



# Tim's Wine Market

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By Tim Varan

Last quarter the selections were produced by winemakers inspired in one way or another by the wines of the French region of Burgundy. This quarter I took a twist on the idea and selected three wines produced using Bordeaux varieties, but from other parts of Europe who all have a long history of producing similar wines. In this case the producers do not look to Bordeaux as inspiration but use similar varieties to forge their own unique style. It was a lot of fun tasting a wide field of options to make these selections and I hope you enjoy the exercise as much as I did.

## **2017 Serafini & Vidotto Il Rosso dell'Abazia Montello - \$79**

The wine that inspired my idea for this theme is the last of this offering but when I discovered this one everything began to gel. Partners Francesco Serafini and Antonio Vidotto produce Bordeaux style blends in a historic winemaking area in the Piave River valley in the Veneto region of Italy. When they launched their project in the late 1980s it was to revive a style of wines that were basically lost after the First World War. While not well known to Americans it was the occupation of this region by the Austro-Hungarian empire before the unification of Italy that shaped the style of wines in this area. Coincidentally the next feature is from a region with the same catalyst.

Cabernet Sauvignon and the other Bordeaux varieties are not new to Italy. The first record of Cabernet Sauvignon in Italy was recorded in the 1820's in the Piedmont region. By the 1830s the mix of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and what we now know as Carménère were being planted across northern Italy including this area of the Veneto. For most of the 19th century they were interplanted and blended with local varieties but gained more importance after phylloxera struck the area in the 1890s. Once producers began replanting their vineyards with the help of American rootstocks they began looking for higher yielding varieties with consistent yields. The region is still primarily planted to white varieties, Glera for Prosecco and Garganega for Soave, but in certain sub-zones the Bordeaux varieties dominate such as wines like this.

Officially this wine originates from the Colli Asolani, a DOC that was established in 1977. This zone is within the Prosecco zone and in fact Asolo Prosecco, one of three DOCGs for the region. Before the Prosecco craze, Serafini and Vidotto decided to revive high quality red wines in the region in the 1980s. Knowing the historical significance of the Asolani valley, Serafini and Vidotto were also drawn to the area because of the iron rich soils and deep gravel beds. These are perfect mediums for the Bordeaux varieties and when farmed with great intention the results can be staggering.

This is the duo's flagship wine, the 36th vintage crafted exclusively from vineyards in the Montello vineyard. They do not break out the percentages but this wine is Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Each variety is harvested separately, Merlot in September and the Cabernets in early October, then fermented in stainless steel tanks. Once dry the wines are moved to French oak barrels for eighteen to twenty-four months before blending and bottling.

Despite the age of this wine you will definitely want to decant it for a half hour but up to two hours is fine. Despite the modest 13.5% alcohol content this wine has a powerful nose of strawberry and black raspberry preserves, dried figs, Morello cherries, claro cigar wrapper, cracked black pepper corns and vanilla wafers. The palate is quite dry, with a dense texture and very finely tuned tannins. Serve this wine 2024-2035 with braised short ribs or pot roast.

## **2015 Movia Veliko Rdeče - \$69**

Unlike most European countries the history of wine production in Slovenia began well before the Roman conquest of the area in the 2nd century BC. Archeological evidence shows that Celtic and Illyrian tribes were producing wine for export as early as the 5th century BC, thanks to close proximity to the Adriatic Sea. During the Roman period the popularity of the wines grew with trade centered from what is now Venice. After the fall of Rome, viticulture was dominated by abbeys of the church but popularity fell. Later, during the reign of the Austro-Hungarian Empire viticulture in the region was prolific, with a heavy emphasis on white wines. However, 1820 Archduke John of the Austro-Hungarian Empire planted Cabernet and Merlot in an experimental vineyard in Meranova. Ironically, most of his early life he served as an officer battling the French in three wars across what is now Northern Italy. Being a noble he had spent much of his early years traveling in

France and despite the wars was a huge fan of their culture, and it can be assumed wines. While the Bordeaux varieties are not the most popular in current day Slovenia they are well established and the country is known for many excellent examples, led by the country's top winery Movia.

