



It has been long enough now since South Africa has reentered the fore front of high quality wine production and for some reason the ghosts of this country's wine making past still exist. It is beyond time that we as wine buyers and consumers cast aside our previous notions and possibly questionable past with Pinotage. This is not to say that there aren't mind blowing examples of Pinotage out there but for so long it feels like that has been the wall that has stopped so many from experiencing all that this incredible wine producing country has to offer.

This month, we take a journey into the new frontier of what South Africa has to offer, with a white wine like nothing we've featured in this club before and a red wine that will have you asking for the case price. So without further ado, let us begin our expedition into the new frontier of South Africa!

## 2014 The Three Foxes Gnarly White (\$23)

I must begin this write up, for my own peace of mind, with a bit of explanation into what this wine is. Many of you may open this wine, pour it into the glass, see the color and think, "what has Tim gotten us into?!" The color of this wine may lead you to believe something is awry, but I assure you, everything is the way it is supposed to be. For those of you who make it to the nose without question, you may be abruptly greeted with a doughy, yeasty quality that might lead you to think the wine has oxidized. But I once again assure you, everything is the way it is supposed to be. Let me explain...

The wine you have presented before you is an orange wine. Orange wines have been around since the dawn of wine but were long since forgotten until an Italian winemaker from Friuli by the name of Josko Gravner reintroduced this production method, under his own interpretation, in 1998. Simply put, orange wines are distinctively dry white wines that have undergone prolonged skin contact much like the majority of the red wines made around the world. With this extended contact with the skin comes two major factors that makes these wines different; one is the darker color and the other is the higher level of tannin than most white wines typically have. These high tannin levels can make for incredibly interesting food pairings but, more importantly, can aid in the preservation of the wine. That means that for the "natural" winemakers of the world can add little to no sulfur dioxide and still be assured that the freshest product possible will make it to the end consumer. Whether you're on the "natural" wine movement's train or not, it is still very interesting to experience and experiment with wines made in such an ancient style.

One of my favorites things about working in the wine industry, other than tasting all the wine a guy could wish for, is meeting and getting to know the many faces behind the wines we sell. This can in some ways be very disappointing when meeting a winemaker for the first time, if you've hyped them up in your head for years. But this was certainly not the case the first time I met Pascal Schildt. His natural energy and passion for wine was palpable and it certainly shows through in his wines. The Three Foxes winery was founded in 2004 by Pascal, his brother Olivier, and a young winemaker named Chris Mullineux, thus the "three foxes". Chris got his start in winemaking by working through multiple vintages in France, California and eventually South Africa. Even though the winery was founded in 2004, it wasn't until 2007 when Chris and his wife Andrea decided to make the Swartland of South Africa their home.

The thought behind The Three Foxes wines has always been to work with special vineyards that have healthy old vines that are farmed naturally, meaning without any additions of fertilizers, herbicides, or pesticides. The other big piece of the puzzle was finding old and natural sites which sat on the types of soils the boys wanted to work with. They found what they were looking for in two different areas. The 61% Clairette in this wine comes from 70 year old vines in the Wellington region. This old site bolsters rocky and sandy soils that are rich in iron, which is a critically important nutrient for the manufacture of chlorophyll. The 39% Semillon in the blend comes from 73 year old vines in the Swartland, a warm region along the coast, north of Cape Town. The soils here are a very different with a top layer of sand mixed with gravel with a subsoil comprised of granite. It is the old, "gnarly" vines of these two vineyards in which the wine draws its name.

The Clairette vineyard is late ripening and only reaches a natural alcohol level of 10.5% ABV. They skin ferment this portion of the blend for 6 months before pressing in order to bring rich aromas and to preserve the underlying freshness of the wine. The Semillon is harvested and pressed immediately before being racked into 500L neutral oak barrels for 5 months. The final blend of 61% Clairette and 39% Semillon is bottled fresh with low SO<sub>2</sub> due to the extended skin contact and refreshingly high acidity.

When you open this wine make sure it isn't refrigerator temperature because at that low of a temperature you'll lose a lot of the fresh aromas in this wine. Also, you might want to decant it and let it sit for a few minutes before pouring the first glass. This will allow the wine the time it needs to develop its amazing array of aromas. After about 20 minutes of the cork being pulled this wine shows notes of apple purée, lemon curd, peach skin, sour dough bread, juniper, honey and toasted walnuts. Enjoy this wine over the next year with large sampling of sashimi or a coconut based Thai green curry.

## 2016 Fable Mountain Vineyards Raptor Post Red (\$20)

The Fable Mountain Vineyards (FMV) wines have been around since the year 2000 and were originally called Tulbagh Mountain Vineyards. Tulbagh, if you're not familiar, lies to the north of the Wellington wine region and brushes up against the eastern edge of the Swartland. Even though Tulbagh has not historically been known for high quality wine production, quality has increased dramatically over the past decade as they have begun following in the footsteps of their innovative neighbor, the Swartland. They're vineyards sit at an average elevation of around 1700 feet tucked up against the

Witzenberg Mountain range which suits the Rhône varieties they grow perfectly. The drive from Cape Town clocks in at about two hours and you must dodge all sorts of wild animals including baboons to reach the end of the mountain pass that their vineyards lie at the end of. But once you get there, it's definitely worth the journey. Fable Mountain Vineyard's 80 acres of western facing vineyards are all planted to Rhône varieties and farmed completely organically. The dry climate they sit in suits grapes like Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvèdre perfectly.

