



Tim's Wine Market

June 2021

By JP Donnelly-Davis

Both of the features this month carry the name “reserve,” which unfortunately oftentimes means very little in terms of the wine’s actual elite status. Only in a few European wine regions does the name have official meaning. In the new world, it is completely unregulated and frequently is little more than a marketing gimmick. Often, when I ask a producer, particularly of inexpensive wines, if there is an offering below their “reserve” bottling, the answer is “no.” However, this month we have selected two wines that are legitimately reserve wines. Both represent the best each estate offers within their respective category. Yes, there are tiers of wines produced at both wineries below these levels.

Glenelly Estate Reserve 2014 - \$25

The South African region of Stellenbosch is the most famous of the country’s numerous wine-producing areas, often described as the most similar to Napa Valley in terms of prestige. It is located between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and enjoys a climate similar to that of the Mediterranean, making it the ideal location for many French grape varieties. Originally planted to grapes such as Cabernet Franc and Merlot, which thrived in its granitic soils, the region has boasted a distinct French influence since its founding. This is also due to large numbers of French Huguenots settling in the area at a time when religious persecution was on the rise in Europe. Many wine-growing estates in Stellenbosch can trace their origins back to the 18th century or earlier, with the Glenelly estate among their number. While the region has seen its share of conflict and economic depression, grapes have been grown on this property since 1682.

However the history of Glenelly as a modern winery is quite recent. The current owner of the property, May de Lencquesaing, purchased the estate in 2003 with the intent to produce quality Bordeaux-style blends. This is particularly interesting because, at the time, de Lencquesaing was also the owner of Chateau Pichon-Longueville Comtesse de Lalande, a Grand Cru estate in Bordeaux. She purchased Glenelly after falling in love with the rich history and climate of South Africa, re-planting the French varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon that had once grown there. Since then, she has sold her share of Pichon-Longueville and, although still playing an active role in Bordeaux, has focused more of her energy on South Africa.

To make this wine, Bordeaux varieties are sourced from the estate’s east-facing slopes. This sun-facing aspect allows for a longer, cooler ripening season and prevents over-ripeness. Additionally, a small amount of Syrah is blended in for ripeness and complexity. The final blend is 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Syrah, 18% Cabernet Franc, 18% Merlot and 5% Petit Verdot. After harvesting by hand, the grapes are brought to the winery for hand-sorting. After a three-day cold soak, fermentation takes place using native yeasts. The wine is then placed into French oak barriques for 18 months, during which it undergoes full malolactic conversion.

When you open this wine, you will want to decant it for at least half an hour. Once you do, notes of black fruit abound, with blackberry preserve, blackcurrant, cedar, milk chocolate and baking spices. Drink 2022 to 2027 with short ribs, ribeye steaks, grilled portobello mushrooms or shepherd’s pie.

TerraNoble Carmenere Gran Reserva 2017 - \$24

TerraNoble is a similar estate than Glenelly in that it is relatively young, founded in 1993, although the region’s winemaking tradition dates back much farther. The history of the Maule Valley from which this wine originates dates back to the initial Spanish conquest of South America. Initially, sacramental wines were sourced from the region made from the Pais, which was often called the “mission” grape. At the time, Spanish law stipulated that her colonies purchase a certain amount of wine from the mainland every year, fearing that South American wines would eclipse domestic wines in terms of production and sales. However, many producers chose to ignore this mandate, despite the country’s overall shift towards brandy and rum production. As the Spanish Empire began its long, slow decline, many Chilean vineyards were finally abandoned, their contents sold off to produce cheap brandy or else replanted to produce potatoes and other food crops.

However, all was not lost for Chilean winemakers. At the start of the 19th century, the newly independent Chile was home to a burgeoning middle class, and with economic stability came a renewed interest in winemaking. These

landowners and wealthy citizens began buying up old vineyards, replanting them with popular grape varieties and slowly began to promote quality over quantity. With its proximity to the capital of Santiago and its wide selection of microclimates, the Maule Valley was in the spotlight again. An influx of French immigrants further bolstered the region's reputation, as many winemakers fleeing phylloxera brought their technical know-how (and, in many instances, their vines themselves) with them.