The Movia winery was established in 1820 and has been handed down through eight generations of the family. Their reputation as one of the elite wineries of Slovenia is more than a century old, counting no less than Ernest Hemingway as a fan. Papa served as an ambulance driver in the region during WWI and it was from that experience he wrote **A Farewell to Arms**. Later, after WWII when Slovenia was part of Yugoslavia, President Tito was such a devotee that he allowed the family to make wine and bottle under their label instead of as part of the state winery.

Today the Movia winery is run by Aleš Kristančič, who assumed the helm in 1988. There are few winemakers in the world with his chops, training at both Château Pétrus and Domaine de la Romanée-Conti before returning to Slovenia. The family farms nearly 50 acres of vines, practicing biodynamic viticulture. In the cellar Kristančič describes himself as low intervention, and his wines are often grouped with those of his nearby neighbors Gravner and Radikon on the Italian side of the border, but I find them more consistent and less "weird."

For this wine the blend is a very unusual combination of 70% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Pinot Noir, all farmed in a single vineyard named Veliko. All of the Movia vineyards are farmed using certified organic practices and the grapes are hand harvested and fully destemmed before fermentation. The varieties are picked and processed separately, with fermentations using native yeasts and extended skin contact. Kristančič then makes the final blend and barrels down for seven years in new Slavonian oak barriques. Kristančič never fines or filters his wines so expect some sediment.

Before I selected this wine I took a bottle home to enjoy with dinner and to see how it evolves over time. Initially it shows a heady nose of volatile acidity (VA - think balsamic vinegar) that is surprisingly not offensive. After the VA blows off there is a deep and brooding nose of Luxardo cherries, dried cranberries, blackberry preserves, clove, vanilla and toasted marshmallows. There is good richness on the palate but the fruit is held in check by obvious tannins that are pretty polished, although at 8 years old they are still brisk. Drink 2024-2035 with something meaty; pasta Bolognese, or grilled ribeye with olive oil and rosemary.

### **2021 Marques de Griñon Cabernet Sauvignon - \$49**

When I tasted this wine in May it was the catalyst for the theme for this quarter. While there is not a big demand for \$50 Spanish Cabernet the wine is exceptional and being able to feature in this club is the perfect way to show it off. There are records of Cabernet Sauvignon growing in Spain in the late 1800s, but the genesis for modern winemaking was 1974 when Carlos Falcó y Fernández de Córdoba, fifth Marquess of Griñón planted this vineyard in 1974. At the time Spain was still under the control of the dictator Franco, but a younger generation of winemakers were eager to modernize their industry. Winemakers like Miguel Torres and Carlos Falcó had traveled internationally and knew that producers outside of the classic Rioja region needed to modernize and experiment with varieties that were not traditional to Spain.

The Dominio de Valdepeña is a 115 acre estate near Toledo, southwest of Madrid. The Marque's family has owned the estate since 1292 but had never focused on viticulture as their primary source of income. After extensive study the Marque determined the conditions were perfect for growing Cabernet Sauvignon and planted some of the first vines in Spain. While this area was virtually unknown for producing world class wine in the 1970's it is now one of the hot spots in Spain, as the Sierra de Gredos mountains are just an hours drive to the north. Thanks to innovations, such as the first drip irrigation lines and climate controlled aging cellar in Spain, the Marques wines quickly gained acclaim. In 2002 the Dominio de Valdepeña was declared one of the first Pagos, a special classification recognizing historic wine estates producing exceptional wines. Today there are 21 Vino de Pago across the country.

For this wine the grapes are from the original 1974 planting. The harvesting is done in a meticulous manner, selecting only the healthiest and ripest clusters for this tier of production. Fermentation is done in stainless steel tank with extended skin contact and aging for 12 months in 50% new French oak, the remainder second pass barrels. Decant this wine for up to an hour and it displays a rich nose of boysenberry and black currant preserves, caramel, dried orange peel, cooked cranberry, and vanilla paste. On the palate it is very dense and powerful but with nice restraint that shows it will age beautifully for at least a decade. Drink with a roasted rack of lamb or Carcamusas, a classic Spanish stew using beef and tomatoes.