



# HYBRID THEORY

July 2023



# Colonizers bring lots of baggage.

Though we could spend a lifetime unpacking that statement, in terms of wine, the Europeans brought to the Americas the only grape species they knew: *Vitis vinifera*. Originating in western Asia near the Caspian Sea, over the course of a few thousand years it became the only grape species planted from the Caucasus all the way across Europe. It was of huge societal importance for the Greeks, Romans, and Catholic Church; the table grapes, raisins, and wine it produced provided supplemental nutrition for the poor, hydration at a time when water wasn't safe, and carried spiritual meaning for many religions. All from one species of grape: *Vitis vinifera*.

In pre-colonial North America, however, there were more than seventy different species of grapes (*Vitus*) growing and thriving in the wild. At least six or seven of these turned out to be suitable for wine, most notably *Vitis labrusca*, *Vitis riparia*, and *Vitis aestivalis*. The climate, diseases, and pests of North America proved largely unsuitable for *Vitis vinifera* to thrive; and it didn't take long for these diseases and pests to hitch a ride over to Europe through Transatlantic trade routes and start wreaking havoc on the only grape species around: *Vitis vinifera*. By the 1800s, new fungal diseases like powdery mildew, downy mildew, and black rot were causing big problems in Europe.

Yet these were mere nuisances compared to the destruction caused by phylloxera, an insect that attacks the rootstocks of vines. While North American grapes have hard rootstocks that give them protection against phylloxera, *Vitis*

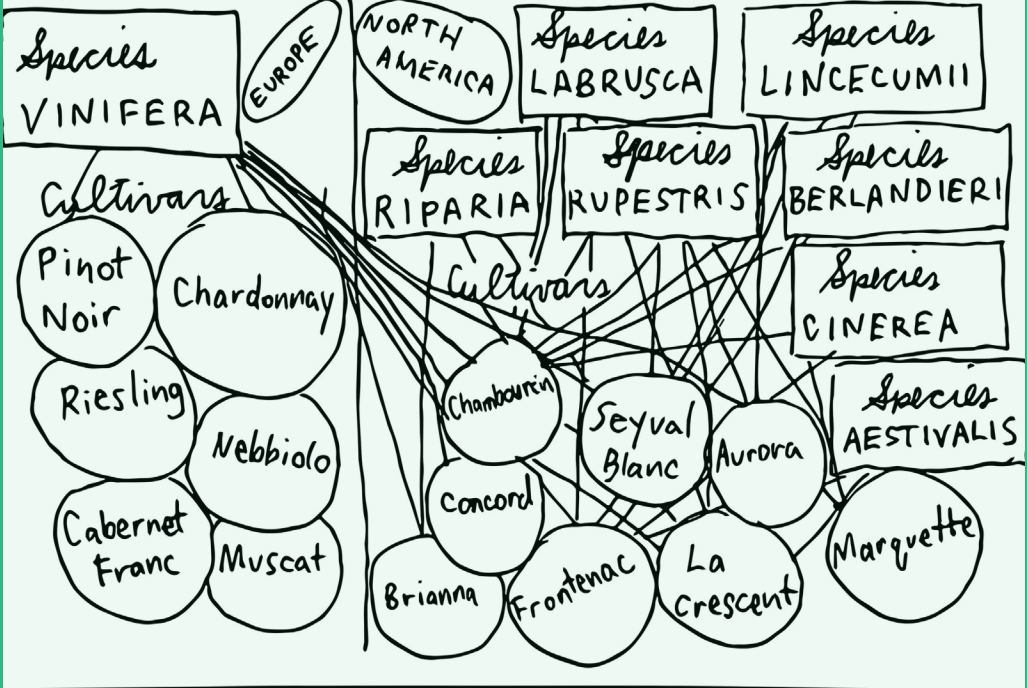
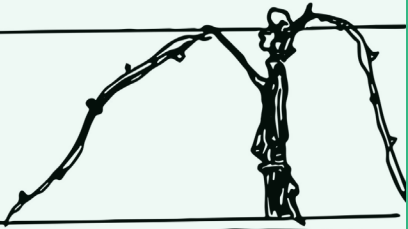
*vinifera* grapes have soft rootstocks that turned out to be catastrophically vulnerable. Some 2.5 million acres of vines were decimated between 1860 and 1880, with more to come in the following decades as the louse-like insect spread across Europe and into western Asia, the ancestral homeland of *vinifera*.

