

vinography

a wine blog

SEPTEMBER 23, 2023 — SPARKLING WINE, WINE REVIEWS

Vinography Unboxed: Week of 9/17/23



Hello and welcome to my weekly dig through the pile of wine samples that show up asking to be tasted. I'm pleased to bring you the latest installment of Vinography Unboxed, where I highlight some of the better bottles that have crossed my doorstep recently.

This week included the latest set of sparkling wine releases from **Raventos i Blanc**, the superstar sparkling producer from Cava that doesn't label their wines as Cava. Their objection is the lack of geographical specificity available with the Cava designation (not to mention the fact that their very serious—and expensive—wines bear very little resemblance to the cheep and cheerful bubbly with Cava on the label). In fact, they're not labeling their wines as anything other than sparkling wine from Spain these days, but that doesn't change how good they are. All four wines are excellent, but the two older vintage, long-tirage wines are definitely a cut above and represent the pinnacle of Spanish sparkling.

Last week I reviewed a bunch of less-common white wines from California for my monthly column at JancisRobinson.Com, including a few from a brand new to me, **Union Sacré**. This fantastic little wine project is the brainchild of Philip Muzzy and Xavier Arnaudin, two friends who decided to play around a bit and make a Riesling, and then the next thing you know they've got a whole portfolio of Alcece-inspired wines that are all delicious. My piece for Jancis was only about single-variety wines that weren't Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, or Pinot Gris, which meant I couldn't review Union Sacrés Pinot Gris or their Edelzwicker white blend both of which are recommended enthusiastically below. Everything these guys make is excellent.

The folks at [Quintessa](#) sent along a couple of wines recently. Their 2020 Red Wine, a rare bird in Napa, and a beautiful expression of a vintage that wasn't for many people. They also sent along their Sauvignon Blanc, Illumination, which doesn't quite reach the heights of their flagship red, but is a nice expression of the variety.

Sticking with Cabernet for a moment longer, the folks at [Wynn's Coonawarra](#) sent their Limited Release Cabernet, which offers a nice combination of ripe fruit and minty herbal notes at a price tag that doesn't hurt.

Lastly, I've got two Zinfandels to recommend from [Quivira](#) in Sonoma's Dry Creek Valley. The Anderson Ranch bottling is wonderfully bright and juicy, and comes in a perfectly ordinary bottle that is perhaps slightly heavier than average, but not offensive. The Black Boar Zinfandel, on the other hand, I like slightly less for the wine in it, and significantly less for the fact that it comes in a bottle that weighs more than the wine inside. I don't understand how Quivira, a blatantly sustainability-focused brand can in good conscience put their wines in glass that heavy. Bottles that weigh more than the wine inside are a big middle finger to the environment, and undermine any brand's claims at sustainability and eco-consciousness. SMH.

Notes on all these wines below.

Tasting Notes

2020 Raventos i Blanc "De la Finca – Vinya dels Fòssils" Sparkling Wine, Spain

Pale gold in the glass with medium-fine bubbles, this wine smells of green apple, grapefruit pith, and nougat. In the mouth, a voluminous mousse delivers flavors of apple, pear, grapefruit pith, and a hint of nut skin. Excellent acidity and a faint chalky texture linger in the finish along with a hint of toasted sourdough. 12% alcohol. Score: between **8.5** and **9**. Cost: \$27. [click to buy](#).

2019 Raventos i Blanc "Textures de Pedra – Blanc de Negres – Vinya Més Alta" Sparkling Wine, Spain

Pale gold in the glass with a hint of bronze and very fine bubbles, this wine smells of apples, butterscotch, and wet pavement. In the mouth, a silky mousse delivers flavors of baked apples, roasted nuts, citrus pith, and a hint of nougat. Excellent acidity. 12.5% alcohol. Score: between **8.5** and **9**. Cost: \$35. [click to buy](#).

**2016 Raventos i Blanc “Manuel Raventos Negra – Brut Nature”
Sparkling Wine, Spain**

Medium yellow-gold in the glass with fine bubbles, this wine smells of candied and dried lemon peel, baked apples, and saffron. In the mouth, a voluminous silky mousse delivers mouthwatering and salty flavors of candied lemon peel, dried apples, warm hay, saffron rice, and butterscotch. Lovely saline and lemon zest notes linger in the finish. Rich and delicious. 12.5% alcohol. Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$115. [click to buy](#).



