

thebacklabel®

A MONTHLY WINE JOURNEY CURATED FOR ADVENTUROUS SOULS

**CLIMATE
CHANGE**

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CLIMATE CHANGE

By Logan Lee

I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT YOUR POLITICS. And we've gotta remove politics from how we think about our planet, after all, it's the only one we've got! It doesn't look like Elon Musk has room for all of us on his rocket to Mars. By no means am I a scientist, but in grade school, I did learn the steps of the scientific method.

1. MAKE AN OBSERVATION

2. CONDUCT RESEARCH

3. FORM HYPOTHESIS

4. TEST HYPOTHESIS

5. RECORD DATA

6. DRAW CONCLUSION

7. REPLICATE

I think nearly everyone learned these steps in science class during middle school. But somehow we've kinda lost our minds when it comes to what science is telling us about what's going on with Earth. So for this month's edition of thebacklabel, let's park the science and the politics to the side and just look at how much climate change is changing wine.

Over the past several years, I've been super lucky to travel to some of the coolest places that make wine. From California to Europe to South Africa, I started hearing a similar story. Harvest keeps getting earlier and earlier. Higher temps are changing the flavor of grapes and, more importantly, the climate literally dictates where vineyards are planted. The changes in extreme weather mean more drought and more storms in different places. I can tell you drought makes it incredibly hard to make wine. No water, no wine.

To dive into the controversial topic... one of our favorite somms, Victoria James, takes us to France and tells the story about a vintage nearly wiped out by climate. Second, we'll see what's up with Champagne-esque production in southern England. And finally, we're exploring what it really means for a wine to be sustainable and carbon neutral. For this month's pairings, we're going all vegan! We didn't pick these recipes because we're so keen on vegan cuisine. We picked them because if we don't address climate change then we're gonna kiss meat goodbye, which is some serious motivation for me because I don't think I can survive without BBQ.

And, of course, this month is stocked with awesome vino from real winemakers from all over the world including South Africa, Portugal, Spain, California, France, and Australia!

Cheers,

LL

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THE YEAR THAT CHANGED FRENCH WINE

By Victoria James



ON APRIL 27TH OF 2016, Regis Minet, a winemaker in Pouilly-sur-Loire, painstakingly placed 500 candles around his vineyards. He lit them all as night fell, a final effort in battling the below-freezing temperatures, hoping the candles would provide enough heat to protect his crop.

“If it were -2°C , it would have worked,” Denis Jamain, a neighboring winemaker in Reuilly added, “but the temperature dropped to -4°C .” Regis Minet lost 80 percent of his crop to frost that night.

Bad weather and lower yields have been a recent trend but the 2016 vintage was especially challenging. Hail, frost, drought and heat-waves attacked vines in troublesome amounts, drastically changing quantities, prices and the future growth of wineries.

In the Loire Valley, winemakers faced losses of 60 to 80 percent. Michel Brégeon, a renowned producer of Muscadet, could not make his single-appellation wines from Gorge and Clisson nor any reserve cuvees. Instead, he had to blend whatever he had left and label it as simply Muscadet. This means charging \$18 a bottle versus \$30 — a huge loss. Others, like Pierre and Catherine Breton of Chinon, had to modestly raise prices in order to make ends meet.

While the frost lowered yields early on in the season, torrential downpours in late spring led to problems with mildew followed by a 3-month drought and high temperatures. Throughout the year, Denis Jamain of Domaine Reuilly constantly fought against mildew, then watched the vines struggle without water and eventually had to pick out grapes that were burnt and scorched from August temperatures.

Further south in Burgundy, a combination of frost and hail devastated the vintage. Domaine Diochon in Moulin-à-Vent in Beaujolais noted, “the hail only lasted for 20 minutes but stole 80 percent of our production!” In Meursault, Jean-Marc Roulot would almost prefer hail, “Frost is far more depressing than hail because it happens so early in the season. You still have to do so much work that year, with knowingly little in return.”

In Chablis, Isabelle Raveneau admitted that the 2016 vintage was one of the most damaging. For them, their Montée de Tonnerre parcel was hit the worst, which provides wine for a third of their estate. As is the case with many growers, a lot of their vineyards are concentrated in one spot, which hail can wipe out with one short storm burst.

To survive, some winemakers have started buying grapes. One of the benchmark producers in Beaujolais, Mathieu Lapiere, bought fruit from a nearby grower in the Julienas cru. This means a new wine altogether for the domaine, which is exciting news for those fanatics who already have a hard time

getting their hands on his coveted wines. However, for the marketplace in general, these new wines and expansions might offer more confusion and the series of destructive vintages in Burgundy might add further complications to ownership.

In fact, very few winemakers in Burgundy today live solely on the grapes they own. Even heralded vigneron like Coche-Dury needs to buy fruit or rent parcels from other growers. The concept of “estate fruit,” is becoming one of the past.

Although the final quality of the 2016 year was exceptional in the Loire and Burgundy, the challenges and low yields left many with empty pockets and heavy hearts. But what about other regions in France, ones that are traditionally sunnier and warmer?

In May 2016 I was in Alsace for the 50th anniversary of André Ostertag’s family winery. This is historically one of the driest regions in France, but we were caught in relentless rain for days. At the party, André confirmed it was the rainiest spring he had seen since the domaine started. For more than two months it poured, this extreme moisture leading to the largest crop they had ever seen.

While visiting the southern Rhône valley, Daniel Brunier of Domaine du Vieux Télégraphe hosted a dinner at his house. There, he mentioned that 2016 was an extraordinary vintage, “even for my olives,” he added while popping one in his mouth. Indeed, the olives were absolutely delicious but with them came a certain bitterness. Knowing that 2016 was such a difficult year for so many, the fruit was somehow unenjoyable.

Perhaps consumers will have to look to the southern Rhône, the Languedoc, Alsace and the New World in poor vintages. In these distressing years, it will be interesting to see how the market changes. With so little Burgundy available, the rule of supply and demand has already driven up costs. It is only a matter of time before the bubble bursts and cheaper alternatives, easily found, are embraced. This might put many struggling winemakers in Burgundy and the Loire out of business.

When I stood in the humble home of Franck Follin-Arbelet in Aloxe-Corton, I could hardly believe his Romanée Saint Vivant Grand Cru cost upwards of \$1,000 a bottle. His modest surroundings did not imply wealth but rather the life of a farmer. I quickly learned that it was made in tiny quantities, the profit hardly covering land taxes. When asked what to expect from Burgundy after years of bad weather, Franck’s steely blue eyes sparkled, he sipped on a glass of his pricey wine that barely pays the bills and added, “Do not expect normal. There is no normal, not anymore.”



2012 CASA DE CELLO "VEGIA" VINHO TINTO

DÃO, PORTUGAL

60% Tinta Roriz, 30% Touriga Nacional, 10% Tinta Amarela

NOSE: Walking in a drizzle with a brown bag of fresh flowers, red raspberries, and cherries on a dirt road

PALATE: Vibrant red fruit with complex earthiness that melts into soft, elegant, and beautiful tannins

MOOD: Leaving work early and making a feast on a Wednesday night jamming to Lake Street Dive's You Go Down Smooth



Portugal is home to wine that 8,000 percent outperforms its average price per bottle! It's also home to varietals that are insanely difficult to pronounce! This red blend hails from the region called Dão, which along with the Douro region comprise the top two red regions in the country. The blend is made of two indigenous grapes: Touriga Nacional and Tinta Amarela, and another grape, Tinta Roriz, that you're probably more likely to know by the name of Tempranillo.

The juice is aged in stainless steel tanks and does not see any oak, which gives the vino a really awesome melty and fruity sensation as you sip. The nose is super welcoming with Portuguese lavender and vibrant and ripe red fruit like pomegranate and strawberries, but this easy-to-get-to-know wine gets a little more complex as you get to know it. After the initial sips, you'll find these ripe fruits melt into dusty, rural roads of earthiness.

 That earthiness aka dirt road in the wine makes for rustic pairings like mushroom risotto and herb roasted chicken.



photo by James Ransom

VEGAN LENTIL BOLOGNESE WITH CASHEW PARMESAN

SERVES: 6

PREP TIME: 20 MIN

COOK TIME: 47 MIN

For the vegan lentil bolognese:

2 tablespoons olive oil, divided

1 cup yellow or white onion,
chopped

1 large rib celery, chopped

2 medium-sized carrots, chopped

1 cup button mushrooms, cleaned
and sliced

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 cup brown or green lentils, rinsed

1 28-ounce can diced or crushed
tomatoes

3 tablespoons tomato paste

1/2 cup red wine

3/4 cup water

1 tablespoon chopped fresh
rosemary, or 1 teaspoon dried
rosemary

2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves, or
1 teaspoon dried thyme

2 teaspoons oregano, or 1 teaspoon
dried oregano

1 pinch red pepper flakes

1/4 teaspoon salt, or to taste

1/3 cup fresh basil leaves, chopped

12 ounces penne or rigatoni pasta
(or linguine, if you prefer)

For the cashew Parmesan:

1 cup raw cashews

1/4 cup nutritional yeast

3/4 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon olive oil

For the vegan lentil bolognese:

1. Heat 1 1/2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the onion, celery, and carrots. Cook for 8 minutes, or until the onions are clear and all of the vegetables are soft.

2. Add the mushrooms and garlic. Cook for 4 to 5 minutes, or until the mushrooms are soft and have released some liquid and the garlic is fragrant.

3. Add the lentils, tomatoes, tomato paste, red wine, water, rosemary, thyme, and oregano to the pot, along with a dash of red pepper flakes and the salt. Stir the mixture well, and bring it to a boil. Reduce it to a simmer and cover. Cook for 30 to 35 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the lentils are cooked through but not mushy. If the mixture becomes overly thick (if it's tough to stir and no liquid is visible at the bottom), add some water by the 1/4 cup. When the sauce is finished, stir in the fresh basil.

4. When the sauce is fifteen minutes from being done, heat a large pot of salted water to boil. Add the pasta and cook according to package instructions. Drain the pasta and toss it with the remaining 1/2 tablespoon olive oil.

