



July, 2018



This month, we will look at two blends from producers who have both enjoyed great popularity with our customers in prior vintages. They are very different wines, with the first being built for immediate enjoyment and the second worthy of a few months, or even years, in the cellar.

The first selection is a new wine from an old friend, the **2016 Annabella Red Table Wine (\$19)** by Michael Pozzan. Over the years, we have featured many of Michael's wines, (and those of his sons Dante and Matthew) as club and weekly selections. There are very few brands I think produce such exceptional quality and value as the Pozzan's, vintage after vintage.

One of the reasons that Michael is able to produce wines of great value is that he does not own any vineyards. Prior to making wine under his own labels, he was a "juice broker" who bought and sold grapes, juice and finished wines. He does own grape contracts for most of the wines made under the Dante, Annabella and Michael Pozzan wines, so he maintains the core of the wine each year. This means that he commits to buy either the entire crop or a specific amount from a vineyard, measured in tons. He then buys other wines, usually in barrel, from other wineries for his winemaker Molly Lyman to blend, which builds complexity and dimension.

Molly is new to the Pozzan team, replacing Richard Bruno, who was their consulting winemaker for many years. She brings a vast amount of experience to their projects, after working with superstar winemakers Heidi Barrett, Philippe Melka, Mike Hirby and Julien Fayard. Molly's winemaking past includes positions as winemaker for Volker-Eisele, associate winemaker at Moone-Tsai Vineyards and assistant winemaker at Paradigm Winery. Additionally, Molly has worked with Duckhorn Vineyards, Relic Wine Cellars and Talisman, as well as Whitehaven Vineyards in New Zealand.

This is the fourth bottling of the Annabella blend, which originally was called "5" and was made up of, you guessed it, five different varieties. Like all of the previous bottlings, this one is primarily Napa Cabernet Sauvignon, in this case 66%, with the balance being made up of 34% Zinfandel. The components were vinified separately and aged in French oak barrels for 12 months, then blended a few months before bottling.

When you are ready to serve this wine, make sure and give it a splash in the decanter for a half-hour before serving. As soon as you do, it almost explodes out of the glass with notes of ripe raspberries and blackberries, peach skin, espresso beans and saffron. In the mouth it shows good concentration, with the plump fruit framed by soft, supple tannins and lowish acidity. Drink this wine over the next couple of years with Korean pork ribs, beef tamales or barbecued chicken.

The second pick, the **2016 Yannick Rousseau Son of a Butcher (\$28)** is the first wine that I discovered on Instagram (for the record, if you want to see what I drink and eat on a regular basis, follow me @timswinemarket). First, there was a posting of a Tannat Rosé, then of an old vine Colombard, then finally a regular Tannat, all from California grapes. This is unusual because these are grapes most often found in the Southwest corner of France, in areas like Gascogne and Madiran. Coincidentally, a few weeks later one of my reps asked if I had time for an appointment with a new winemaker they were carrying, Yannick Rousseau, so I eagerly accepted. The meeting was amazing, one of the rare times where I bought every wine tasted.

During our meeting, I asked Yannick my normal interview questions: Where else have you worked? From whom do you find inspiring wines? It became apparent that we share six degrees of separation in the wine world, and hit it off immediately. At the end of our meeting, he offered to send me a couple of smaller production wines as potential items for the Reserve Club, one of which I later selected. Since that time, his Florida distributor closed, so he reached out to me to buy the wines directly. After tasting through the latest offerings, I selected one for Reserve Club and this for NWR. What better place to begin than with his base level wine, Son of a Butcher, which pays homage to his father and grandfather? The man on the label is Yannick's dad in front of the family butcher shop.

His passion for the aforementioned varieties is because Yannick grew up in Gascogne, the home of the Armagnac region of Southwest France. Surprisingly, his family was not winemakers, but butchers, which is the inspiration for this wine, Son of a Butcher (SOB). His grandfather did make a few barrels of wine each year for family consumption, and his favorite grape was Merlot. As you can guess, Yannick chose a different path and attended school to become a winemaker, even working at a vineyard in Madiran before moving to the US.

When Yannick first came to this country, he did so as the assistant winemaker at Newton Vineyards, working under Luc Morley. After Luc left to take the helm at Peter Michael, Yannick continued the famous "unfiltered" program, making the wines for several vintages. Next came an eight year stint at Chateau Potelle, on Mount Veeder. The powerful style of

those wines suited his style, and for several years he turned out some amazing bottlings from their high elevation, Mount Veeder vineyards. Then the owners divorced, and the vineyard and winery were sold to the Jackson family. At that point, in 2008, Yannick and his wife Susan decided to establish Yannick Rousseau wines.

