

vinography

a wine blog

JUNE 1, 2024 — WINE REVIEWS

Vinography Unboxed: Week of 5/26/24



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.

Let's start with some sparkling wines from the venerable **Raventos i Blanc**, formerly of the Cava region of Spain, but now just making "Spanish" sparkling wines in protest of what they see are appellation rules that haven't kept up with the times. Their Can Sumoi sparkling wine is a brand new product from their ancient mountain farm of the same name, and it's an unusual wine made from a rare mutation of the Parellada grape commonly used in Cava.

The other two wines I'm recommending this week are long-standing products from Raventos, their de La Finca and Textures de Pedra sparkling wines. These are both excellent expressions of the traditional Cava grape varieties, but made with exceptional quality fruit and a long aging time giving them the complexity you'd expect from top-tier sparkling wines. I tend to slight the Textures de Pedra slightly more than the de La Finca bottling, but they're both excellent.

Last week I reviewed a few of the newest releases from **Massican**, Napa's white-wine-only brand made by Dan Petroski. This week I've got his Sauvignon Blanc and Gemina white wine blend, both of which are excellent and worth seeking out.

Regular readers will remember that I'm a fan of **Big Table Farm** in Oregon's Willamette Valley, a small biodynamic label started by Clare Carver and her husband Brian Marcy. Their wines have a wonderful honesty, and all three I'm reviewing this week reflect that character. Their Wild Bee Chardonnay is a glass full of sunshine, with a neon lemon quality that is quite disarming, while their Elusive Queen Chardonnay lives up to its name with an exotic herbal quality that's hard to put a finger on. Their Laughing Pig rosé of Pinot Noir has a surprisingly earthy quality in the latest vintage, something that is echoed in a more subtle way by their "standard" Willamette Pinot Noir.

Last but not least, I've got three more single-vineyard Pinot Noir releases from **Calera** to recommend. I'm surprised a little at the variation between these wines, some of which I like considerably more than the others, with the standout being the Jensen Vineyard bottling which has a finesse and elegance that the others have yet to achieve at this point in their evolution. This superiority is reflected in the elevated price of the Jensen bottling. As is always the case, these wines will all age beautifully for the next 10-20 years, so no rush to enjoy them now, however delicious they might be.

Notes on all these below.

NV Can Sumoi “Ancestral – Brut Nature” Montònega Sparkling Wine, Spain

Palest gold in the glass with medium to large bubbles, this wine smells of golden apples and ripe pears. In the mouth, a coarse mousse delivers flavors of bright pear and apple that are shot through with lemon pith and wet pavement. Juicy and fresh with a nice clean fruitiness. Montònega is a pink-berried clone of Parellada. Sold as non-vintage, but it’s actually the 2023 vintage. 9.5% alcohol. Certified organic. Score: around **8.5**. Cost: \$25. [click to buy](#).

2021 Raventos i Blanc “De la Finca – Brut Nature” Cava Blend, Spain

Light gold in the glass with medium-sized bubbles, this wine smells of lemon and brioche. In the mouth, zippy, fresh flavors of lemon pith and grapefruit oil mix with toasted sourdough and a touch of seawater, all borne on a fluffy mousse of bubbles. Notes of dried mango linger in the finish.

Fantastic acidity. A blend of 50% Xarel·lo, 40% Macabeu, and 10% Parellada aged in the bottle on the lees for 30 months. 12% alcohol. 32,000 bottles made. Certified organic. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$36. [click to buy](#).



2020 Raventos i Blanc “Textures de Pedra – Blanc de Negres – Vinya Més Alta” Cava Blend, Spain

Light to medium gold in the glass with bronze highlights and medium-fine bubbles, this wine smells of flowers, berries, and Fuji apples. In the mouth, a velvety mousse delivers flavors of fresh apple, berries, citrus pith, and saltine crackers as a shimmering stony minerality thrums about in the background. Berry and floral notes linger in the finish. The wine has a wonderful weightless quality. A blend of 50% Xarel·lo Vermell, 25% Sumoll, and 25% Bastard Negre aged for 42 months on the lees in the bottle. 12.5% alcohol. 14,280 bottles made. Certified organic.” Score: around **9**. Cost: \$46. [click to buy](#).

2023 Massican Sauvignon Blanc, California

Palest greenish gold in the glass, this wine smells of passionfruit, green apple, and cut grass. In the mouth, silky flavors of candied green apple, passionfruit, and kiwi have a bright snappiness thanks to very good acidity. A hint of herbal cut grass lingers in the finish with just a tiny hint of salinity that makes the mouth water. 12.9% alcohol. Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$25. [click to buy](#).

2023 Massican “Gemina” White Blend, California

Light yellow-gold in color, this wine smells of candied lemon peel, pomelo pith, and wet chalkboard. In the mouth, bright lemon oil and lemon pith flavors mix with grapefruit and a hint of white flowers. Crisp, bright, and delicious with hints of bee pollen and yellow herbs that emerge in the finish. A blend of 60% Greco Bianco, 23% Falanghina, and 17% Fiano. 12% alcohol Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$30. [click to buy](#).

2022 Big Table Farm “The Wild Bee” Chardonnay, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Palest greenish gold in color, this wine smells of sweet candied lemon and jasmine flowers. In the mouth, bright lemon oil and lemon curd flavors are shot through with jasmine floral notes, as silky texture wraps vibrant acidity. Wonderfully bright and balanced, with a hint of saltiness in the finish underneath that sweet lemon floral aroma. Very lovely. 12.9% alcohol. Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$39. [click to buy](#).

2022 Big Table Farm “The Elusive Queen” Chardonnay, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Palest gold in color, this wine smells of lemon pith and resinous aromatic herbs like verbena and rosemary. In the mouth, flavors of lemon curd and lemon pith mix with pink grapefruit and a touch of verbena. Delicate, filigreed acidity builds sneakily as the wine lingers in the mouth. 12.9% alcohol. Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$60.

2023 Big Table Farm “Laughing Pig” Rosé of Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Palest ruby in the glass, this wine smells of freshly cut watermelon, sweet cherries, and a hint of barnyard. In the mouth, tangy notes of sour cherry and raspberry mix with watermelon and a deeper slightly earthy note and some dried herbs. Decent acidity. Silky texture. 14.3% alcohol Score: around **8.5**. Cost: \$50. [click to buy](#).



2022 Big Table Farm Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Light to medium garnet in the glass, this wine smells of earth, raspberries, and flowers. In the mouth, silky flavors of raspberry, wet earth, flowers, and a touch of cherry have a lovely gauzy tannic structure and very good acidity. 13.1% alcohol. Score: around 9. Cost: \$53. [click to buy.](#)

2021 Calera “de Villiers Vineyard” Pinot Noir, Mt. Harlan, Central Coast, California

Dark garnet in the glass, this wine smells of cherry and cranberry fruit. In the mouth, cherry and cranberry flavors mix with flowers and aromatic herbs. Lightly muscular tannins flex and stiffen as excellent acidity keeps things fresh and juicy through a long finish. Very well-integrated oak. Grown at 2200 feet of elevation. 14.5% alcohol. Score: around 9. Cost: \$95. [click to buy.](#)

2021 Calera “Reed Vineyard” Pinot Noir, Mt. Harlan, Central Coast, California

Medium to dark garnet in the glass, this wine smells of cherry and raspberry fruit. In the mouth, cherry and black raspberry fruit are ripe and aromatically sweet, as fleecy tannins coat the mouth. Sweet oak notes emerge on the finish. Rich and opulent. Grown at 2200 feet of elevation. 14.5% alcohol. Score: between **8.5** and **9**. Cost: \$95. [click to buy](#).

2021 Calera “Jensen Vineyard” Pinot Noir, Mt. Harlan, Central Coast, California

Medium to dark garnet in the glass, this wine smells of raspberries, citrus peel, and cranberry compote. In the mouth, exceedingly silky flavors of raspberry, cherry, cranberry, and orange peel have an ethereal weightless quality on the palate, with wispy, ghost-like tannins haunting the corners of the mouth. Aromatic herbs and flowers perfume a long finish. Grown at 2200 feet of elevation. 14.5% alcohol. Score: around **9.5**. Cost: \$125. [click to buy](#).