



DIRECT PRESS

JULY 2022

FROM TABLE TO VINE

Kirk Sutherland reflects on his journey from server to sommelier to winemaker as he prepares to move to Oregon

My time in New York City is coming to

an end — at least for now. A decade in New York wine and hospitality feels like a really good run. I'll be departing in the middle of July to return to Portland, Oregon and focus more on my winemaking project, Erde Wines. I wanted to use my last month working on the Direct Press wine club to reflect on some of my favorite wine discoveries from the last ten years.

Probably the most 'career defining' move of my professional life in New York was when I took the position as the Beverage Director of Roberta's Pizza and Blanca in the summer of 2018. It was a huge job that included working 80 hours a week; running three wine lists in New York; opening the Los Angeles location including all sorts of pop-ups; and losing more hair than I'd like to admit. Several wines I've selected this month were staples for my time at the helm there, on both coasts. When I was picking wines to be poured by-the-glass, I looked for producers who were thoughtfully

farming their vines, but I also needed bottles that were stable enough to still taste great on the second day after opening.

This theme stretches across all of the selections in the 4-bottle club, and many of my old standbys are in the mix, including the otherworldly skin-fermented Grüner Veltliner from Alwin Jurtschitsch; Francesco Cirelli's textured, refreshing Pecorino from Abruzzo; and my all-time favorite Grignolino, made by Fabrizio Iuli (potentially the nicest guy in Italy). The 2-bottle club this month features 2 regions that hold a very special place in my heart: Corsica and Alto Piemonte.

I was extremely fortunate to move my way up from a server to sommelier to the beverage director of a bicoastal restaurant group before moving to the retail side full time. I was incredibly lucky to work under Lee Campbell when I first arrived in New York in 2012, and would not be where I am today without her as a mentor. I hit the ground running with a position at Reynard at the Wythe Hotel, where

Lee had created a wine program that was way ahead of its time. It was at Reynard where I had my first experiences with natural wine. I sipped my first Pet-Nat there; fell head-over-heels for Beaujolais and Muscadet; learned about obscure regions of France. I also met many of the importers and distributors that I would go on to work extensively with — people like Jules Dressner, Zev Rovine, David Bowler, and too many others to name.

In 2016, I accepted a pretty wild job with the Matter House Hospitality Group. They are now known as Mattos Hospitality after some serious scandals. While I can't say I have the fondest memories of working under Thomas Carter — Eater and Google are best if you want the full investigative details — I have to acknowledge the fact that I learned a lot while on the floor at Estela, Cafe Altro Paradiso, and on the opening team of Flora Bar at the Met Breuer (RIP). It was there I really honed my palate and wine-buying skills. I got the chance to work with a stellar, Italian-focused list at Altro Paradiso. It was the first place that I worked that had a section of the list dedicated to Alto Piemonte. This is the area north of Barolo and Barbaresco, an underappreciated home of lighter, more ethereal Nebbiolo-based wines. Selling these was super exciting at the time, as was exploring the seven main appellations of the region, all of which have distinct styles that play really well with food. I found a special connection to the village of Bramaterra, where

the wines are typically a blend of Nebbiolo, Croatina, and Vespolina grown on volcanic soils. This imparts the wines with a pronounced salty, smoky minerality — yet also profound elegance. The Colombera & Garella Bramaterra (*Press 2*) has always been a stand-out for me, and I'm thrilled to feature this outstanding wine.

I also got pretty good at making a kick ass by-the-glass list at Flora Bar, where I became enamored with Corsican wines. Tasting the wines of Antoine Arena had been an “ah-ha” moment for me back in my Reynard days. At Flora Bar I took a real position on the quality and intensity that the island of Corsica can produce in its wines. I selected a Patrimonio Blanc from Antoine's son, Antoine-Marie (*Press 2*) for this month's lineup.



I landed my first wine buying position as the opening beverage director of High Street on Hudson in the West Village in the fall of 2015. The list was composed entirely of small-production American wine. Writing that list led me to take a fairly deep dive into what the younger generation of winemakers were up to in the States. This was 2015, and American wine was still dominated by the “big flavor” brands. It was not at all easy to find lower alcohol, naturally-made domestic wines. Many of my peers and friends in the wine industry scoffed at the idea of a wine list driven by up-and-coming producers from the West Coast.