Because of his history at Newton and Potelle, Rousseau's prefers to make wines from vineyards that grow at high elevation, where the character of the grapes is more intense than those grown on the valley floor. He has also discovered some vineyards where his beloved Colombard and Tannat grow, so he produces those as well, but not exclusively from high elevation sites. I should mention that a good bit of Tannat comes from the Alder Springs Vineyard in Mendocino county, one of the highest elevated sites growing grapes in California. Generally Yannick's wines bottled under his primary label are full throttle and intense, particularly the reds, which need some time to evolve. The Son of a Butcher shows the friendlier side of his winemaking touch, with softer tannins.

To make the SOB, he uses the exact same wines that go into his much more expensive bottlings, pulling a small amount of grapes out to make a more approachable wine. The foundation of SOB is 45% Tannat, from the previously mentioned Alder Springs as well as a site in Solano county. (Long time members may remember the Rock Wall Tannat feature from several years ago, which was also sourced from the Solano site). Then he blends in 25% Mount Veeder Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Moon Mountain Merlot and 15% Cabernet Franc. It is a testament to the size and power of Tannat-based wines that he uses mountain grown Bordeaux varieties to soften and lighten the final wine. The wine is aged in French oak 228-liter barrels and 400-liter puncheons for 18 months. 15% of the barrels were new, and the balance were older.

For those unfamiliar with Tannat, it is an extremely dark and tannic variety best known for the wines made in the Madiran region of Southwest France. The Madiran region is near Yannick's home of Gascogne and his first job in the wine business was working at a winery in the area. If you only drink wine for the health benefits then you will love Tannat, since the variety is attributed with the most anthocyanins/antioxidants of any grape variety. If you drink wine for other reasons, then you will find the SOB checks a lot of boxes, both due to its incredible concentration and polished tannins.

When you are ready to drink this wine I would encourage you to decant it for up to an hour before serving. Once you do, it offers a brooding nose of cinnamon sticks, cooked blackberries, black peppercorns, black fig, dark chocolate, tobacco barn and cedar. On the palate it is very dense, with good concentration framed by obvious and relatively firm tannins, with moderate acidity. Drink this wine from 2018-2028 and serve with high protein dishes like steaks with a good fat cap or braised short ribs.

Korean Short Ribs

The sweet, salty, savory nature of these ribs is a nice pairing with both of the feature wines this month. Unlike fall-off-the-bone American versions, the meat in this version is grilled quickly and retains a little chew. This recipe calls for boneless, English-style short ribs which you may be able to find, or make yourself by cutting the meat off the bones of the ones available at the grocery store. Just make sure there is plenty of meat on the them. If you happen to find Korean cut, available at Asian grocery stores, you can certainly use it- just adjust the cooking time.

1 medium pear (ripe), peeled, halved, cored, and roughly chopped

6 medium cloves garlic, peeled

4 teaspoons minced fresh ginger

1/2 cup soy sauce

2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil

6 tablespoons sugar

1 tablespoon rice vinegar

3 scallions, green and white parts sliced thin

5 pounds bone-in English-style short ribs, meat removed from bone, trimmed of excess fat, sliced widthwise at angle into 1/2- to 3/4-inch-thick pieces and pounded 1/4 inch thick

Vegetable oil for grill rack

1. Process pear, garlic, ginger, soy sauce, oil, sugar, and vinegar in food processor until smooth, 20 to 30 seconds, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. Transfer to medium bowl and stir in scallions.

2. Spread one-third of marinade in 13 by 9-inch pan or other suitable container that will hold ribs in 2 layers. Place half of meat in single layer over marinade. Pour half of remaining marinade over meat, followed by remaining meat and marinade. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and place in refrigerator. Marinate ribs for at least 4 hours and up to 12 hours, turning meat once or twice to ensure that it marinates evenly.

3. Light large chimney starter filled two-thirds with charcoal (4 quarts, or about 65 briquettes) and allow to burn until coals are fully ignited and partially covered with thin layer of ash, 15 to 20 minutes. Build modified two-level fire by arranging coals to cover half of grill. Position grill grate over coals, cover grill, and heat grate until hot, about 5 minutes; scrape grate clean with grill brush. Lightly dip wad of paper towels in oil; holding wad with tongs, wipe grill grate. Alternatively, you can prepare your gas grill or broil in your oven.

4. Grill half of meat directly over coals, turning 3 or 4 times, until well browned on both sides, 7 to 12 minutes. If flare-ups occur, move meat to cooler side of grill until flames die down. Move first batch of meat to cooler side of grill and repeat browning with second batch. Transfer second batch of meat to platter. Return first batch of meat to hot side of grill and warm for 30 seconds; transfer to platter and serve immediately.