

vinography

a wine blog

APRIL 23, 2022 — WINE REVIEWS

Vinography Unboxed: Week of 4/17/22



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 a couple more sparkling wines from [Raventos i Blanc](#), the Penedes-based producer who left the Cava appellation behind to make site specific wines with indigenous grapes and never looked back. I'm particularly fond of their Textures de Pedra wine which is a you-might-not-notice-it's-so-pale *gris de gris* wine made from darker skinned mutations of some local grapes as well as some red grapes. It's got wonderful salinity and berry qualities that make it well worth the price.

I also tasted the latest orange wine from [Troon Vineyard](#) up in Oregon, which is a tasty, if unusual combination of Vermentino, Riesling, and Roussanne. Like many orange wines, it improves with some air.

I've got two more wines from [Neely Wines](#), a tiny producer in the Santa Cruz Mountains. While I've reviewed their Bee Block Chardonnay, which was good, this week I'm featuring their "Special Selection" from that vineyard which is even better, in part because it offers a stronger perception of acidity. Their Pinot is nice too, especially if you're looking for a more lean, savory interpretation of the grape.

Sticking with Pinot Noir for a moment, let's look at a couple of wines from the Burgundy producer [Maison Eduoard Delaunay](#), a relatively old name in Burgundy that was revived in 2017 when descendents were able to buy back their family domaine. They now make a wide portfolio of wines, including the Beaune Premier Cru and the Charmes-Chambertin I tasted this week. It's hard not to love the Charmes in all its elegance and refinement, but that price tag.... Ouch. However if you're in the habit of spending three-digits on bottles, this one won't disappoint.

Lastly I received two new releases from [Ashes and Diamonds](#) in Napa, which employs two separate superstar winemakers to make different wines for them. The 2018 Cabernet Franc made by Steve Matthiasson is tight and savory and needs some time I think, but will reward those looking for the more herbal side of Cabernet Franc. The Mountain Cuvée, made with fruit sourced from the famed Bates Ranch in the Santa Cruz Mountains is more approachable at this point in its evolution, and it will only get better over time.

Notes on all these below.



Tasting Notes

2018 Raventos i Blanc “De La Finca” Cava Blend, Spain, Penedes

Light gold in the glass, with fine bubbles, this wine smells of lemon pith, lemon oil, and sea air. In the mouth, a soft mousse delivers flavors of crushed nuts, vanilla, Meyer lemon, and a hint of sourdough bread, all juicy bright with excellent acidity and a lovely saline note. This wine is a blend of Macabeu, Xarel·lo, and Parellada from various plots around the Raventos property, most of which feature calcareous soils studded with marine fossils. Fermented in steel and aged for 30 months on the lees with no additional dosage. 12% alcohol. Disgorged January 2022. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$39. [click to buy](#).

2017 Raventos i Blanc “Textures de Pedra” Cava Blend, Spain, Penedes

A light bronze color in the glass with fine bubbles, this wine smells of raspberries, orange peel, and a touch of ocean breeze. In the mouth, wonderfully saline flavors of orange peel, lemon pith, honey roasted nuts, and vanilla mix with a lovely floral quality and that fantastic seawater saltiness. Technically this is a *vin gris*, made with all dark-skinned varieties – Xarel·lo Vermell, Bastard Negre, and Sumoll. 12% alcohol. Disgorged November 2021. Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$55. [click to buy](#).

2021 Troon Vineyard “Kubli Bench Amber” White Blend, Applegate Valley, Southern Oregon

A cloudy dark gold in the glass with a hint of amber, this wine smells of wet leaves, citrus peel, and Asian pear. In the mouth, chalky flavors of orange peel, Asian pear, pear skin, peach, and sarsaparilla have a light grip to them and nice acidity. A blend of 50% Vermentino, 10% Roussanne, and 40% Riesling. Made with biodynamically grown organic grapes. 12.8% alcohol. Score: between **8.5** and **9**. Cost: \$30. [click to buy](#).

**2019 Neely “Bee Block Special Selection” Chardonnay,
Santa Cruz Mountains, California**

Light greenish-gold in color, this wine smells of lemon and pomelo pith with a hint of white flowers. In the mouth, a nice stony citrus pith, lemon curd, and cold cream quality pervades, with excellent, filigreed acidity and a long finish. 13.1% alcohol. 98 cases made. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$55.



**2019 Neely “Picnic Block” Pinot Noir,
Santa Cruz Mountains, California**

Light garnet in the glass, this wine smells of raspberries, herbs, and a hint of something more vegetal. In the mouth, red berry flavors are shot through with dried herbs, earth, and a touch of peeled willow bark. Barely perceptible tannins. Good acidity. Definitely on the lean side of fruit. 12.2% alcohol. 127 cases made. Score: around **8.5**. Cost: \$45. [click to buy.](#)

**2018 Edouard Delaunay “Les Grèves”
Beaune Premier Cru, Côte de Beaune,
Burgundy, France**

Medium garnet in color, this wine smells of forest berries and wet earth. In the mouth, raspberry and even a little alpine strawberry flavor mixes with wet earth and sweet oak. Good acidity and the faintest of tannins. I wish the wood were not so present in the wine. 13.5% alcohol. 3240 bottles made. Score: around **8.5**. Cost: \$85. [click to buy.](#)

**2018 Edouard Delaunay Charmes-Chambertin Grand
Cru, Côte de Nuits, Burgundy, France**

Medium to dark garnet in the glass, this wine smells of raspberries and a touch of smoked meats along with fresh chopped herbs. In the mouth, wonderfully wispy tannins wrap like tendrils around a core of raspberry, herbs, dried violets, and a touch of forest floor. Lovely citrus peel notes emerge with the floral qualities in the finish. Very pretty. 14% alcohol. 1161 bottles made. Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$350. [click to buy.](#)

2018 Ashes and Diamonds “No. 5” Cabernet Franc, Napa Valley, Napa, California

Medium garnet in the glass, this wine smells of cocoa powder, green bell pepper, and cherry. In the mouth, bright cherry fruit mixes with green bell pepper and a hint of roasted nuts and cocoa along with chalky, mouth-coating tannins and very good acidity. Very savory in quality with just a hint of smoky allure. Will doubtless open up over the next 5 years. Contains 23.5% Merlot. Aged for 19 months in 30% new French oak. 13.4% alcohol. 950 cases made by winemaker Steve Matthiasson. Score: between **8.5** and **9**. Cost: \$75. [click to buy](#).

2018 Ashes and Diamonds “Mountain Cuvée No. 4 – Bates Ranch Vineyard” Red Blend, Santa Cruz Mountains, California

Medium to dark garnet in the glass, this wine smells of black cherry, dried flowers, and wet earth. In the mouth, gorgeous black cherry fruit mixes with a hint of black olive and violets. There’s a wonderful savory, saline quality to this wine with lovely licorice and floral notes that linger in the finish. Supple, fleecy tannins hang around the edges of the mouth, leaving the fruit to give its silky sweetness the spotlight. A very elegant wine, with excellent acidity and potential for longevity. A blend of 82% Cabernet Sauvignon and 18% Cabernet Franc from the Bates Ranch Vineyard in the Santa Cruz Mountains aged for 19 months in a combination of American and French oak, 35% of which was new. 13.4% alcohol. 800 cases made by winemaker Diana Snowden Seysses. Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$105. [click to buy](#).