Above: The author at Cassin, Division's home vineyard, in the Willamette Valley



Our list featured names like Evan Lewandowski, John Raytek of Ceritas, Pax Mahle of Windgap, and Tegan Passalacqua of Sandlands — some of the most insanely fought-over wines today — but barely known in NYC seven short years ago. Among this crew of West Coast hot shots was Kate and Tom of Division Winemaking Company (*Press 4 Red*) in Portland, Oregon. This year will mark my seventh vintage working harvest with the Division team, where I learned everything I know about winemaking — how to set up a pump, how to do pigeage, when to bottle Pet Nat so it doesn't explode all over you — and so much more. In fact, my Erde wines are made with Kate and Tom. If I hadn't taken the job at High Street, I don't think I'd be a winemaker now. Advocating for the validity of new-school American wines helped me forge some great friendships, and has led me to this next chapter in my career as I move to Oregon to be closer to grape vines and my winemaking friends.

I hope this last collection of wines I've picked out is as fun for you all to drink as it was for me to select them. And if you ever find yourself in the City of Roses, give me a shout.

Byeeeeee,
Kirk

DIRECT PRESS • JULY 2022 • TABLE TO VINEYARD

[Jurtschitsch "Belle Naturelle" Gruner Veltliner](#)

2020

Kamptal • Austria

[*Press 4 Mix + Press 4 White*]

Alwin Jurtschitsch and his wife Stefanie Hasselbach are probably the most influential natural winemakers in Austria's renowned Kamptal region. They are still very much outnumbered by more conventional growers in the area, but like-minded friends like Anna and

Martin Arndorfer, frequently used in past Direct Press selections, are helping making the Kamptal prominent on natural wine lists. The Jurtschitsch estate is on the larger side, 62 hectares, but that was cut down to size in order to ensure natural farming could be executed on this scale. Since 2006, Alwin has been tireless in his effort to convert his family's holdings to organic viticulture and increase biodiversity. "The more life you have in the vineyard, the

Above L-R: Inspecting Pinot Noir at Keeler Estate in Eola-Amity; with Linnie and Angela Osborne (of A Tribute To Grace) at Flora Bar; with Tom Monroe at Division Winemaking Co. in Portland

more stable the entire system is,” he says. They keep tweaking their approach, like using whey instead of copper sulphate to treat mildew.

Belle Naturelle is Grüner Veltliner “in its birthday suit” as Alwin calls it. It comes from terraced vineyards on granite in Langenlois. It is aged in red wine barrels and sees ten days on the skins but is not really orange; though there is some playful funk. Nothing that will scare anyone away, just enough to add some character. Mandarin oranges, chamomile tea, fresh ocean breeze, and a lean stony finish make this a delicious accompaniment to warm weather pastas and vegetables. Bottled with just 10mg/L of sulfur. *Jonathan Kemp*

Cirelli Colline Pescaresi Pecorino 2019

Abruzzo • Italy

[Press 4 Mix + Press 4 White]

I first started working with the wines of Francesco Cirelli while working at Flora Bar. The Colline Pescaresi Pecorino was a staple by-the-glass wine, as it's always been super versatile, approachable and the ultimate crowd pleaser. Running an Italian focused wine list can sometimes be daunting, especially when it comes to sourcing white wines from the country, as they can sometimes be a little low acid and on the fuller-bodied side of things. In the Cirelli Pecorino, a perfect middle ground is found: medium body, medium acid, medium fruitiness. We poured it for anyone looking for Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio or even Chardonnay as the wine fantastically easy going.

Francesco Cirelli has long been an outlier in his native Abruzzo. In a region dominated by chemical farming and mass produced wines, Cirelli has stood out by taking a firm stance on

organic farming and minimalist winemaking. While his production is by no means teeny tiny, his wines are all made with the utmost care and attention.

The 2019 Pecorino has really come into its own with a couple years in bottle. The texture and acidity have melded quite nicely, while the wine is still marked by youthful notes of citrus and sea spray. Mint and pear carry through the slightly nutty, quite lengthy finish. And it remains delicious for 3-4 days after opening.

Kirk Sutherland



Iuli "Natalin" Vino Rosso 2020

Piedmont • Italy

[Press 4 Mix + Press 4 Red]

We're zooming into the northern part of Piedmont, in the Monferrato hills, then further into the small town of Montaldo di Cerrina, to find the home of Fabrizio Iuli and his family. The Iuli's connection to Montaldo began in the 1920s when Fabrizio's grandfather Gioacchino made a move back to his home town from a factory job in Lombardia to play clarinet in a marching band, and decided to stay and settle with his wife Ernestina. 10 years later they planted the first vines on the property and the

Above: Fabrizio Iuli in Monferrato, northwest of Barolo and Barbaresco, where his family has lived ever since his grandfather quit his job in a factory to play the clarinet, as one does. He later planted grape vines.

DIRECT PRESS • JULY 2022 • TABLE TO VINEYARD

rest is history. Today, Fabrizio is the only winegrower in the town. His first commercial vintage was 1998, with his Barbera called “Rossore”, and since then he’s focused a lot of energy into showcasing the less celebrated grapes found only in these parts of Italy, like the nearly extinct Baratuciat and Slarina, along with Barbera, Nebbiolo and the Grignolino featured in this month’s selections. At the winery, he favors the use of old wood casks and cement tanks for fermentations, and aims to capture each variety's character with high-toned freshness and purity.

