



# WINE OF-THE-MONTH CLUB

April 2019

## New World vs. Old World

### A Cabernet Franc Face-Off

**CABERNET FRANC** may call France its home, but can we find great wines elsewhere? Cabernet Franc is a medium-bodied red wine whose origins likely lie in the Basque region of France. The parent of such star-studded children as **Cabernet Sauvignon** and **Merlot**, the thing about Cabernet Franc that makes it unique is that it can't hide its nature. It's always been a bit more peppery and lean compared to its pedigree children. And for this reason, most winemakers use it sparingly in blends, transforming what might have been a boring fruit-bomb wine into something that makes us go, "Ooooo! Magic!"

#### FAST FACTS ABOUT CABERNET FRANC

- 1). **HISTORY:** Cabernet Franc is a parent to Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot and Carménère. The crossing occurred sometime during the middle 1600's around southwestern France (Bordeaux).
- 2). **DECANT:** This will help simmer down Cabernet Franc's natural spiciness. The wine will taste softer and richer with 30 minutes of decanting (or pour through an aerator).
- 3). **AGING:** While most are recommended to be enjoyed within 5 years, there are many high quality Cabernet Franc wines from the Loire Valley that have been known to age wonderfully for about 10 - 15 years. An age-worthy Cabernet Franc will have high acidity and crunchy tannins that you can sense towards the front of your mouth.
- 4). **VALUE:** Looking for value? Look at Cabernet Franc from Chile, Argentina, California's Central Valley and New York State.
- 5). **PRESTIGE:** One of the most treasured Cabernet Franc wines comes from the St-Emilion Appellation in Bordeaux and is called Chateau Cheval Blanc. This wine is usually a blend of Cabernet Franc and Merlot.
- 6). **ALTERNATIVES:** If you love the savory herbaceous character of Cabernet Franc, seek out the rare Basque red: Hondarribi Beltza, and Chilean Carménère.

**"New World Style" - Bold, Fruit-Forward Cabernet Franc:** *California, Chile, Argentina, Washington, Australia, and Tuscany.*

In warmer places, Cabernet Franc produces a much richer wine. It's not just the heat and sunlight hours that produce full-bodied, higher alcohol wines. Many of the most popular warm-climate Cabernet Franc regions have clay-based soils, which result in grapes with increased tannins. With higher intensity, warm-climate Cabernet Franc wines are often aged in oak, adding baking spice and cedar flavors, with smokiness on the finish. Generally speaking, these wines won't age quite as long.

**"Old World Style" - Lean, Herb-Driven Cabernet Franc:** *Loire Valley, Friuli, and Finger Lakes NY.*

In cooler climates, Cabernet Franc produces a much leaner, more savory wine. In the Loire Valley where this is prevalent, the lightest and most aromatic styles are grown in sandy soils. It's rare to find heavy-handed oak in these cooler climates because it overwhelms the wine. This style is a bit less of a crowd-pleaser because many wine lovers tend to shy away from bitterness and herbal notes in wines. Still, it's useful to note that the "old world" styles tend to age longer because of its increased acidity.

**4 PROFILES OF CABERNET FRANC:** *The best way to learn this wine is to taste it from several different regions.*

#### CHINON, LOIRE VALLEY, FRANCE (Cool-Climate)

France is the largest producer of Cabernet Franc and it is commonly used as a blending grape in the famous **"Right Bank"** of Bordeaux. Fortunately, there is also a French wine region that specializes in Cabernet Franc as a single-varietal wine: Loire Valley. A great example of Chinon will smell of roasted red pepper, raspberry, jalapeño and wet stone. On the palate you'll taste moderately high acidity and moderately low tannin with flavors of sour cherry, smoky tomato, dried oregano and sweet pepper.

#### TUSCANY & FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA, ITALY (Warm-Climate)

Italy is the second largest producer of Cabernet Franc. Much of it is made in **Friuli-Venezia Giulia** but perhaps the most well known comes from Tuscany. Since Cabernet Franc is not indigenous to Italy and declassified out of the DOCG system these wines are lovingly referred to as "Super Tuscan." On the palate there will be a boldness from the elevated alcohol with mocha, cinnamon, and plum flavors complimented by medium-high acidity and moderately high tannin. It is common to find Cabernet Franc from Tuscany aged in French oak for additional body and richness.

## CALIFORNIA & WASHINGTON STATE, USA (*Warm Climate*)

There is Cabernet Franc growing throughout California and parts of Washington state, producing an opulent, fruit-forward style of Cabernet Franc. With bold aromas of sweet strawberries, raspberry, mint and roasted pepper, you'll experience wines with rich fruit from elevated alcohol and flavors of chocolate and baking spices from the oak. These wines are best enjoyed within the first few years of release.

## NEW YORK STATE, USA (*Cool Climate*)

Cabernet Franc lovers around the world know how well the grape fares in the state of New York, specifically **North Fork of Long Island** and the **Finger Lakes** region. The cool climate paired with diverse soils makes it an ideal environment for the grape. Overall, these wines are savory and tart, highly acidic and with moderate tannins. Both regions, with a proximity to bodies of water produce dominating flavors of strawberry and raspberry. Not widely distributed, so you'll have to hunt them down.