2012 Mas del Serral (Raventos i Blanc) Sparkling Wine, Spain

Medium bronze in the glass with very fine bubbles, this wine smells of baked apples, roasted nuts, lemon peel, and dried orange peel. In the mouth, a silky mousse delivers flavors of parchment, dried citrus peel, roasted nuts, and saffron. Excellent acidity and a faint salinity linger with dried orange peel in the finish. A field blend of Xarel·lo and Bastard Negre planted in 1954 and farmed biodynamically. Aged for a staggering 100 months on the lees. I believe this is the 5th release of this wine. Disgorged March 15, 2023. 12.5% alcohol. 2372 bottles made. Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$155. [click to buy](#).

2022 Quintessa “Illumination” Sauvignon Blanc, California

Palest greenish gold in the glass, this wine smells of green apple and a hint of cut grass. In the mouth, bright green apple flavors mix with a touch of white flowers. Very good acidity. Could be more dynamic. A blend of fruit from Napa and Sonoma counties. 14% alcohol. Score: between **8.5** and **9**. Cost: \$60. [click to buy](#).

2022 Union Sacré Wines “Edelzwicker” White Blend, Central Coast, California

Pale salmon pink in the glass, this wine smells of pastry cream, orange peel, and white flowers. In the mouth, orange peel, creme anglaise, and floral flavors have a wonderful aromatic sweetness as well as a snappy citrus brightness. There’s a faint wet chalkboard minerality to the wine as well. Juicy and delicious. A blend of 33% Pinot Blanc, 30% Pinot Gris, 20% Sylvaner, 10% Riesling, 5% Gewurztraminer and 2% Muscat Ottonel. 12.2% alcohol. Closed with a screwcap. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$25. [click to buy](#).



2022 Union Sacré Wines “Skin Contact” Pinot Gris, Monterey County, California

Pale salmon pink in the glass, this wine smells of unripe strawberries, flowers, and orange peel. In the mouth, berries, citrus peel, and honeysuckle have a faint aromatic sweetness to them, along with excellent acidity and brightness. Delicious. 12.1% alcohol. Closed with a screwcap. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$25. [click to buy](#).

2020 Wynn’s Coonawarra Estate “John Riddoch Limited Release” Cabernet Sauvignon, Coonawarra, South Australia, Australia

Inky, opaque garnet in the glass, this wine smells of black cherry and camphor wood. In the mouth, juicy black cherry and blackcurrant flavors are wrapped in a fleecy blanket of tannins but have a nice herbal freshness thanks to very good acidity. An interesting balance between dark ripeness and freshness, with herbal notes lingering in the finish. 13.5% alcohol. Closed with a screwcap. Certified sustainable. Score: between **8.5** and **9**. Cost: \$22. [click to buy](#).

2020 Quintessa Proprietary Red Wine, Rutherford, Napa, California

Inky garnet in the glass, this wine smells of black cherry and vanilla. In the mouth, gauzy tannins surround

a core of black cherry, blackcurrant, and cola flavors that are fresh and bright with juicy acidity. There’s a nice herbal, even slightly menthol note to the wine with hints of darker earth and licorice lingering in the finish. Well-integrated oak. A blend of 87% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Cabernet Franc, 4% Carménère, and 2% Petit Verdot that spends 22 months in 60% new French oak. Farmed and produced biodynamically. 14.5% alcohol. Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$240. [click to buy](#).

2019 Quivira “Anderson Ranch” Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma, California

Medium to dark garnet in the glass, this wine smells of blackberries and a hint of incense. In the mouth, juicy blackberry and licorice flavors have a nice freshness thanks to excellent acidity. Faint, fleecy tannins wrap (with increasing stiffness) around the palate, and linger with floral and berry notes. Aged in a combination of small and large barrels for 16 months. 14.5% alcohol. Certified organic. 771 cases made. Score: between **8.5** and **9**. Cost: \$50. [click to buy](#).

2019 Quivira “Black Boar” Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma, California

Medium to dark garnet in the glass, this wine smells of dried cherries, blackberries, and licorice. In the mouth, flavors of blackberries, blueberries, licorice, and some dried herbs are wrapped in a powdery sheath of tannins that grow muscular over time. Good acidity keeps things fresh. Contains 15% Petite Sirah. 14.9% alcohol. Aged for 18 months in 25% new French oak. 839 cases made. Certified organic. Packaged in an unnecessarily heavy bottle weighing 1.64 kg when full. Score: around **8.5**. Cost: \$55. [click to buy](#).