

BERGAMOT WINE co

All White Wine Club
August 2021

BY LAKE OR BY SEA

There is no questioning the influence a large body of water has on grape growing. Our first examples of this are from Lake Garda, where the cool climate, maintained by the deep water standing at the base of the Alps, has an enormous effect on the vines in the surrounding soils. The wines of Lugana and Chiaretto have a bright flavor profile that is of course indicative of their sense of place.

The grapes themselves can also carry this sense of place, even if they are grown somewhere else entirely, provided of course that the winemaker understands how to bring out that ideal expression in the wines. Our second examples in this month's Club are Mediterranean blends - made right here in California! - that will transport you to the South of France before you can get to the bottom of the first glass.

- Kevin Wardell, August 2021

WINE NO. 1

Cavalchina Chiaretto

60% Corvina, 35% Rondinella, 5% Molinara

Bardolino Chiaretto, Veneto, 2020

GRAPE: CORVINA

This classic grape variety trio (Corvina, Rondinella, and Molinara) are known worldwide for creating the famous wines of Valpolicella. They are only recently being recognized for their collective ability to create fabulous Rosato wines even though the tradition is not at all a new tradition. "Chiaretto" comes from the word *chiaro*, meaning pale or light. Chiaretto producers harvest their rose grapes a week or two earlier than the grapes picked for red Bardolino wine so that the acidity remains high.

GROWER: Cavalchina's owner is literally a rockstar winemaker. Franco Piona, spends much of his time as guitar tech on tour with Billy Gibbons and Steve Vai, and the rest of his days on the shores of Lake Garda, in Custoza. His family is actually responsible for the creation of the Custoza appellation in the 1970s, and the history goes even deeper, to 1948 when Franco's grandfather Luciano first planted vines after World War II.

Today, brothers Franco and Luciano run their grandfather's estate, earning themselves international recognition as masters of Chiaretto. The three varieties are harvested together and spend an overnight, pre-fermentation skin contact soak before pressing and then fermenting together in stainless steel. Malolactic fermentation is blocked, and the wine is aged on its lees until bottling in February.

GLASS: Quite literally sparkling in the glass, this pink is as brilliant as a rainbow and the bottle will last about as long. They say that Chiaretto can mimic Provence, but this one really means it. Brilliantly deep and juicy, the chiaretto cornucopia is supremely bountiful with summer delights like cantaloupe, grapefruit rind, peaches and white nectarines, with salted white strawberries, watermelon pith, rainier cherries, dried herbs... you name it.

SIDE NOTES: Chiaretto supposedly had its inception in 1896, when Pompeo Molmenti, an attorney and writer with possibly the *funnest* name ever, created his pale pink; but it took til 1968 for Chiaretto to be named an official DOC.

WINE NO. 2

Marangona Lugana

Turbiana

Lugana, Veneto, Italy, 2019

GRAPES: TURBIANA (aka TREBBIANO DI LUGANA)

The landscape and knowledge of Italian grapes is still such a moving target, and the only way to describe Turbiana at this time is: TBD. Now called Turbiana, after its original local name, but then referred to as Lugana in reference to its location, as well as the assumption that it was actually Trebbiano di Lugana, then it was thought to be Verdicchio that has broken beyond its Marchigiani borders, but now turns out to be its own distinctly genetic grape variety that is back to being good old fashioned Turbiana... Or is it?!

Learn it, love it, but be flexible in your knowledge of absolutes as to its roots. These particular roots are certainly beautiful enough to behold on their own located on the Garda coastline and their mysterious origin story clearly lends a little something to their intrigue.

GROWER: Alessandro Cutolo is the fourth generation to run his family's magnificent estate, just a half mile from the water's edge at Lake Garda, which has mineral-rich calcareous clay soil. Alessandro, the young owner and winemaker, harvests the Trebbiano in two passes, half in mid-September and the rest in mid-October at fuller ripeness, in order to capture tons of fresh acidity, with added complex body and fullness (without the residual sugar in popular use!) The wine is aged on its fine lees and then bottled early, with no oak or malolactic fermentation. 'Marangona' is the local name of a bell rung throughout the area to signify the end of the workday. Ring my bell, ring my bell!

