

## ROCK JUICE WINES July/August 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 Furlani Alpino Frizzante \$27

Region: Trentino-Alto-Adige < Italy

Grapes: Nosiola, Verderbara, Lagarino Bianco

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic/biodynamic farming, clay over schist and broken granite, known as sasso dolomitico, 700m altitude, pergola trained for ventilation, fermented in stainless steel, fermented wine left outside in the snow over the winter to clarify; spontaneous fermentation in stainless steel; frozen must added in the Spring before re-fermentation in bottle; no added sulfur and no disgorgement; 11.5% ABV

Winemaker: Danilo Marcucci and Matteo Furlani

We featured the Italian wine whisperer, Danilo Marcucci, last month with his own wine, Vini Conestabile della Staffa. Danilo originally got his start in winemaking as a mentee of the old guard of natural winemakers throughout Italy – Maule, Capellano, just to name a couple. After consulting up and down the boot, he met his wife, and transformed her family's unloved vineyards into the esteemed estate it is today. But, when he first started, he was working only with unknown, unproven small producers already working organically, and Furlani was his first target. Though the estate is tiny, just 3 hectares of land scattered high in the hills above Trento, at the incredible altitude of 700-720m, he knew the bones were good and that he could help coax the vines into producing something special. Working with 4th generation "custodian of the vineyards" Matteo Furlani, Danilo brings his zero-intervention philosophy to the biodynamic Cantina Furlani to make a cool line-up of tiny-production, mostly frizzante, mountain wines that are so reflective of that place. This summer we were fortunate to visit Matteo at his estate way up the mountains, where he farms grapes on seriously steep slopes, along with cherries and apples. We tried, and fell in love with, the whole lineup of wines, and have since had our hearts broken upon learning how hard they are to possess. We grabbed the last 3 cases of this lightly fizzy Alpino, a blend of three local grapes from the Dolomites done Sur Lie style (a pet'nat hybrid), that transports you to a Sound of Music party in the mountains with 7-up snowflakes melting in your glass. Dangerously drinkable, but it is so clean, you'll hardly notice.

### 2017 Mas Candi Xarel-lo 'Desig' \$18

Region: Penedes < Spain

Grapes: Xarel-lo, Macabeu Ancestral

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic farming, white clay/limestone/flint soils, 50-year-old vines, zero added SO<sub>2</sub>; 300 cases; 12.5% ABV

Winemaker: Toni Carbó

Four viticulture and enology students got together in 2006 to start Mas Candi to make wines from their families' vineyards, focusing on indigenous Catalan varieties. Xarel-lo is the lead grape in Cava, Spain's sparkling wine, and rarely is bottled on its own. For this bottling, the juice from 52 year-old vines spends a day with its skin to pick up texture before spending 7 months with its lees in stainless steel, helping it mellow and round out before bottling. Desig is a fresh breezy, mineral bomb, with earthy tones, grapefruit peel and pronounced salinity. A most excellent pool wine.

### NV Manoir Tête de la Rouge 'Free Mousse' Pétillant Naturel \$29

Region: Saumur < Loire Valley < France

Grapes: 80% Cabernet Franc, 20% Chenin Blanc

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Farming: certified organic since 1998 and certified biodynamic since 2010; clay-limestone soils; fermentation begins with native yeasts in vats, then transferred to bottles to continue for 10 months; bottled under screw cap with no added SO<sub>2</sub>; 12.5% ABV

Winemaker: Guillaume Reynouard

Le Manoir de la Tête Rouge has been around for a minute or two (ahem, 1649), based in the Saumur region of the Loire Valley. Certified since 2010, they are all in on the biodynamic farming. Proprietor Guillaume says, "We consider our 18-hectare area as a living being, the cultivated soil and the surrounding air become the energy base of the vine. Our goal is to provide the plant the best possible environment to grow." We love it when he talks dirt like this.

Almost as much as we love this pretty orange-gold sparkler that glows like the setting sun, which drinks more like a champagne than pet'nat. It shows lots of Chenin on the nose – floral, apple and stone fruit – which continue through to the palate with more apple, roasted nuts and unripe peach. This is a step above your average pet'nat and an achievement for sure - bubbly, zesty, a bit yeasty, and super delicious! Hipster bubbles even your mama – and grandma -- would love, yet interesting enough for the geeks. All in a biodynamic, no-added-sulfite package. Win-win.

