

## ROCK JUICE WINES October 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).*

### **1701 Sull'Erba Non Dosato \$26**

Region: Franciacorta < Lombardia < Italy

Grapes: Chardonnay

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic + Demeter-certified Biodynamic farming; clay and sand soils; 18 mos aging with no dosage; first fermentation is done in amphora on native yeast, second fermentation in bottle using as re-starter must of the same grapes; bottled un-disgorged under crown cap with no added SO<sub>2</sub>; 11.5%; 180 cases

Winemaker: Federico + Silvia Stefini

Brother and sister duo Federico + Silvia farm one of the oldest estates in Franciacorta (near Milan), a region known for producing top quality *Methodo Classico* bubbles (Italy's answer to Champagne). And we mean super old. Within the 11<sup>th</sup> century walls outside of the 18<sup>th</sup> century villa Palazzo Cazzago lies their 4 hectare vineyard. They are not only certified organic but also biodynamic -- the first and only certified biodynamic producer in the Franciacorta region, in fact. They are so passionate about natural winemaking that they posted a manifesto on their website, declaring that their insistence on organic and biodynamic viticulture is, "far from any forcing or chemical intervention in the vineyard, is a philosophy of life, a way to understand and respect the vineyard in its life *cycle until, in the bottle, it fully expresses itself.*" It's not actually labeled Franciacorta, because it has low pressure, isn't disgorged and has a crown cap -- essentially a pet'nat, although it does undergo a second fermentation in the bottle. Not a wallflower, this one has swagger, showing off those Chardonnay nutty, pear round notes, while somehow feeling lean and angular all at once. Zesty and salty, with a freshness that makes it succulent, and seductive grapefruit notes that keep you coming back for more.

### **2017 Mas del Périé 'Les Agudes' Vin de France \$22**

Region: Cahors < France

Grapes: Sauvignon Blanc, Sauvignon Gris, Chardonnay, Semillon

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified Biodynamic, limestone soil, 350m altitude, fermented and aged in old oak or cement, unfiltered and unfiltered, <20 ppm SO<sub>2</sub>

Winemakers: Fabien Jouves

Fabien Jouves first made a name for himself in the wine world with his phenomenal and revolutionary, at the time, AOC Cahors wines. His lineup of terroir and vineyard specific Malbec as well as his youth and brazen personality all made for good debate. Only just over 30 years old now, Fabien took over his parent's estate in 2008 and boldly started bottling his Cahors in -- gasp -- a Burgundy bottle. While not regulated by the AOC, every appellation in South West France goes by the unspoken rule of bottling in a Bordeaux bottle to mimic their neighbors to the north. Why Burgundy? Because Fabien saw their philosophy as much more aligned with his -- a focus on vineyard, terroir and personal winemaking -- as something he wanted to emulate. Now, he has gone even further astray from the AOC and created an entire lineup of vins de soif, essentially chug-now versions of his AOC wines. While he was always working naturally, these put him on the natty map, and now he is a fixture at natural wine fairs around the world. This wine is gorgeously honeyed and floral and downright seductive on the nose. And so balanced on the palate -- this does seem like an odd-ball blend of varieties but holy crap does it work. The Chenin and Chardonnay offer texture and weight while that acidity from the limestone bounces around in your mouth. And that craaaazy orange blossom, honeysuckle stuff is the work of the Sauv Gris and Semillon. Les Agudes is no less well put together than any of Fabien's other gems and its going to have a similar range of food to pair with it

### **2017 Vini Conestabile della Staffa Umbria Rosso \$24**

Region: Umbria < Italy

Grapes: Sangiovese

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: organic farming, de-stemmed, 4 day maceration on the skins before pressing and aging in fiberglass. No sulfur.

Winemaker: Danilo Marcucci

Winemaker Danilo Marcucci brings wine and people together. 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 unattended but no chemicals were ever used. Enter Danilo. After marrying heiress Alessandra he once again is uniting a family with its terroir, although this time it's kind of like a re-birth. Sensing the history of the place, Danilo easily saw the potential for all the indigenous varieties, including Sangiovese. He's nailed the cloudy, dusty rose color - classic romance - like an Indian Summer sunset. It tastes like a bushel of plums, oranges, and tomato leaves with a juicy pomegranate and cherry pucker on the finish. light bodied, so you know you can open this bottle before dinner (!) but feels full and satisfying. A perfect fit on one of those lingering warm nights where you might want to dig into something a little more substantial, like and overripe tomato salad, maybe with a sprinkling of pomegranate, and curried chickpeas.