This is not the first time phylloxera has come up in a Direct Press newsletter. It is hard to overstate the ruin and devastation caused by phylloxera and the way that it cataclysmically altered the landscape — figuratively and literally — of European grape farming. Once-thriving regions were abandoned and never recovered. The solution, which continues to this day, was to graft *vinifera* vines onto the American rootstocks that were immune to phylloxera. By the time this was adopted and painstakingly put into practice — around the turn of the 20th century — grape varieties, traditions, income sources, and local economies had been ruined or permanently lost.

Given the clear disadvantages of *vinifera*, why does it remain as the only notable species of grape cultivated in Europe? It's a complicated question. *Vinifera* advocates have long derided North American hybrids (grapes made from a mix of European *vinifera* and any number of North American species) as simple or too full of unappealing flavors; 'foxy' or 'skunky' being the most scurrilous terms. I've had wines like that, and they indeed can be easy to mock. But there are simply too many species of grapes — and too many hybrids made from these species crossed with *vinifera* grapes — to dismiss them outright.

Like anything else, for too long North American hybrids were not taken

# Genus VITIS



JKemp<sup>123</sup>

Europe has been dominated by only one species of grape — *Vitis vinifera* — for thousands of years. North America, by contrast, has long been home to a diverse mix of over 70 grape species. Despite superior disease immunity and productivity, the wine world has been slow to embrace grapes that are hybrids of European and North American species.

seriously because they were not being farmed in the best locations or made with the exacting care and detail that one would make, say a Pinot Noir. Ben Jordan, of Lightwell Survey in Virginia (*Press 4 Mix/Red*) reflected that “it took me a while to realize that, as with *vinifera*, a little winemaking respect went a long way.” Maya Hood White, who took over winemaking from Ben at Early Mountain (*Press 4 Mix/White/Red*) remembers that she had “only experienced [French-American hybrid] Chambourcin in highly-oaked and seemingly off-kilter blends.”

Chris Denesha of Pleb Wines in Asheville, North Carolina (*Press 4 White*) describes how many winemakers approached North America hybrids, saying “we’d have Chardonnay planted next to Traminette and when we’d bring them in, the overwhelming approach was, ‘we can sell Chardonnay but not Traminette.’ It doesn’t matter that the Chardonnay required five to ten times the fungicide sprays or came in with more rot and chemistry imbalance. We’d spend all of our time and resources on making the Chardonnay palatable and then give the Traminette what I call the ‘snickelfritz’ treatment in cellar: ‘we’ll just sweeten the hell out of the Traminette, give it a kitschy name and sell it to the sweet wine drinkers.’ This was and is the normal perspective. I started working with these hybrid cultivars that were maligned and very quickly learned that they could also make compelling wine with the proper attention.”

Jonas Newman of Hinterland Wine Company in Ontario (*Press 4 White*) says “once serious winemakers started

to work creatively with them the results were compelling. That was the key: if you worked them conventionally the wines were not amazing. Taking real risk in the cellar was the ultimate answer.” He notes that the idea is not to mimic *vinifera*, though, saying, “I love that the flavors are different. The world of wine is fairly homogeneous and there is a sort of “no rules” ethos to [North American] hybrids.”

