

Minority Winemakers Tasting
Wednesday, November 7th at 5:00pm
Zoom meeting # 544 704 6021

#1
Maison Noir, Knock on Wood Chardonnay, 2015 Not Rated \$21
Willamette Valley, Oregon 13.2%



100% Chardonnay, all stainless-steel and no malolactic fermentation. Procured from hillside vineyards in Yamhill-Carlton AVA, reminiscent of the grand crus of Burgundy's *Cote d'Or*. It benefited from a very long and cold fermentation - almost two months - resulting in a lean and mean wine with perfume of honeydew melon and pear surfing huge waves of minerals, bringing a nice tide of racy starfruit to the finish.

#2
Sun Goddess by Mary J Blige, Pinot Grigio Ramato, 2019 Rating – WW 90 \$20
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy 12.5%



With origins in Italy's northeastern province of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, *Ramato* (Italian for "auburn" or "copper") wines are produced by macerating Pinot Grigio grape must with its skins. The skins' pink hue gives the wines color from a semi-pale pink to dark orange, depending on maceration time. (From WW This wine is at once delicate and flavorful. Enjoy its nifty aromas and flavors of tart cherries, apple, and peach pit with lime juice and dried red chile-accented ceviche.)

#3
LVE by John Legend, Sparkling Rosé NV Rating – WW 89 \$20
Rose Sparkling Wine, France 12.5%



With a fruity nose, blending notes of citrus and small red fruits, the bubbles are soft and pleasant. Peach, pear, citrus, fine bubbles. Grapes sourced from Loire, Provence and Burgundy. (From WW: This wine is bright, fresh, and straightforward. Enjoy is jazzy red fruit aromas and flavors as an aperitif or all by itself.)

#4
Longevity Wines, Cabernet Sauvignon, 2017 Not Rated \$16
California 13.5%



Plum colored Cabernet that shines with intense black cherry notes produced from a multi-vineyard blend. The palate has a rustic fruit expression favoring dried cherry, cassis and pomegranate notes. The wine finishes with subtle oak notes yielding a light vanilla and cocoa finish. The soft tannins provide a lengthy enjoyable finish.

#5
Charles Woodson's Intercept, Cabernet Sauvignon, 2016 Not Rated \$24
Paso Robles, Central Coast, California 14.5%



Aromas of black currant, sweet tobacco and spice. Flavors of dried blueberries, cedar and forest floor complement this wine's fine-grained tannins and well-balanced acidity. Blend: 76% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot, 8% Petite Syrah

Minority Winemakers

Finding wines produced by minorities is a difficult task. Start with the fact that there just aren't that many minority winemakers and combine with the problem of distribution and you are left with only a few choices. After scouring through recent articles (see links below), I discovered several interesting stories about minority winemakers and it seemed to me that there are three main categories: 1. people who are actual winemakers; 2. people affiliated with the wine industry; and 3. celebrities who use their brand to promote the wines. I picked a handful that fall into these three categories, and from that small number I narrowed my selection down to those wines that were available for purchase. We will taste five.



1. [Maison Noir - André Hueston Mack](#)

Maison Noir was founded by sommelier André Hueston Mack in 2007. Mack was a sommelier at Per Se restaurant in NYC. Mack also has a line of Maison Noir apparel that is inspired by punk and hip-hop scenes. His wines are more than a typical Oregon Pinot, they are full of big, bold flavors that reflect the traditional style of red Bordeaux wine. In addition to Pinot Noir, Maison Noir has other wines available such as Knock On Wood Chardonnay and Love Drunk Rose. Maison Noir Wines source grapes from six vineyards throughout Oregon's wine-growing regions. Mack has numerous awards for his palate and wine list selection, including the Best Young Sommelier in America by the *Chaine des Rotisseurs*.