### **2017 Stephane Orioux Muscadet 'Bregonnette' \$18**

Region: Pays Nantais < Loire Valley < France

Grapes: Melon de Bourgogne

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic farming; schist + granite soils, fermented in tank, aged on the lees; bottled with minimal So2

Winemaker: Stephane Orieux

Doesn't get more classic than Muscadet. The quintessential oyster wine. Briny, crisp and clean, it's hard not to love. It's also hard to find clean, organic versions in this big, conventional region that spits out a bunch of cheap plonk along with a few gems. Like this one from Stéphane Orieux, whose father Joseph converted the estate to organic agriculture back in 1967 – truly a pioneer here. Stéphane has continued (now certified by Ecocert) the great vineyard work of his father, continuing to hand-harvest, eschew additives and use only minimal sulfur at bottling. His 2017 Bregeonnette, from vines on both schist and granite soils, smells like classic Muscadet: pear, green apple, citrus, and wet stone. It has the requisite acidity of the region, with an added level of flowers and chalky, chipped stone. Delicious and versatile, this could be your house white.

### **2015 Domaine de la Fontainerie Vouvray Sec \$20**

Region: Vouvray < Loire Valley < France

Grapes: Chenin Blanc

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming, chalky, porous limestone soil; 13% ABV

Winemaker: Catherine Dhoye-Deruet

Hi guys, Cristin here. I'm the storyteller for the Vouvray this month. A long, long time ago, before kids, when I worked for a French wine importing company, my husband and I ventured to Vouvray to drink lots of Chenin (I mean, search for a new Vouvray producer ;) We had dinner the first night in the town of Vouvray at a restaurant where we were told we could find the best selection of regional wines in the central Loire. I sat down and explained my mission to the server, who promptly presented me with a blind flight of Vouvray. I couldn't fault any of them but there was one wine that was clearly a level above – no let's call it 10 levels above – the rest. She left me the business card – Domaine de la Fontainerie. As soon as I got back to the B&B I logged onto my computer and tried to find out all I could about them. We had a full day booked but I was going to do everything I could to persuade them to give me some of their time. And... as you might have guessed, they were already imported...so bummed! So I did what any self-respecting Chenin fan would and gave up the pursuit but vowed to drink as much of it as possible once we returned to the states. Unfortunately, that didn't exactly happen since this wine is SO hard to come by! Catherine Dhoye-Deruet, current winemaker and owner (the property has been in her family since the 1700's) works with only 6 ha and as no expansion plans. Everything is done by hand and yields are extremely low so inventory stateside is hard to come by. Which is too bad because it is so damn good! The precision is unreal, and there is so much power and grace. At first it's all about the minerality, which has a chalky, wet rock thing going on – that's the power part. And it definitely sports that classic wool note but that's just the segue to the green apple, quince and acacia - grace. The finish is lengthy and thought provoking and makes me like – yeah, that what Chenin is *supposed* to be people!

### **2017 Domaine Fouet Buvons des Fruits Cab Franc \$23**

Region: Saumur-Champigny < Loire Valley < France

Grapes: Cabernet Franc

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: mixture of heavy clay soils with exposed volcanic tuffa; fruit is hand harvested and sorted first in the vineyard, then in the cellar; carbonic fermentation then raised in stainless steel underground in their cellar dug into the tuffa; bottled unfiltered/unfiltered no added So2; 12% ABV

Winemaker: Julien Fouet

This small estate, a classic father-and-son operation, has six generations of wine growing and producing under its belt, with dad tending (organically) to the vineyards, and young Julien making the wines. And what a fun little wine this is, carbonic Cab Franc with a lift and freshness that makes you want to gulp. The palate is silky smooth, but still a little edgy so you know it's real. She is brightly French and autumnal, full of cinnamon sticks, cranberry, orange and that unmistakable crunchy, savory Cab Franc fruit. And, like all good carbonic reds, she's DTC – down to chill. 30 minutes in the fridge is just enough to make the fruit pop.

### **2017 J. Mourat O.V.N.I Val de Loire Rosé \$18**

Region: Fiefs Vendéens < Loire Valley < France

Grapes: Grolleau Gris

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming; 25 year-old vines on purple schist and rhyolite soil; fermented and aged in stainless steel for 4 months; minimal So2 at bottling only; 11.5% ABV