### **2018 Plop! Blanco de Semillón \$18**

Region: Mendoza < Argentina

Grapes: Semillón

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming; 110-year-old, dry-farmed vineyards planted in sandy clay soils at 1,300 m (4,300 ft); Half of the grapes spend a week on the skins before fermentation in concrete; minimal So2 at bottling only; 12% ABV

Winemaker: Manuel Michelini

How much more summery can a wine get? This one looks like it was made by mermaids under the sea, but drinks leagues above the Disney level. Although it was made by a millennial -- Manuel Michelini is the early-20-something son of Gabriel Michelini, the man behind Zorzal and Gen del Alma, two of the the Uco Valley's most forward-thinking and avant-garde projects. The Michelini brothers (and now their offspring) are making some of the most natural, authentic wines in South America today like this Pinot Noir and this Malbec we've featured in the past. They're kind of bad boys, mavericks who have no time for convention or rules because they're is too busy making experimental (but consistently clean and awesome) wines with his series of micro-projects showcasing unique terroirs in Argentina and Chile. Like this bright, fresh Semillón, round in the mouth, with an herby, lemony edge. No wood or flabbiness here, just a chewy mouthful of tropical fruit clinging to a tart backbone of acidity. Fantastic all-purpose white, with something for everyone.

### **2017 Papras Bio Wines Coccinela Rosé \$20**

Region: Tyrnavos < Greece

Grape: Black Muscat of Tyrnavos

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic farming; limestone soils; Fermented with indigenous yeast in stainless steel tank, paper filtration; minimal So2 at bottling only; 12% ABV

Winemaker: Stegios Papras

Stegios Papras, a big believer in organic viticulture, makes fresh wines from the indigenous grapes of the area of Tyrnavos, at the base of Mount Olympus. This bright fuschia rosé gets its color naturally from a quick press of the black-skinned, ferociously aromatic Black Muscat of Tyrnavos. It smells like opulent Tuberose flowers and drippy, juicy nectarine but the palate is dry and snappy, with raspberry, balsamic, black tea and stone fruits. Amazing with Indian curries or a summery salad with fruit and cheese.

### **2017 Succés Patxanga Rosado \$18**

Region: Conca de Barberà < Catalonia < Spain

Grapes: Trepapat

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming, 40-year-old Trepapat vines, whole cluster pressed, stainless steel, very low added SO2, farmed in high elevation calcareous clay soil, 12.5%

Winemakers: Mariona Vendrell & Albert Canela

The name of this wine, Paxtanga, comes from a street ball game where the only rule is to have fun – and also from the summer music blaring outdoors in Spain. Both of these etymologies reflect the playful, summery goodness of this wine. The young couple behind Succés Vinicola began their organic winemaking just 8 years ago (when they were 20) and they had the opportunity to start making wine in the "viver de celleristers" – a program that allows young Spanish winemakers to get started with the necessary space and equipment to produce their wines for up to 10 years. Their fruit is sourced locally by organic, responsibly farmed vineyards nearby. While their first wine was a delicious red from Trepapat, they have used the same local varietal to make what may be the most sunshine filled rosé of the season, that tastes like refreshing, mouthwatering watermelon-y (que cute label) and strawberry lemonade. When writing our notes on this stellar pink, we enjoyed it with some fresh tomato and mozzarella – and easily killed the bottle in the sun sans food. Like the label suggests, this popsicle-like watermelon wonder may be your new favorite pool wine (or stick it in a Swell and carry it onto the sand.)

### **2017 Bodegas Forlong Blanco \$22**

Region: Cadiz < Puerto < Spain

Grapes: Palomino, Pedro Ximenez.