5. Divide the pasta into six serving bowls and top with the bolognese sauce. Serve with an extra sprinkle of basil and cashew Parmesan (see below), if desired.

For the cashew Parmesan:

1. Add all the ingredients to a food processor fitted with the S blade. Pulse repeatedly, until the cashews are broken down, and then process the mixture until it's taken on a crumbly texture (similar to the size of grated parmesan). Serve with any pasta dish.

2. Stored in the refrigerator in an airtight container, the cashew Parmesan will keep for 2 weeks.



2017 SIX HATS PINOTAGE

WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

100% Pinotage

- NOSE:** Ripe black plums garnished with violets and splashed with fresh cracked peppercorn
- PALATE:** Clean and freshly loaded up with ripe plums and fresh strawberries rolled in bits of teriyaki beef jerky
- MOOD:** The first perfect night of spring to fire up the grill, enjoy some QT with your neighbors on the community roof top, and jamming to Ends of the Earth by Lord Huron.



Building a business can mean doing well for yourself and your family, but it can also mean doing good for your team and your community. Often it is actually good business to do well by your people. The crew behind this juice truly put their money where their mouth is... the team follows a motto of wearing the 6 hats of Partnership, Potential, Change, Equity, Dignity, and Sustainability. The winery is also a registered fair trade producer and invests in the community schools, clinics, and other projects to improve standards of living.

We swear the values behind the brand make this juice taste even better. Plus, this Pinotage isn't anything like what the grape's reputation was in the '90s. This vino is juicy, vibrant, and bright with succulent plums and red fruit, but is also nuanced and complex with touches of spice and saltiness. Don't let anyone tell you that Pinotage can't be good because this one is delicious and also does some good in the world!

 Rarely can a red wine compete with a spicy, yellow curry dish, but this is the one. It must be because it is from South Africa and the nation's delicious mix of culture. After all, they call it the rainbow nation!



photo by James Ransom

PURNIMA GARG'S EGGPLANT AND TOMATO CURRY

SERVES: 4-6

PREP TIME: 10 MIN

COOK TIME: 20 MIN

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 teaspoon brown mustard seeds
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 onion, sliced
- 4 Japanese (long and thin) eggplants, sliced 1/2 inch thick
- 1 serrano chile, seeded and chopped fine
- 1 teaspoon coriander
- 14 ounces canned diced tomatoes, with juice
- 1/4 teaspoon garam masala
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

1. Heat oil in a large frying pan until it shimmers. Add the mustard seeds and cumin seeds and heat about 30 seconds, until they pop.
2. Add the sliced onions, and stir occasionally over medium high heat until they are deep brown in spots (this will take a while, but makes a big difference to the taste and they won't burn if you are careful).
3. Add the eggplant and fry until the skin is turning brown and the flesh just starts to soften. You may have to add a little more oil.
4. Add the chile, coriander, garam masala, tomatoes, and salt and pepper. Turn heat to medium low and cook until the eggplant is soft. Add a little water if it is getting too dry but it will be more solid than watery.
5. Serve with white rice, spicy Indian lime pickle, and plain full-fat Greek yogurt (you only use a little yogurt and the low-fat yogurt tastes thin and sour).



2015 ALVEAR SEÑORÍO DE ALANGE ENSAMBLAJE

RIBERA DEL GUARDIANA, SPAIN

40% Tempranillo, 30% Garnacha, 30% Syrah

NOSE: A fruit stand outside of a super good fresh bakery

PALATE: Complex smokiness joins the fruit for a bold and expressive long finish

MOOD: Sneaking a little sip of vino at the office as the clock slowly makes its way to 5 PM on a Friday with Catahoula Man by the Generationals filling your cubicle.



Alvear winery produces an array of wines from entry-level on up to the top notch of that year's harvest. The Ensamblaje is a blend of the best of the best Syrah, Tempranillo, and Garnacha grapes of the harvest. We're lucky to have some serious eyes on the ground in Spain to hunt out these opportunities to snag top quality juice at an awesome price point.

The juice is dark ruby red and the bold fruit is balanced by the acidity. The nose is fruit forward with cherry, blackberry, and ripe plums. As you sip you'll first find all this lush fruit, but this vino gets more complex as it lingers with notes of tobacco, dark chocolate, and licorice. Kinda like hitting the farmer's market for fresh produce with your favorite leather-donned, tobacco-chewing cowboy.



A big jammy, full-bodied wine calls for some meat, but skip the cliché steak and find a deluxe cut of tuna and whip up a yummy soy sauce. Tuna has enough heft to hold up to a bold wine.



photo by James Ransom

VEGAN LENTIL SLOPPY JOES

SERVES: 6

PREP TIME: 10 MIN

COOK TIME: 58 MIN

1 cup brown or green lentils, soaked for a few hours (or overnight) and rinsed

2 cups water

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 cup white or yellow onion, chopped

1 green or red bell pepper, chopped (about 3/4 to 1 cup)

1 clove garlic, minced

2 teaspoons chili powder

1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika

1 teaspoon mustard powder, dried

1 15-ounce can crushed, fire-roasted tomatoes (I like the Muir Glen brand)

3 tablespoons tomato paste

1 tablespoon organic brown sugar or maple syrup

1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar

1/4 teaspoon sea salt (adjust according to taste; how much is needed will also depend on the tomatoes and tomato paste you use)

1/4 teaspoon black pepper (or to taste)

1/2 cup vegetable broth (or more as needed)

6 sprouted grain buns

1 dash Toppings of choice (Tabasco sauce, sriracha, pickles, onions, sauerkraut, coleslaw, avocado slices, etc.)

