



# DIRECT PRESS

NOVEMBER 2022

## OUR ANNUAL STAFF PICKS

Once a year we remove

the constraints of the wine club theme and curate a selection that is based purely on what we're into at the moment. For me, my wine decisions are always wrapped up in the context. As much as I enjoy the open-ended question, 'what are you most excited about right now?' I've come to see wine as a supporting actor to the occasion and the people, not as the lead role. So I feel like I always have to ask, 'what are you having as your meal, and *who* are you having it with?' Just as a good DJ picks out tracks that fit with the vibe of the crowd, I want to fit the wine into the setting. In terms of wine, we're certainly fans of the deep cuts and introducing people to new favorites, but we try to make sure our more obscure picks have universal appeal, too, and tap into pleasure centers.

Of course as Thanksgiving approaches this month, we wanted to put together the most

versatile group of wine we could find. Everyone has a different way of celebrating this food-centric holiday. At its best, Thanksgiving serves as a way to gather people together to share food and drink. At its worst it forces people together out of obligation, starts arguments, and/or necessitates painful avoidance of certain topics. If wine is the most fraught topic of conversation, that is probably a nice situation in which to find yourself.

Either way, the goal this month was to pick out wines that could satisfy a wide range of tastes and cuisines, allowing for wide departures from traditional Thanksgiving. There are refreshing, easy whites like the Fabulas 'Fecerunt' Pecorino and salty, spicy ones like the Vino di Anna Palmento Bianco. There are bright, vivid, chillable reds like the Preisinger Kalkstein Blaufränkisch, and earthy, gnarly, barnyardy dark reds like the Il Vinco 'Canajó.'



What you do with these is up to you. Want to introduce your 74 year-old aunt to orange wine without totally freaking her out? We've got you: Oskar Maurer's 'Crazy Lud' from the border of Serbia and Hungary. Want to take a classically delicious bottle that will pair with anything from turkey to brisket to vegan pasta? The new vintage of the Mofete Etna Rosso from Palmento Costanzo can do that (the last vintage was featured in our Mt. Etna theme in September 2021). Jeremy, our vegan staff member, is borderline obsessed with this suave Sicilian red.

We also tried to represent a range of countries and regions, so there are wines from Serbia, Austria, Italy, Spain; the sole American pick is from Virginia. (There's notably less French wine this month: December's Direct Press will feature the Loire Valley.)

We're a small shop with outsized opinions on wine but I still see our role primarily as one of service. We taste a lot and learn about all these producers, not to gain some superior status or awards for our wine wisdom; we do it to help people steer through all of the labels, styles, and trends, not to mention science, farming, and geography that can easily overwhelm. For something that is supposed to be fun and enjoyable, wine can quickly turn into a risk proposition. Picking out wine is filled with pressure: nobody wants to risk judgment or be stuck with a dud. Our job is to take the risk out of the equation,



*Pictured: Eleanor Robb (top left) with Virginia's Early Mountain Young Wine. Jeremy Hernandez (below) with Mount Etna's Palmento Costanzo Mofete. Clothing supplied by the models. Styling and art direction by Jeremy.*

which takes trust, and we are lucky to have you and the rest of the Direct Press members allowing us to be your guides.

We're matchmakers in a way, too, getting winemakers' creations in front of the people who will most appreciate it. I try to advocate for producers leading with their hearts, sacrificing their backs, and being stewards of the earth. Price is definitely a concern, too, and if a wine can hit all of those marks while tasting great, it's our turn to tell the story and get the wine into the right customers' hands.

This month the stories are varied, the grapes might be a little unfamiliar, the vines planted off the beaten path; it's a bit of a style salad, a genre grab bag, if you will.



That's the point, to show that organic

wine, natural wine, small-production, craft wine — whatever the label — there is no uniform taste. The important thing is that they come from a wide swath of people who are putting their own feelings and passions into their work, so I know they can similarly reach a wide group of wine drinkers with their own strong feelings who want wines to take them to new places. Hopefully that makes for a story of connection and some good conversation.

Cheers!

*Jonathan Kemp*

*Bruno Sant'Anna*



*Bruno Sant'Anna (bottom left) samples Claus Preisinger's Blaufränkisch on Vanderbilt Avenue. Jonathan Kemp (above right) recklessly poses in a high traffic bike line with Guy Breton Morgon and Chionetti Dolcetto Dogliani Briccolero.*

**Oszkar Maurer "Crazy Lud" Dry White Serbia**

**2021**

**Subotica • Serbia**

**[Press 4 Mix + Press 4 White]**

Take our word for it, this blend of Syrmia Green, Bakator, Slankamenka, Kevidinka, and Welschriesling from northwest Serbia is not nearly as exotic in taste as it may appear. It's a super-refreshing easy-drinker, as perfect for a summer day at Coney Island as it is with spicy Thai food in the dead of winter. Bursting with tangerine and Meyer lemon notes, there are hints of peach tea, creamsicle, marmalade, and sour beer as well. Bright, tangy, and just a little salty mineral texture from some skin contact make this about as crowd-friendly as orange wine gets.