It’s important to back up and point out that ALL grape varieties are hybrids, and what has been so controversial is North American hybrids. Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Chardonnay are hybrids, but derived from grapes with *vinifera* parentage only. However, they were created much the same way as grapes without 100% *vinifera* parentage: through natural or selective breeding that resulted in healthier, better tasting fruit. The hybrids we’re referring to are a combination of *vinifera* with North American grape species like *aestivalis*, *berlandieri*, *cinerea*, *labrusca*, *linceumii*, *riparia*, and *rupestris*. In fact, all of the above are present in Marquette, a variety featured in the Wild Arc Marquette this month (*Press 4 Mix/Red*) from Todd Cavallo in New York’s Hudson Valley. Marquette’s grandfather is none other than Pinot Noir, but it is strengthened against cold weather and disease by its wild North American DNA.

Chardonnay, meanwhile, is a hybrid of Pinot Noir and Gouais Blanc (a nearly extinct bulk wine grape that was planted all over Western Europe) and wasn’t mentioned in print until the late 1600s. The idea that it’s been

around forever and can't be improved upon is simply false. "I feel like farmers in most other industries would think that our nostalgic, hierarchical commitment to one species of wine grape is stupid," says Ben Jordan.

The time has come for a reckoning with the reasons North American grape species are sidelined. By forcing North American grapes out of the picture, we're fighting against nature; we're requiring more chemical sprays, more labor, more costs, and a higher economic bar that excludes many people. "Hybrids tend to be able to ripen at higher yields without losing quality, and they tend to be able to produce better yields after frost. All of this makes it easier for smaller, less capitalized projects to exist and grow. It also offers access and lowers barriers in a way that fancy *vinifera* fruit that costs \$10,000/ton cannot," says Ben Jordan. He feels that "our industry fetishizes low yields and the scarcity they create." This gets to the more troubling reasons why *vinifera* is still held up as the gold standard of grapes.

As a result of phylloxera, there was actually a huge push in Europe to employ North American grape species and create hybrids with *vinifera* grapes starting in the late 19th century and continuing through the middle of the 20th century. But they were, in many ways, too successful. North American hybrids quickly posed a huge economic threat to *vinifera* and the world-famous regions that stood to lose a lot of money from any reshuffling of the wine map. In France, especially, French-American hybrids were producing more than what the domestic market could take

in. Politicians at the time, especially those in power who had vines in Bordeaux and Burgundy, enacted laws banning French-American hybrids, the strictest coming in 1970. With additional incentives for growers to rip out French-American hybrids, they succeeded in establishing the dominance of *vinifera* in France, and this had global repercussions. This highly politicized hierarchy is one of the major reasons that it has taken so long to mount another attempt to storm the castle, so to speak, of King *Vinifera*.

In North America, growing *vinifera* successfully is expensive, risky, and nearly impossible in most parts of the country. Unlike grape cultivation all over rural backwaters of Europe, most wine in the US these days comes from the most expensive real estate in the world; just think of northern California or Long Island. This is also why the paradigm in the US is so different from Europe, where we are used to the winemaker growing their own grapes. In the US, winemakers need an immense amount of capital to buy land, so most purchase fruit from farmers who work vineyards owned by people or investment groups they may never meet. Winemaking and fermentation has a long history of being a populist activity almost anyone can do. Maintaining *vinifera* in spite of all this has been a fateful decision that goes beyond simple aesthetics. It is a choice that has immense socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural impact.

Enter Lee Campbell, the catalyst for the renewed interest in North American hybrids. She is one of the most important figures in natural wine and was one of the first to introduce New Yorkers to small-production wines made with organic farming and low sulfur through her work with Louis/Dressner and the Tarlow Group, running the wine programs at Reynard, among others. She is a Black woman with a reputation for inspiring many in our industry with a mix of magnetic leadership, exacting expectations, and the gracious patience to wait for others to catch up to her perceptive intellect. Six or seven years ago she put her reputation on the line for Virginia wines, which included wines from Early Mountain (*Press 4 Mix, White, and Red*) made from non-*vinifera* hybrids like Chambourcin and Vidal Blanc. As such she was one of the first people to change my opinion, and others, about the potential of these maligned grapes. I asked her when she started to change her own mind. “Let’s just say that I was wide open and

