

WORLD WINES, AUTUMN SPLENDORS

Looking for home runs among the grape American pastime

I was ready to break into “September Song” or my whistling riff of “Early Autumn” when Mole got up in my face.

The Round Mound of Merlot almost never gets angry, but he was clearly irked: “Yuz hoit my feelins laz mont’ when yuz wrote dat I wuz smoikin’ lak da Donald. Ah wuzn’t smoikin’ ‘n’ ah ain’t lak Trump. Ah don’ even lak dat guy. He’s nasty ta wimmen ‘n’ nearly ever’body, ‘cept his pal Voldemort Pootin.’ Ah wuz jes’ smilin’ cuz weah back on track on da wines.”

“I got it, podna,” I replied. “And I’m really sorry. Nothing about you is Trumpish. I shouldn’t have compared you to that phony in any way. My bad. Forgive me, please, and let’s talk wines. The sun is shining, the leaves are turning and a super grape harvest is already rollin’ in. Got some good juice for the peeps?”

He beamed a toothy grin at me, all hurt gone, the real Mole.

“We gots beauties, from all ovah, ‘n’ as many colors as dat sweetgum down der.” He pointed down at the park outside our grimy 15th-floor window.

“Foist da Frenchies,” Mole continued. I took a deep, relieved breath. “Dis one is so pretty, ah gotta t’ank ouah pal Mario Ramos fer dis. Da label sez chardoonay, but it’s **Jean-Paul Brun 2014 Beaujolais Blanc** (\$18). Ticket’s stiff but da wine is terrif, dry but pure fruit flavas of peaches, peahs, kiwi berries, lak pure autumn. Gotta have it. Den dis Loire Valley rosie: **Cognardiere 2015 Gamay Rosé** (\$10), pale ‘n’ dry but punchy wit’ red fruits ‘n’ dat tangerine rind tang ya digs.”

He nailed that one, then rambled on. “Den Italy, ‘K? Dah Antinori fam been makin’ wines fer ‘bout 400 years, ‘specially wit’ great Chiantis. But dis white is tops, lak dey knows sumpin’ ‘bout makin’ wine: **Villa Antinori 2015 Toscana** (\$9), crisp ‘n’ clean blend, zippy wit’ some Asian peahs, mebbe quince li’l lemon zest zing, great by itself oah wit’ sum ersters when dey come in.”

Thirty years Mole’s been living up the McKenzie, but Flatbush still lives

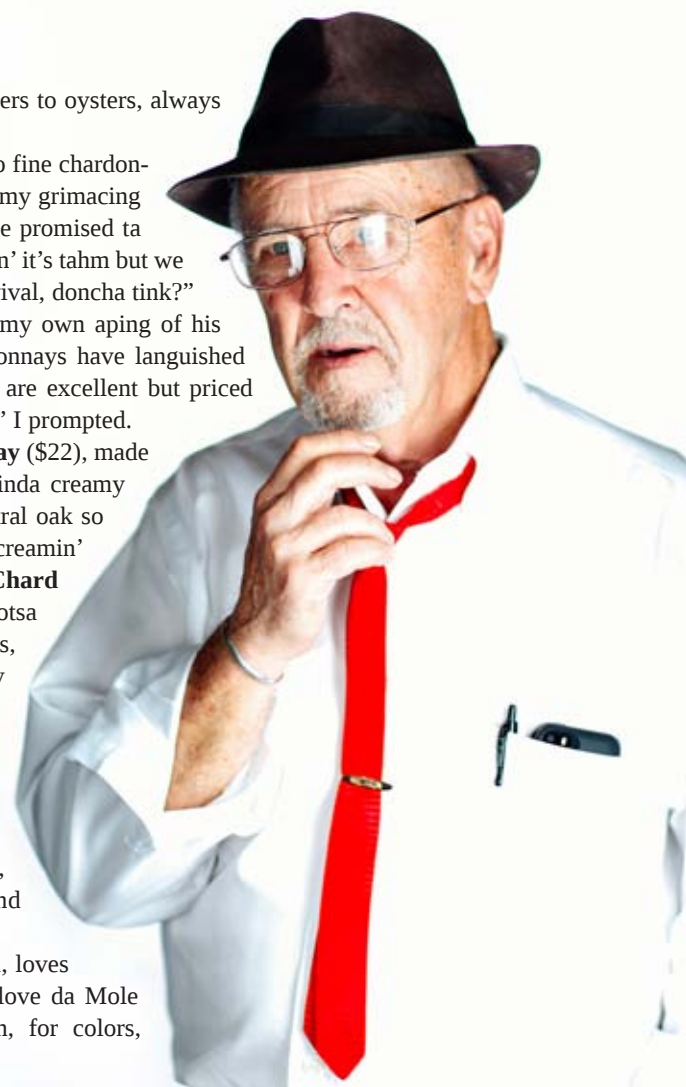
in his accent; just FYI, “ersters” refers to oysters, always will.

“Now da local guys. We gots two fine chardon-nays ...” He held up a hand to stop my grimacing interruption, broke in. “Ah know we promised ta tawk ‘bout reds, ‘n’ nights are cool ‘n’ it’s tahm but we oughts ta give a shout-out fer da revival, doncha tink?”

“F’shuah,” I replied, smiling at my own aping of his accent. It’s true that Oregon chardonnays have languished for years but now score big; many are excellent but priced beyond most folks’ budgets. “Sooo,” I prompted.

“So, two: **Roco 2013 Chardonnay** (\$22), made by Rollin Soles, nice, pure fruit, kinda creamy but not too rich, spent tahm in neutral oak so no lak lickin’ a piano leg. But screamin’ good is **Territorial 2014 Equinox Chard** (\$25), a flat-out home run wit’ lotsa peahs ‘n’ apples ‘n’ tropical fruits, wahn wood notes. Den dis pretty peeno nawhr” — I winced, he nattered — “‘n’ if it ain’t a home run, it’s shuah a hit for extra bases, black cherries, smoky notes, li’l whiff of violets.” That’s **Love and Squalor 2013 Pinot Noir** (\$26), good folks in Portland and McMinnville.

Mole watches too much baseball, loves the Mets. Says it all, right? Gotta love da Mole — and love this dazzling autumn, for colors, scents and, of course, wines.



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