1. Place lentils in a large pot, and cover with water (enough so that there's at least a full inch or two of water above the lentils). Bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Cook for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the lentils are chewable, but still have some firmness to them. Drain them and set aside.

2. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onion and pepper, and cook for 5 to 8 minutes, or until the onion is soft and clear, stirring frequently. Add the garlic, chili, paprika, and mustard, and continue cooking for another minute or two, until the garlic is quite fragrant.

3. Add the lentils, fire-roasted tomatoes, tomato paste, brown sugar or maple syrup, apple cider vinegar, salt, pepper, and broth. Bring the mixture to a simmer. Add more broth as needed. Simmer until the mixture has thickened to your liking, about 15 to 20 minutes (I like thick sloppy joes, but if you like 'em sloppier, that's fine, too!).

4. Remove mixture from heat and allow to cool for a few minutes. Divide sloppy joes onto the buns and top with toppings of choice, including some Tabasco or sriracha for heat, if desired. Serve.



2016 BAND BLEND LIVE

CALIFORNIA

57% Zinfandel, 32% Teroldego, 5% Petite Sirah, 3% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Petit Verdot

NOSE: Grandma is baking black cherry pie laced with real deal vanilla beans

PALATE: Soft and juicy plums melt into elegant spice

MOOD: Getting ready for anything Saturday night brings, with nothing but Beyoncé's Coachella performance streaming in the background.



In the 1990s, the Little family had a little dream to own a little vineyard and farmhouse in Sonoma Valley, California. Fast forward a couple of decades and the Little family has raised a few kids, restored a farmhouse, and built themselves a not so little wine business. The Little Family is also quite the musical family. The father of the family plays guitar in a band formed by friends, and the story goes that when the band got together for practices they were caught sneaking some wine from the winery. To prevent future theft the Little Family winemaker decided to make the band its own special blend for their consumption during practice.

And just like that... the Band Blend became a fave and the Little Family decided to bottle it and sell it to all of us! Meet the 2016 vintage of the Band Blend Live. The juice is a blend of classic California grapes like Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon, but with a delightful Italian twist with the addition of the Teroldego grape. The nose is super fragrant and all about ripe and juicy plums combined with black cherry and a freshly split vanilla bean. The sipping is more complex as the rich fruit slides into subtle spice of white pepper and cloves.



A perfect red wine to kick off the beginning of spring. This juice is calling for anything from the grill, but we're thinking skip the standard burger and break out some eggplant and portobello mushrooms to put on the hot coals.



FULLY LOADED VEGAN BURRITOS

SERVES: 4 TO 6

PREP TIME: 24 HRS

COOK TIME: 1 HRS 45 MIN

For the beans and vegetables:

1 cup dry pinto beans, picked over
(or 2 cans pinto beans, rinsed and
drained of liquid)

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 large white onion, thinly sliced

1 poblano or jalapeño chili, stem
and seeds removed, finely chopped

1 red bell pepper, sliced into thin
strips

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 1/2 teaspoons ground chili powder

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 1/2 tablespoons lime juice

1 dash red pepper flakes

4 to 6 9- or 10-inch flour or corn
tortillas

For the rice:

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 white or yellow onion, diced

1 cup white or brown basmati or
long-grain rice, rinsed

1/4 teaspoon salt

2 1/4 cups low-sodium vegetable
broth or water

2 teaspoons lime juice

1/4 cup tightly packed, chopped
cilantro

1. If you're boiling the dry beans from scratch, soak them overnight in enough water to cover them by a few inches. The following day, when you're ready to make the burritos, drain and rinse them. Place them in a pot of fresh water and cover them by a few inches again. Bring them to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Cover the pot partially, so that steam can escape as they cook. Boil the beans for 45 minutes to 1 hour, checking at the 45 minute mark for doneness. As soon as they're tender but retain their shape and chew, they're done. Drain them, rinse them, and allow them to cool a bit.

2. While the beans cook, make the rice: Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a medium-sized pot over medium heat. Add the onions and cook for 5 minutes, or until tender. Add the rice and sauté it with the onions for a few minutes, until it's it has a lightly toasted fragrance. Add the broth and salt. Bring the rice to a boil, reduce it to a simmer, and cover. Cook the rice for 45 minutes, or until it has absorbed all of the liquid (I recommend checking on it at the 30 or 35 minute mark, as different rice varieties absorb liquid at different rates). Fluff the rice, remove it from heat, re-cover, and let it cool for 15 minutes. Stir in the lime juice and cilantro.

