

2024 May 17 - Unusual Grapes and 2 Buried Treasures

1. Bele Casel Colfondo Asolo Prosecco - Italy, Asolo \$21

Prosecco 2 Ways - First, straight and second, with grenadine, pom beads and orange liquor.

Col Fondo translates “with the bottom” and refers to the wine being unfiltered after the second fermentation on the lees which takes place within the bottle. Unlike most Prosecco which are slightly sweet, this wine may be cloudy and is bone dry. After the 2008 DOCG appellation re-organization, the primary grape in Prosecco wines, the ancient grape “Glera”, was re-named “Prosecco”. In addition to Glera, up to 9 other varieties are commonly used in the region. Prosecco Colfondo uses with up to 15% Bianchetta Trevigiana and Perera.

2. Dr Konstantin Frank Rkatsiteli 2020 - NYS, Finger Lakes \$20

Dr. Frank was a pioneer in planting European grape varieties in the Eastern U.S. in the 1950s.

The Grape: Rkatsiteli is a Georgian grape variety that dates back to 3,000 B.C. and is the oldest known grape variety in the world. Elegant, aromatic, and tropical with apricot, passion fruit, pineapple, and mango with undertones of ginger, white pepper, and grassiness.

3. Dão VIGNO Tinto Freire Lobo 2020 - Portugal, Dao \$16

Grapes and Tasting Notes: A blend of organically-farmed, hand-harvested and foot-trodden (for gentle extraction) 40% Touriga Nacional (the finest grape of Port), 30% Alfrocheiro, 25% Jaen (Mencia) and 5% Tinta Roriz (Tempranillo), Vigno Tinto has a dark ruby color with magenta at the edge. Blackberries, raspberries, lavender, and cassis in the nose with cinnamon, cherries, and fennel as the nose evolves in the glass. On the palate, the wine is juicy, yet elegant, with mineral-infused black and red fruit flavors that echo the nose, along with ripe olives and baking spices. Fine-grained tannins and fresh berry acidity punctuate the refreshing, lingering finish.

North-central Portugal, high-elevation vineyards (between 1300-2300’ above sea level). One of Portugal’s oldest demarcated wine growing regions. Protected from harsh Atlantic winds, the region is temperate, with schist and granite soils. Wine has been grown here for millennia, but it became “first” in fame (after Port) only in the 19th century. Upon applying for membership in the EU in 1979, the old practice of allowing only co-operative wineries was abandoned, and now the wines from the region are held in high esteem, with small producers who grow their own grapes leading the way.

4. Pergola Aleatico Vernaculum Villa Ligi 2022 - Italy, The Marche \$19

Tasting notes: 100% Aleatico, hand-harvested and fermented in concrete tanks, where the wine matures for six months before bottling in the spring. Soft ruby red color. Aromas of violets and peonies, along with blackberries, cranberries, tea, and sandalwood as the nose evolves in the glass. Juicy, with floral and red fruit elements including cherries and pomegranate that echo the nose, along with fresh acidity and fine minerality. Balance, restraint, and drinkability.

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The Grape: An ancient black grape variety grown in small quantities, largely in Tuscany, with small plantings in the Marche where it produces the rare DOC Pergola wines. It produces dry red and rosé wines (but also dessert wines made in the passito manner with grapes air-dried prior to vinification). Hints of Muscat-like aromas due to its genetic relationship with Muscat Blanc a Petit Grains. Thought to be native to Tuscany, though possibly Greek origin.

5. Damiani Sole e Terra 2021 - NYS, Finger Lakes

\$25.

Blend: 49% Pinot Noir, 32% Lemberger, 19% Saperavi. 10 months in neutral French Oak.

Saperavi is a dark-skinned, pink-fleshed grape variety originally from the Georgian Republic. Being the Georgian-language word for "dye", *saperavi* is a particularly appropriate name for this teinturier* variety. (*French word meaning literally 'tinter', or 'dyer', denoting wine grape varieties with red-tinted, rather than clear, flesh which yield richer-colored wines.)

Lemberger (aka Blaufrankisch) is a black-skinned wine grape grown widely in Austria, Hungary and to a lesser extent in neighboring Germany, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Croatia. Tiny quantities are also grown in the United States, most notably in New York's Finger Lakes Region, like this wine. The common feature in Blaufrankisch wines from all of these places is a fruit-forward profile with aromas of spiced black cherries. Lemberger is genetically related to Pinot Noir and buds early, ripens late and delivers generous yields.

Tasting notes: The winery itself calls this a "quaffable table wine" but hopefully it's more than that. They write: "aromas of shaved cedar, tart cherry, and lush boysenberry." They describe flavors of plums, blackberry and black cherry with hints of graphite and mushrooms. They suggest that "Pinot Noir brings silk, Lemberger a gorgeous hue and Saperavi muscle and grip".

5. Monterey Peninsula Winery Hilltop Essence 1977 Late Harvest Zinfandel California (possibly Paso Robles) Probably \$20 in 1979

6. Grahams Vintage Port 1977

I don't remember how much I paid for it, possibly about \$25. According to Wine-Searcher.com, the average price is \$163 which may be off by about \$100. The current price at D & M Wines and Liquors in San Fran is \$259.99
