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Wines Of The Week: A Rich Sauvignon Blanc, An Age-Worthy Beaujolais Cru, And A Perfect Bourbon For Springtime

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No matter how much wine you taste—and during lockdown, it seems, most of us are tasting *a lot* of wine—every bottle possesses the potential to surprise, and often in ways that you didn’t expect.

My white Wine of the Week, the Alpha Omega “1155” Sauvignon Blanc Napa Valley 2018, stunned me with a weight, breadth, and sheer generosity that aren’t typically hallmarks of the grape variety. At least, not traditionally. These days, I’m seeing more and more Sauvignon Blancs being crafted in this more luscious style, many of them from California. Producers like Aperture, Peter Michael, and more all are working with impeccable fruit, often employing the use of oak and lees-stirring to increase textural richness and releasing Sauvignon Blancs that have the ability to appeal to Chardonnay lovers, too.

Alpha Omega’s “1155” is sourced from the producer’s estate vineyard and lifted with 3% Semillon. It was entirely barrel fermented, aged for 16 months in oak, a third of which was new, and 3% of which was acacia, (the rest was the more

traditional French oak). The result is a Sauvignon Blanc that balances freshness and density impeccably, and speaks of honeydew, white tea, flowers, and vanilla on the nose before energetic flavors of yellow grapefruit, white licorice, vanilla, ginger, and a hint of passionfruit drizzled in honey. \$80 isn't inexpensive for any wine, much less a Sauvignon Blanc, but this one is well worth it.

I was introduced to this wine—and several other of their excellent new releases—during one of the virtual tastings that Alpha Omega is running. It was hosted by winemaker Henrik Poulsen and Master Sommelier Bob Bath, who were socially distanced from one another at the winery. Several dozen wine lovers from around the country joined in, as they have been for the producer's other virtual events. And every Wednesday at 5:00pm PDT, they're hosting "Wine Down Wednesdays" on Instagram Live and Facebook Live, during which a library wine is opened and discussed. Producers around the country—and around the world—have been rolling out some fantastic programming to bring consumers into their wineries virtually, and the response has generally been very positive. They're a great, safe activity in these difficult times.

My red Wine of the Week, the Château du Moulin-à-Vent Moulin-à-Vent 2017, is from what is considered to be the benchmark producer in what many professionals believe to be the finest of all of the Beaujolais *crus*. Château du Moulin-à-Vent, which traces its roots back to 1732—back then it was known as Château des Thorins—has been owned by the Parinet family since 2009, and the quality right now is absolutely spectacular.

Their Moulin-à-Vent is usually easier to find than it is in this vintage, but in 2017, a massively destructive hailstorm ruined 70% of their grape crop. As a

result, only 3,000 bottles were produced...whereas typical production is closer to 10,000. (That's also the reason that I'm not naming their "Champ Coeur" 2017 my Wine of the Week—at just 1,500 bottles available, it's a bit trickier to find. If you do see it, however, snap it up immediately: It's a paradigm-shifting embodiment of the heights that great Beaujolais *cru* is capable of.)

With aromas of raspberries, red cherries, wild strawberries, and a hint of spice and cherry pipe tobacco as well as the suggestion of sandalwood, this is a particularly elegant, complex expression of Moulin-à-Vent. The palate is structured by amazingly plush tannins that promise a decade of age, but it's wonderful already, with chamomile, rooibos, complex berry fruit and a touch of chocolate-enrobed orange peel informing notes of violets and dried herbs. It's all so long, balanced, and elegant, with a great pulse of underlying power and ripeness that carry through the long finish that itself is flecked with mineral and floral peppercorn. At \$42, it's a steal.

I also want to highlight a standout Bourbon today. The Legent Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey is a fascinating product, crafted from a beautiful spirit that was distilled in Kentucky under the watchful eye of Jim Beam's Master Distiller Fred Noe and partly finished in ex-sherry and wine casks, and then blended by Shinji Fukuyo, Suntory's Master Blender. The result is transportingly delicious, a fascinating bourbon in which salted caramel and mashed apples are joined by hints of red berries, gentle spice, and flowers. It's assertive and nicely spiced, yet layered and deeply complex. This is a fantastic whiskey.

Alpha Omega "1155" Sauvignon Blanc Napa Valley 2018

Fresh and dense, with honeydew, white tea, flowers, and vanilla on the nose that precede energetic flavors of yellow grapefruit, white licorice, vanilla,

ginger, and a hint of passionfruit drizzled in honey. \$80 isn't inexpensive for any wine, much less a Sauvignon Blanc, but this one is worth it.



The Alpha Omega "1155" Sauvignon Blanc is a standout example of a lush, creamier style of the variety.

ALPHA OMEGA

Château du Moulin-à-Vent Moulin-à-Vent 2017

With aromas of raspberries, red cherries, wild strawberries, and a hint of spice and cherry pipe tobacco as well as the suggestion of sandalwood, this is a particularly elegant, complex expression of Moulin-à-Vent. The palate is structured by amazingly plush tannins that promise a decade of age, but it's wonderful already, with chamomile, rooibos, berry fruit, and a touch of chocolate-enrobed orange peel informing notes of violets and dried herbs. It's

all so long, balanced, and elegant, with a great pulse of underlying power and ripeness that carry through the lingering finish that itself is flecked with mineral and floral peppercorn. SRP: \$42



Château du Moulin-à-Vent produced a spectacular wine in 2017, despite significant damage from a hail ... [+]

CHATEAU DU MOULIN-A-VENT

Legent Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey

Transportingly delicious, this is a fascinating bourbon in which salted caramel and mashed apples are joined by hints of red berries and gentle spice. It's assertive and nicely spiced, yet layered and deeply complex. SRP: \$34.99



Legend Bourbon is a fantastic whiskey distilled by Fred Noe and blended by Shinji Fukuyo.

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