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic, biodynamic, 11 year old vines, use of biodiverse cover crops, pruning as fertilizer, direct press, stainless steel, very low added SO2, farmed in high elevation albariza soil, 12.5% ABV

Winemakers: Alejandro Narváez, Rocío Áspera

Started by two young entrepreneurs with a passion for wine, Alejandro Narváez and Rocío Áspera began Bodegas Forlong in 2009, with a very clear focus on quality, not quantity. They're the *only* certified organic vineyard *and* wine producer in the region of El Puerto de Santa Maria. This slightly peachy-pink wine is full bodied, yet fragrant, with a crisp minerality, palpable saltiness and relatively low acid. It tastes like lime and river rocks up front and ends on a Fino Sherry note (because it is made from the same grapes as Sherry), so you get the savory salty, figgy nuttiness without the extra alcohol (because Sherry is fortified). Makes an incredible aperitif, chilled with a bowl of salty nuts.

### **2016 Pfneiszl Zefir**

Region: Sopron < Hungary

Grapes: Zefir

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic farming, slate and sandstone soil, minimal added SO<sub>2</sub>, aged in stainless steel, unfiltered/lightly filtered, 11.5% ABV

Winemaker: Pfneiszl

We love the Pfneiszl sisters, Birgit and Katrin, from Hungary, with their devotion organic farming (certified!) and hands-off winemaking. No pesticides, chemicals or weird additives here! This duo is also responsible for the amazing Kékfrankos (aka the IL Blaufränkisch) that we so love. Born and raised in Austria, the sisters moved to Sopron to escape Communism in '93 and here they eventually acquired vineyards. Birgit, the winemaker, "researched" her practice in Italy, Australia, the US, and South America before returning home to Hungary to begin running their organic estate. The vineyards were certified organic in '09 but have been practicing organic since the first vintage. This perfect summer white is fresh, fruity, and floral. Made of 100% Zefir grapes, which is a rather unknown varietal (which refers to Zephyr, the Greek god of the west wind), this wine is bold and bursting with flavor despite their remarkably small crops. With honey pollen and elderflower aromas, this light white begins tasting like peach fuzz that soon melts into watermelon juice and finishes with a bright tart acidity that leaves your mouth salivating long after swallowing. PLUS with a screw top, this might be our favorite picnic wine to date. Pair with sunshine, a blanket, a Bluetooth speaker, and your favorite Saturday (or Tuesday night) crew.

### **2017 Thomas Jullien Ventoux 'Sur le Fil' \$22**

Region: Ventoux < France

Grapes: 90% Grenache, 10% Syrah

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: certified organic farming, gravel and clay soils, 40-year-old vines, co-fermented and aged in concrete tanks, 1g/hl of SO<sub>2</sub> added at bottling; 13.5% ABV

Winemaker: Thomas Jullien

I was skeptical when first presented with the Thomas Jullien Ventoux, not being a huge fan of Grenache, and making a mental note of the high-ish (for me) 13.5% alcohol. Once I tasted it though the particulars faded away - my Grenache spirit animal had been found! Juicy-juicy red fruit mingles with some ripe plum + some exotic spice notes and tannin in the right proportion all make for a lip-smacking treat. The man behind the wine, Thomas Jullien, grew up in the foothills of Mount Ventoux where he farms these grapes organically. They come from a mix of three different vineyards and are selected specially for the 'Sur le Fil' which is self-described by Thomas as the 'glou glou' cuvée. You hear this a lot from us, but, please, serve with a slight chill! Those spices are going to pair perfectly with an afternoon mezze platter or roasted chickpeas.

### **2018 Des Vins D'Envie 'De Tutoyer Le Diable' \$24**

Region: Savoie < France

Grapes: Mondeuse, Pinot Noir, Gamay

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming; aged in stainless on the lees after blending; bottled unfiltered/unfiltered, with zero added So<sub>2</sub>; 11.5%

Winemakers: Maxime Dancoine and Guillaume Lavie

This is the summer wine we crave when we're in green, foresty nature - a light, fresh, chillable alpine red from high-elevation sloped vineyards in the French Alps! A collaboration between Maxime Dancoine and Guillaume Lavie, both of whom farm tiny biodynamic vineyards and make a small amount of wine for their own wine labels. They met just before the 2016 vintage and got to talking. They desperately wanted to find a way to create wines in the same natural style and from grapes that were organically farmed at prices their friends could afford. Enter Des Vins D'Envie. Their De Tutoyer Le Diable (which translates roughly as "to treat the devil") is a bright, energetic blend of three local Savoie grapes that tastes like the end of summer, when the cool breeze slides in at 6pm to push you inside. Its bright acidity, tart raspberry and day-drinking alcohol levels scream summer, but the notes of crunchy cranberry & peppery black cherry will have you reaching for some decadent French cheese and your cozy socks. Throw it in the fridge before serving and ride the shoulder-season wave.