3. Preheat oven to 350° F. Wrap the tortillas in foil and allow them to heat up for 15 to 20 minutes.

4. To prepare the bean and veggie filling, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a large skillet or frying pan over medium-high heat. Add the onions and peppers and a pinch of salt. Cook for 10 minutes, or until the vegetables are sweet and tender, adding a few tablespoons of water if the vegetables get dry or start to stick to the pan. Add the garlic, salt, chili powder, and cumin, and cook for 1 to 2 minutes, until the garlic is very fragrant. Add the cooked pinto beans and lime juice, along with the red pepper flakes. Stir everything to heat through, and if you like, mash some of the beans lightly with the back of a spoon to create a partially "refried" texture. Check the seasonings and adjust as needed.

5. To assemble the burritos, spread a tortilla on a flat surface and add about 1/2 cup of cooked rice and a generous 1/2 cup of veggies, as well as any other fixings you like. Tuck in the bottom and top ends, and then wrap from left to right. Repeat with remaining tortillas and serve.

photo by James Ransom



WHY IS ENGLISH SPARKLING TRYING TO BE LIKE CHAMPAGNE?

By Chappy Cottrell

DID YOU KNOW that England is actually producing its own sparkling wine now? Oh yeah, that's a thing. And for hundreds of years, England has been one of the largest importers of Champagne with more than 30 million bottles imported to the UK in 2013. But in recent years the Brits have been making their own sparkling. It's good too (really)! Some of the producers (like Chapel Downs, Camel Valley, Hush Heath, Lyme Bay, Nyetimber, Sixteen Ridges and Digby) are even making sparkling wines that rival Champagne. The only issue is — they aren't Champagne.

Simon Day, the winemaker for Sixteen Ridges Winery feels, "There are those producers who are chasing the Champagne flavor (or even a particular Champagne house), and there are those who are carving out their own niche, perhaps with less well-known varieties. The great news is, there is room for all styles."

To understand English sparkling and Champagne, we first have to talk about climate.

When comparing southern England and the French region of Champagne, it is easy to see how similar the climates are. Southern England is generally a few degrees warmer in the winter and Champagne slightly cooler in the summer. They are both geographically fairly north, close to the water and have rolling hills. It also rains a lot in both places, which brings us to the importance of soil.

While England and Champagne don't have exactly the same soils, they do have very common traits, the most important being that they both quickly drain water, meaning the soil is less moist. Champagne has more limestone and chalk while England has more greensand and clay, with a bit of the same chalk that Champagne enjoys.

So we've got a similar climate and similar soil types. When it comes to winemaking this can only mean one thing: similar grapes!

The grapes used to make Champagne form what is called the "Holy Trinity" of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier. These same three varieties grow happily in southern England as well.

So now that we have the grapes, the next major decision English winemakers have to make is how exactly they're going to carbonate their juice. There are a couple different ways to do this but the method Champagne makers use — and the one many English winemakers have adopted — is called *méthode champenoise*, also known as the traditional method.

In this process, after the grapes have been picked, pressed, and fermented in stainless steel tanks, the wine is bottled. Then the winemaker adds sugar and yeast and allows the wine to go through a second fermentation in the bottle. Once the yeast eats all of the sugar and farts out alcohol (this gets you drunk) and carbon dioxide (those are the bubbles), the dead yeast gathers in the neck of the bottle. The winemaker then pops open the bottle letting out all of the dead yeast (a messy but fun job!), adds some more wine to the bottle, puts a cork in it, labels it, and ships it off to you to enjoy.

This may sound gross, but the dead yeast inside that bottle cause the toasty, nutty, and creamy

flavors and aromas you often taste in Champagne. And since most English sparkling is made in exactly the same way, similar flavors and aromas are tasted.

So, in an industry where a sense of place or terroir is valued in the end result, why would English winemakers try so hard to be like the French? The simple answer, of course, is that Champagne is the carbonated king and the UK already has the demand for it. But the reality is that when the two regions are already so similar, and the French have already perfected the art of sparkling, it would seem silly to try to perfect what has already been perfected. Right?

On the other hand, we're firm believers that winemaking is an art form that will never truly be "perfect" or finished. And we'll be the first ones to offer when it comes to tasting how English bubbles change over time!



2018 ELICIO ROSÉ

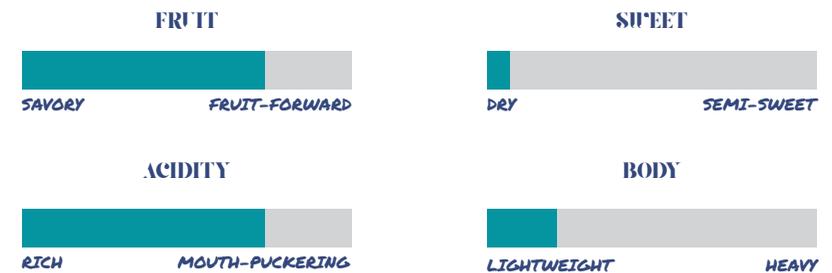
RHONE VALLEY, FRANCE

60% Grenache, 40% Syrah

NOSE: Penelope flower-wrapped fresh red raspberries

PALATE: A delightfully over-eager all pink pack of Sour Patch Kids

MOOD: Dancin' on a classic picnic blanket in the park on the first really nice day of spring to Good Thing by Fine Young Cannibals.



