

BERGAMOT WINE co

Italian Wine Club
JULY 2021

CRUSHABLE, CHILLABLE SUMMER REDS

This July is special, the need for more wine that is primed for gathering together is at an all time high. A crisp white is so often the right call and sure, sure, we get it, Rose all day. But can you righteously rock all reds in July? (Insert audible gasp here) But wait a sec... have you some ice, perchance? No, not for IN the glass. (Insert panicked scream here) These four freshies are just ripe for a good chill prior to serving. Chillable reds are an oft overlooked category of awesome in the world of wine, and it is no surprise that with Italy's wealth of varietal diversity there are some perfect candidates built to shine.

Summer red wine can come from anywhere on the map of the boot, honestly, from north to south and from the mountains to the sea. In this case, we present two from way up high in the mountains, one from the Mediterranean coastline and one genuinely unique gem made from a grape that you never expect this type of lighter personality from. These four deliciously bright and expressive reds will impress those special folks you have chosen to spend your precious summer days with and will inspire smiles as you celebrate the ability to simply get together and... Chill.

- Kevin Wardell, July 2021

WINE NO. 1

Institut Agricole Régional 'Vin des Chanoines'

40% Mayolet + 20% Vuillermin + 20% Nebbiolo + 20% Cabernet Franc

Valle d'Aosta, Italy, 2018

GRAPES: MAYOLET + VUILLERMIN [mah-you-lay] + [voo-lehr-meen]

Mayolet dates back to the 18th century in [Alto Adige](#), making it one of the region's oldest known grapes, with around 1,200 acres planted today. It can make outstanding wine that is light to medium bodied and uniquely refined and aromatic, projecting strong notes of spice, purple flowers, blue/black fruits and white pepper. However, Mayolet is thin-skinned and has tightly packed bunches that are susceptible to botrytis, so growers often describe it as "a nightmare in the vineyard" and avoid growing it altogether. In addition to making svelte monovarietal wine, it sometimes plays a minor role in the fuller-bodied blends of Torrette, which benefit aromatically from a slathering of Mayo.

Vuillermin was saved from near extinction in the late 20th century and its resistance to sunburn makes it a good natural fit in the high and exposed Aosta Valley. Thought to be an offspring of Mayolet, Vuillermin shares a similar aromatic profile but with thicker skins and more tannic structure.

GROWER: The IAR is not an estate or a co-op, but a well-regarded local agriculture school and focal point for young winemakers from all over Northern Italy. The Institut Agricole Régional was founded in 1952 specifically focused on the issues of Aostan regional agriculture challenges. But in 1982 it broadened its curriculum to include winemaking. The school also acts as a cultural center of sorts, a place to experience the valley's unique wine, food, and personality.

The name '*Vin des Chanoines*' means "canon wine," likely referring to the roster of ancient native grapes in this bottling. For this blend, the IAR pulls together a strange cast of grape characters from two sites outside of the city of Aosta. Both vineyards grow in loose glacial moraine soils around 2,000 feet elevation on steep north-bank terraces above the Dora Baltea river.

GLASS: This odd ensemble makes for an utterly unique alpine journey. There's a mountain of heady fresh ground herbs and clove spices hovering over dense black plum and pomegranate fruits, finishing with an earthy pot of English Breakfast tea. A dollop of hoisin plum sauce perks up the roasted barley richness in the middle, and then a melange of baking spices leads to an exotic flourish that just lasts and lasts. This Aostan brew wants roast veggies (charred eggplants!) and a hearty helping of truffle pasta.

SIDE NOTES: You may notice there is no vintage on this label. Technically, vintages can't be included on Italian *vino da tavola* -even though most producers do anyway.

WINE NO. 2

GD Vajra 'Claré J.C.'

Nebbiolo

Langhe, Piedmont 2020

GRAPE: NEBBIOLO [neh-bee-OH-low]

Nebbiolo is as famous a grape name as one can find in Italy. It is most notable from Barolo and Barbaresco in Piemonte, where it expresses its brawn and brooding depth, but it can be truly remarkable from many other growing regions. From the greater Langhe to the rolling hills of Roero, to the Alto Piedmont appellations: Ghemme, Gattinara, Boca, Lessona and Carema, and up into the steep and remote Valle d'Aosta, all Nebbiolos are very much worth exploring. The ability of this King of Grapes to translate terroir is incredible, and thankfully it has been explored on disparate soils in different climates, and also cultivated for centuries resulting in different biotypes of the grape, as well as a prism of stylistic approaches. From pink and bubbly to brawny to... Medieval Red Fizz?

GROWER: GD Thomas Jefferson, who visited Piedmont in 1787, described Nebbiolo as "*dry as a claret, sweet and lingering as Madeira, brisk as Champagne.*" This wine from Vajra pays homage to that style.

Vajra has farmed some of the highest altitude vineyards in Barolo since the 1880s. All told, they have 100 acres across a range of sites, starting in Barolo, opening up to Novello and reaching out to Bricco Bertone in Sinio (next to Serralunga). They are an independent, family-owned winery and were the first in the region to obtain organic certification in 1971. Vajra's Claré JC bottling is a time machine back to the forgotten days of Nebbiolo in the Langhe, when the style was lighter, fresher and frothy. For this vintage 18% of the fruit was fermented as whole clusters. It was finished in tank, and bottled just a few months later to retain freshness and that classic frizzante-level spritz.

Vajra follows the winemaking protocol outlined in 1606 by the writings of G.B. Croce, who was a jeweler in the House of Savoia. JC refers to Juliette Colbert de Maulévrier, a socialite intellectual and part of the Falletti family that controlled Barolo from the mid-thirteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries. Colbert doggedly promoted her region in the 1840s and exposed producers to French winemaking methods that helped elevate Barolo to become known as the "King of Wines and the Wine of Kings."

