



Rick's Grape Skinny

ricksgrapeskinny@gmail.com



“Wine is to women as duct tape is to men.
It fixes everything!”
(Anonymous Truism)

Orange Wine!

Orange Ya Excited To Try It!?

We all know that wine is made from just about anything from peaches to dandelions (oh yeah, look it up if you don't believe me!), but just to clarify, I'm not talking about orange wine made from oranges (although there is such a concoction), I'm talking about orange-hued wine made from grapes. For what it's worth, it's the latest and arguably the greatest organoleptic fad in the world of wine...and chefs especially are jumping on board the orange wine bandwagon! Indeed, wineaux and foodies alike are going gaga over this latest eno-craze.

A Little History Might be in Order

Hey, there's red, pink, and white...so why not orange!? And if truth be known, orange wine has actually been around a long time...a very long time -- going back to the earliest evidence of wine being made. Ancient wines were pretty much all made using a common approach -- macerating the wine - whether using red or white grapes - even fermenting it, on the skins. As that approach applies to white grapes and wine, the act of macerating the wine on the skins is essentially what gives the finished wine its “orange-ish” hue. Given that ancient wines were stored in clay amphorae whose seals were less than perfect, exposure to air (*oxidation*) was another factor that tended to give “ancient white wines” a characteristic orange or amber hue. So, in a few words, rather than it being the orange wine that is novel, it is the evolved white wine -- which resulted from a modernized winemaking approach of separating the grape skins etc. from the wine being macerated -- that is the actual new kids on the wine block if you will. Who knew?

What goes around comes around!

OK...so orange wines are old...what's with the big deal being made about them these days? Hey, it is certainly true that your life will not change for the better or worse if you do or don't buy and try a bottle of orange wine. In fact, you might be hard pressed to find some to try. But the big deal, if indeed that's what it is, is that orange wine -- i.e., white wine made the old fashioned way -- has been rediscovered by the wine and food cognoscenti -- and it's adding an entirely new dimension of taste dynamics to the fine old art of wining and dining! And, of course, for those who enjoy learning about and experiencing the world of wine from a holistic perspective, this “old-new” niche of wine is to an enthusiast what a new cave is to a spelunker! Here's what Banjo Plane, sommelier extraordinaire and GM of Attica, Australia's most acclaimed restaurant, had to say about orange wines: *“They have tannin, which gives the wines structure. Tannins and food go together. Tannins work like acidity -- they clean the palate of fat and prepare it for the next flavor. Introducing tannic structure to a white wine of already high-ish acidity makes it not only incredibly complex, but supremely versatile in a gastronomic setting.”* They don't all taste alike, but try a few with spicy or highly seasoned dishes and you'll be amazed! All to say -- **ORANGE WINES ARE BACK!**

Orange Wines to Hunt Down and Try

My #1 recommendation to seek and try is *Donkey and Goat Winery's Stone Crusher Roussanne Orange Wine*. It's made by one of the most highly acclaimed winemaking teams in all of California -- Tracey and Jared Brandt -- in their Berkeley-based industrial winery. They are noted for making “natural” wines -- and their fabulous 100% *Roussanne Orange Wine* is a shining example. It was the first California Orange Wine I experienced. Tracey and Jared are also the daughter and son-in-law of my bud Henry Rogers -- and you should see how he puffs up and swells with pride when we talk about Donkey and Goat! Anyway, here a few other *orange wines* you might consider hunting down and trying: New York based Channing Daughters 2013 Ramato; Napa's Forlorn Hope 2014 Dragone Ramato Pinot Gris; and Australia's Cullen 2014 *Amber Semillon-Sauvignon Blanc*.



Toast of the Month



*“Here’s to the haves and the have-mores!
Some people call you the elite, I call you my base
(friends)!”*

(George Dubya’s Opening Line at a Fundraiser)



The Monthly Bunch!

Red

Red Blend

Apothic Inferno 2014

A Fruit-forward, Soft & Supple!

(California Appellations - Modesto, CA)/\$12-\$16

From the makers of the wine that kick-started the world’s nouveau love affair with red wine blends, *Apothic Red*, comes *Apothic Inferno* a small-batch, limited-release blend which is aged ever-so-briefly in charred used whiskey barrels. At 15.9% alcohol by volume (ABV)...maybe it should be called the *Devil’s Brew!* Wow, that’s a lot of kick! But I hasten to add that the Apothic winemaker and blend mistress, Debbie Juergenson, has managed to concoct a potion of varietal partners that not only manages to tame that beast – but a wine that makes you scream for another swig...and another! Sooner than one should, I found myself asking, “Where did that bottle go!?”

www.apothic.com

Bogle Vineyards Phantom 2013

Deep, Dark, Devilishly Distinctive, & Delicious!

(Clarksburg, CA)/\$15-\$18 – A just released, unique and limited-release blend of 39% *Old Vine Zinfandel*, 38% *Petite Sirah* and 23% *Cabernet Sauvignon*, this mystical, inky dark elixir is known as “*Black Magic*” and trust me...this baby will cast a spell!! The word “*bogle*” is of Scottish origin and means goblin, ghost, phantom, or bugbear...but don’t let the name run you off! This awesome vintage has been aged for 24 blissful months in tannin-taming one and two-year-old American oak – and the pay-off is a rich, complex and beautifully balanced wine that is characterized by a seemingly unending evolution of aromatics and flavors. Winemakers Eric Aafedt and Dana Stemmler have created yet another extraordinary wine...and one



that you better hunt down and buy before it “disappears!” And it will!!

<http://www.boglewinery.com/>

Zinfandel

Boneshaker 2014

Succulent, Sensual, and Sensational!

(Lodi AVA – Soledad, CA)/\$12-\$15

This is one of those exemplary wines that highlight why Zinfandel became “*America’s wine!*” From the Hahn Family of wines, and with fruit sourced from 40-year-old vines from the Mettler family’s renowned Bruella Vineyard, this plush and luscious gem is comprised of 87% *Zinfandel*, 11% *Merlot* and 2% *Cabernet Sauvignon*. It’s rich, brooding, fruit-forward, and chocked full of soul! If you might be one of those who’ve tended to be “on the fence” with regard to *Zinfandel* wines, this stunner will make a believer out of you. Trust me!

<http://www.hahnwines.com/>

White

Sauvignon Blanc

Ponga 2015

Fruity, Aromatic & Flavor-full!

(Marlborough, New Zealand)/\$10-\$12

This relatively new kid on the New Zealand block is a flavor-packed dandy...and a great value to boot. Produced by the iconic New Zealand Scott Family Group, headed by patriarch Alan, this particular venture is a project led by son Josh and daughter Sara. With a character that is far less herbal and grassy than many “trademark” NZ Sauvignon Blanc wines, this little jewel of a wine aims to please those whose palate might be a bit more affixed to Chardonnay or Pinot Grigio/Pinot Gris...but whose curiosities demand something extra. That “something extra” is a very pleasant tongue-tingling tartness that plays softly sweet music in your mouth! Oh...and Ponga? That refers to the indigenous Maori word for a native fern that is widely recognized as New Zealand’s national flower. Its curly and silvery white fronds have come to symbolize New Zealand’s vibrantly exciting and diverse culture.

<http://www.countryvintner.com.au/ponga.html>