### 2017 DOMAINE la BONNELIÈRE "TRADITION" SAUMUR-CHAMPIGNY, LOIRE VALLEY FRANCE \$16.99

100% CABERNET FRANC and 12.5% ABV

**André Bonneau** and his wife created **Domaine la Bonnelière** in the town of **Varrains**, the heart of the Saumur-Champigny appellation, in 1972. Today, their children Anthony and Cédric represent the 5th generation of family vintners. The Bonneaus are vigorous proponents of biodiversity in their vineyards and plant grass between all the rows. No herbicides or chemical products are used. From a selection of ripe and healthy 20-year-old vines, on southwest facing slopes, the soils are a chalky limestone and gravel mix, giving fully ripe and concentrated Cabernet Franc grapes. The nose is understated with dusty redcurrant and cranberry notes, but there are plenty of vivid black fruits on the palate and long, fragrant floral notes on the finish. This wine is both thirst-quenching and engaging with a fine and elegant tannic grip.

**FOOD PAIRINGS:** CHARCUTERIE w/OLIVES & HARD CHEESES, FRENCH ONION SOUP, MUSHROOM FLATBREAD, BEEF TENDERLOIN w/ CHERRY SALSA, PENNE w/ SAUSAGE & FENNEL, SPICE RUBBED LEG of LAMB w/MINT, ROASTED CHICKEN w/LEMON & THYME,

### 2017 RAVINES CABERNET FRANC FINGER LAKES, NEW YORK STATE USA

**\$23.99**

100% CABERNET FRANC and 13.0% ABV

**Ravines Wine Cellars** is a boutique winery in an emerging world-class wine region, the Finger Lakes of upstate New York. Morten and Lisa Hallgren, a European Winemaker and his Chef wife have created a small, distinctive winery crafting elegant and food friendly wines using Old World winemaking traditions with New World innovation. In 2000 the Hallgrens purchased a 17-acre parcel of land on a glacier-carved hillside on the Eastern slopes of **Keuka Lake**. This land is located at the widest part of the lake which allows grapevines to receive maximum benefit from its temperature-moderating effects, it has a good slope which keeps the mineral rich soils well drained, and is situated between two deep ravines, which drain cold air from the land during the winter. These ravines are the namesake of the winery. This wine exhibits deep colors and a concentrated array of aromas, particularly blackberry and plum. Earthy elements, hints of pepper and cloves, and touches of violets mingle in the nose and on the palate with ripe red fruits. Good acidity and soft tannins emerge towards the finish and the delicate texture makes for a harmonious and enticing wine.

**FOOD PAIRINGS:** COPPA SALAMI w/BLACK OLIVES & CHEDDAR, CHILI CON CARNE, VEGETABLE LASAGNA, SWEDISH MEATBALLS, RIBEYE w/MUSHROOMS & BLUE CHEESE, LAMB SKEWERS w/MINT & ROSEMARY or BEEF KABOBS w/ MINT COUSCOUS SALAD.

### 2016 VILLA LOCATELLI "ISONZO" CABERNET FRANC, FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA ITALY

**\$17.99**

100% CABERNET FRANC and 12.5% ABV

Founded in 1648 in hills of Friuli, **Tenuta Angoris** has been a cultural sanctuary of Northern Italian varietal for centuries. In the Isonzo, a flat area with alluvial soils, Angoris grows Cabernet Franc, popular in Friuli's vineyards for over 200 years. Compared to Cabernet Franc from the Loire Valley, this wine is similarly herbaceous, but with more fruit and less "barnyard". On the nose, the wine is intense with vegetal and herbal notes of grass, sage and rosemary. The palate; medium bodied with bright plums and cherry.

**FOOD PAIRINGS:** PÂTÉ DE CAMPAGNE, FRESH CHEVRE, CHARCUTERIE, ROASTED VEGETABLE ANTIPASTO, CIOPPINO, LASAGNA BOLOGNESE, CORNISH GAME HEN, BRAISED LAMB SHANK w/ROSEMARY or BBQ CHICKEN.

### 2017 HAMILTON CREEK CABERNET FRANC, NAPA VALLEY CALIFORNIA

**\$17.99**

100% CABERNET FRANC and 14.1% ABV

This Cabernet Franc was hand selected by this newly formed label. The wine comes from one of Napa's top cult classic wineries (**Silver Oak**), known for producing hand crafter award winning red wines. Because Cabernet Franc is often used as a blending grape in Napa Cabernet Sauvignon, a winery may have a few barrels left of these gems but needs to move on to the next vintage, this is when this producer takes advantage of this opportunity and purchases the wine at a fraction of the cost. The nose showcases blackberry and dark figs with a hint of spice. The palate is simply delicious with layers of soft supple tannins, luscious tones of dark crushed fruit, cedar-box and spice in the mid-palate leading into a finish of lingering notes of chocolate an espresso.

**FOOD PAIRINGS:** BACON WRAPPED FIGS, BLACK BEAN SOUP, GRILLED SAUSAGES w/POLENTA & TAPENADE, PETIT FILLET w/BLUE-CHEESE MASHED POTATOES, STEAK AU POIVRE or LAMB BURGERS w/ FENNEL RELISH.