“Natalin”, after his grandfather’s nickname, is made entirely with Grignolino — a variety that usually makes for wines aromatically bright and floral, yet firm and distinct reds. His take on this vintage is very light in color and body, with perfumed raspberries and a grounding, “wet earth” undertone. *Bruno Sant’Anna*

[Yves Duport "Le Marginal" Vin de France 2021](#)

Bugey • France

[Press 4 Mix + Press 4 Red]

Chilled reds have really taken over, and I love it. When we served cold red wine in the summer at Reynard in 2013, people thought we were nuts, but here we are almost a decade later and we have a full shelf dedicated to these wonderful wines that rest between dark rose and light red. Situated in the hills of the Bugey region in northern France, Yves Duport makes super refreshing, light wines, and I would always try

and horde as much of his "Celine" bottling as I could every year. I had originally planned to throw it in the club, but due to shipping issues the wine wasn't available. Thankfully Mike from Savio Soares informed me of this new bottling from Duport that is essentially a slightly beefed-up Celine. 75% destemmed Mondeuse given a gentle maceration blended with 25% direct press Jacquère fermented in stainless steel and bottled without any added sulfur. This is everything I want in a chilled red – fresh,



joyful and fruity, with just a whisper of tannin that becomes more perceivable when the wine is cold. No muss, no fuss. It's clean, easy and so much fun. *Kirk Sutherland*

[Dolores Cabrera "La Araucaria" Tinto 2021](#)

Tenerife • Canary Islands • Spain

[Press 4 Red]

Dolores Cabrera Fernández has been making wine in the Valle de la Orotava, a small village in the Canary Islands, since 2013. A farmer first, and a winemaker second, Dolores has worked her high-elevation, centenarian vines of Listan

Above: Dolores Cabrera Fernández in her vines on the northern coast of Tenerife

Blanco and Listan Negro organically since the inception of the winery. What initially drew me to her wines was the great value they offered, and, like many other producers from the Canary Islands, the wines often tasted better on days two or three, making them fantastic candidates for by-the-glass offerings.

The 2021 La Araucaria is a bit of a reinvention of the typically smoky, reductive red she had made in the past. A fresh perspective led her to give the Listan Negro grapes 12 days of whole-cluster carbonic maceration, followed by an additional week of traditional open top fermentation before pressing. The finished wine was then aged for 6 months and bottled unfiltered with a tiny dose of sulfur. All of this set up a wine that is much more friendly and approachable upon opening, but doesn't lose the volcanic elements so many of us love in the wines of this region. Juicy boysenberry and plum are met by a gentle smoky note that doesn't overpower any of the other elements. Buoyant and fresh, with a touch of funky earthy tones to keep things fun. Drink it with a slight chill. *Kirk Sutherland*

[Division Villages "Beton" American Red Wine](#)

2021

Willamette Valley • Oregon • USA

[Press 4 Red]

The Division 'Villages' wines are Kate and Tom's answer to classic French bistro wines, and Beton has long been a favorite of mine in the lineup. When I first featured this wine by-the-glass on the opening list at High Street on Hudson in 2015, I never imagined that a few years later I'd be helping make the wine.

Inspired by the juicy, playful reds of the Touraine region of the Loire Valley, the blend is

composed of 39% Cabernet Franc, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Malbec (or Cot as they call it in the Loire), 11% Gamay and 10% Pinot Noir. Beton is french for concrete, nodding to fact that the wine is made in giant concrete fermenters. The grapes in the blend are fermented in a number of different ways: some go through full carbonic maceration to give levity and energy, some are done semi-carbonic to create more balanced fruit tones, and a bit is done with traditional de-stemmed fermentation to lend structure and depth. The resultant wine is fresh and playful, and after the difficult 2020 vintage, it's awesome to see Beton back and better than ever. Medium-bodied and high toned, this is the perfect bottle for a barbecue. Juicy red and blue fruits take center stage, with just enough vegetal character from the Cabernet Franc without being overly green. It's hard not to love this wine. *Kirk Sutherland*



[Adega Entre Os Rios "Komokabras" Albarino](#)

2019

Galicia • Spain

[Press 4 White]

Albariño has long been my favorite white grape. When I first started working in wine, I often

thought of Albariño as simply the Spanish alternative to Sauvignon Blanc, but that perspective shifted after I tasted my first wine from Alberto Nanclares. In the Nanclares wines I found a purity and elegance that matched the precision of some of the best Chablis I'd ever tasted, and from there I was hooked. I was introduced to Adegas Entre Os Rios by the wines importer, Álvaro de la Viña, while I was still at Roberta's. While the domaine is situated farther south than Nanclares, the wines have a similar vibe - they're picked at complete ripeness, fermented with native yeast and aged in neutral barrels. I ended up pouring the first vintage Álvaro imported by the glass for almost the entire summer of 2019.

