

Tasting Notes
Feb 2022 Pick-up
Wines of NE France



Welcome to your February 2022 Smart Wine Club pickup. The theme this quarter is wine from several regions in the northeastern part of France.

We'll be enjoying wine from the famous region of Burgundy, plus Alsace and Jura. You may know that Burgundy is most famous for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. As with any well-known region, it can be tricky to find good values in wine. So, we'll try some under-the-radar Burgundies including a Chardonnay made in Pét Nat style, and an Aligote (Burgundy's "other white"). We'll also sample a great example of Beaujolais (Gamay).

From Alsace, we'll try a classic dry Riesling (my personal favorite style of wine for drinking with food). Finally, from Jura, we'll try two unique reds. The two common red grapes in Jura are Ploussard and Trousseau. You'll get to try Ploussard on its own, while the Trousseau is blended with Pinot Noir.

- **Pét' Mout' Chardonnay Pétillant Naturel NV** – If you received the November wine pickup, then this will be the second Pét Nat you've sampled. This type of wine is extremely popular right now, so you'll probably be seeing more and more of them on menus and in shops. The method for making them is called "méthode ancestral" and means the wine is bottled (often with a metal beer-style cap) before the first fermentation is complete, creating a natural effervescence. This one is 100% Chardonnay from the region of Tonnerre in Burgundy. It is completely different from the one in the November tote. You will enjoy very fine, delicate bubbles, aromas of citrus and floral notes, with excellent freshness and acidity. Reg retail: \$16 Smart price: \$14

Pairing: I'd open this for a tasty cheese and charcuterie board. In particular, the bubbles and acidity will go well with a very rich, creamy cheese such as a triple crème. Délice de Bourgogne is one of my favorites, it's reasonably priced at Trader Joe's, and it's from Burgundy just like this wine!

- **2020 Marcel Giraudon Bourgogne Aligoté, Chitry** – Aligoté is considered the second white grape of Burgundy after Chardonnay. The Chitry region is located in the extreme northwestern part of Burgundy. The wine is quite minerally, you can really taste the nearness to Chablis. Interestingly, this wine also goes through malo-lactic fermentation which gives it a middle-note of butter in addition to minerals and fruit. It is elegant, bright, and a big hit with everyone I serve it to. Reg retail: \$17 Smart price: \$15

Pairing: Aligoté works exceptionally well with oysters, delicate seafoods and shellfish, as well as roast chicken or pork.

- **2019 Pierre Sparr Riesling, Alsace** – Riesling is *the* grape of Alsace and many consider it the best white wine in the world. In contrast with other regions (including our local Rieslings) Alsatian Riesling is always quite dry, with the exception of late-harvest dessert wines. It is a big favorite of mine for its ability to pair so well with food, due to its dryness and acidity. This particular bottle is a good example of the style and a good value. The winemakers' notes highlight aromas of lilac and orange peel, followed by wet stone. Reg retail: \$16 Smart price: \$14

Pairing: Dry Riesling can truly pair with a wide variety of food, ranging all the way from raw seafood to white meats to game meats to aged cheese. This particular example is on the lighter side of the spectrum so I'd pair accordingly.

- **2020 Domaine Dupeuble Beaujolais, Beaujolais** – Beaujolais is made from the Gamay grape and is typically released very young each November. So, this is from the release before last, however, I believe it benefitted from a little time in the bottle and is great to drink now. The 2020 vintage received 91 points from James Suckling and I think it's just delicious. Bright, fresh, raspberry, blackberry and cherry predominate, with some aromas of candied violets and anise seed. Make sure to swirl your glass well and enjoy the floral notes. Smooth tannins with a crisp finish. Reg retail: \$17 Smart price: \$15

Pairing: Some great pairings to try: seared tuna loin; white bean soup; any charcuterie; chicken or pork Milanese (*aka* Schnitzel); seafood pasta or risotto

- **2019 Domaine Baud Génération 9 Rouge Ancestral Cotes du Jura** – Lastly, our first of two *slightly* bigger reds – the Jura region of France has a cool climate where big, bold reds just don't grow. So, think of these last two along the same lines as an Oregon Pinot, in terms of boldness. This first one is a blend of 70% Trousseau (a very local grape to Jura) with 30% Pinot. The wine is named "Ancestral" because it comes from the vineyard's oldest plots of red grapes, planted by the current owners' grandfather. On the nose, you may experience aromas of leather, which is typical of Trousseau. The Pinot Noir adds body, and light tannins. You may want to serve this just slightly chilled. Reg retail: \$23 Smart price: \$21

Pairing: Trousseau pairs especially well with mushrooms, lightly creamy sauces, and smoky flavors. I'm imagining a dish of mushroom chicken sauce, seasoned with smoked paprika, with some crème fraîche swirled in at the end, served over egg noodles.

- **2020 Domaine Dugois Ploussard "La Sombarde" Arbois, Jura** – Our final red is a 100% Ploussard *aka* Poulsard. Interestingly, this grape has extremely thin skins, resulting in a very light-colored red wine. It can be considered a fun alternative to Pinot Noir, but with a bit more earthiness and tannic structure. The producer is a small family-owned winery that is growing all grapes according to organic certifications. The grape is notoriously difficult to grow and therefore isn't seen a lot outside of Jura, so it's fun to be able to try it. Reg retail: \$23 Smart price: \$21

Pairing: Because it's on the lighter side, it pairs easily as long as the dish doesn't overpower. Ploussard goes well with medium-strength nutty cheeses such as a lighter cheddar or gruyère. In addition to the expected chicken and pork, it is tasty with duck and salmon.