The French are the OGs of rosé. Literally, France is where the pink juice craze all began and the trend has spread to every wine region around the globe. So it is quite awesome that we have a guy... a guy that is a Frenchman and roams France's countryside hunting for delicious vino. Our guy has done it again with this rosé from the southern portion of the Rhone Valley, which is an internationally heralded wine region.

This version of pink wine is bright and vibrant pink, almost like a vintage neon sign that has faded over the years in the window of a quaint, rural gas station. The juice is uber fruit forward with the fruit bursting from the glass eager to meet ya, say "hey, it's rosé season again!" The nose has an elegant creamy flowery-ness leading to all those ripe berries. The sipping is tart, fruity, and just the beginning of an endless summer.

 Rosé and ceviche are bffs. Lime juice enhanced seafood like salmon, tuna, or shrimp pair perfectly with this rosé that has a little extra bite too.



photo by James Ransom

VIBRANT SPRING SOCCA

SERVES: 4 TO 6

PREP TIME: 30 MIN

COOK TIME: 15 MIN

For the socca:

1 cup chickpea flour

1 cup water

1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon chopped parsley

1 1/2 teaspoons salt

1 handful your favorite spring vegetables, such as sprouts, snow peas, and/or asparagus, blanched

1 handful shaved Pecorino (optional)

For the pesto:

1 cup basil leaves, packed

2 cups arugula

1/2 cup olive oil

1/4 cup water

1/2 cup walnuts, toasted

1/4 cup nutritional yeast or Parmesan

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 pinch salt and pepper

1. For the socca: In a medium bowl, combine flour, water, olive oil, parsley, and salt. Whisk until all clumps of flour are incorporated and the batter is smooth. Set aside and allow to rest for 30 minutes. You can prepare the pesto during this time, and cut up your vegetables into small bite size pieces.

2. For the pesto: Combine all ingredients in a blender or food processor and blend until smooth. Add more oil or water as needed to reach a smooth consistency. This recipe will make more than you need for the socca, but it freezes wonderfully. Freeze extra and thaw to add to pasta salads, baked eggs, or just about anything your little heart desires.

3. Turn your broiler to high and place oven rack about 5 inches below the flame. Place a lightly greased cast iron skillet below the broiler for a few minutes until hot. Carefully remove the skillet and pour in the batter. You may need to gently swirl the skillet around to evenly distribute the batter. Return to oven. Cooking time will be 5 to 10 minutes depending on the strength of your broiler. Check every 3 minutes or so to avoid burning. Remove from oven when golden brown. Allow to cool for several minutes, carefully remove from skillet and place on serving dish or parchment paper. Top with pesto, fresh vegetables, and Pecorino.



2017 ZAZOU PICPOUL DE PINET

LANGUEDOC, FRANCE

100% Picpoul

NOSE: If spring had perfume, this would be it: fresh flowers with a hint of citrus

PALATE: Vibrant, bright, and refreshing like a bowl of ripe lemons and white peaches

MOOD: Easy Sunday morning jamming to Dan Auerbach's Stand by My Girl while whippin' up some brunch!



The French know a thing or two about making wine. They've been doing it for centuries and sometimes they keep their vino knowledge a little too close to the vest, but we've got the lowdown for you on this v cool indigenous French grape. The coolest fact about this wine is that "Picpoul" literally translates to, "sting the lips," (*enter several Anchorman jokes*).

The grape got its name because the wine is high in acidity, which means it's refreshing and tart as you sip on it while hoping for a short winter. This bottle makes for a great aperitif but also goes particularly well with salty dishes, especially seafood or charcuterie. In France, it is most often served with oysters — so make like the French and get shucking.

 This vino is springtime refreshing and pairs well with anything salty or from the sea... we're thinking oysters on the half shell with a squeeze of lemon and mignonette.



photo by Julia Gartlandt

VEGAN GUMBO WITH BEANS AND GREENS

SERVES: 3 TO 4

1 cup dry pigeon peas, crowder peas, or small red or brown beans, such as red nightfall

1 bay leaf

2 stalks celery, finely chopped

1 medium green pepper, finely chopped

1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped

2 large cloves garlic, minced

2 teaspoons thyme leaves, chopped

Freshly ground pepper

1/4 cup toasted peanut oil

1/4 cup all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons salt (preferably smoked)

2 to 3 cups chopped leafy greens (mustards, collards, turnips, radish greens, or a combination)

Steamed white rice, for serving

1. Soak the peas or beans overnight in a bowl of water to cover by several inches. The next day (or evening, if you started the soak in the morning), drain the beans, add them to a medium-sized, heavy pot, and cover them with 4 to 5 cups water. Add the bay leaf, a pinch of salt, and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Reduce the heat to about medium-low—you want the water to remain at a very low bubble with the pot partly covered. Simmer for 45 minutes or so, until the beans are just tender. If your beans are particularly fresh, this might only take 35 minutes; older, an hour or more. Remove from the heat, cover with a lid, and allow the beans to rest for at least 30 minutes. Leave them in their liquid; you'll need to use it later.