GLASS: Like Verdicchio taking summer vacation lounging lakeside, this Lugana has the verve and texture of Matelica but with a Garda laid-back sensibility. There's corn thread tassel and a handful of crunchy celery leaves layered on a crystalline structure built on all that mineral calcareous soil. The color is clear as rainwater and the aroma is deep and profound as the lake, with a delicate palate of stone fruit as stony as the limestone pebbles skipped across its surface. Whatever you call it, you'll find yourself longing for Lugana, turgid for Turbiana, and virile for Verdicchio.

SIDE NOTES: At 1,135 feet deep and covering 146 square miles, Lake Garda is Italy's largest lake and beloved by tourists for its crystal clear water. It makes for a stunning backdrop for the vines grown along its coast to say the least.

WINE NO. 3

Edmunds St. John 'Heart of Gold'
55% Vermentino + 45% Grenache Blanc
El Dorado County, California 2019

GROWER: The OG underground artist, Steve Edmunds is a hippie with a hint of hipster, an urban winemaker with terroir on the mind, dirt on his boots and (literally) a song in his heart. Steve has been producing his brand of "wine-for-winemakers" for 36 years, starting out in Berkeley in 1985 with his wife, Cornelia St. John, with a clear vision of soulful wines spun from California soils. He's never had employees, land, or a physical winery of his own, and yet he has maintained a justified place of reverence amongst the wine industry for over 3 decades.

His buddy Kermit Lynch poured Edmunds' 1986 Mourvèdre for the head of Domaine Tempier himself, who allegedly exclaimed, "la terre parle" - "the earth speaks." No further endorsement needed here.

GRAPE: Steve is the pioneer responsible for putting Gamay in the pink granite of the Sierras Nevadas, and thanks to his time traipsing through the foothills, he was also inspired to plant Southern Rhône grapes in the gold country, at Fenaughty vineyard outside of Placerville, CA. Since 2007, Steve picks and presses and co-ferments the Vermentino and Grenache Blanc all together, aging in stainless with no malolactic, and bottling in early Spring to keep the wine young at heart. We love dancing to Steve's heart-felt renditions of a few of our favorite varieties!

GLASS: As lively as a mountain stream bubbling with flecks of gold, the Heart of Gold is delicate with white tea and herbs like wild mint and Calabrian thyme, and yet packed with fresh cut pineapple and underripe snappy white nectarines. A vein of golden shimmering minerality and liveliness is balanced with a sumptuous weightiness, the Grenache Blanc texture adds just a bit of fat to flesh out the Vermentino's saline edge.

WINE NO. 4

Martha Stoumen 'Post Flirtation'

75% Colombard, 12% Marsanne, 9% Roussanne, 4% Muscat Blanc

California 2020

GROWER: Martha Stoumen began her journey to winemaker stardom at an Ag learning center in Tuscany, working in vineyards, olive orchards, and a small winery. She was drawn to the pace and rhythm of grape growing and winemaking, dictated and built by the seasons. After her initial exposure in Tuscany, Martha began apprenticeships while attaining a Master's at UC Davis, working with Reinhard Löwenstein at Heymann-Löwenstein in the Mosel; Chalk Hill winery; Chris Brockway at Broc Cellars; Seresin in Marlborough; Léon Barral in Faugères; and Giusto Occhipinti of COS in Sicily.

She has been foundational in the California natural wine scene with her bombastic style of low-intervention winemaking, focusing on responsibly farmed and expressive wines that are bringing elegance to the natural wine front.

GRAPES: This blend comes from 2 vineyards: the Roussanne, Marsanne, and Muscat blanc come from The Urban Edge Farm in Oakley, Contra Costa County, a warm Mediterranean-like site on deep, sandy soils. These varieties are picked together, and then tumbled around in the press to elicit a touch of skin contact during pressing, then fermented on full lees in stainless steel. The Colombard was planted in 1948 in the Ricetti Vineyard in Mendocino County, and dry farmed on loamy soils.

It is picked early for bright acidity, and fermented in stainless steel. In some vintages Martha chooses to filter this flirtation, but some years she prefers the hazy versions of this wine, as in the 2020 which she left with a touch of haze. The final blend was bottled after 6 months of aging and once malolactic fermentation was complete.

GLASS: This is a supreme salty summer sipper, striking a zone between a classic Muscadet oyster-water character and a Cheniny-ness, like salted pine nuts with golden apples - but without using either variety. There's exotic yeast aromatics like a fine Belgian Farmhouse saison with the tang and tannin of cider apples. A briny green olive character is persistent throughout, begging for a plate of oysters and toast points with boquerones anchovies.