Winemaker: Jérémie Mourat

An hour south of Nantes along the central coast of France, Fiefs Vendéens is the westernmost tip of the Loire Valley, just 20 km from the coast, resulting in a maritime influence from the nearby Atlantic that is unusual for Loire wines. The Mourat family has been in wine for a long time – first making wine on the Ile de Ré (along with salt) until the end of the 19th century, then as wine merchants, until Jean Mourat created the current estate in 1974. Son Jérémie joined him in '98, converting all of the family's 10 acres to organic farming. OVNI stands for *Objet Viticole Non Identifié* (or Unidentified Wine Object), a play on the UFO thing. Ridiculously cute packaging aside, we fell hard for this savory, salty, bone-dry rosé. Sporting a glowy salmon pink hue, with watermelon, blood orange, minerals and a kiss of salt, this is a lifted, pure and thirst-quenching juice, ideal for a round of aperitifs or a California fall laze by the pool. Only produced in exceptional vintages, this is made from 100% Grolleau Gris, somewhat of a Unicorn grape, adding to the cool factor. One of our top rosé discoveries of the year, and amazing value as well. Stock up, then drink up!

### **2017 Ruet Beaujolais Villages 'Sans Soufre Ajouté' \$21**

Region: Régnié < Beaujolais < France

Grapes: Gamay

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified biodynamic farming; pink granite and sandy soils; semi-carbonic fermentation in cement using whole clusters; bottled unfiltered/unfiltered with zero added SO<sub>2</sub>; 125 cases; 13% ABV

Winemaker: Jean-Paul Ruet

Jean-Paul Ruet, whose family has been making wines in Beaujolais since 1926, farm 16 hectares of steep, old-vine vineyards between the communes of Brouilly, Morgon and Régnié. This is his no-added-So<sub>2</sub> cuvee from young vines in the cru village of Régnié, and it is classic carbonic Beaujolais glou-glou that goes down way too easy. Light, juicy and just a touch wild, bursting with fresh Gamay fruit that has an earthy edge and cherry-flecked electricity. We love Gamay, always have, always will – and the rest of the world is catching on, making Gamay the new it-grape – and inflating prices left and right. So, it is refreshing to find such a gorgeous, organic, clean zero-zero example of declassified cru Beaujolais at this price, which means you can – and should – drink it every day!

### **2015 Gotsa Tavkevri \$24**

Region: Kartli < Georgia

Grapes: Tavkevri

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic/biodynamic farming; two level cellar, the first for fermentation the second for aging – they drill holes in the bottom of the fermentation Qvevri to allow for gravity flow into the aging Qvevri. Qvevri are then wrapped with silicon tubing attached to a cold water spring and a warm indoor pool to individually cool or warm the Qvevri during fermentation; bottled unfiltered/unfiltered with no added So<sub>2</sub>; 11.5% ABV

Winemaker: Beka Gotsadze

This is a weird but wonderful light red wine from Georgia – the country, NOT the state. Georgia, a classic wine region, you ask? Well, yes. Perhaps the most classic of all, having a history of wine that dates back at least 8000 years – longer than any other place in the world. There was a dark time, during Communist rule, when the good stuff went underground, or stayed within families, as Stalin commandeered most of the top vineyards for the state to make industrial plonk for export to Russia. Thankfully, the traditions survived and Georgia's wine culture is thriving. This crazy light red is made in the ancient traditional method, in qvevris (large, buried earthenware amphora) by Beka Gotsadze, an energetic architect who is obsessively natural and unafraid to modify tradition in the name of improvement (i.e., cleaner more drinkable wines). He farms his high-elevation vineyard organically, without no inputs at all, and is equally hands off in the cellar doing, just moving his juice from one qvevri to another and using his archaic water cooling system (silicon tubes around the qvevri with either warm or cool water flowing) for temp control. This wine, somewhere between a light red and a deep rosé, also wavering between juiciness and bitterness. Super interesting and exotic, like a magic carpet ride through a strawberry forest, hitting waves of black pepper and medicinal herbs, to end up on a blanket of rose petals. NERD TIP: Decant into a jug or pitcher and let it breathe for 20 minutes, then sip it slowly over the course of an hour or two and watch it evolve. The flavors blossom, showing more flower and soft spice over time.

### **2013 Old World Winery Abundance \$42**

Region: Sonoma < California

Grapes: Muscadelle, Abouriou, Zinfandel, Mondeuse Noire, Trousseau Gris, & Chasselas

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Biodynamic farming, dry-farmed; 120 year-old vineyard on iron-rich volcanic soil; whole-cluster fruit is stomped then transferred to one ton insulated bins for outdoor fermentation then aged 2 years in French oak sur lie, then bottled unfiltered/unfiltered with zero added SO<sub>2</sub>; 12.9% ABV; x cases