2. While the beans are resting, start the roux. Heat the oil in a 3- or 4-quart Dutch oven over medium-low heat. Sprinkle the flour over the oil, and whisk until smooth—a flat whisk works well here. Whisk the oil-flour mixture for a few minutes, then switch to a wooden spoon, and stir, constantly, as the roux begins to darken to a dark caramel color. The time it takes to reach this shade depends on the heat you're using, but count on around 20 to 30 minutes at medium-low.

3. Once the roux has reached a deep caramel color, add the onions, green pepper, and celery (the roux will coat the vegetables in a way that may make you think you're doing something wrong, but don't worry). Stir for a couple of minutes, add the garlic, thyme, and a good several grinds of black pepper, and saute for another 7 to 8 minutes, until the vegetables are light golden around the edges and begin to wilt.

4. Now pour off about 2 cups of the bean-cooking liquid, and pour it into the pot with the vegetables. Add the salt. Whisk well, bring to a simmer, and cook for about 5 minutes, until the broth thickens. Add the beans and any remaining liquid (you should have another 3/4 cup or so), and cook for a few minutes more. After about 10 minutes, add the greens, and simmer gently until their texture turns silken, anywhere from 2 to 3 minutes to 10. Season to taste with additional black pepper, and serve with white rice. Serve leftovers with more rice, or cornbread.



2017 WOOP WOOP CHARDONNAY

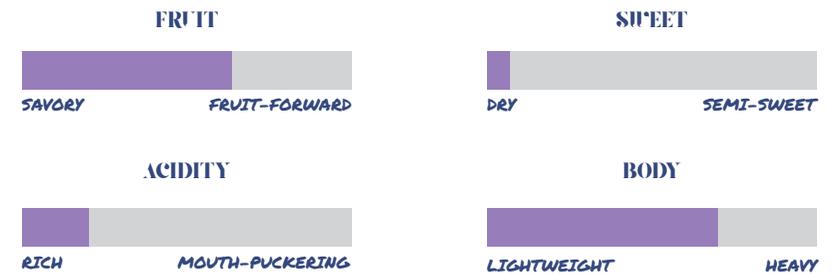
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

100% Chardonnay

NOSE: Ripe pears, lime peels, and honeysuckle breakdance together on a tropical beach

PALATE: Alive, fresh, and bright with rounded tropical fruit wishing and washing around your cheeks

MOOD: Watching the sun shine through the windows and feeling the excitement of warmer days while listening to a Fleetwood Mac marathon on a Sunday afternoon.



In Aussie speak, mates are your bffs and "woop woop" equals being in the middle of nowhere. So what happens when three mates get together in the middle of nowhere in southern Australia?!?! Well... a new wine company is born. This wine biz got its start in 2000 and is proving that amazing, everyday drinking wine is made in Australia. They survived the Yellow Tail debacle of the 2000s and are thriving in the new error of Aussie vino.

These Chardonnay grapes are so good because of South Australia's climate. The best places on earth are defined by warm and sunny days with cool nights! That climate also helps grapes be all they can be! If the mercury rises too much, then the grapes are a sugar-y, hot mess. This juice is crisp with stone fruits combined with hints of lemon blossom and skins of lime, while the palate is a medium-bodied, richly fruity, dry wine that loves to linger on the cheeks.



This creamy delicious Chard from the Aussie Outback is the perfect way to cool down some hot wings! Make your own or order takeout from your favorite spot. Wine + wings = party time!



photo by James Ransom

WONDER FRIES

SERVES: 4, AS A SIDE

PREP TIME: 20 MIN

COOK TIME: 16 MIN

**1 1/2 pounds fingerling potatoes,
each as close to the same size as
possible**

1/4 cup mayonnaise

**2 teaspoons miso paste (brown is
ideal, or try chickpea or brown rice
miso)**

**1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice (up to
2 teaspoons)**

**4 cups Oil for frying (I use rice
bran, peanut, and/or safflower—use
more as needed)**

**2 stalks of green onions, trimmed
and thinly sliced**

1 pinch Sea salt (optional)

1. Wash the potatoes and place them in a deep pot. (Halve any large ones if needed.) Cover them with 2 inches of water.
2. Place the pot on high heat, bring to a boil, and cook the potatoes until just barely cooked, about 8 to 12 minutes depending on size. You don't want them to get soft, so test them frequently. The tip of a sharp knife should penetrate the flesh easily but not split the potato in half. Err on the side of slightly undercooking them.
3. While the potatoes cook, prepare a sheet pan or large frying pan with a thick dish towel. When the potatoes are done, drain them, and spread them out on the dish towel. Roll them around a bit to dry them off, then let them sit for 5 minutes to cool slightly.
4. While the potatoes cool, mix the mayonnaise, miso, and lemon juice thoroughly in a small bowl. Store in the refrigerator until ready to use.
5. While the potatoes are still warm but not too crazy-hot to handle, firmly but gently crush each potato to break the skin and flatten just slightly. I use a dish towel under the heel of my hand to help press the potatoes down. You want them to be mostly intact, but if they break in half, no big.
6. Prepare your deep fryer (I use a cast iron pan with a few inches of oil) and have at the ready a sheet pan lined with newspaper, a grocery bag, or paper towels. Fry the potatoes in batches at 375° F until the edges brown, about 4 minutes (in the cast iron pan, I do 2 minutes on each side). If you'd like, keep the potatoes warm in a 200° F oven until all of them are cooked.
7. In a serving dish, toss the potatoes with the green onions. Top with the miso mayonnaise and an optional sprinkle of salt. Serve immediately.