### **2018 Des Vins D'Envie 'De Chasse Au Dahut' \$24**

Region: Savoie < France

Grapes: Jacquere, Altesse, Chardonnay

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming; aged in stainless on the lees after blending; bottled unfiltered/unfiltered, with zero added So<sub>2</sub>; 11.5%

Winemakers: Maxime Dancoine and Guillaume Lavie

Another wine from our new Savoie crush, the boys at Des Vins D'Envie, Maxime Dancoine and Guillaume Lavie, both of whom farm tiny biodynamic vineyards and make a small amount of wine for their own wine labels. They met just before the 2016 vintage and got to talking. They desperately wanted to find a way to create wines in the same natural style and from grapes that were organically farmed at prices their friends could afford. This electric Alpine white blend, named after the French Bigfoot character (Dahut = bigfoot) is the essence of summer in the mountains – bright, tart, high acid lemon and green apple sour patch kids up front, then a pristine wave of glacial water washes it all away, leaving your mouth tingly and thirsty for more. Will have you running through lush, green fields singing Sound of Music lyrics....

### **2016 Château de Grand Pré Brouilly 'Le Loup' \$26**

Region: Beaujolais < Burgundy < France

Grapes: Gamay

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic (ECOCERT) with biodynamic practices; schist & sandy soils. 40-year-old vines, long carbonic fermentation, then gently transferred into neutral oak barrels and demi-muids for several months; bottled both unfinned and unfiltered with no added sulfites; 12.5% ABV; 400 cases (80 for the US)

Winemaker: Romain Bertrand

In 1972, Louis and Renée Bertrand purchased the 18th century estate of Château de Grand Pré and its respective vineyards. Their children took over and began the conversion to organic and biodynamic farming. Then Louis and Renée's grandson, Romain, returned to Beaujolais after working at wineries around the world, and helped the estate become certified organic through ECOCERT in 2009. Romain then built upon this eco-friendly mindset by implementing natural practices in the winery (little-to-no sulfite additions, natural yeasts, neutral barrels).

Grapes were sourced from the lieu-dit "Gorge de Loup" (loup = wolf), near the northeastern reaches of Brouilly, and harvested at yields comparable to those of Grand Cru Burgundy. The mouth feel is gorgeous - supple berry textures and layers of minerality, with fine tannins and just the slightest prickle on the palate when the wine is first opened to remind you this wine is alive, without preservatives to dampen its exuberance. The bright and poppy red fruit is enhanced by a sprinkle of black pepper and cinnamon, and croutons of crunchy minerality. If you want to be fancy, open the bottle or decant for 30 minutes to let it settle and fully express itself – and don't forget the slight chill, which we think Gamay always wants. One final note: this is the inaugural vintage of Le Loup and quantities are dangerously low: only 80-odd cases made it to the entire U.S.—400 total cases were produced, but the Frenchies loved this wine and drink most of it themselves. We got the last 4.2 cases in the US, and it will go fast! So don't f this up, this is the Beaujolais to drink and to hold, to order by the truck (or case)-load; if only it were available in such quantity.

### **2017 Château de Grand Pré Fleurie 'Cuvée Spaciale' \$30**

Region: Beaujolais < Burgundy < France

Grapes: Gamay

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic (ECOCERT) with biodynamic practices; granite-sand soils; 70+ year-old-vines; after fermenting in the 'Sputnik' vessel, the wine is gently transferred into large 600-liter neutral oak barrels (hogsheads) for 7 months; bottled unfiltered with no added sulfites; 12.5% ABV

Winemaker: Romain Bertrand

In 1972, Louis and Renée Bertrand purchased the 18th century estate of Château de Grand Pré and its respective vineyards. When their children took over, a major push towards organic and biodynamic farming began. Then Louis and Renée's grandson, Romain, returned to Beaujolais after working at wineries around the world, and helped the estate become certified organic through ECOCERT in 2009. Romain then built upon this eco-friendly mindset by implementing natural practices in the winery (little-to-no sulfite additions, natural yeasts, neutral barrels).

