



Southbury Package Store Uncorked



Thank you to all the subscribers and patrons of Southbury Package Store Uncorked. Your support is greatly appreciated. If you haven't signed up for our weekly SPS Wines of the Week email blast, please do so at our website. As Covid-19 begins to lift and the world begins to re-open (hopefully) we will be starting our tastings and seminars. Locations, topics, and times will be announced in our weekly WOW emails. We look forward to seeing you at these events.

First, But Not Forgotten

As we head into what we in the wine biz call "rosé" season most of the glitz, glamour and attention will be pointed toward the popular Provencal rosés, and why shouldn't it be? Provence has been producing world class rosé for an exceptionally long time and its recent ascension into mainstream wine consumption is warranted and long overdue. While I love a delicious and refreshing bottle of Provence rosé, sometimes you must pay homage to the original.

Along the Rhône River, just northwest of the city of Avignon you will find the village of Tavel. You may ask yourself why this small village is special and why should we take note? You can liken Tavel to a small island made of rosé in a veritable ocean of deep, rich high octane red wines. You read that correctly, Tavel makes only rosé. Tavel and Lirac (the region next door) were the first regions in the world to perfect the production of rosé wine and produce it for commercial consumption. From the time of Louis XIV to the mid-20th century Tavel was the world's rosé of choice. It was not until after World War II that it began to lose traction in the world-wide wine marketplace. Today, the entire Tavel region produces only around 5 million bottles a year (super small production).

The rules:

- Grenache must make up at least 30% of the blend and no one varietal can account for more than 60% of the wine.
- Permitted varieties: Grenache, Mourvedre, Syrah, Carignan, Cinsault, Picpoul, Clairette, Bourboulenc, and Calitor.
- Must have less than 6g/L of residual sugar (ex. Whispering Angel has 5.6g/L).

Now that we have laid out the parameters and history of Tavel, what should we try?

Domaine Lafond Roc-Épine can trace its winemaking lineage back to 1780 when Pascal Odoyer (Jean-Pierre's great-uncle and governor of Tavel) produced one of the Tavel region's first wines. Today Pascal Lafond (Jean-Pierre's son) and his two sons produce wine in the same cellars. The **Domaine Lafond Tavel Roc-Épine 2020 (\$21.98)** is a classic expression of Tavel rosé. I love to drink Tavel wine all Summer, but find it especially pleasing in the transitional seasons of Spring (getting warmer) and Autumn (getting cooler). While dry and flavorful just like its brethren from the south, Tavel has a full-bodied mouthfeel which differentiates it from the more delicate wines of Provence. Made from Grenache, Cinsault, Syrah, Carignan, and a mélange of other allowed varietals, the Lafond Tavel is noticeably "pinker" than the see-through Provencal wines. Both red and white fruits blend on your palate as the edges throw off more floral tones. The balanced acidity will have you sip, sip, sip and ask for a second glass. A personal favorite.

Though not yet on our shelves this year (arriving mid to late May), the **Château de Trinquedel Tavel Rosé 2020 (\$22.98)** is another example that is not to be missed. The lineage of the family is not quite as extensive as the Lafond family's, but this estate's history dates back prior to World War II. Located on Montagne Noire the soil is remarkably like Chateauneuf du Pape. There the climate and sun exposures produce grapes with sensational focus and power. The rosé wines of Château

de Trinquedel consistently enjoy aromas of ripe, red berries with notes of the omnipresent spicy, garrigue and I expect this year's edition to be no different. Enjoy.

When Big Buying Small Is a Good Thing

Buying wine to sell in 2021 can be a relatively simple thing depending on your perspective. For the last year and a half SPS has tried to bring you wines from wineries run by people that actually "put their hands in the dirt." Every year this task becomes more difficult, as the corporate wineries become larger, and the independent wineries become pricier and more elusive. On occasion we have exceptions to the rule. Sometimes a larger winery purchases an independent and allows them to become what they had always tried to be. One such example is Ryan Patrick Winery out of the Columbia Valley in Washington state. Originally founded by Terry and Vivian Flanagan in 1999 and named for their sons Ryan (aspiring viticulturalist) and Patrick (aspiring winemaker and cellarmaster); this family put everything into producing world-class wines. In 2004 tragedy struck the Flanagan family when Patrick was killed in an automobile accident. The family held the winery together until 2012 when two other brothers (Butch and Jerry Milbrandt) purchased the Ryan Patrick Winery. The Milbrandt family is a major player in agricultural land ownership in Washington. While they could have absorbed the much smaller Ryan Patrick winery into their family named estate, the Milbrandt brothers decided to keep the spirit of Ryan Patrick. The Flanagan family is involved with the production of their namesake labels, including input at every vintage's final tasting. Today, Ryan Flanagan is the head viticulturalist for Milbrandt's prized Evergreen Vineyard (1200 acres of Riesling and Chardonnay) which is the source of fruit for wines such as Chateau Ste. Michelle's Eroica Riesling.

