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Winesday: Best Wines from the Mohegan Sun Winefest Wines to Watch

1. Durigutti Bonarda 2009

Lookout Malbec, there's a new Argentinian red in town! Although the Bonarda varietal is currently flying under the radar, it promises to burst onto the scene and battle with Malbec for supremacy. Bonarda has origins in Northern Italy, but people brought their vines with them into Argentina. The South American climate proved perfectly conducive to the grape.

Bonarda has elements reminiscent of Malbec: red cherry, plum, and chocolate. At the same time, it has twists on its own. For instance, I detected a slight Eucalyptus on the finish. It seemed more alive and effervescent in my mouth as it travelled across my palette.

Do Valle Wines, carriers of the Durigutti wines, aptly call it "fairly explosive." They continue, "Bright, refreshing acidity holds everything together."

This particular version of Bonarda undergoes an interesting process before reaching the bottle; it actually ferments in cement tanks! After a brief time in American Oak, it spends 18 months in "stave-studded cement" chambers. The cement imparts a hint of stoniness and enhances the dynamic energy I enjoyed so much.

At around \$12.99, this bottle is a steal! Mo's Wine and Spirits in Fairfield carries the bottle now, and Redding Wine and Spirits is due to begin selling it. Stay tuned to CTBites.com for purchasing information or visit <http://dovalle.com/wines/durigutti-bonarda/> to learn more.

2. Vinkara Wines, Turkey

If you want the brand new, the up and coming, the undiscovered: you've found it. Vinkara Wines, which herald from Turkey, just arrived in the American Market.

"The wines just arrived last week," representative Veronica Lipinski informed me at the Mohegan Sun WineFest.

The wines are also revolutionary because they feature two grapes never encountered before: Narince and Kalecik Karasa. These "undiscovered exceptional new flavors" are exclusive to Turkey.

Since Anatolia has been dubbed "the birthplace of wine," how is it possible that these wines are just debuting now? Winemaking in Turkey dates back almost 7,000 years, to the times of the Hittites, Noah, and the New Stone Age, so it seems preposterous that we have not experienced it until now.

"Turkey had to stop making wine for religious and political reasons," Lipinski explicated. Vinkara Wines notes that "the general atmosphere of tolerance was interrupted from time to time with official prohibitions on the use and sale of alcohol." However, the government renewed its interest in wine in the 1980s. As tourism boomed, officials recognized the drink's economic potential. Turkish wineries focused on investing in new technologies so that they could compete on the international market. In order to import a product, wine must comply to international standards. Today, Vinkara has met those requirements and can begin offering its wine in the United States.

The first grape, Narince, is a white varietal. Its vines date back between 7,000 and 8,000 years and it is indigenous to the region.

"This is a varietal from Turkey. It cannot be found anywhere else," emphasizes Lipinski.

The white wine contains fruity elements, such as apricot and citrus. At the same time, it has a minerality that comes from the "sandy-clay and gravelly" soil it grows in. The wine hovers between medium and full-bodied, and I would call it dry. It has balance; it has acidity without seeming overly crisp. Although most white wines are made for immediate drinking, Vinkara encourages drinkers to age the wine.

"The wine gains a complex bouquet with aging," they assert.

Narince comes in two bottles: the Narince 2012 and the Narince Reserve 2010. The Reserve ages for 14 months in oak and spends additional time in the vineyard's wine caves. It also undergoes "sur lie" fermentation, which means that the wine is bottled directly from the lees without a filtering method known as racking. It smooths out any harsh flavors from the oak and imparts a touch of creaminess.

The second type, Kalecik Karasi, is a red wine. It gets its name from the place of its origin, a region 45 km northeast of Ankara. The climate truly defines the wine. It sits at an altitude of 650 meters, and there is a stark difference between day and night temperatures.

"Kalecik Karasi is a dry and elegant ruby-colored wine with vibrant fruit aromas," Vinkara states. "The medium-bodied low tannin wine is fresh and lively with a crisp acidity and long finish." Like the Narince, the Kalecik Karasi comes in a standard bottle along with a Reserve version. The regular version has "sour cherry, raspberry, redcurrent, and banana" while the reserve is more driven by "blackberry, black currants, strawberry, sour cherry, vanilla, and smoked aromas." The Reserve spends 14 months in oak barrels and undergoes further aging in the vineyard's caves.

Vinkara is just beginning to present its wines to local wine stores. Right now two wine stores carry all 4 of the bottles: Le Wine Shop at 39 East Elm Street in Greenwich, CT and The Wine Thief at 181 Crown Street in New Haven. I predict demand for these wines will grow and more stores will carry them, though.

"We've been having a lot of success," Lipinski assured me. Hopefully these wines will come to a store near me!

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