

OLD WORLD VS. NEW WORLD



Wine #1: Walnut Ridge Gamay Noir Rosé

Variety: Gamay Noir

Appellation: Willamette Valley, OR

Wine Notes: A blend of the two blocks of Gamay noir from the estate vineyard, the 2023 Gamay Noir Rosé expresses fruit intensity and weight, pushing toward a ramato style perfect for cool evenings, summer grilling, and wide range of cuisine.

My Thoughts: GORGEOUS color. Bright, nearly magenta pink and crystal clear. The wine on the nose is fresh with notes of cranberry juice and raspberries. Once it hits the palette it is so clean and crisp, way lighter than it appears. Watermelon, strawberry, cran-raspberry, all jump out amidst a lean mouthfeel and beautifully structure acidity. A medium finish that keeps the red fruit lively while getting you ready for that next sip.

This is a wine that would pair beautifully with a tomato salad or even a red fruit-based fruit tart for dessert.

12 words or less: Elegantly delicious, a refreshingly bright rosé for more than just the patio.

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Wine #2: Walnut Ridge La Petite Fête Blanc

Varieties: Pinot Gris (50%), Pinot Blanc (25%), Riesling (25%)

Appellation: Willamette Valley, OR

Wine Notes: In the frame of an Alsatian white blend, the 2023 La Petite Fete Blanc combines Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, and Riesling into an exuberant wine full of peach, melon, and citrus tones. The finish holds the wine in place, creating a wine of beautiful texture.

My Thoughts: This is exciting. Alsatian blends so often give a sense of place, a story that Walnut Ridge is keen to show. No need for oak, these wines come together to enhance one another's high acidity, and create post rain garden - with its floral nose and Sauv Blanc-esque stony minerality. It takes the best parts of each grape and the their ability to fully ripen in the Southern Willamette Valley, bringing all the beauty of tropical fruit without the MLF and oak allowing each sip to be like a fruit salad on a beach in Hawaii. Blended post-fermentation, allows each grape to shine. Like adding toppings to a pizza vs. making a casserole.

12 words or less: Alsace in the PNW, lean, dry, gorgeously floral. Pair with nearly everything.

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Wine #3: Hugel Gentil

Varieties: Gewürztraminer, Sylvaner, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, Riesling, Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains

Appellation: Alsace, France

Wine Notes: Produced exclusively from hand harvested grapes in predominantly clay and limestone vineyards, from a dozen of the most favored localities in and around Riquewihr. Gentil "Hugel" allies the suave, spicy flavour of Gewurztraminer, the body of Pinot Gris, the finesse of Riesling, the grapiness of Muscat and the refreshing character of both Pinot Blanc and Sylvaner.

My Thoughts: White blends are rather common in France. However in Alsace, many bottlings are single varietals featuring any one of the grapes in this wine. The beauty of this wine is the ability of the winemaker to utilize the best features of each grape to create a distinctly unique yet wholly Alsatian style of wine. Just when you think it is dry, it softens. Just when it seems like it may be sweet, it stops. It is zippy and fresh, balanced, and easy to drink. This is Hugel's entry wine of sorts, really showing you all they have to offer in a single bottle of wine. Let's compare it to that Walnut Ridge in the other glass...

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Wine #4: Walnut Ridge La Petite Fête

Variety: Pinot Noir, Gamay Noir

Appellation: Willamette Valley, OR

Wine Notes: The La Petite Fete Rouge 2021 blends two grape varieties, Pinot Noir and Gamay Noir, taking its nod from the rustic Passetoutgrain wines of Burgundy. This playful blend is "The Little Party," providing the entry point to Walnut Ridge red wines with a fresh, vibrant, and quaffable bottling.