I've read that Oszkar Maurer is the only winemaker ever to be invited for a featured dinner at Copenhagen's legendary Noma. Whether or not he's really the only one, he certainly has the right profile for Noma. Oszkar Maurer's family has been making wine for four generations in what was part of Hungary until 1920. He works organically with minimal intervention and has been helping mentor younger winemakers and

assisting them with wine and farming equipment so that they can also showcase the special qualities of the region. Many of his labels feature artwork from children in his home village. 'Crazy Lud' has a goose on it because *lud* means 'goose' in Hungarian and 'crazy' in Serbian. It's inspired by the Hungarian phrase *ha lúd, legyen kövér!* which means, 'if it's a goose, let it be fat'. Go big or go home, essentially. *Jeremy Hernandez & Jonathan Kemp*

**Fabulas 'Fecerunt' Pecorino Terre di Chieti**

**2021**

**Abruzzo • Italy**

**[Press 4 Mix + Press 4 White]**

Fabulas is a group of farmers and friends who have made it their goal to improve the quality of wine coming out of Abruzzo, which has been dominated by cheap, industrial Montepulciano for many years. In contrast, the Fabulas wines check almost every box in terms of natural certification, including EU organic, Demeter Biodynamic, and vegan. Their vines are part of a polycultural farm at about 2000 ft above sea level, protected on one side by a mountainous national park, and influenced on the other by the Adriatic Sea, just 20 miles away.

The name 'Fecerunt' comes from the Latin for 'we are building' and is made from 100% Pecorino. It has a salty sizzle on the finish and it's hard to not think of the famous sheep milk's cheese of the same name — in fact, the grape is named for those same sheep, who apparently love to eat this variety. Fleshy orange peel and minty pear

*Above: Oszkar Maurer, whose vineyards, family, language, and culture crosses the many literal and figurative borders between Hungary and Serbia*

notes come together with citrus oil and a chamomile/verbena tinge to build a very delicious and versatile wine. There's a lot to love about a super-approachable, crisp, charming wine like this that can be poured and shared with anyone, anytime.

*Jonathan Kemp & Bruno Sant'Anna*

**Palmento Costanzo**

**'Mofete' Etna Rosso**

**2018**

**Mount Etna • Sicily • Italy**

**[Press 4 Mix + Press 4 Red]**

With the establishment of the Etna DOC in the 1960's came an end to the historic practice of making wines in *palmento*: a stone structure carved out of the mountain itself, where winemakers of yesteryear

pressed their grapes into volcanic stone vats. Italian wine bureaucrats forbid this practice due to hygienic concerns — they felt making wine in the mountain itself was too hard to keep clean. Recently, under the guidance of Etna's most renowned viticulturist and enologist, Salvo Foti, some estates have fought to reestablish these ancient structures and preserve this piece of Sicilian history. Palmento Costanzo, led by Valeria Agosto and her daughter Serena have done just this.

Located in the Cru of Contrada Santo Spirito, Palmento Costanzo has been creating wine in their reclaimed winery since 2012. They tend to their bush-trained vines, some of which are over 120 years old, farming organically with focus on preserving biodiversity in their vineyards.

Mofete Rosso is 80% Nerello Mascalese and 20% Nerello Cappuccio, from younger vines (30 years on average), fermented in stainless steel and aged in a combination of tank and old barrels. The wine is wonderfully red-fruited, savory and volcanic mineral laden. Undeniably Mediterranean with spicy earth, eucalyptus, menthol, black currant, macerated/stewed cherry fruit backed by

fine-grained tannin, dried rose, hints of pumice and black pepper give structure and a lengthy, saline packed finish keeps me reaching for my glass.

*Jeremy Hernandez*

**Claus Preisinger 'Kalkstein' Blaufränkisch**

**2021**

**Burgenland • Austria**

**[Press 4 Mix + Press 4 Red]**

Claus Preisinger is making wine near Gols, in the Burgenland, which is right at the



*Above: Serena and Valeria Agosto of Palmento Costanzo, on the north side of Mount Etna*

center of the natural wine scene in Austria. It's right on the Neusiedlersee, the biggest inland lake in Europe, that sits on the Austria-Hungary border. He is only 42 but began working with ambient yeasts and low sulfur back in 2002. He got Biodynamic certification in 2006. After many years of working this way, his wines are not funky at all, but fine, filigreed expressions of the soils around the Neusiedlersee.



