

SAVING THANKSGIVING

This year we collectively approach the holiday season with very little idea of what to expect. Regardless of where your holiday will be spent there is no question that the concept of 'gathering' will be greatly altered. But if there is one thing so many of us have learned to adjust to in this time, it is to keep focused on the few things we can actually control. For us, it's food. And with that, we present a perfect trio of wines for this year's feast, no matter what you decide to cook.

First course: **Trail Marker Rose of Carignan** is the ideal opener. Whether or not you are opening your home to a few friends, or perhaps you're open to risking some travel this year. This year might even mean opening a new chapter. To open this wine is to love it.

Second Course: **Lo-Fi Cabernet Franc** has plenty of pop and will wow the palate by the time it's time to sit down at the table. Six feet apart, of course. And maybe outside. Guaranteed to set aside differences at the table, this one will get 100% of the votes.

Third Course: **Matthiasson Malbec** will keep everyone at the table engaged. A wine for celebrating accomplishments under adversity, be they large or small. Breaking old expectations and constraints as well as providing a pairing panacea for the ages.

Let's face it, even if this holiday means no guests at all for you, it's the perfect year to prepare whatever you want and to do so with perfection. Opportunities abound when looking for a silver lining to the forced change of plans for Thanksgiving this year, and now you have the wine tools to navigate and curate a memorable holiday feast regardless of circumstances.

- Kevin Wardell, November 2020

WINE NO. 1

Trail Marker Rosé

Carignan

Bartolomei Vineyard, Mendocino 2019

RE-ORDER: \$21

GRAPE: CARIGNAN [car-eeg-NYAHN]

Carignan has its share of doubters regarding its ability to truly showcase as a great red wine on its own. So what's to stop someone from tapping into potential here in California as a very viable grape for some serious rosé? There are in fact nice examples of Carignan Rosé in Languedoc-Roussillon, but let's be honest, it is some pretty stiff competition to stand out in the crowd of pink wines in France. In California, however, Rosés have never been more popular and it's a bit of the Wild West when it comes to grape varieties - anything goes. Carignan, in fact, has the advantages of high natural acidity retention, low pigmentation (as so few people pick the darker rosés on a shelf) and a flavor profile that leans away from simple fruitiness.

WINEMAKER: Trail Marker wines are just that, a marker along the path highlighting the way, a sign blazed on a route, a cairn pointing to the road less traveled to some of California's most hidden and exceptional vineyards. Drew Huffine and Emily Virgil began their project in 2012 with just one little ton of Chardonnay from high above the Anderson Valley, and from there they scouted out more coastal sites in Mendocino, Santa Cruz, and Sonoma Counties. Drew has plenty of winemaking chops from his time at Copain, DuMol, Kosta Brown, Wither Hills, and Tuck Beckstoffer Wines, and acknowledges that along the way he learned what he needed to do to let the wine speak for itself. While the couple built their winery on Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, they also work with Austrian rarities like Dornfelder, Zweigelt and Blaufränkisch, all with minimalist winemaking, including fermentations with indigenous yeasts and little or no new oak. This rosé comes from gnarled 70 year old carignan vines from the Bartolomei Vineyard outside of Ukiah. Organically dry-farmed in red volcanic soils, the carignan retains brilliant acidic flare, a rosey candidate for pink wine.

GLASS: Spicy rosé wine with an attractively layered fruitiness on the nose with aromatics like white peaches, strawberries, raspberries, and rosewater. But on the tongue It's got laserbeam acidity and grip, with a very refreshing mouthfeel and an almost saline texture. Underripe snappy honeydew melon, pink grapefruit, watermelon white rind, zippy like a spinning ride at the fair, hop on the Zipper

and ride this acid party, complete with a whiff of cotton candy. This wine screams for gatherings of family and friends, for decadent passed appetizers and for group reflection on this crazy year. Close your eyes and at least enjoy how the wine transports you... And here's to hoping for something safe, yet close enough to that this month.

WINE NO. 2

Lo-Fi

Cabernet Franc

Santa Barbara, California 2019

RE-ORDER: \$23

GRAPE: CABERNET FRANC [kah-behr-neh Frah]

Cab Franc should be no stranger to anyone. A Bergamot favorite from France, especially when compared with its far more commercially recognized Bordeaux brethren, Merlot and Cabernet. Looking to Loire for inspiration has helped in identifying the right combination of cool climate sites and farming decisions, like when to pick, and brought the grape new found success here in the US. The cooler sites part of the equation is a big one, as it opens up a wider playing field for any winemaker because Cab Franc shows a more versatile range when it's not baking in the sun. Equally enjoyable as an age worthy and savory serious wine as it is a spicy-crunchy and light bodied one.