primed for something new,” she started. “Hybrids, Petit Manseng, mid-Atlantic wines, digging into the agricultural history of this region — and how the descendants of enslaved people and sharecroppers have too often lost ownership of their family landholdings — this all became conflated for me. And after spending the largest part of my professional life at the front of certain wine trends and movements (ahem), I was eager

to find a new frontier. I’m pretty excited to say that I’ve found one, and that the other frontiers-folk are darned fantastic.”

“Hybrids are a distinctly American thang that young people, queer folk, and people of color feel like they can really own. Hybrids

personify just being who one is; celebrating and doubling-down on one’s natural strengths instead of always trying to fit into a pre-established motif. It used to be that ‘Natural Wine’ did this for folks. And now I feel that it’s this creative cauldron of hybrids, ciders, co-ferments, etc. that is effecting this. And essentially, it feels like a similar journey to the one I was on when I was advocating low-sulfur Grolleau.”



Lee Campbell DANIEL KRIEGER FOR BON APPETIT

Campbell cites Jahdé Marley — NYC sommelier, wine industry professional, writer, and community activist — as instrumental in taking this further to stoke the fire around non-*vinifera* hybrids. Marley, herself introduced to hybrids by Campbell, has been working to illustrate how non-*vinifera* fermentations can be used to reclaim and build a new community by those historically excluded from the race, class, and gender boundaries entrenched in the wine business. “During lockdown,” she says, “I met all kinds of emerging winemakers from diverse backgrounds working with these grapes, regional fruit, and grains. I found my people. Black people. Brown people. Queer people. Concerned citizens. These folks tapped into the sustainability that working with these raw materials allowed, and often rely on solidarity economics to bring their projects to life.”

With this impetus, Marley started ABV in 2021, which stands for ‘Anything But Vinifera’ and the seminar is now in its third year. This year the event is July 11th at Rule of Thirds in Greenpoint, and as a Direct Press member we will comp your ticket (check your inbox for more details or contact us directly). The theme is ‘Economy of SCALE’ (Social Capital Above Legacy of Exploitation).

Marley realized “hybrids and native grapes presented an opportunity for inclusivity far beyond regionality, but allowed for a cultural narrative that was missing with traditional wine

grapes.” And, yet, she emphasizes that North American grapes, “enabled me to frame American wine with a regional inclusivity that reminded me of my Italian wine experience.”

Ben Jordan echoes this attitude towards allowing for a wider range of regional styles and flavors that are unique to certain areas. “I love that they are part of this ongoing conversation of allowing that every place should be different, it’s okay to make wines that don’t taste like Burgundy or Napa, and that a vine should grow well in a place and its grapes should ripen in a way that it makes sense to make wine out of them, year after year. It’s the basic rules of farming, and I think the hybrids are part of convincing the wine industry that it doesn’t make sense to plant the same ten cultivars all around the world.”

Eli Silins of Camuna Cellars (*Press 4 Red*) moved to Philadelphia after making wine in Australia and California, and he has been energized by hybrids. “It’s an exciting time to be working with these varieties! There are more and more folks getting involved and expanding the breadth of style and vernacular of hybrid grapes. I think it’s interesting to find the grapes that grow well in a region and then explore the winemaking styles suited to those grapes.” He’s describing a time-honored approach to great wine, but it has been seriously stymied by the overuse of *vinifera* North America.

Because of hybrids, we can include wines like Eli's Chambourcin from the coastal plain of New Jersey. Not to mention the other states and provinces represented this month that would have been previously unheard of on our shelves, let alone in the wine club. This month's wines hail from North Carolina, Virginia, New Jersey, New York, Vermont, Ontario, and Quebec. If that's not a sign of something different afoot, I don't know what is.