Grapes for this cuvéé are sourced from ancient vines on some of Beaujolais' highest elevations in the Cru village of Fleurie. As always with this estate, yields are half of Grand Cru Burgundy (especially important in a region that has some of the world's highest vine densities), and fermentation occurs in a spherical concrete vessel known as 'Sputnik' (hence the space man on the label). This is an incredibly special wine, with the bright and lifted red-fruited juiciness of Fleurie and a depth and gravitas not usually found in Beaujolais at this price point. Again, it would not hurt to open the bottle or decant for 30 minutes to let it settle and fully express itself before drinking – and don't forget the slight chill, which we think Gamay always wants. Drink now or let it age a year or two – it'll only get better with time.

### **2018 Mas Des Capris Rouge á Siroter (RAS) \$22**

Region: Leucate < Languedoc < France

Grapes: Carignan, Mourvèdre

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic & biodynamic farming (Biodyvin); limestone soil; 4 days maceration, aged in concrete; bottled unfinned/unfiltered with minimal added SO2; 12.5% ABV

Winemaker: Mireille and Pierre Mann

Husband and wife team Mireille and Pierre Mann, both children of Alsace winemakers, had been running their own restaurant in Alsace but gave it up to start Mas Des Caprices and make wine in 2003. Their estate, certified organic and biodynamic, sits outside the dreamy town of Leucate on the Mediterranean coast in France's AOC Fitou region. We loved [this white](#) from the duo a few months ago, and now we bring you their chillable red, perfect for all of your summer grilling needs! This wine's light body and rustic tannins are practically begging for burgers, grilled chicken or grilled veggie tacos. You can't not love this energetic mouthful of wild berry, red raspberry and tart plum fruit zipped up with mouth-watering acidity. Give it a 30-min chill.

### **2018 Ruth Lewandowski 'Feints' Cuvée Zero \$30**

Region: Mendocino < California

Grapes: 38% Arneis, 32% Dolcetto, 16% Barbera, 14% Nebbiolo

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming; zero additions, not even SO<sub>2</sub>; unfinned/unfiltered; 12.2% ABV

Winemaker Evan Lewandowski

Oh, how we love Evan's wines – and so do all of you, apparently, as they're becoming harder and harder to get. Feints, his delicious red/white co-ferment, is now allocated -- but we got 3 cases, wheeee! Whereas in previous vintages, Utah-boy Evan bought fruit from organic vineyards in California and trucked the fermenting juice cross country in a refrigerated U-Haul to make the wine in Utah, he has now moved his production to California. So, it's the same delicious juice with a lower carbon footprint. Win! Made of Italian varietals (from the Piemonte region) that grow together organically in the Fox Hill Vineyard, this light red gets the full carbonic treatment.

We love the way Evan describes it: an unexpected carbonic co-ferment of Dolcetto, Barbera, Nebbiolo and Arneis. Three reds and a white; one big happy fruity funky fresh family. This is the wine that introduced many of you to Ruth Lewandowski Wines and for some of you this is the wine that first showed you the benefits of drinking wine grown/made in this manner. I can't tell you how happy that makes me. This wine was born from very difficult circumstances in 2013...I had no idea if I was going to like it, if YOU were going to like it. Here we are, 6 vintages later and I'm completely smitten. I simply cannot make enough of it because YOU all can't DRINK enough of it! Unfortunately, Feints goes quickly so don't dilly-dally here. Thankfully, I get to make it all over again every year. 875 cases lovingly made." Chill this baby down for 30 minutes in the fridge, and try not to slurp it down, which is hard because it tastes like sophisticated adult fruit punch.