The above mentioned Chris and Andrea Mullineux actually worked with these wines under the original name back in the early 2000's. They helped pave the way for the current wine maker, Tremayne Smith, who has taken these wines to a whole new level. Tremayne is a talented young wine maker that focuses on naturally fermented wines with a classic crunchy edge. According to Pascal, who imports these wines, Tremayne is not only a dynamite winemaker but he also cures his own meats and can play a vicious game of cricket.

The blend for this wine is 50% Grenache, 39% Syrah, and 11% Mourvèdre. All of the fruit is hand harvested from the vineyards and brought straight into their temperature controlled winery. A natural fermentation is allowed to take place in open top concrete fermenters and a small portion of the fruit is put through a whole cluster fermentation to bring about the brighter fruit and aforementioned "crunchy edge" that Tremayne is known for. Hand punch downs to develop color are done daily and fermentation took about 14 days to complete. The wine is then pressed in an old school basket press into 500L, 2nd to 5th use, French oak barrels. The wine spends 12 months in these vessels before bottling.

Before diving into this wine, I would suggest decanting it for about 30 minutes to let the aroma develop. You'll be glad you did because once its ready it will reveal to you notes of black raspberry, wild strawberry, white pepper, sage, black tea, and candied orange peel. Drink over the next three years with a bountiful charcuterie platter or a hoisin glazed steak.

### Thai Green Curry

**2 (14-ounce) cans coconut milk (unsweetened), not shaken**

**½ cup green curry paste (related recipe), or 2 tablespoons store-bought green curry paste**

**2 tablespoons fish sauce**

**2 tablespoons brown sugar**

**1 ½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed of excess fat and sliced thin**

**Table salt**

**3 cups broccoli florets (about 6 ounces)**

**4 ounces white mushrooms (or shitakes), stems discarded and mushrooms quartered (about 2 cups)**

**1 medium red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut into thin strips**

**1 large chili (hot), stemmed, seeded, and quartered lengthwise (optional)**

**1 tablespoon lime juice from 1 lime**

**½ cup fresh basil leaves**

**½ cup fresh mint leaves**

**¼ cup hoisin sauce**

**2 tablespoons rice vinegar**

**1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil**

**2 teaspoons Sriracha sauce**

**1 teaspoon cornstarch**

**1 (1 1/2-pound) flank steak, trimmed**

**1 tablespoon vegetable oil**

With the Gnarly White, you're going to need something with a bit of richness, savoriness, and body to pair with it correctly. I find that time and time out that savory white wine and savory curry are a match made in wine pairing heaven.

Carefully spoon off about 1 cup of the top layer of cream from one can of coconut milk -- this layer will be thick and possibly solid. Place the coconut cream and curry paste in a large Dutch oven and bring to a simmer over high heat, whisking to blend, about 2 minutes. Maintain this brisk simmer and whisk frequently until almost all of the liquid evaporates, 3 to 5 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium-high and whisk constantly until the cream separates into a puddle of colored oil and coconut solids, 3 to 8 minutes. (You should hear the curry paste starting to fry in the oil.) Continue cooking until the curry paste is very aromatic, 1 to 2 minutes.

Whisk in the remaining coconut milk, the fish sauce, and the brown sugar. Bring back to a brisk simmer and cook until the flavors meld and the sauce thickens, about 5 minutes. Season the chicken with salt and add it to the pot, stirring until the pieces are separated and evenly coated with the sauce, about 1 minute. Stir in the broccoli and mushrooms and bring back to a brisk simmer over medium heat. Cook until the vegetables are almost tender, about 5 minutes. Stir in the bell pepper and fresh chili, if using, and cook until the vegetables are crisp-tender, about 2 minutes. Off the heat, stir in the lime juice, basil, and mint. Serve immediately.

### Hoisin Glazed Flank Steak

This recipe just begs for an earthy, Rhône style blend. I often find myself using hoisin sauce in red meat marinades to add a deeper level of savoriness to leaner cuts of meat. If you haven't found a great flank steak recipe yet, here it is:

Whisk hoisin, vinegar, sesame oil, Sriracha, and cornstarch together in bowl. Pat steak dry with paper towels. Heat oil in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until just

smoking. Cook steak until well browned and meat registers 125 degrees (for medium-rare), 5 to 7 minutes per side. Transfer to carving board, tent loosely with foil, and let rest for 5 minutes.

Stir hoisin mixture into now-empty skillet and cook over medium-high heat, scraping up any browned bits, until sauce has thickened, about 2 minutes. Slice steak thin on bias against grain and transfer to platter. Stir any accumulated meat juices into sauce and spoon over meat. Sprinkle with cilantro and sesame seeds. Serve.