It may be overly simplistic to suggest that scrapping *vinifera* in North America is a magic pill for any problems in the wine industry; but then again it would be even more narrow-minded to continue to exclusively plant a grape species where three or four hundred years of cultivation has shown it can barely survive. These are early days for hybrids but there have been huge leaps in quality in the past few years and a palpable sense of excitement that is growing. Science, nature, economics, history, and sociology are all nudging us to see what Jahd  Marley has been proclaiming: "Hybrids are, in every way, the future of wine."

*Cheers,*  
Jonathan Kemp



Maya Hood-White

## **Early Mountain 'Young Wine' White 2022**

**Virginia • USA**

*Press 4 Mix/White*

It's hard to think of a winery and a region in the U.S. where I've seen as many positive changes as Early Mountain in Madison, Virginia. They have quickly become a leader in the region and are showing there is a lot of untapped potential in the state. Winemaker Maya Hood-White has improved farming techniques and pushed organic vineyard practices in a



challenging climate. Virginia is both hot and rainy, creating a ton of disease pressure from fungus, mildew, and rot. One of their responses to this has been to embrace hybrid grapes like the red Chambourcin grape and the white Vidal Blanc grape. Because they are a mix of wild American varieties with the more familiar European types, they have a natural resistance to many of the issues above, requiring far less spraying to keep them healthy.

The Young Wine White, made from Vidal Blanc, is equally as gulpable and playful. With a touch of spritz, it's got bright floral notes mixed with nectarine, savory depth, and a refreshing ginger ale quality. It's perfect with sushi or as an aperitif.

The grapes are sourced from the Shenandoah Valley (the cooler temps there help retain the acidity) and it's made with minimal intervention in a mix of steel and neutral barrel. Unfiltered and less than 20ppm of sulfur. *Jonathan Kemp*

### **Wild Arc 'Aurora' 2022** **375ml can**

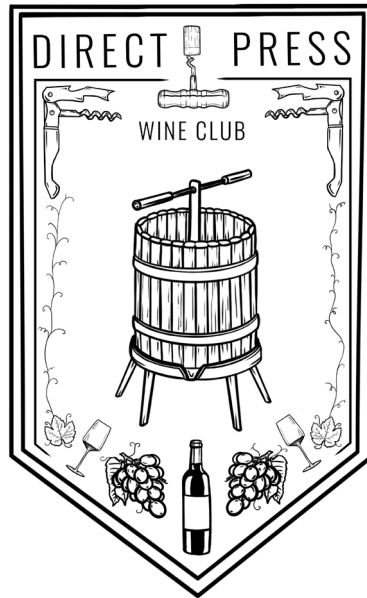
**New York • USA**  
*Press 4 Mix/White*

Wild Arc have crafted an incredibly refreshing sparkling wine in a can

from the highly disease resistant Aurore hybrid grape. Aurore is typically used as a bulk blending grape in New York State but Todd and Crystal knew they could craft a shining example from this hearty little grape, and golly have they! Grown at the Buzzard Crest Vineyard in the Finger Lakes this is Certified Organic fruit at it's finest.

The grapes are whole cluster macerated for 24 hours before direct pressing into tank and left to sit undisturbed until it's ready for packaging. They do not fine, filter, or rack the wine at any point. The wine is then refermented in can to give a gentle effervescence.

This is such a refreshing white wine with a tiny bit of texture due to that 24 hours of maceration. The bouquet reminds me of pithy lemon marmalade, fresh orange and lime juice, and a hint of wild flowers. I have enjoyed this can both directly and in a glass and it always gives me a flash of nostalgic flavors including pineapple and lime lifesavers, fleshy acidity, a slight saline and mineral character all while being a bit wild, rustic, and juicy at the same time. *Jeremy Hernandez*



## **Lightwell Survey 'Strange Collapse' Rose 2021**

**Virginia • USA**

*Press 4 Mix/Red*

Ben Jordan was one of the first winemakers to convince me of the potential of North American hybrids as well as Virginia wines. I know I'm not the only one whose mind was changed by his Early Mountain Young Red, made from Chambourcin. He is thoughtful and committed to the hard work of matching the right grape to the right terroir in an emerging region, and embracing North American hybrids has been a big part of that.

