



Tim's Wine Market

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It is a common misconception here in the United States that lower alcohol means less flavor. In many Old World wine regions, traditional viticulture and winemaking will result in a wine that may not boast the 15% ABV of a warm-climate Grenache or Zinfandel, but certainly showcases a full range of aromatics and flavors. On the other end of the spectrum, of course, it is possible to be over-cautious and harvest too early, resulting in a red (or white) that is overly lean and acidic. This month we are proud to present two traditionally minded wines which, although lower in alcohol than one might expect, are excellent expressions of the places in which they are grown.

2020 Domaine des Chaumes Chablis - \$30

The deep relationship between Chablis and seafood goes back longer than one might think, in fact, millions of years. As part of the Paris Basin, Chablis is famous for its chalk and limestone soils which formed from prehistoric plankton-like fossils 200-300 million years ago, when the entire region of what is today Eastern Europe was underwater. Today, it is the soil which gives the wines of Chablis their prized mineral characteristics and contribute to their natural acidity. The lower alcohol comes from the high latitude, but more about that later in the write-up. It is important to note that the region was devastated by frost in April 2021, so wines from this region are scarce and prices have skyrocketed, so we are fortunate to find an example for this offering.

The Domaine des Chaumes is run by Céline and Romain Poulet, whose families have taken great care to preserve the terroir of Chablis across multiple generations. Their winery is located in Maligny, on the right bank of the River Yonne which flows through the Chablis appellation. This village is home to many of the Premier Crus of Chablis, including the high-altitude Vaillons and L'Homme Mort vineyard sites. In Chablis, almost all of the vineyards lie on south and southeast facing slopes. This is to capture as much sunlight as possible for the grapes to achieve full ripeness. Sitting near the 48th parallel the region receives 2 hours more sunlight than vineyards in the northern parts of California, which is critical to ripen grapes for wine production.

Historically, the wines of Chablis were rarely more than 12 percent alcohol, but with climate change it is not uncommon for producers to now harvest earlier to keep alcohol levels below 13.5%, and retain good balance. The Poulets are able to accomplish this with very little intervention in the vineyard, having recently been awarded the HVE or Haute Valeur Environnementale certification, one of France's highest honors in sustainable viticulture. From manual ploughing to improve soil health to homemade torches which burn at night to keep the frost at bay, the Poulets work as traditionally as possible in the vineyard to better showcase the characteristics of Chablis.

All fruit used to make this wine is harvested by hand. In the winery, alcoholic fermentation takes place using native yeasts in stainless steel. Once dry, spontaneous malolactic conversion occurs in most vintages, with the finished wine spending roughly 2-3 months on the fine lees before bottling and filtration. When you open this wine, you will want to serve it chilled, but not ice-cold, around 45 degrees. In addition, like most white Burgundy, it will benefit from decanting. On the palate, notes of green apple, lemon zest, fennel bulb, talc, and wet stones show how Chablis can have an edge, but not come off lean. Drink now through 2025 with crab legs, tuna sashimi, raw oysters, or grilled mahi.

2021 Artuke Rioja - \$18

With our ever-increasing interest in Spanish wines here in the United States, we are fortunate enough to be able to taste through the different sub-zones of Rioja instead of merely reading about them. Arguably Spain's most prestigious wine region, Rioja is located within the autonomous community of La Rioja and divided into three distinct sub-regions. Rioja Alta is, as the name would imply, the highest in altitude, and home to age-worthy and celebrated wines centered on Tempranillo. Rioja Oriental, the easternmost and warmest sub-zone, is known for its fuller-bodied wines, often based around Garnacha due to the warmer climate. However, the smallest sub-zone, Rioja Alavesa, is where this month's feature

is grown. Located in the Basque province of Álava, this is Rioja's coldest sub-zone, receiving some maritime influence from the Bay of Biscay and cooling breezes from the Cantabrian Mountains. In fact, it was often thought that this area was too cold to produce Tempranillo!

The de Miguel family, who produce this wine, are more than happy to prove them wrong. Winegrowers for 4 generations, the family often sold bulk fruit to the local co-op at a time when fruit from Rioja Alavesa did not command a high price. Arturo de Miguel Blanco made the shift to estate bottling around 1991, co-fermenting Tempranillo with the white Viura to increase its aromatic complexity. Today, his sons carry on this and many other local traditions, sourcing from the original plots planted by their grandfather and great-grandfather. The brothers have brought greater attention to Rioja Alavesa, inspiring other young winegrowers throughout the region, all while sticking to traditional, low-intervention practices.

All fruit is harvested by hand, sourced from multiple vineyard sites across the family's holdings. This means that some of the vines used in this cuvée are over 110 years old, while others were planted as recently as 2005. In making this wine, the brothers carry on one of Rioja's oldest indigenous traditions, utilizing whole-cluster fermentation and carbonic maceration techniques similar to many examples of cru Beaujolais. Wines made in this manner were once held in high regard in Rioja Alavesa, and many younger winemakers are experimenting with these methods again. Without destemming, the fruit, both red and white, is transferred to stainless steel tanks where partial carbonic maceration takes place. Once dry, the wine is transferred to cement tanks where it matures for 5 months before bottling.

When you open this wine, we strongly recommend decanting for up to half an hour. In addition, do not be afraid to serve it with a slight chill, which will highlight the semi-carbonic nature of this wine. On the palate, notes of dried cranberry, dried red cherry, strawberry leaf, and dried hibiscus petal. Drink now through 2026 with marinated vegetable dishes, bean soups, or heartier seafood dishes such as fried catfish.

Shrimp Mozambique

I recently had the opportunity to spend the day at a goat roast with several long time acquaintances, most of Greek origin. It was an all day eating and drinking experience, with the host providing a dining room table covered with *meze* (appetizers). To my surprise, after eating my body weight in dolmades and all the cold goodies, the hot food started coming out of the kitchen. First was mussels, followed by grilled octopus, and finally this shrimp dish, prepared by the host's son-in-law, whose family is Portuguese. He explained this is a traditional dish in his house, harkening to the time when Mozambique was under the colonial rule of Portugal. I was totally blown away by the dish and began making it myself and coming up with this version. If you happen to find any Portuguese pepper sauce, add to taste, substitute a small amount of sambal, peri-peri or omit entirely.

1 medium onion, finely chopped
4 large cloves of garlic, minced
3 tablespoons fresh parsley, finely chopped
2 packets of Goya Azafran
1/4 cup olive oil
1/2 stick of unsalted butter
1 can of mild beer (American lager)
1 pound of 31-40 shrimp; raw, peeled and cleaned
1-2 teaspoons Portuguese pepper sauce, peri peri, sambal or red pepper flakes
salt and ground pepper to taste

Melt the butter and oil over medium to medium-high heat in a large pan or wok. Add the onion and cook for 4-5 minutes. Lower the heat to medium and add the garlic, Goya Azafran and pepper sauce if using, sauté for 3 minutes until aromatic.

Pour the beer into the pan, cover and cook for 5 minutes. Add the shrimp, cover and cook for 3 minutes, flip them over/stir and cook another 3 minutes. Pour the contents into a bowl so that you do not overcook the shrimp. Taste and season if necessary.

This dish works as an appetizer or over rice for an entree.