2. [Sun Goddess – Mary J Blige](#)

Mary J Blidge partnered with Marco Fantinel, owner of one of the leading wineries of Friuli-Venezia, to create her own wine label "Sun Goddess". She states, "After walking through the vineyards and tasting with the Fantinel family, I felt extremely connected to the place, and more importantly, the people. The experience inspired me to create my own wines in partnership with Marco Fantinel." She has a limited edition of a couple of wines: Sauvignon Blanc and a pink Pinot Grigio, released worldwide.

3. [LVE – John Legend](#)

LVE stands for Legend Vineyard Exclusive (also like LOVE without the O). John Legend loves wines and so he partnered with Jean-Charles Boisset, an experienced French-American winemaker. Interestingly Legend said that his fans had consistently said that they like to drink wine while listening to his music so he thought winemaking was the perfect project to undertake. You can join John Legend in a tasting of his sparkling and still Rosés with John Legend at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAPHZ7-1Ykw&t=800s>

4. [Longevity – Phil Long](#)

Phil Long of Longevity Wines began his journey making wine in his garage with his wife Debra. Today, with almost two decades of winemaking experience and a list of awards too long to print, Winemaker Phil Sr. and his son, Assistant Winemaker Phil Jr., continue the journey. Phil Long also serves as president of the Association of African American Vintners. Phil and his wife started an online wine club as a business in 2003 and began making wine in the Livermore Valley in 2006 under the Longevity label, using other wineries' facilities. It was only a matter of time before production was moved to Longevity's own facility in Livermore. Yearly

production gradually ramped from 500 cases per year to the current production of 3,000. At Longevity's facility in Livermore, the wines are produced in small lots. Phil says, "Everyone who visits the tasting room is treated like family, and they always bring back friends to share the experience."

5. Inception – Charles Woodson

Charles Woodson love of wine was fostered during spring training for the Oakland Raiders in Napa Valley. He went on to launch a Napa Cab under his label TwentyFour, and wines from the brand would make Wine Spectators lists of Top 100 Wines of the Year. Knowing he could deliver, his fans soon began requesting a more affordable, everyday brand that didn't sacrifice on quality. Charles Woodson brings the same passion and hard work to his wine as his football career. With *Intercept*, he has created central coast (Paso Robles and Monterey) wines with diversity and complexity.

The wines that we missed out on (sounded great but too hard or too expensive to obtain):

Aslina Wines - Ntsiki Biyela from South Africa, was voted Woman Winemaker of the Year in 2009 and has been the finalist for two consecutive years for The Most Influential Women in Business and Government. In 2017, Ntsiki was listed in the world's top 10 most Innovative Women in Food and Drink by Fortune's Food & Wine. She makes Cabernets, Chardonnays and Sauvignon Blancs.

Bodkin Wines – Chris Christensen in Sonoma, California, is most known for making the first Sauvignon Blanc sparkling wine.

Brown Estate – family owned by Deneen, David and Coral Brown from Napa Valley. This the first and only Black-owned estate winery in Napa, founded in 1996. (Estate wineries make and bottle wine made from grapes grown on the property.) Brown Estate makes a variety of wines from Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon to Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc.

La Fête du Rosé – Donae Burston in Saint Tropez, France. After working in the liquor industry for 15 years, he created the La Fête du Rosé brand. The company donates a portion of the proceeds from every bottle to various programs that help underserved and underrepresented youth.

Other interesting celebrity wines:

Domaine Curry – Steph Curry's sisters Sydel and Ayesha partnered with Napa vintner John Schwartz.

Dwade Cellars – Dwayne Wade partners with winemaker Jayson Pahlmeyer

Links to articles and resources:

<https://www.winemag.com/2020/06/08/black-owned-wine-guide/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/29/dining/drinks/black-wine-professionals-sommeliers.html>

<https://www.newsweek.com/black-owned-wineries-wine-producers-1508526>

<https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2019/02/23/black-owned-wineries-in-the-spotlight-at-oakland-tasting-event/>

<https://www.aaavintners.org/about.html> (Association of African American Vintners)

<https://melaninlife.com/blogs/lifestyle/black-owned-wine-business>