

THE POUR

Eric Asimov

\$20
& Under**Raventós I Blanc Cava de Nit**
Catalonia 2009

Spain produces an ocean of cheap cava, the sparkling wine guzzled throughout the country. Much of it is forgettable, but this pale rosé (make that rosato) is elegant, nuanced and fresh, with balanced, persistent flavors. (Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, N.Y.)

André et Mireille Tissot Crémant du Jura Extra Brut NV

Stephane Tissot, who makes the wines that bear his parents' names, is one of the most interesting and experimental producers in the Jura. But this is no oddball or fringe sparkler; it's simply delicious and a great deal. It's made largely of chardonnay and pinot noir, like a Champagne, with some trousseau and poulsard thrown in to provide a bit of Jura identity. With flavors of nuts, minerals and flowers, it's dry, refined and lip-smacking. (A Camille Riviere Selection/Fruit of the Vines, New York)

Christ Wiener Gemischter Satz 2011

Vienna is the only great metropolis with commercial vineyards within its city limits. Gemischter satz wines are historically blends of grapes that are grown and fermented together and served in heurigen, informal little bars where wine estates served their own produce. The gemischter satz tradition was dying until a few committed producers revived it in the last decade and began to sell the wines commercially. This beautiful wine is on the delicate side, just right for smoked fish or other light seafood dishes, yet it feels rich and round on the palate. (Carlo Huber Selections, Salisbury, Conn.)

Jean Ginglinger Alsace Riesling Cuvée Bihl 2009

The body craves riesling year-round, and if a delicate Mosel kabinett is the perfect spring wine, richer rieslings from Alsace can't be beat in the fall. Even in a ripe vintage like 2009, this peachy, rich riesling is nonetheless earthy and dry with tantalizing mineral flavors. Choucroute garni, please. (Wineberry America, New York)

Champafou Vouvray 2010

I love Vouvray, Savennières and all the chenin blanc wines of the Loire Valley. Is there any grape with a texture as mesmerizing and seductive as chenin blanc? The best wines of Vouvray tease as they coat and envelop the tongue, almost thick yet lively and tense as well. This is dry and rounded, but delicate, too—the neat trick of chenin blanc—with honeysuckle, citrus and mineral flavors. Delicious. (Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant, Berkeley, Calif.)

Domaine de Montbourgeau L'Étoile 2008

Another great deal from the Jura, this is largely chardonnay with perhaps a little savagnin thrown in. Nicole Dériaux of



Montbourgeau, from the L'Étoile appellation, is one of my favorite Jura producers. Usually I choose her savagnin, made in the sous-voile style, under the veil of a sherry-style yeast, which gives the wines nutty, fino-like flavors. The chardonnay is tangy, dry and persistent. It has the twang of sous-voile, and though less severe than the savagnin, it still suggests the mystery and depth of the best Jura cuvées. (Rosenthal Wine Merchant, New York)

Qupé Santa Maria Valley Chardonnay Bien Nacido "Y" Block 2010

Bob Lindquist's real passion is Rhône grapes; he makes chardonnay to pay the bills, but he does a superb job. This is exemplary California chardonnay, with a detectable sheen of new oak, but the wine under the oak is packed with mineral goodness, which makes it highly enjoyable.

Abbazia di Novacella Alto Adige Valle Isarco Kerner 2011

According to "Wine Grapes," an extraordinary new book from Jancis Robinson et al, the kerner grape, a cross between riesling and schiava grossa, was named after a 19th-century doctor who wrote drinking songs. If that's not enough to recommend it, this rich, ripe, persistently herbal and refreshing wine will do the rest. From a winery in an ancient monastery in Alto Adige, and just one of many treasures from the mountain vineyards of northern Italy. (Abbazia di Novacella U.S.A., Sausalito, Calif.)

Bebame El Dorado County Red 2011

A wonderfully fresh, deliciously gulpable wine from Eldorado County in the Sierra Foothills. It's made mostly of cabernet franc, with a little gamay noir, and is lively and bright, with an herbal streak woven into the red fruit flavors. It's low in alcohol, an almost unheard-of 12 percent for California, yet does not sacrifice structure.

Benanti Arma Rosso di Verzella 2009

I'm fascinated with the wines of Mount Etna, grown in the foothills of a highly active volcano, where belching steam and flowing lava are regular features. Nerello mascalese, the main red

grape of Etna, seems to harness that energy, brimming with flavors of bitter cherries and stony earth. This is fresh and lightly textured yet rich and persistent, rough and rustic yet charming and expressive. (Tradizione Imports, New York)

Frontón de Oro Gran Canaria Tinto 2010

As exotic as Mount Etna may be for growing grapes, the Canary Islands are even more so. This archipelago is a region of Spain, but geologically and geographically it is part of Africa, 60 miles off the southwest coast of Morocco. Gran Canaria is at the heart of the chain, warm but mountainous. This lovely fresh red, made largely from the listán negro grape, is lively enough to gulp down and complex enough to ponder. (A José Pastor Selection/Vinos & Gourmet, Richmond, Calif.)

Paumanok North Fork of Long Island Festival Red 2010

This is one brash Bordeaux blend from a very good Long Island producer. Eighty-four percent of the blend is split evenly between cabernet sauvignon and merlot, with 12 percent cabernet franc and 4 percent petit verdot, yet it's the cabernet franc that grabs the attention with a strong herbal vein. Juicy and joyous, and topped with a screw cap.

Rainoldi Valtellina Superiore Sassella 2008

I've always liked the wines of Valtellina, but nowadays many producers seem to be really hitting their stride. This mountainous region in northern Lombardy is an excellent nebbiolo alternative to Barolo and Barbaresco, generally for a lot less money. Rainoldi makes gorgeous wines like this one from the Sassella zone, fine, balanced and beautifully aromatic. (Michael Skurnik Wines)

Señorio de P. Pecina Rioja Crianza 2005

Such a pleasure when the producer ages the wine for you! This crianza is already seven years old and just right for drinking. In the old Rioja tradition, it tells the story of red raspberry fruit merging blissfully with the vanilla flavors of American oak. Aromas

explode from the glass, yet the wine is mellow and fine. (A José Pastor Selection/Vinos & Gourmet)

Clos de la Roquette Fleurie 2011

The wines of Fleurie, one of the 10 leading crus of Beaujolais, are habitually described as light, pretty, feminine and flowery. Perhaps, but in my experience the best Fleuries, like Alain Couder's Clos de la Roquette, are better described as structured and mineral. Nothing dainty about the 2011. It's dense and a little tannic, smoky and spicy with aromas of licorice and granite. Superb, but consider decanting when young. (Louis/Dressner Selections, New York)

Domaine Iliarria Irouléguy 2009

I'm crazy about the wines of Domaine Iliarria from Irouléguy, in the Basque Pyrenees as far southwest in France as you can go. Its rosé is great, and this red, made of tannat, cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc, is superb. It's tannic with deep red fruit, spice and iron flavors. Drink now or age, but it's hard to find, so grab any and all. (A Thomas Calder Selection/Moonlight Wine, New York)

Domaine de Terrebrune Vin de Pays du Mont Caume Terre d'Ombre 2009

This very good Bandoil producer also makes a cuvée from vines of mourvèdre, grenache and cinsault that it considers too young for the Bandoil. It's called Terre d'Ombre, and it has an herbal, savage quality that belies the image of sunny Provence. A hearty wine for hearty steaks. (Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant)

Domaine de Ferrand Côtes du Rhône La Ferrande 2010

An anomaly: a Côtes du Rhône from the southern part of the Rhône Valley yet 100 percent syrah, as if from the northern Rhône. It's rich yet focused and fresh—typical for the 2010 vintage, with black olive flavors yet fruitier than a northern Rhône wine. Imported in small quantities. (Weygandt-Metzler, Unionville, Pa.)

Di Filippo Montefalco Rosso 2009

Big and tannic, rich and robust, fruity yet well structured with a pleasant musk. If this Umbrian

rosso doesn't achieve quite the power of a sagrantino di Montefalco, its big brother, it's still plenty sizable for stews and roasts. (A.I. Selections, New York)

Mastrojanni Rosso di Montalcino 2010

Sangiovese is a grape that touches me deep inside. Good Sangiovese wines, particularly from the Chianti or Montalcino regions, offer the sort of purity,

honesty and authenticity that I find moving compared to the tricked-up confections that some producers seem to favor. This Rosso di Montalcino from Mastrojanni is indeed pure and honest, tannic yet approachable with bright cherry flavors that really could come from nowhere but the heart of Tuscany. (Selected Estates of Europe, Mamaroneck, N.Y.)

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