His Blaufränkisch 'Kalkstein' comes from limestone soils (*kalk* translates to chalk), and Claus reportedly tastes the actual limestone so that he can also make sure that the wine has the same flavor: now that's commitment to minerality. While I certainly get the crunchy, chalky thread going through the wine, it's a mostly mouth-watering, juicy wine with blueberry, red plum, lavender and sage. We tasted through his whole line up of new releases

in September and were once again excited and energized by the 'Kalkstein' Blaufränkisch. This wine really captures the aesthetic of all Preisinger's wines: lithe, elegant, dialed-in, and irresistible. Chill it a bit if you like, it will pair with anything: Hong Kong cuisine, pulled pork, Indian food, pizza, cheeseburgers, and, of course, turkey. *Jonathan Kemp & Bruno Sant'Anna*

### [Early Mountain Vineyards 'Young Wine' Red Chambourcin Virginia 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 winemaker. Now that Ben has moved on to focus on his own projects Midland and Lightwell Survey, Maya has taken the reins.

*Above: The 2021 Preisinger harvest team: Bencze, Isa, Feri, Fanni, Angelo, Christian, Gabor, Andi, Tibi, Enniko, Gabi, Kovi, Zoli, Bela, Imi, Andi, Alex, Gabor, Nils, Felix, Lorenz, Inge, Cathi, David, Dieter, Susanne, Carl and Hilde. There will be a quiz later.*

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, even in November!

*Eleanor Robb*

**[Il Vinco 'Canajó'](#)  
[Vino Rosso 2020](#)**

**Lazio • Italy**  
**[Press 4 Red]**

Daniele Manoni, Marco Fucini, and Nicola Brenciaglia began Il Vinco in 2014 with the goal of rehabilitating old Canaiolo Nero vines in Lazio, just north of Rome. Canaiolo is known as a blending grape now, but until the 20th century, Canaiolo, not Sangiovese, was the main grape found in Chianti. The volcanic soils that slope down to Lake Bolsena have been the site of a growing scene of natural winemakers like Le Coste, Andrea Occhipinti, Joy Kull of La Villana, and Trish Nelson of La Gazzetta. Il Vinco's vines are lush with wild herbs, flowers, and field

beans that are used to make a green 'manure' or vegetable-based compost for the soil.

Canajó is fermented in concrete and it has a rich, textured, almost gritty feel. Chewy, savory, and dense, it almost reads like Sangiovese with its black cherry, dried flower, and sage notes. Minimal sulfur added only at bottling. It's the most rustic, gnarly wine of this month's lineup.

*Jonathan Kemp*



**[Luis Perez 'El Muelle de Olaso'](#)  
[Blanco Cadiz 2021](#)**

**Cadiz • Andalucia • Spain**

**[Press 4 White]**

Looking back, this year it felt like we found the most unique wines in familiar places. By

looking beyond the surface in regions like Piedmont and countries like Chile, we learned about local grape varieties and individual heroic efforts to preserve and celebrate traditional methods and vineyard sites. I thought 'El Muelle de Olaso' represented this spirit so well.

Luis Perez Rodriguez is a professor of oenology at Cadiz University and in 2002, along with his son Willy, he launched this project with the goal of highlighting the storied terroirs of Andalucia. They are not doing this by way of the traditionally

*Above: Maya Hood-White's impressive vineyard and cellar skills are just the thing needed to show off the exciting potential of Virginia wine and hybrid grapes*

oxidized and fortified sherry wines —but by making energetic and expressive table wines from local varieties grown on the region's unique *albarizo* (chalky) soils.

The Palomino grapes for 'El Muelle de Olasso' are fermented in stainless steel tanks, with about 20% of the fruit quickly sundried and fermented in used sherry casks. The portion fermented in cask is racked in December and then blended with the stainless steel wine and aged together on the lees in tanks for 6 months. This all translates into a white wine with salty overtones, with touch more weight and persistency, ending with a tropical flavor that made me think of a *cherimoya* (sugar apple), with its custardy, slightly funky flavor. *Bruno Sant'Anna*

**Vino di Anna 'Palmento Bianco' Sicilia 2021**

**Mount Etna • Sicily • Italy**

**[Press 4 White]**

The wines of Mount Etna have really been speaking to me over the past year. There are so many interesting wines that all capture the unique volcanic energy there in their own way. I especially like the wines of Anna Martens and Eric Narioo and the way they combine freshness and playful rusticity with the darker tones of the volcano's influence. Anna, an Aussie, and Eric, a Frenchie, started making wine on Etna in 2008. Everything is worked by hand, using organic and Biodynamic practices. Nothing is added in the cellar except an occasional, minimal dose of sulfur. They have vines on the eastern side

of Etna, closer to the Ionian Sea's influence, from Linguaglossa to Contrada Nave.

