started bottling his own wine. For pretty much everything else, he stuck to tradition – green harvests to reduce yields, old barrels for aging, and very light filtration and sulfur usage. , has mastered the old-school elegance for which Northern Rhone Syrah is famous (just not the labels – these are pretty bad). Powerfully feminine and exuding Syrah-ness, this single-vineyard cuvee is surprisingly deep, and dark, almost opaque, yet isn't a big wine. Sweet and savory at the same time, it smells and tastes like ripe blackberries, leather, smoked meat and black olives buried in a wet cedar forest. Super hard to resist now, but it can age if you have that kind of willpower.

2016 Cherchi Vermentino 'Filighe' Metodo Classico \$25

Region: Isola dei Nuraghi < Sardegna < Italy

Grapes: Vermentino

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming, limestone/clay soils on a hilly vineyard site located at about 200 meters above sea-level. Hand harvested, de-stemmed, gently crushed and soft-pressed, fermented in stainless steel for 6 months then in bottle on yeasts for 18 months; 500 cases

Winemaker: Giovanni Cherchi

We love Giovanni and his wines, having featured his Cagnulari this spring. So we were stoked to get our hands on two 6-packs (that's it -- our importer only got 20!) on this lovely sparkling Vermentino, Sardinia's dominant white grape. Made in the Champagne method, it's classic with an island twist -- there's a hint of salt in the finish that reminds you of the beautiful place from which this wine hails. Perfect for *apertivo* hour with salty snacks.