The yellow cap Komokabras is a new wine for their line up. The organically farmed grapes were given a short maceration before a gentle whole cluster pressing, then fermented in steel tanks. After primary fermentation was completed, the juice was moved to neutral barrel where it aged for 9-10 months on its lees, without going through malolactic transformation. The finished wine is insanely good. The nose is zesty and citric, recalling the regions proximity to the ocean. Crisp and clean, with peach, lemon and fennel running the lead on the palate, while the oak aging imparts a nice roundness without feeling too oaky. Drink with oysters, and pretend you're on the Spanish coast. *Kirk Sutherland*



[Inconnu Chenin Blanc Clarksburg 2018](#)

Clarksburg • California • USA

[Press 4 White]

Most of y'all are probably familiar with Laura Brennan's wines. I wanted to be sure to feature one of her wines, as I'm going to be doing some work on her vineyard on Underwood Mountain in the Columbia Gorge. Laura launched her project in 2011, focusing on overlooked vineyard sites in northern California. She's since become one of the leading voices of reintegrative agriculture in America. I used the 2018 Chenin in the Blanca pairing back in 2019. The grapes were sourced from a small organic, dry-farmed vineyard in the Clarksburg AVA, close to

Sacramento. Fermented on its lees, and aged in neutral barrel.

Aromatically, the wine is flinty and stone fruited. Light bodied, with great texture from the lees aging. The palate is salty and refreshing, with notes of lemon zest, yellow apples and pear, with a pleasantly nutty finish. *Kirk Sutherland*

[Antoine-Marie Arena "San Giovanni"](#)

[Patrimonio Blanc 2018](#)

Corsica • France

[Press 2]

The name Antoine Arena is synonymous with Corsican wine. I don't think we'd be seeing such fantastic wines coming off the island today if Kermit Lynch hadn't taking such a strong position on producers like Arena and Giacometti several decades ago. I always like to

DIRECT PRESS • JULY 2022 • TABLE TO VINEYARD

discuss how stylistically Corsica is truly the intersection of France and Italy, and because the wines are still somewhat under-appreciated by Americans represent an insane value.

In 2014, the Arena family split up the family's holdings in Patrimonio, the crown jewel of Corsican wine production. Vineyards were divided between Antonine and his two sons Antoine-Marie and Jean-Baptiste.

Antoine-Marie's San Giovanni Blanc is pure, Vermentinu (they spell it with a u on the island) comes from a tiny .5 hectare vineyard planted on the regions trademark limestone soils. The grapes are given a gentle 5 day maceration (this is NOT an orange wine) before being pressed and fermented in concrete. Aromas of citrus and pear blossoms spring from the glass, with a gentle grassy undertone. The palate is lush, but balanced, with medium-acidity and a creamy mouthfeel aided by the skin contact the grapes received. A foundation of peach, nectarine and yellow melon notes are supported by a strong, stoney mineral tone. The finish is long and saline. Perfect for fatty seafood dishes.

Kirk Sutherland

[Colombera & Garella "Cottignano" Bramaterra](#)

2017

Piedmont • Italy

[Press 2]

Cristiano Garella has emerged as a figurehead in the renaissance the Alto Piemonte has seen over the last the last decade. A native to the region, Garella has brought a youthful energy and passion to revitalizing old vineyards, refocusing winemaking to old-school practices and producing fresh, elegant wines that drink almost like Pinot, and don't try to taste like Barolo or Barbaresco. The first wine I tasted

form Colombera & Garella was the 2012 bottling of the Cottignano Bramaterra back in 2016, I was instantly made a fan.

One of the most northernly appellations in the Alto Piemonte, Bramaterra is best known for its cool climate and volcanic soils, and it's my favorite of the villages. The 2017 Cottignano is a blend of 70% Nebbiolo, 20% Croatina, 10% Vespolina coming from just 2 hectares of vines up to 50 years old. Fermented

in concrete tanks, then aged 24 months in giant oak casks, the wine is refined and energetic. A beautiful nose of rose petals, anise and orange peel pulls you in right away. Medium-bodied, with soft tannin and bright acidity, marked by notes of bing cherry, cranberry and clove. A long, spice laden finish makes it extremely food friendly. Drink it a little cooler than room temp now, or lay it down 3-5 more years. *Kirk Sutherland*



Above: Antoine-Marie Arena on the limestone-laden soils of Patrimonio, Corsica