WINEMAKERS:

Lo-Fi Wines plays on the love of vintage vinyl, the low fidelity sound with pops and cracks that makes the music sound alive. Lifelong friends (and audiophiles) Mike Roth and Craig Winchester began the Lo-Fi gig in 2014 in Los Alamos in Santa Barbara county with that quality in mind - wine that is honest with no studio polish. They embraced the "glou glou" style, making wine for every day drinking, using whole cluster fermentation and frequently carbonic maceration, and minimal intervention hallmarks like neutral barrels, native yeasts, little or no sulfur additions, and no other adjustments dialed in, ever. This Cab Franc comes from two organic vineyards in the Los Olivos AVA, Coquelicot Estate and Oak Savanna Vineyard, both with fine sandy loam soils. The grapes were fermented by carbonic maceration, sealed in a tank pumped full of CO2 gas, then pressed after 10 days and aged for 6 months in 50-50 concrete and neutral barrel. A cheeky splash of 15% Gamay rounds out this highly sessionable Franc, but it's so quaffable it may not last to the other side of the record.

GLASS:

Impossibly crushable Cab Franc. This is a turkey feast's very best companion, a juicy red that's light enough for the white meat, and spicy enough for the dark. It's got that tart pucker oh so reminiscent of canned cranberry and the pyrazine green zippiness of a fresh jalapeño. Fresh cracked black pepper on a hearty helping of plums and blackberry cobbler, there is plenty of savory core to this Cab. And yet it is so quenchingly light you will certainly keep reaching for second helpings.

WINE NO. 3
Matthiasson
Malbec
Napa, California 2017

RE-ORDER: \$55

GRAPE: MALBEC [MAL-bec]

Malbec (or Côt) is a french native grape that is hardly recognized as being so anymore. Found mostly in the Southwest, in very few places, but is the featured grape variety in Cahors. Argentina has truly been the place where it has staked its claim as the premier grape for their climate, soils, and they're palates. It's still a rare find to experience Malbec at its best from there, as importers are constantly either swimming in inexpensive and inexpressive mass market juice or they are chasing the uber-modern, over oaked show ponies one cannot drink with anything but a massive steak. Which, if you've ever had proper Argentinian beef, is hard to begrudge. In the US it has had mild success but there is no question the potential is there to be found.

WINEMAKER:

The Matthiassons have been going green since the beginning, and have been avid practitioners and teachers of organic and sustainable Ag for decades. Jill studied botany at Penn, researched ancient farming techniques in Israel, and studied soil health in grad school at UC Davis. At the beginning of the organic movement in the early 90s she pioneered "farmer to farmer" networking for sustainable farming practices. Her husband Steve became obsessed with farming and cuisine while in college studying philosophy, and began consulting on vineyards throughout Napa in the early 2000s. He literally wrote the manual on sustainable viticulture practices in California. He continues to manage countless vineyards - the guru of organic in Napa. In 2003 they began making their own wines under their name, with classics like Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, but also breaking through the Napa normal with grapes like Refosco, Ribolla Gialla and Schioppettino. In 2015, Steve and Jill planted a mixed "estate" block of vines outside of their home in the Western Oak Knoll area of Napa Valley, including just one row of Malbec in the vineyard, and in 2018 they harvested this first crop from the young vines.

GLASS:

"When we made this wine, we aimed to grow healthy grapes and simply make the best wine we could from them. Zero thoughts required on what a Malbec *should* actually taste like" -Steve Matthiasson.

Bright and vibrant fresh fruits with an energetic *jouis de vivre*. Black raspberry aromatics with a whiff of gunpowder minerality. Black cherries and plums stitched onto an earth dusty leather coat, and all somehow elegantly seamless. Impossibly concentrated for a wine that finishes light on its feet as well. The bias and low expectations for Malbec due to the sea of mediocrity that is associated with the grape aside, it goes to show that in the right hands (and the right soils) Malbec can truly shine up beautifully. Steve and Jill Matthiasson pretty much have the right hands for anything. Such a treat.