TerraNoble was founded by winemaker Marcelo Garcia to showcase the diverse soil types and sub-regions of Chile's Central Valley, and today farm over 800 acres, not only in the Maule, but the Colchagua and Casablanca Valleys as well. Originally, most of the red wines produced at the estate were Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot-based, although DNA testing confirmed that the long-lost Carmenere grape was being grown there as well! The apocryphal stories of "Chilean Merlot" and the lost Carmenere grape are fanciful at best, but the fact remains that this Bordeaux varietal was all but forgotten in its native France and was discovered to have survived in Chile's phylloxera-free vineyards. Marcelo considers Carmenere to be one of the "Noble Grapes" of Chile, hence its inclusion in the winery's Gran Reserva line.

All of these grapes are sourced from the 150 acre La Higuera vineyard, located in the Maule Valley. The elevation and north-facing vineyard exposure help ensure that the grapes do not over-ripen in this hot region. The grapes are harvested by hand during the first week of April, and after a four- to five-day cold soak begin fermentation in stainless steel. All the TerraNoble wines ferment in stainless steel, but are finished in gently used French oak barrels where malolactic conversion also occurs. The wine is filtered before bottling, and spends an additional six months maturing in the bottle before release.

When you open this wine, I strongly suggest decanting for at least half an hour. Once you do, the black plum and blueberry characteristics greet you immediately, followed by notes of ivy stem, espresso roast coffee and black pepper. Drink now through 2023 with steak fajitas, red beans and rice or blackened chicken kebabs.

Steak au Poivre

Both of the selections this month have subtle, spicy, herbal notes, which are reminiscent of crushed peppercorns. This classic French preparation is perfect to serve with either wine.

Heat 1 tablespoon butter in 12-inch heavy-bottomed skillet over medium heat; when foaming subsides, add shallot and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 2 minutes. Add beef and chicken broths, increase to high heat and boil until reduced to about 1/2 cup, about 8 minutes. Set reduced broth mixture aside. Rinse and wipe out skillet.

Meanwhile, sprinkle both sides of steaks with salt; rub one side of each steak with 1 teaspoon crushed peppercorns, and, using fingers, press peppercorns into steaks to make them adhere.

Place now-empty skillet over medium heat until hot, about 4 minutes. Lay steaks unpeppered-side down in hot skillet, increase heat to medium-high, firmly press down on steaks with bottom of cake pan and cook steaks without moving them until well-browned, about 6 minutes. Using tongs, flip steaks, firmly press down on steaks with bottom of cake pan and cook on peppered side, about 3 minutes longer for rare, about 4 minutes longer for medium-rare or about 5 minutes longer for medium. Transfer steaks to large plate and tent loosely with foil to keep warm.

Pour reduced broth, cream and 1/4 cup brandy into now-empty skillet; increase heat to high and bring to boil, scraping pan bottom with wooden spoon to loosen browned bits. Simmer until deep golden brown and thick enough to heavily coat back of metal tablespoon or soup spoon, about 5 minutes. Off heat, whisk in remaining 3 tablespoons butter, remaining 1 tablespoon brandy, lemon juice or vinegar and any accumulated meat juices. Adjust seasonings with salt.

Set steaks on individual dinner plates, spoon portion of sauce over steaks and serve immediately.

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- 1 medium shallot, minced**
- 1 cup low-sodium beef broth**
- 3/4 cup low-sodium chicken broth**
- 1/4 cup heavy cream**
- 1/4 cup brandy**
- 1 tablespoon brandy**
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice or 1 teaspoon champagne vinegar**
- Table salt**
- 4 strip steaks (8 to 10 ounces each), 3/4 to 1 inch thick and no larger than 3 inches at widest points, trimmed of exterior gristle**
- Table salt**
- 1 tablespoon black peppercorns, crushed**