My Notes: Passetoutgrain is the cool kids wine. Combining the familiarity in every sense that Pinot Noir brings with the fun, under appreciated, oft-misunderstood Gamay Noir grape, you get a distinctly Burgundian wine. Balancing the tannins of the Pinot with the Gamay via used oak brings cohesion to two grapes that are similar in a lot of ways but typically aren't found in a lot of still red blends. They want to be their own thing. Chilled down, this is the red that gets us all through the summer. Tart raspberry and strawberry italian ice, red apple skins, cola, the tannins are still noticeable and forgiving. Grippy but not intrusive. They quickly move to the sides and bring a little cherry skin to the front.

12 words or less: Summer red for the patio, it's like cherry cola & raspberry Italian ice.

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Wine #5: Domaine du Salvard Cheverny Rouge

Variety: Pinot Noir (65%), Gamay Noir (35%)

Appellation: Loire Valley, France

Wine Notes: A bright garnet-red in the glass. Scents of red cherries, cloves and earth. Fresh and lively on the palate. Flavors of strawberry and licorice dominate. Great acidity and well-balanced tannins, leading to a crisp finish. Cherries all the way!

Try with guinea fowl with savoy cabbage, prunes and Madeira sauce, rabbit with mustard and cream or a slice of Camembert cheese.

My Thoughts: For those who joined us for the Burgundy portion of Tour de France, you experienced a Passetoutgrain in its purest form. But we are not here to taste you through Burgundy all over again. And I will preach for days on the importance of drinking Pinot-based wines from the Loire Valley. The 2nd best region for Pinot Noir in France is absolutely Loire. But with no laws around Passetoutgrain styled wines, we can get something that is comparable to La Petite Fête in your other glass. The beauty of this style of wine is you have two light bodied reds that really come together to produce something bolder than expected, spicy, bright, intense, and CHILLABLE! This is a key wine that should be in your Thanksgiving lineup this year. The light nature is great for sipping as you cook, bold enough to pair with the turkey and gravy, but acidic and elegant for the 31 salads that inevitably seem to end up on a Thanksgiving spread.

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Wine #6: Walnut Ridge Estate Pinot Noir

Variety: Pinot Noir

Appellation: Lower Long Tom, Willamette Valley, OR

Wine Notes: Expressing the fullness of Walnut Ridge's vineyard, the 2022 Estate Pinot Noir is blended from blocks and clonal selections encompassing all 16.5 acres of Pinot noir planted at the estate. A complete wine, it's profile ranges from red to dark fruits, carrying weight and intensity on a structured frame.

My Notes: A significant shift from 2021 to 2022, this wine shows a brighter, lighter body with a noticeable change in the oak regiment. This is Burgundian in every way except its home state, with red apple skin, cranberry, raspberry (a lot of raspberry), and a touch of savory spice on the finish. The tannins are present and structured but not intrusive allowing this to be a fantastic wine to enjoy today or in a few years.

15 words or less: Harnessing the beauty of Pinot Noir, this is perfect for food or all by itself..

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Wine #7: Domaine Faiveley Mercurey Vieilles Vignes

Variety: Pinot Noir

Appellation: Mercurey, Burgundy, France

Wine Notes: Our old vines produce a wine of exceptional aromatic intensity, a faithful reflection of the characteristics of the Mercurey terroir. Its sweetness and fruitiness immediately captivate the taste buds. Juicy raspberry and strawberry aromas mingle harmoniously with an elegant note of vanilla. This wine delivers a mesmerising sensory experience, combining aromatic intensity with silky tannins. It is both accessible to novices and rewarding for wine lovers who prize its complexity and finesse.

My Thoughts: When Aaron and Alisha Young were in town recently, we did our own little side by side tasting. They had recently returned from a trip to Burgundy where, for the second time, enjoyed a bottle of wine from Mercurey. Coincidentally, I feel like Mercurey and the southern Willamette Valley - especially in the Estate Pinot - really stack up well against one another. This is right in the heart of Burgundy and gives us the opportunity to truly see why some say that the Willamette Valley is the Burgundy of the US.

My Notes:
