

Set the stage for spring with these 5 wines



By **Dave McIntyre** Columnist, Food March 18

★★★ Exceptional ★★ Excellent ★ Very Good

This week's recommendations include two Bordeaux-style red wines: an elegant cabernet sauvignon from Paso Robles and an intriguing blend from one of Virginia's top producers. Then, explore a high-end sparkling wine and a juicy cava rosada from Spain, plus a tasty Portuguese rosé that fits our budget for relaxed patio sipping. Think spring!

— Dave McIntyre

Raventos i Blanc Textures de Pedra Blanc de Noirs 2012

★★★

Spain, \$45

Raventos i Blanc is trying to elevate Spanish bubbly to the level of champagne — an ambitious project — so this wine is not labeled as a cava. Some will be turned off by the price, which reaches champagne levels. But the quality is there. Textures de Pedra is sophisticated, complex and enticing, blended from grapes that don't exactly trip off the tongue: xarel-lo vermell, bastard negre and sumoll. Look for this mostly in restaurants and a few retail stores, but don't pass it by simply because it's unfamiliar and pricey. Alcohol by volume: 12 percent.

Distributed by Potomac Selections: Available in the District at Grand Cata. Available in Virginia at Foods of All Nations in Charlottesville; on the list at Fleurie in Charlottesville, Northside Social in Arlington, Saison in Richmond.

Niner Wine Estates, Cabernet Sauvignon 2013

★★★

Paso Robles, Calif., \$40

Niner impressed me with this sleek combination of depth and elegance. It has all the blackberry and cassis flavors we expect in a cabernet without the heaviness and bulk that too often afflicts the grape in California. Like a good conversationalist, it

kept me interested. Sustainably farmed. Because Paso Robles cabernet is still a sleeper for its value, this might be hard to find. The distributor still has some, so retailers can order it. Alcohol by volume: 14.3 percent.

Distributed by International Cellars: On the list in the District at Mastro's Steakhouse. Available in Virginia at Whole Foods Market in Tysons Corner, Unwined (Alexandria); on the list at Piedmont Steakhouse in Culpeper.

RdV Vineyards Friends and Family 2014

★★★

Middleburg, Va., \$35

Friends and Family is RdV Vineyards' third wine, after Lost Mountain and Rendezvous. That means it actually gets into distribution beyond the winery's direct sales and restaurant placements. This is your chance to taste what the fuss is all about. Friends and Family is a bit angular and edgy, but it shares the lovely blackberry and plum core that characterizes the winery's two more expensive wines. Good winemaking shows, even in wines that don't make it into the top bottlings. ABV: 14.5 percent.

Distributed by Elite: Available in the District at Arrowine & Spirits, Calvert Woodley, Dean & DeLuca, Harry's Reserve Fine Wine & Spirits, MacArthur Beverages; on the list at several restaurants. Available in Maryland at Grand Cru, the Wine Market in Baltimore; on the list at Level in Annapolis, Parts & Labor in Baltimore. Available in Virginia at Arrowine & Cheese in Arlington; Balducci's (Alexandria); Barrel Thief Wine Shop & Cafe, Ellwood Thompson's Natural Market, J. Emerson Fine Wines & Cheese and Libbie Market in Richmond; Dominion Wine and Beer in Falls Church; Locke Store in Millwood; Market Street Wineshop (Uptown) in Charlottesville; Planet Wine & Gourmet in Alexandria; Unwined (Alexandria, Belleview); on the list at several restaurants.

Canals Canals Rosat Reserva Cava Brut Nature 2013

★★

Penedes, Spain, \$18

This vintage cava rosé is a delightful sparkler, with bright strawberry and currant flavors and fresh bubbles to turn any day into a celebration. ABV: 11.5 percent.

Distributed by Lanterna: Available in the District at Calvert Woodley, Cleveland Park Wine and Spirits, Cork & Fork, MacArthur Beverages, Rodman's, Smucker Farms of Lancaster County. Available in Maryland at Bin 201 Wine Sellers and the Italian Market in Annapolis, Bin 604 Wine Sellers and the Food Market in Baltimore, Dawson's Market in Rockville; on the list at Forno Baltimore in Baltimore.

GREAT VALUE

Bacalhoa, JP Azeitao Syrah Rosé 2016



Peninsula de Setubal, Portugal, \$10

What a delightful rosé. It's juicy with strawberry and raspberry flavors and an appealing hint of sweetness on the finish that gives it a little extra body. Fine patio sipping, by itself or with pre-dinner nibbles. ABV: 12 percent.

Distributed by DMV: Available in the District at Paul's of Chevy Chase. Available in Maryland at Bethesda Co-Op in Cabin John; Dunkirk Wine & Spirits; Eastport Liquors and the Italian Market in Annapolis; Fenwick Beer & Wine in Silver Spring; Franklins Restaurant, Brewery and General Store and Yes! Organic Market in Hyattsville; Georgetown Square Wine and Beer in Bethesda; Old Farm Liquors in Frederick; Town Center Market in Riverdale Park; Wine Bin in Ellicott City; Wine Source in Baltimore; the Winery in Chester; Wisteria Beer & Wine in Germantown; on the list at Bistro Rx, Butcher's Hill Society, Modern Cook Shop and Rachel in Baltimore.

Availability information is based on distributor records. Wines might not be in stock at every listed store and might be sold at additional stores. Prices are approximate. Check Winesearcher.com to verify availability, or ask a favorite wine store to order through a distributor.

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Dave McIntyre writes about wine weekly. He also blogs at dmwinline.com.  Follow @dmwine