### **2017 Villa Job 'Sudigiri' Sauvignon \$30**

Region: Collio < Friuli < Italy

Grapes: Sauvignon Blanc

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming; zero additions, not even SO<sub>2</sub>; from 15-year-old vines planted on a combination of marl, clay and silt soils; grapes are not sorted and spend two days on the skins before spontaneous fermentation in open barrels begins with indigenous yeasts; aged in concrete for 6 months, then 3 months in old mulberry barrels (4-5 years old), then another 2 months in bottle; unfinned/unfiltered; 13% ABV

Winemaker: Alessandro Job

Skin-contact white is not a new thing coming in vogue – "orange" winemaking dates back centuries in regions like Friuli, although the technique lost favor around the 50's when a "fresher" (read: conventional) style of white wine took over the market. Alessandro didn't grow up in wine, he found his way to it after working for years in Milan then taking over his grandfather's estate in Friuli that had some vines amidst organic corn fields and lots of wild forest. But his journey led him to the understanding that there is wine is both objective and subjective. He says: "Objective is the wine that all the people would like to drink. Subjective is a more personal wine, a personal trip. And so that is why during the last three years we decided to take out everything from the wine, because we understood after we read Steiner (the Biodynamic guru) and other philosophies about natural wine that what is very important is to understand exactly what we are looking for. And time and terroir for us are very important. So, time is to respect the season and to respect nature and what she can give to us. And time because we are not in a hurry to put all our wines in the bottle immediately just because the market needs it, because probably the wine is still not ready. And then we started to cut out everything so now we just make wine with simple juice. So, we're not correcting the acidity, we are not filtering the wine."

With the forest, the stream and the vegetable crops, in addition to the huge variety of herbs and weeds growing between the vines, there is a ton of biodiversity on the estate. Which is important to the final product, according to Alessandro. He explains, "What we are looking for when we bring the grape inside the cellar and we make the skin contact, is for all this biodiversity to appear in our wine. Because 50% of your work and all your terroir and all the diversities is situated on the skin (translation: all the herbs and grasses in the vineyard, you taste those in the wine.) Then we make skin contact and this Sauvignon for us is the most complex wine that we have. This is not your typical Sauvignon Blanc. There is no grapefruit, gooseberry or cat pee. No jalapeno or green pepper. It isn't piercing or direct. In fact, you would be hard pressed to pin it as Sauv Blanc. And that's what we love about it. It is entirely itself, the Sauvignon from soils of this region between Grave and Collio in Friuli, with the added complexity of a few days on the skins. Here, and with this treatment, it is complex, and seductive, with layers of forest herbs and a dominant mint character. It smells like a mysterious amaro from a tiny Italian

mountain village where all you know is that 32 herbs comprise it. And tastes like herby, minty peach juice for the Princess Bride. I am Buttercup drinking this wine on the eve of my marriage to Prince Humperdinck....

### 2017 Losonci Nyitnikék Mátra \$22

Region: Mátra < Hungary

Grapes: Magyarfrankos (cross between Muscat Bouschet + Kékfrankos)

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming; soils are andesite (volcanic), tons of iron/red clay, and chalk, one week of skin contact, left to settle naturally before bottling unfinned/unfiltered with <20ppm SO<sub>2</sub>; 11.5%

Winemaker: Bálint Losonci

Bálint Losonci entered the wine business as a writer for a wine magazine and was exposed to a whole world of Hungarian wines in the late 1990s that was just waking up after Communism. After learning the ropes, he joined a few other like-minded small producers who believed in the future potential of the Mátra appellation, which has quietly become Hungary's second largest appellation (7500+ hectares), but has been dominated by just a few larger industrial players – a Soviet cooperative era hangover. Bálint doesn't spray anything of any kind – he doesn't have to, as the vineyard has the right exposure and is protected from harsh weather on all sides by the tallest mountains in the country. Deep color despite the low alcohol, thanks to the red-fleshed Muscat Bouschet grape. Tart plums, sour cherry, orange peel and nutmeg, somehow all working harmoniously together in a light, bright summery package. Chillable red that isn't simple glou glou, this wine is fantastic on its own or with pretty much any combination of foodstuff – the rare red wine that works as well with veggies as it does with a burger or a sloppy burrito. 30 minutes of chill brings out the aromatics and the lovely quirks.