He has since left Early Mountain (now in the expert hands of winemaker Maya Hood White) to focus on his own labels, Lightwell Survey and Midland. In addition, he has partnered with his brother Tim, Lee Campbell, and others to start Common Wealth Crush Co., a 'custom crush meets business incubator meets thinktank cooperative' in the Shenandoah Valley that will continue expanding the community of small producers in the region and allow a more diverse group of folks to get a leg up in the wine world.

And just in case you need any further convincing of Ben's ability to craft subversively delicious wines from unfamiliar grape varieties, crack open his 'Strange Collapse' rosé on a hot day and pour yourself a big slug. It's not your mom's rosé, that's for sure, sporting a label with one of the baseball bat-wielding gang members

from the movie 'The Warriors' and a color that is more ruby red and amber than the typical Provençal pale salmon. But it is still immensely crowd-friendly. A blend of 49% Vidal blanc, 31% Petit Manseng, 8% Chambourcin, 8% Noiret, and 4% Traminette with zero sulfur added. Aromas of mandarin orange and Campari are met with grassy undertones, 'river stone wetness,' subtle tannic chew, and Alpine strawberry on the palate. It's one of those wines that was kind of hard to write



*Ben Jordan*

about because my notes just say, 'mmm that's really good.' *Jonathan Kemp*

## **Wild Arc Marquette 2021**

**New York • USA**

*Press 4 Mix/Red*

When Todd Cavallo and Crystal Cornish moved from Brooklyn to the Hudson Valley hamlet of Pine Bush in 2016, they "had very limited experience in agriculture, mostly relegated to growing tomatoes, peppers, herbs, and hops on fire escapes." It's safe to say they have progressed since their days of fire escape gardening, as they have a biodynamic permacultural farm as well as 3 acres of vines they lease and tend

themselves. The Wild Arc wines always get people excited when they arrive on our shelves, and we were lucky to snag a tranche of their Marquette for our wine club members this month.

These vines are from Valley Falls Vineyard, one of the sites Wild Arc farms about a half and hour from



*Todd Cavallo of Wild Arc Farm*

Troy, NY. The wine is made with two weeks of whole cluster fermentation and partial carbonic maceration. It's aged in old French oak barrels and one chestnut barrel. Marquette always has a dank, almost smoky, animal note to it and this is no exception. Here, though, it isn't overpowering, and it is complemented beautifully with plump, mouthwatering notes of black plum, raspberry tea, root beer, and cola. *Jonathan Kemp*

## **Camuna Chambourcin** **2021**

**New Jersey • USA**  
*Press 4 Red*

Eli Silins began his wine journey back in 2004 at a biodynamic winery in Australia. In 2013 he started making wine in California, and in 2019 he and his wife moved from Berkeley to Philadelphia. "I started making wine in California and didn't really think too much about hybrids as there were so many *vinifera* varieties to explore. When I moved to Philadelphia, you couldn't talk about local wine without mention of Chambourcin, which I had never even heard of until then. I started to learn more about the predominant hybrids grown in the region.. Cayuga white, Vidal blanc, Chambourcin, Traminette.. I've always been excited about regionality and lesser known varieties, how a place and its produce become intertwined. Hybrid grapes offer a chance to develop that relationship in a growing region where that relationship is still being discovered. There's an opportunity to grow grapes here that work in this environment and can speak of this place."