With the backing of Milbrandt Wines the Ryan Patrick wines are now available outside the tasting room in over 20 states and a few of the reds have piqued our palates.

Ryan Patrick Redhead Red 2017 (\$12.98) is a Cabernet Sauvignon dominant blend (got some Rhône varietals in here) that does not disappoint. Grapes are sourced from three of Washington state's best AVAs (Columbia Valley, Horse Heaven Hills, and Wahluke Slope). It is approachable from the get-go. Ripe raspberry and black cherries hit you on the nose as herbal notes of eucalyptus and mint round out the mouthfeel with red currants on the finish. Perfect for a couple of early warm weather burgers on the grill.

Unlike the younger Redhead Red brother, the **Ryan Patrick Rock Island Red 2017 (\$19.98)** is born from the Bordeaux pedigree. A classic blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot and a few others this wine is remarkably more powerful than the more than adept Redhead Red. It is also a reminder to me to make sure I taste with a poker face with sales reps. When I tasted the Rock Island Red, I could not pull a bluff. It is as impressive at its price point as the Redhead Red is at its. Dark fruit aspects of blackberry and black currants on the nose; cranberry and rhubarb on the palate with subtle toasty notes and hint of leather on the finish. Perfect with a pan-seared NY Strip.

Our first foray with this winery, the **Ryan Patrick Rock Island Cabernet Sauvignon 2016 (\$19.98)** is everything I have come to expect from Washington State Cabernet Sauvignon. We were first introduced last Summer and have not looked back. The nose has torrents of blackberry and currant leading into the full-bodied structure on the palate with notes of smoke, vanilla, and cedar. The tannins are firm but not oppressive. This wine is a beauty. Enjoy with a grilled Filet Mignon.

DRINK BETTER!



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Interesting Stories, Excellent Wines

Clos Henri is the Marlborough outpost of the Henri Bourgeois family of Sancerre. They first came to New Zealand in 1999 and decided they wanted to make wine here, but rather than take on an existing project they wanted a blank canvas. Their focus was to be Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir, just as in their Loire home base. They'd previously investigated a few countries, including South Africa, but New Zealand won. Why would one of the leading families from Sancerre want to produce wines in New Zealand? I am not sure, intellectual curiosity, viticultural hubris; it could be either, both or neither but the results are fascinating. Initially they planted 21 hectares; now there are 45 ha of vineyards. They planted at more than twice the density than was usual for the area (5000 vines/ha vs. 2000 vines/ha). Of course, they hired a young French winemaker and since 2010 they have been employing organic farming. **Clos Henri Sauvignon Blanc 'Petit Clos' 2019 (\$16.99)** is an all-stainless-steel wine from the younger vines on the estate. Organic. Really aromatic and expressive with passionfruit and tangerine on the nose. The palate is delicate and fine with a lovely mouthfeel from extended lees aging. Bright tropical and citrus fruit. Very light and pretty. Think Pouilly Fumé meets Marlborough.

Driven by a passion for Burgundy and the dream of making wine, Japanese sommelier Koji Nakada left his native Tokyo in 1996 and moved to Beaune to study oenology. The first thing he had to do was learn French. He enrolled in language class at Dijon where his teacher was the lovely Jae Hwa Park who he would eventually marry. In 2000, they formed a tiny negociant domaine named Maison Lou Dumont. (In Burgundy, a negociant is a winemaker/seller who owns no vineyard but relies on buying grapes or finished wine to bring to market). Koji's goal was to produce pure, honest, regionally correct Burgundy with minimal manipulation from organically farmed grapes. He does little manipulation to his wines, limiting pump overs and punch downs and he vinifies with natural yeasts. Koji's passion bred success and in 2012 he and Jae Hwa purchased their first parcels of land in Burgundy: no small feat for a non-native Burgundian. Their **Maison Lou Dumont Bourgogne Passetoutgrains 2018 (\$23.99)** is one of the finest examples of its type I have ever had...period. Passetoutgrains is an appellation that covers ALL of Burgundy. By regulation, Passetoutgrains must contain at least 30% Pinot Noir and at least 15% Gamay with no more than 15% combined of Chardonnay, Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc. In reality, most vigneron use the minimum of Pinot Noir and then fill the vats with two-thirds Gamay. Maison Lou Dumont's version is 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Gamay. C'est tout! This Passetoutgrain is a blend of Nuits-St-Geroge Pinot Noir and single parcel Gamay. It is aged for 17 months in 20% new French oak. It has all the structure and elegance of Pinot combined with lush fruitiness and perfume of Gamay. We love this unique Burgundian rouge. Red cherry fruit complemented by some dark streaks of Pinot. Pleasant touches of earth, good tannins, and balanced acids on a satisfying finish. Pairs well with almost anything. Drink alone or with cheeses, burgers, soups, and even tomato dishes.