### 2017 Bichi La Flama Rosa \$29

Region: Tecate < Baja California < Mexico

Grapes: Cab Franc, Cab Sauv, Nebbiolo + Petit Verdot

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: organic farming, dry-farmed, 100 year-old vines, sandy, granitic soil, 2400 foot elevation, fermented in 450L concrete 'tinajas' (amphora), then ½ aged in stainless steel and ½ in old barrel, no added SO<sub>2</sub>; 378 cases; 12.5% ABV

Winemaker: Jair Téllez and Luis-Antoine Luyt

NEW VINTAGE ALERT: Jair Téllez, chef of the progressive Laja Restaurant in Ensenada, Mexico, is the guy behind Tecate-based Bichi, the only known natural winery in Mexico. A few years ago, he left his post as chef at a Top 50 San Pellegrino Restaurant to resurrect old vines in Baja and make delicious, authentically made wine from grapes suited to the climate, with awesome label art (bonus!). In the meantime, he's also opened a casual dining spot in Mexico City with an entirely natural wine list – one of the few in the entire country. Jair's winemaking partner in crime is Luis-Antoine Luyt, pioneer of natural winemaking in Chile, so of course they're working naturally: organic farming, native yeasts, and as of the 2015 vintage, no so<sub>2</sub> whatsoever. These are Mexican wines of the future! And in our opinion, some of the best wines made in Central America today. Like many of their wines, La Flama Rosa is a field blend of whatever grows in this particular vineyard near Tecate – some random French and Italian varietals in this case. But with Bichi's light-handed, old-school treatment (amphora and used barrels, nothing but minimal SO<sub>2</sub> added at bottling) the wine manages to be bright, lifted and perfectly balanced – and still only 12.5% ABV.

### 2018 Delinquente "Tuff Nutt" Bianco D'Alessano Pet'Net \$21

Region: Riverland < South Australia < Australia

Grapes: Bianco D'Alessano

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic farming, sandy/clay soil, fermented in stainless steel with 2 months lees contact; bottled unfinned/unfiltered with minimal So<sub>2</sub>; 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 cloudy pet'net is a porch POUNDER with its zing of acid, bright citrus and stone fruit, and surprising creaminess. Plus, a percentage from every bottle sold is donated to charities dedicated to the support of domestic abuse victims. Delicious, only 10% alcohol, and supremely crushable – plus every sip supports a good cause -- this natty bottle of bubbles checks all the boxes!

### NV Podere Il Saliceto Albone Lambrusco \$24

Region: Modena < Emilia-Romagna < Italy

Grapes: Lambrusco Salamino

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming, 50 year-old vines on sandy soils; primary fermentation in stainless steel, secondary fermentation in

bottle with must from original harvest; minimal added sulfur and no filtering or fining; 300 cases; 12.5% ABV

Winemaker: Gianpaolo Isabella

Brother-in-law winemakers Gian Paolo and Marcello, who started the tiny Podere il Salecito estate in the classic Lambrusco area near Modena, work only with indigenous varietals like the traditional Lambrusco Salamino grape here. We had the pleasure of visiting with Gianpaolo at his estate this summer, watched him machete his way through the vineyard to clear out overhang (super high-tech), and taste through the full lineup of wines, which were outstanding. His 'Albone' is everything we want in a Lambrusco, it's dry, luscious purple, chewy earth. With Lambrusco's famous acidity and tartness, this is the wine you want with pizza, salumi, cheese or fried bits, as it'll cut through all that fat and clean your palate. In the scorching heat of the late summer, this wine is the perfect sparkling red refreshment we all want (and need!). Chill like a white wine and enjoy nice and cold!

### **2018 Companion Wine Co. 'Savvy B' 375ml \$12**

Region: Edna Valley < California

Grapes: Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: organic & biodynamic farming (Demeter certified this year), stainless steel, volcanic soil, 12% ABV

Winemaker: Gina Hildebrand

Delicious natural wine, from organic farming, in a can? Yes, it's a thing now! Here's one of our favorite natty cans to stash alongside snacks for adventures at the beach, the river, the park, on horseback, under the freeway, and pretty much any other outdoor recreational spots where no bottles should go (coozie optional). A full 375mL of wine (1/2 bottle) in each can to keep you happy and hydrated wherever your outdoor journeys take you. Savvy B is made by Lady of the Sunshine: winemaker and farmer Gina Hildebrand, who works with fruit from California's Central Coast, with as little intervention as possible. As pretty and aromatic as it smells, it tastes even better – citrus and grapefruit that fades into passion fruit on the clean, crisp finish.