GLASS: Don't let anybody tell you that Nebbiolo has to be a power house with years and years of age on its meaty bones. This 2020 Nebb invites us to explore not only the soft and perfumed beauty of the grape, but also to time travel 400 years in the past. Aromatic as all get out, with wild strawberries intertwined with red vines licorice, swisher sweets, and hearty iced black tea. The palate is surprisingly buoyant with brilliant acidity and sweet tannins, and rosey aromatics that bloom forever. Nebbiolo that gives you wings!

One might also note a hint of fizz that adds an unfamiliar and utterly delicious mineral zing rarely found in reds (from this century at least!) Embrace and appreciate this rare spritzzy Nebb-gem.

SIDE NOTES: Piedmont in 1606 was not actually Piedmont, but an autonomous country from 1416 to 1847 called the "Duchy of Savoy" which also included Aosta and big chunks of western France like Nice and Savoie.

WINE NO. 3

Markus Prackwieser 'Gump-Hof'
Schiava
Isarco, Alto Adige, Italy 2019

GRAPE: SCHIAVA [ski-YAvA] / (aka VERNATSCH, aka TROLLINGER)

This is actually the most widely planted grape in Alto Adige, despite the fact that the overall percent produced favors white over red 60:40. Only recently have single varietal Schiavas made it stateside, versus just consumed locally. Could Americans be interested in this tart and light bodied red? A few delicious wines from the St. Magdalener DOC wines have helped pave the way - always Schiava but with a small amount of Lagrein (inky dark native grape) blended in for color and backbone. Schiava is Italian for 'slave,' so named from the high yields that the vines carry, but local producers use the vernacular "Vernatsch," and Germans call it 'Tyrolinger' (from the Tyrol) confirming its native roots. Viva Schiava!

GROWER: The Prackwieser family has been farming their steep Gump House vineyards for over 200 years, and in 2000, Markus Prackwieser decided to make the family's first wines from their own fruit. Their tiny ten acre vineyard is planted with Pinot Blanc, Sauvignon, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Noir and Schiava. The Gumphof estate grows on steep glacial moraine slopes at the foot of the Sciliar *massif*, a beautiful 8,400 ft limestone wall perched at the entrance of the Isarco Valley. The grapes grow between 1,150 to 1,800 feet altitude on steep slopes between 50% to 70% grade. (Whoa!) Cold winds are channeled from the northeast by the walls of the valley, creating drastic diurnal temperature swings, and the steepness and exposure of the vineyard site is critical for ripening the demanding Schiava.

This particular wine is fermented in stainless steel and aged in large Slavonian oak [botti](#) for 7 months.

GLASS: Just like Mr. Gump would say, this wine is like a box of chocolates...you never know what you're gonna get. Each bite keeps you guessing for the next. The first impression is so floral, from lilacs and dried rose petals, to the sweet scent of wet forest and Fall leaf duff. The classic alpine je-ne-sais-café scent of lightly roasted green coffee bean leads into a rich note of smoked brisket, followed by caramelized sugar. The fruit is easy as you please, with sour cherry a la Pinot Noir, and a crunch of candied apple all balanced by a Gamay-like bitter, crunchy finish. This wine isn't massive, but it certainly tastes of *massif*.

SIDE NOTES: The gorgeous Sciliar *massif* rock formation is believed by locals to be home to magic creatures: mostly witches, some good and some evil. The Sciliar Witches have apparently been flying on broomsticks to this mountain meeting place since Medieval times.

WINE NO. 4

Ka Manciné 'Beragna'

Rossese

Dolceacqua, Liguria, Italy 2018

GRAPE: ROSSESE DI DOLCEACQUA [row-SEY-say dee DOHL-CHEY-awe-quah]

A pale and rosy red, Rossese di Dolceacqua is bright, aromatic and lively with acidity as steep as the hillsides it hails from. There are other *rosseses* out there, including grillos and biancos, but they share the name only. The Rossese from the Riviera was recently discovered to be identical to the obscure (but well loved) Tibouren grape from Saint Tropez in Provence, proving it as one grape that just loves dramatic Mediterranean coastlines. All that acid gushes with red fruit juiciness like cranberries, sour cherries, and pomegranate pith.

GROWER: Liguria is the coast with the most... hills that is. The Alps meet the Apennine mountain range here, and then they plummet into the sea. 65% of the region is mountainous, and many of the vineyards are accessible only by rail, or by boat. Just a few miles from the coast, where vineyards cling to 60% grades in the steep Nervia valley, lies the town of sweetwater - Dolceacqua - whose native red grape takes its name.

Ka Manciné is a tiny family-owned winery run by Maurizio Anfosso and Roberta Repaci. Together they painstakingly farm eight acres of Rossese (out of just 200 acres in the entire DOC) on some of the highest and steepest vineyards in the region. Their flagship Beragna bottling is from own-rooted, head-trained vines planted in 1872 (!) that grip onto incredibly steep southeast-facing terraces of schist and marl soil. This site produces Ka Manciné's most mineral, soil-driven bottling, using native yeast fermentation in stainless steel tank, then pressed via manual basket press, and aged in tank.

GLASS: Deceptively pale, this ruby gem of a wine carries the type of saturated flavor and palate presence that only comes from ancient vines. At first, it pops with cranberry and red currants, with dusty minerals and a melange of spices (bay laurel, allspice, clove) providing a perfumed and piquant backdrop. Mouthwatering brightness compliments an earthy umami in the vein of black olives or truffles. Few wines can manage such a balancing act, but such is the magic of Rossese.

SIDE NOTES: *Mancine* means *left-handed* in Italian, a shortened form of *man + sinistro*: "sinister hand," which is what people used to think of poor lefties back in the day.