One Man Show

Domaine du Clos des Roccs is a one man show - Oliver Giroux. Belonging to a family of winegrowers for 7 generations, Olivier Giroux was impatient. His brother was next in line to take over the family business so Olivier decided to branch out on his own. He found a domaine owned by an old man with some great vineyards but no heirs and purchased it in 2002. The estate counts 8.6 hectares of vines across seven parcels, principally in Pouilly-Loché, with plots in Macon-Loché and Pouilly-Fuissé rounding out the holdings. The **Domaine du Clos des Roccs Macon-Loché 2019 (\$26.98)** comes from a parcel that is only one and a quarter acres in size. Production, in a good year averages around 8,000 bottles. The grape here is

Chardonnay; which is hand-harvested, fermented in stainless-steel with natural yeasts and then aged for 11 months in a mixture of stainless-steel and neutral oak barrels prior to bottling. No chemical products are used in the vineyard and Olivier is committed to organic processes from start to finish, though he has chosen not to pursue certification. This is a wow! wine in the glass. The nose is rich but precise with notes apple, honey, beeswax and ripe fruits. Those same concentrated flavors cascade over the palate balanced by a vibrant acidity. A surprisingly complex and satisfying wine. If you like excellent Chardonnay, this is a wine not to miss!

A Really Good Bordeaux

One would think it's easy to find a really good Bordeaux but it's not. Let me rephrase that, it's not easy to find a really good Bordeaux under \$25. **Chateau Treytins Montagne-St Emilion 2015 (\$22.99)** is a really good Bordeaux. Just to make things clear, Château Treytins is perhaps better known for its Lalande de Pomerol wine but in 1997, the owners, the Nony family acquired vineyards in the Montagne Saint-Emilion Appellation, and Château Treytins Montagne Saint-Émilion was born. Planted on gravelly soil located partly on a hillside, the average age of the vines is about 25 years. The vineyard is planted mostly with Merlot with a small amount of Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. At slightly over 12 acres and producing on average 2,500 cases of wine a year, Ch. Treytins Montagne-St. Emilion is small by Bordeaux standards. Besides a favored location and skilled winemaking, the 2015 vintage is particularly good. One leading wine publication described it as, "Truly an incredible vintage for Right Bank wines. Perhaps, not quite at the level of 2009, but close. Pomerol and St. Emilion are just stunning! Rich, ripe, fleshy, opulent and even decadent, the wines taste and feel great! The Merlot on the clay soils is the highlight of the vintage." Lots of black cherry, fruit cake, dried herbs, and a touch of earth all emerge from the 2015 Treytins. With fine tannins, medium-bodied richness, moderate acidity, and a character filled personality, it's a gem from this small Saint-Emilion satellite appellation. Try this with some grilled New York Strip Steak with a spicy coffee rub.

Quick Hits

Rosé season is upon us and has mentioned earlier that means many eyes and palates will turn to Provence. Unfortunately, such popularity tends to breed mediocrity as vigneron and importers fall all over themselves trying to provide more juice for the pipeline. We have at least one Provençal rosé for which we can attest high quality, **Chateau Sainte Croix 2020 Cotes de Provence (\$15.99)**. Located in the magnificent setting of Provence on the former lands of the Thoronet Abbey, 4 generations of the Pélépol family have made wine on the now 50-hectare estate. This rosé comes from their vineyard in Carcès. Château Sainte Croix is the perfect balance between fruit and freshness. 70% Grenache 20% Carignan 10% Syrah. A beautifully fresh wine, pale in color and redolent with soft red berries and herbs of garrigue.

And now for something wonderfully different, from Italy's smallest region, Valle d'Aosta. Tucked under the Alps, bordering France, the wines of Valle d'Aosta are not quite Italian and not quite French but they are consistently high in quality. You should discover **La Kiuva Rouge de Vallee 2019 (\$14.99)**. La Kiuva is a cooperative winery with 50 grower members located in the heart of the Aosta Valley. With roughly 15 hectares planted to vine, La Kiuva's growers do all their vineyard work by hand. The Rouge is a blend of 70% Picotendro (local Nebbiolo clone), 30% Gros Vien, Neyret, Cornalin and Fumin. The color is a light ruby red of moderate intensity. The winy bouquet is fine and intense with aromas of red fruits and delicate spicy notes. Dry, smooth and harmonious taste, enriched by smooth tannins and a slightly bitter finish. Stylistically similar to a fine Beaujolais. Great with fish, white meats or pasta dishes.