Palmento Bianco is a beautiful, almost delicate wine, but it slowly reveals notes of dried apple ring, nutmeg, and ginger. The underpinning of seaspray and brine is wildly refreshing. Don't be fooled by its understated, sprightly, and whimsical feel: this wine is dangerously chuggable.

*Jonathan Kemp*



**Guy Breton Morgon Vieilles Vignes 2021**

**Beaujolais • France**

**[Press 2]**

Guy Breton is one of the members of Beaujolais' lauded 'Gang of Four' which includes Jean Foillard, Jean-Paul Thevenet, and the late Marcel Lapierre; following the teachings of Jules Chauvet, who taught about making with without the use of sulfur and eschewing synthetic pesticides and other treatments, their work signaled a change that is easily traced to the natural wine movement today. The wines of Guy Breton et al. were an inspiration to countless winemakers, who were moved to use similar methods of going back to very



old methods of winemaking. The vines for Breton's old vine Morgon are around 80 years-old, planted on granite. There is a nice combination of spice and rustic crunch with ethereal finesse. Plush strawberry sorbet aromas, blueberry flesh, overripe black plum, and sundried tomatoes. The savory depth and silky tannins give just enough grip but let the wine remain subversively pleasurable. Beautiful balance and lingering umami.

Guy Breton is still showing me why he was such an instrumental figure in the trajectory of wine in the past 30 years and why his approach has been embraced by so many others: who wouldn't want to try and emulate this?

*Jonathan Kemp*

**Chionetti Dolcetto Dogliani Briccolero 2013**

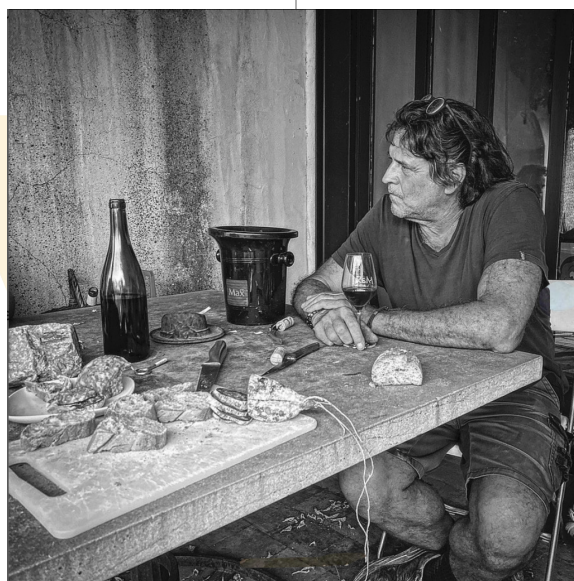
**Dogliani • Piedmont • Italy**

**[Press 2]**

This is the second month in a row we've featured Dolcetto in the Press 2 lineup. Where last month's Nibio from Cascina degli Ulivi was untamed and edgy, this month's Dolcetto from Chionetti is a study in classical elegance.

Dogliani is located just south of Barolo and has the same chalky clay soil as Barolo's revered Monforte and Serralunga crus. At some point it was declared not suited for

Nebbiolo and Dogliani took on a lower status, but this seems to have been a mostly arbitrary designation. For those who know, there are incredible values and age-worthy wines to found in Dogliani for fractions of the prices of Barolo. It also proves that Dolcetto is a serious grape in its own right, as producers in Dogliani can focus solely on Dolcetto without being distracted by Nebbiolo.



Chionetti is one of the oldest winemaking families in the area, arriving in 1912. They began labeling and bottling their wines in the 1950s and have been certified organic since 2015. The 'Briccolero' bottling comes from the top of the hill, and has been vinified separately since the 1950s, which

was very ahead of its time. The 2013 vintage is in a particularly amazing spot to drink right now. It is superbly complex and bewtiching. Pine, forest floor, black truffle, leather, sandalwood, and old library vibes. True to the Chionetti style, this is an exercise in restraint and filigreed detail. The tannins provide a fine, precise, chalky backbone to the wine, and the wine reveals more and more as it's open. Sage, black peppercorn, and ethereal, lifted layers emerge, all with a sensation of haunting beauty instead of power. *Jonathan Kemp*

*Above: Guy Breton, known as 'P'tit Max,' makes the least tannic wines of the Beaujolais Gang of Four that included Lapierre, Thevenet, and Foillard — but hardly the least delectable. He took over his family's vines in 1986.*