Winemaker: Darek Trowbridge

Darek is one of the OG Cali natural winemakers, having made low-intervention wine in Sonoma for 20 years, way before it was a thing. In fact, he named his winery 'Old World', because he's all about a return to the old-world methods of his grandfather Lino Martinelli (of Martinelli wine/cider fame), who started making wine in the early 1900s, with no technology or chemicals. Darek adds nothing to the wine except a minimal amount of protective sulfur before bottling. He has no press, just his feet (and the feet of his friends who respond to his cattle call for help) to stomp the grapes. He uses no temperature control or additives of any kind, including sulfur. This is his field blend of 6 grapes, including some gnarly old Arbouriou (an obscure French grape, and the only known planting in the US) that he co-ferments for this wild, earthy, plummy, peppery blend. It is somehow rich yet light on the palate, lifted and exotic, California sunshine and old-world restraint. In our opinion, Darek is one of California's top winemakers – and perhaps the best kept secret in the state. He's also one of the nicest people we know. For a Cali wine of this pedigree and quality with 5 years of bottle age to be priced under \$50 is insane. It's a little pricier than we usually do in the mixed case selections, but this is such a special bottle we wanted you all to have a chance to try it. Because small guys like Darek need exposure and your support to keep doing what they do. Fall in love, reorder, win win!

### **2016 Julia Bertram 'Handwerk' Spätburgunder \$27**

Region: Ahr < Germany

Grapes: Pinot Noir

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Organic farming, whole cluster press with a seven-day maceration until spontaneous fermentation started; pressed and aged in neutral French oak 1 year then 2 months stainless; bottled unfiltered/unfiltered; 10ppm SO<sub>2</sub> added

Winemaker: Julia Bertram

Real life wine royalty, Julia was Germany's 2012 Wine Queen. Yes, this is a thing. German Wine Queen. How rad is that? Apparently, every autumn, each of Germany's 13 wine-growing regions elect a queen, who then goes on to compete for the national title before an 70-member jury of professionals from the wine industry, politics, and the press. The lucky winner then becomes the German wine ambassador, complete with a crown and Germany's idea of a gown (a dirndl-like number). Julia grew up in a winemaking family in a tiny Ahrweiler village, but says she never saw herself working in wine as she watched her parents and grandparents burn the midnight oil in both the vines and in the cellar. But when she was old enough to drink (high school, natch – because, Europe) she fell in love with wine, and specifically, Spätburgunder from slate soils (uh, the family vineyards she wanted to escape – full circle). She started by working with some famous German wine dudes then studied oenology at university before returning to the family fold to make wine. Her region of the Ahr is one of the most northern wine regions in Germany yet strangely has a Mediterranean growing climate (so not a ton of rain) and very steep, rocky slopes on which vines are planted. These are good things for grapes, as those extreme slate slopes hold the summer heat and protect the vines from any radical temperature fluctuation, which helps eliminate Botrytis—normally a major struggle for Germany. And makes organic farming possible, somewhat of a rarity here. So this Julia's Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir), which in Germany often drinks like a Gamay – light, fresh, bright, somewhat spritzy, like a bowl of cherries with a leafy edge and a kiss of cinnamon spice. Seriously, this wine is so good, it's like a gateway drug to German Pinot. Trust, if you're a PN fan, this may rock your world.

TAGS: German wine, Germany, Pinot Noir, red wine, organic

**2017 Finca Parera Penedès Fins Als Kullons 1L NO SO2 \$26**

Region: Penedès < Catalunya < Spain

Grapes: Sumoll, Xarel-lo and Garnacha Blanca

Vineyard/Cellar Stats: Certified organic and biodynamic; limestone/clay soil; grapes fermented separately then racked into cement for 9 month; bottled unfined/unfiltered with no added SO2; 12% ABV

Winemaker: Jordi and Rubén Parera

We first met Rubén Parera at a natural wine fair here in the Bay Area last year, and were immediately smitten. In a sea of faces, his stood out – brimming with enthusiasm and a big grin that stretched from ear to ear, despite jetlag and probably a hangover. As he poured his delicious wines, some of the best (and cleanest) we've tasted from Spain, we learned the story of Rubén and his father, Jordi, who worked together to convert their entire family farm, which includes almond and olive trees, a cherry orchard, and a vegetable garden, to organic and then biodynamic viticulture, finally becoming certified in 2013. It was only then that they bottled the wine under their own label. Their dedication to their terruno (terroir) includes using only native varieties and only cement, clay and stainless steel in their cellar – no oak and no sulfur is used. This blend of local red and white grapes is light and fresh, designed for easy, everyday drinking. Transparent, almost neon, ruby in color, it tastes like cherries, tart red currants and fresh, clean dirt after a rain, with an unexpected brightness and floral hit on the finish, courtesy of the white grapes. Serve slightly chilled.