His City Glou Chambourcin comes from grapes grown on New Jersey's coastal plain, and like Early Mountain's Chambourcin, is made using whole cluster carbonic maceration. There's a dark, tangy edge to the wine balanced by a

luscious mix of juicy blueberry, lavender, and violets. Chill it down and gulp it down.

Eli is not just an exciting new voice in East Coast wines, but he is working under a new K kosher certification that is more aligned with the values of natural winemaking. He told me, “The Camuna project inspired a local Rabbi friend to start Green Mountain K kosher, a grassroots heimish “punk rock” hechsher alternative for folks who opt out of pursuing costly mainstream certification. It’s meant to help small K kosher producers connect with congruous consumers who value transparency, community, and informed choice, while also following Halakha.” *Jonathan Kemp*

**Early Mountain ‘Young Wine’  
Red 2021**  
**Virginia • USA**  
*Press 4 Red*

Virginia is emerging as a compelling place for winemaking, but it is not without many challenges. The high rainfall levels there combined with the heat make for perfect conditions — for fungus and rot. Hybrid grapes that have both native American disease resistance and European wine grape parentage help solve this problem without aggressive fungicide sprays. But it has taken winemakers with a thick skin (no pun intended) to get these hybrid wines, long dismissed as ‘foxy’ and simple, to be taken seriously. Early Mountain has been at the forefront of this effort, being proof positive for the exciting potential of hybrids, organic viticulture, and natural wine

in Virginia. Until this year, the team was led by Ben Jordan, with Maya Hood-White in charge of the vineyards and being assistant



*Eli Silins*

winemaker. Now that Ben has moved on to focus on his own projects Midland and Lightwell Survey, Maya has taken the reins. Maya Hood-White’s creativity and skill as a winemaker is apparent from the moment you have a sip of Early Mountain’s “Young Wine”. This juicy, fresh wine hails from the varied climate of Madison, Virginia, and evokes a ‘glou-glou’ ease with a distinct hybrid variety twist. Composed of 96% Chambourcin, 4% Vidal Blanc, these cold-hardy and fungus-resistant grapes are able to endure the Shenandoah Valley’s rain, frost, and heat—all while challenging any lingering bias about hybrid grapes. Its bright acidity is perfect with a chill: in July or November. *Jonathan Kemp*

## L'Imparfait A L'Aire 'Libre' 1L 2020

**Ontario • Canada**

*Press 4 White*



*David McMillan, Jonas Newman, and Vicki Samaras*

L'Imparfait Negociant is a collaboration between Vicki Samaras and Jonas Newman of Hinterland Wine Company in Ontario and David McMillan of Joe Beef fame in Quebec. Vicki and Jonas planted vines in Prince Edward County, Ontario back in 2003 after careers in the pharmaceutical industry and restaurants, respectively..

Working with North American hybrids was not a hard decision for them, at least after being convinced by other winemakers' examples. Practically speaking, Jonas says, "hybrids are a sort of safety net when we are growing grapes in

such a cold climate. Even in the worst of winters you are probably going to make wine. Because there are no real benchmarks yet for these varieties you are very free in the cellar."

The 'À L'Air Libre' is 80% Seyval Blanc and 20% Muscat, with 20 days on the skins. It's lower acid but has some fresh, mineral, steely notes and a savory, briny undertone. There are definitely some bruised apple notes not unlike a good Chenin Blanc here, too. It's very refreshing and perfect with seafood and summer fare, and given its deep thirst-quenching properties, it's fortunately in a liter-sized bottle. *Jonathan Kemp*

## Pleb 'Tete' Seyval 2018 **North Carolina • USA** *Press 4 White*

Chris Denesha of Pleb Urban Winery in Asheville, North Carolina is another trailblazer when it comes to using North American hybrids. However he doesn't distinguish *vinifera* from hybrids or natives, saying, "they are all vines that produce grapes. The strong thrive and the weak do not. There are many hybrid grapes that do just as poorly at my sites as *vinifera* does. I just have a small threshold for what chemical intervention is worthwhile in the vineyard. I'm much more accepting of physical labor in the vineyard. I love the hybrids and natives because they allow me to work directly with them through more

physical intervention and not as dependent on chemicals. This is the continuity I look for in the wine from the vineyard.”