CREATING CARBON-NEUTRAL WINES

By Allison Russo

WHEN I WAS doing a little research about environmentally friendly booze, I stumbled across the term “carbon-neutral wine.” Carbon neutrality refers to anything that achieves net zero carbon emissions, and there are two ways wineries can do this. They can balance the carbon dioxide they release into the atmosphere with renewable energy, or they can offset the carbon by planting trees or funding carbon projects that will prevent future greenhouse gas emissions.

Wine releases carbon dioxide as part of the fermentation process, so no winery can completely eliminate its carbon emissions. Yeast converts the sugar in the grape juice into alcohol, releasing carbon dioxide as a byproduct. A winery can become carbon neutral if they reduce and offset residual emissions so the net calculated carbon emissions equals zero.

Wineries can still reduce and offset their carbon emissions though, whether through renewable energy practices or a lighter weight bottle design to reduce transportation fuel costs. Parducci Family Winery in Mendocino County, CA was the first American winery to go carbon neutral. In addition to using solar and wind power, they have an “anaerobic digester” to get rid of the methane that’s released from livestock on their farm.

Tahblik Winery was the first winery to be carboNZero certified in Australia, and is

one of eight wineries globally to have this certification. CarboNZero is the world’s first internationally accredited greenhouse gas certification program. Tahblik uses on-site revegetation and organic waste treatment, and funds carbon reduction programs to offset their emissions.

Backsberg Estate Cellars is the first carbon neutral winery in South Africa, a wine region that could be seriously affected by climate change in the next twenty years. Backsberg plants trees and uses biofuels to offset excess carbon, and they also have a range of Tread Lightly wines that use PET packaging to reduce shipping weight and fuel costs.

A new company is looking beyond the vineyard when it comes to carbon neutralization; UK-based Nomacorc has created the first carbon neutral, fully recyclable wine cork. The Select Bio cork is a plant-based wine stopper made from a biopolymer derived from Brazilian sugar cane. It looks and feels like a traditional cork, pleasing for traditionalists and innovators alike. Traditional corks, plastic corks, and aluminum stoppers release up to 25 times more carbon, so the emission savings is actually pretty significant.

From biodynamic to fair trade to organic, sustainable wines are continuing to hold their own in terms of flavor, regardless of their production process. We think it’s time to give carbon-neutral vino a try.



GLOSSARY

ACIDITY

Gives wine a bright, crisp, tart taste and is essential in keeping a wine balanced — acidity balances out sweetness. You can gauge how acidic a wine is by taking note of how much you salivate after your first sip of wine. More saliva = more acid.

BODY

Describes how heavy wine feels on the palate. When determining body, picture the difference between how skim milk feels in your mouth versus how heavy cream feels. If a wine feels like skim milk, it has a lighter body. If it feels more like heavy cream, it has a full body. Acidity, sweetness, tannin and alcohol all affect the body of a wine.

DRY

A “dry wine” is one that does not have a sweet taste. However, even if a wine is technically dry, it can still have a considerable amount of residual sugar that’s concealed by a higher acidity. Example: unsweetened is technically “dry.”

FRUITY

Commonly confused with sweetness (because we affiliate fruit with sweetness), “fruity” describes the presence of fruit flavors in wine. To better understand fruitiness in wine, imagine unsweetened iced tea with lemon squeezed in it. The tea has a fruitiness from the lemon but is still dry because it’s unsweetened.

SWEETNESS

A wine’s sweetness is measured by the amount of naturally occurring sugar — Residual Sugar (RS) — that’s left in the wine at the end of the fermentation process. This sweetness is ranked from bone dry (Brut Nature) to very sweet (doux) and can usually be detected by a slight tingling sensation on the tip of the tongue.

TANNIN

The astringent or “grippy,” almost drying, feeling a red wine leaves in your mouth. A wine’s tannin level is determined by how long the pressed juice sits with the grape seeds and stems, which is where tannins are naturally found. Example: think about how your mouth feels after drinking unsweetened black tea — also high in tannin.

THANKS FOR BEING A MEMBER! DID YOU KNOW...

THE WINE

We’re constantly tracking down, taste-testing and selecting authentic bottles from winemakers around the world — wines that are new to us and hopefully new to you, too. We curate authentic wines rather than bulk blending so that you can truly experience the diverse world of wine.



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More in the mood for only red (or white) wine this month? Switch the type of wine you want to receive. Swimming in wine right now and need a break? Log in to manage your membership to fit your wine needs. P.S. We’re now offering 6 packs of all white or all red!



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