

CATCHING UP

A few grand wines we've overlooked

Summer's astrally over, and autumn's cosmically begun. Grand times for grand wines, good time for Mole and me to issue apologies, make course corrections, loop into big red wines, all that change-of-season kinda thing.

First off, let's be clear: All mistakes — omission, commission, whatever — are mine. My old sidekick — Mole, I mean — should not be blamed, not that he ever is; slanders just run off his back, like water off a duck's back (a trick the UO Ducks could apply). Still, and in general, let me just say: Sorry. I try not to make errors but, having surrendered my divine powers, I sometimes slip up, though I never mean to do so. Again, sorry.

Just for examples: We missed some good wines that deserved mention in previous columns, such as **Chateau de Campuget 2014 Rosé** (\$10.50), mostly syrah (70 percent) blended with grenache (30 percent) from France's Rhone Valley (sure, we're unashamed locavores, but day-um), very pale but loaded with charming flavors of red currants, tangerine rind, roses. Slides down so smoothly, just gotta taste a little more.

Last month, we cited **Seufert 2014 Dolcetto** (sold out) as a promising experiment with an Italian (Piedmont) varietal. Then we got to taste it — and, again, day-um, it's really good, just how a dolcetto should taste, unpretentious but bursting with cassis, black cherries, a whiff of pepper, ready for paninis alfresco.

'Course, if you're rollin' in disposable cash or have friends who are, and want to close summer with a boffo bang, find a bottle of **Domaine Tempier 2014 Bandol** (\$44), a rosé imported by Kermit Lynch (always trust Kermie), superb for character, flavors, length



of finish. This is how bright rosé can be.

We admit to not being enamored with most pinot gris, but sometimes and with some foods, a good gris just fits. **Antiquum Farm 2014 Pinot Gris** (price varies) is a rare creation from talented and passionate Stephen Hagen. Only 50 cases were made, so this could be tricky to find, but the flavors open up new horizons for this grape, floral yet mineral, delish. Matt LaVelle also scored with **LaVelle 2013 Pinot Gris** (\$25), lavish flavors of ripe Asian pears, touch of citrus zing, slightest tingle of sweetness, just enough to round out the acidity: yummy.

Seasonal changes, from the high heat of summer to cooler temps of autumn, invite changes in wines, from whites and rosés (the latter, like sparkling wines, are always in season, we think), to richer, body-warming reds. First, that means a return (if you left) to pinot noirs (though pinot noirs take a little chilling very well), and we're always seeking enjoyable pinots at under \$20; they're notoriously fussy grapes, expensive to cultivate and vinify, hence expensive at retail. So we were tickled to find **Vista Hills 2014 Willamette Valley Pinot Noir** (\$16.50), ripe and round, glowing with distinctive black-cherry flavors, gentle tannins, lingering finish.

Big reds — syrahs, cabernets, merlots, malbecs and other such — will warm anyone's cockles when the world turns colder. But demand is driving prices higher. If you (and friends) can handle the ticket, do not miss **J. Scott 2012 Grenache** (\$26), just superb. Gotta have a cab? Give a little love (and bux) to a deserving family; take home **Girardet 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon** (\$37), savor aromas/flavors of black currants, earth, whiff of chocolate. Yes, Oregon *can* yield big reds.

This year's grape harvest is in, fruit pressed, vintners excited about the quality and flavors of the fruit. The 2015 vintage could prove excellent, and next year's wines could help relieve some of our aches and pains, whatever the weather or whichever way the winds blow. ■

VOTED #1 BY EW READERS

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