### **2018 Companion Wine Co. Rosé \$10**

Region: Arroyo Seco < Monterey < California

Grapes: 97% Riesling, 3% Zinfandel

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: granite soil, stainless steel, less than 20 ppm SO2 added, 11.5% ABV

Winemaker: Ryan Stirm

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This Riesling-based rosé, made by California's Riesling king Ryan Stirm of (link Stirm), is bone-dry and refreshing, perfect for daytime sipping. Even better, the proceeds from this wine go to endangered Coho salmon native to CA. This critter is found on the label, but also live in the Pacific but spawn in rivers. This endangered fish has returned to the Marin watershed with help from recent rains & local efforts. Visit Companion's website for more ways to help.

### **2018 Companion Wine Co. Malvasia \$10**

Region: North Coast < California

Grapes: Malvasia

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming, volcanic sediment and alluvium soils, fermented in concrete egg, 11.5%

Winemaker: Scott Schultz

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This Malvasia from Scott Schultz of Jolie-Laide fame is bright, orange peely, and tastes like unsweetened, dried stone fruits. From a single vineyard on the southern end of the Vaca Mountain range, the volcanic soils lend to the minerality of this killer white, and the vines are trained high so the wild boar in the vineyards don't eat the grapes! One of the best local Malvasia we've had, in any kind of vehicle, but especially awesome that this beautiful, varietally correct Malvasia comes in packaged in the green and convenient can!

### **2018 Domaine Grosbois 'La Cuisine de Ma Mère' Chinon Rouge \$24**

Region: Chinon < Loire Valley < France

Grapes: 100% Cabernet Franc

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: certified organic farming with some biodynamic practices, sandy, clay/limestone and gravel soils, fermented and aged in concrete, unfiltered and only 29 mg/L of SO<sub>2</sub>; 12.5% ABV

Winemaker: Nicolas Grosbois

The Grosbois estate has been in the family since 1820 and primarily produces grains, but there is a small amount still planted to vines. Nicolas Grosbois, current winemaker, left to travel and work vintages in New Zealand, Australia, Chile and even the United States before returning to the estate in 2005. The vines are scattered around the large property in order to take advantage of the best soil and the plot he selected for this blend is just 2 hectares in size. While we love a little funk in our wines, it's always nice to come across a classic – made naturally of course! True to Cab Franc form, this cuvée is bright and approachable with lots of blackberry and cherry and easy tannin, making it a delicious everyday dinner pick – everything from salmon to stir-fry will shine with this wine, so make it your go-to any night of the week!

### **2018 Paul-Henri Thillardon Beaujolais 'Raisin Libre' \$28**

Region: Beaujolais < Burgundy < France

Grapes: Gamay

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming with biodynamic practices; sandy granite soils; whole cluster, long, cool semi-carbonic macerations; bottled both unfinned and unfiltered with no added sulfites; 12.5% ABV

Winemaker: Paul-Henri Thillardon

This is pure Gamay glou glou from one of Beaujolais' rising talents, Paul-Henri Thillardon, whose family farm is home to horses that work in the vineyards, as well as geese, turkeys, pigs and dogs. As if this wasn't pastoral enough, he even lives in a converted pigsty on the property. But he's no country bumpkin – Paul-Henri has positioned himself as the champion of Beaujolais' smallest, sleepest cru, Chénas. In 2008, he began making wine from 3ha of vineyards that he farmed organically from the start, working some of the vineyards with said horses and using biodynamic treatments. In 2009, he met Fleurie winemakers and lynchpins of the Fleurie natural winemaking scene, Jean-Louis Dutraive and Yvon Métras, who took the young Paul-Henri under their wing and inspired his evolution towards completely hands-off, zero-zero cellar work and the use of carbonic vs. Burgundian vinification techniques. The rest is history. He should be famous for the kind of incredible farming and heroic winemaking he's doing, and his are among the best Beaujolais out there, but somehow he hasn't made it to the top of the natty wine charts. Maybe because he makes such tiny quantities that if you blink, you miss them. Raisin Libre is his entry-level wine, the most glou glou of the lineup, and is extremely clean, classic and drinkable. All the fresh, gulpable Gamay feels in this one, with none of the junk found in the mass-produced Beaujolais Village plonk...