*The team at Pleb Urban Winery*

A wine like his ‘Tete’ Seyval Blanc is a great example of his ability to take hybrid wines to another level. This spends four years (!) on the lees in oak barrels and is one of the most intriguing and distinctive wines we’ve come across. Ripping acid and a subtle, nutty element reminiscent of Jura Savagnin, it is a perfect wine for gastronomic situations that require cut and complexity. *Jonathan Kemp*

## **La Garagista ‘Loup d’Or’ 2021**

**Vermont • USA**

*Press 2*

Few winemakers have had as much influence on the discussion around North American hybrids as Deidre Heekin of La Garagista in Vermont. We could probably devote an entire

newsletter just on her project and her proteges but the basic facts are this: she and her husband Caleb Barber ran a farm-to-table restaurant for 20 years in Woodstock, VT, and making their own wine seem like a natural extension of farming their own radicchio and other greens that were hard to find locally. The winery started in 2010 and she uses a chef’s mentality of ‘using everything in the kitchen,’ blending different ferments and experimenting freely to create bottles that permanently alter many peoples’ perception of wine. She also experimenting because she feels that we still don’t know what Vermont and the grapes that thrive there can do yet. There’s a wide-eyed sense of playfulness and yet a deep earnestness to her wines that understandably resonates with adventurous wine drinkers.



*Caleb Barber and Deidre Heekin*

Loup d’Or is made from 100% Brianna, a white grape with DNA from several Muscats, Grenache Blanc, Schiava, Bourboulenc, and Tibourin Gris. It sees extended

aging on its lees in glass demijohns, where it develops flor, the unique layer of yeast present in Sherry and Jura. To my palate there is a very clear parallel with Manzanilla, but there is a floral freshness and finesse on top of the salinity and nuttiness that created a combination of colors and sensations that I had never experienced. It went from provocative and challenging to fascinating and thrilling. Mind blown. *Jonathan Kemp*

## **Pinard et Filles 'Vin de Jardin' 2021**

**Quebec • Canada**

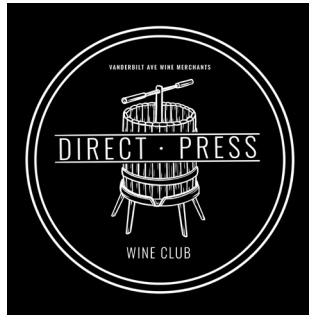
*Press 2*

Almost a decade ago, Frederic Simon and Catherine Belanger started planting grapes near Magog, Quebec: the middle of nowhere, even by Canadian standards. Slowly they came around to embracing North American hybrid grape varieties despite strongly resisting them at first. The change came after they tasted a La Crescent made by Deidre Heekin of La Garagista, and they began working with hybrids in 2016. I love their ability to create wines that never lose the ability to deliver irreverent pleasure even when they may be challenging your preconceived notions of wine.

The 'Vin de Jardin' is far more in the irreverent pleasure camp, however, triggering a primal, thirst-quenching response while playfully engaging your more analytical neurons with originality and sense memories of berry foraging by a mountain lake. It's a blend of all three Frontenac subtypes — Blanc, Gris, and Noir in equal parts — with zero sulfur added and partial fermentation in amphora. Juicy, luscious strawberry and raspberry dance on the palate, with crunchy cranberry skin and some stony details adding some clarity and contrast. Lip-smacking, delicious AF, and proof positive that North American hybrids from Quebec can be as much of a standard-bearer for cutting edge vin nature than anything from l'hexagone France. *Jonathan Kemp*



*Frederic Simon and Catherine Belanger of Pinard et Filles*



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JULY 2023