

Our goal with our club is to provide you with a wide diversity of wine to showcase the styles of the world. This January we include a Syrah from Pax Mahle, a who's who of Cali Syrah. His wines balance natural wine tenets with everyday drinkability. And, we give an overdue shoutout to the wines of Portugal with a Jean (Mencia) blend from Dao!

# THE CELLAR D'OR

## WINE & CIDER

Wine Club • January 2022



Pax Mahle

## Pax Mahle The Bench VYD Syrah

Key Words: Clements Hills (CA), USA 100% Syrah Practicing Organic Foot/Hand Crushed 100% Whole Cluster Ferm No Fining/Filtration

I've said it before, I still believe the best price-quality ratios out of California come in the form of Syrah. Sometimes, great wine is made at climatic extremes, like atop a volcanic island peak, or the basin of an ancient dried seabed. And, then... there's Syrah grown in California... where it's harder to make unripe than ripe wines and the norm is to focus winemaking to vineyard management towards accentuating that ripeness. Yet, this works for Syrah. Perhaps, it's that Syrah has been chosen through the ages for its ability to carry ripe, rich fruit with grace. Or, perhaps, non-fruit elements classic to Syrah, like black pepper, game, and violet are flavors that work synergistically with its generous, blue-toned fruit — no matter how ripe, rich and extracted. Whatever the case, I'm rarely let down by a Syrah from a good Cali producer.

Pax Mahle is partly to thank for the assurgence of Rhone Valley varietals in California. Pax is best known for his Sonoma Hillside Syrah (Antonio Galloni of Vinous awarded '2016 Sonoma Hillside' 100 points) and he's garnered heaps of praise for his rich, brooding, terroir-driven style. **Pax's 'The Bench VYD' Syrah is a different take on California Syrah. Pax harvests early to capture buoyantly fresh red fruit** (replacing the typical brooding blue, here) and to temper ABV. While Pax adopts some natural wine tenets, this wine is clean and polished. This silk-textured medium-bodied Syrah gets juicier and more mouth-watering with air. This is a crowd-pleasing Syrah that does not need food!



João Tavares

## Tavares de Pina 'Lero-Lero' Dao Tinto

Key Words: Dão, Portugal 90% Jean (Mencia), 10% Rufette Practicing Organic Hand-Harvested Spontaneous Ferm No Fining/filtration

Portugal has long been the major European wine 'region' ready for a blow up. As wine professionals, I think we (at least I) gloss over the nitty-gritty of Portugal's regional wines and appellations, opting for broad stroke references to density and compact fruit. It's a crass way to portray the medley of styles and wine appellations that Portugal and its wines offer us.

The wine we packed comes from the Dao and shows light-hearted, ripe Iberian fruit and ringing acidity from diurnal shifts. Diurnal shifts refer to shifts between day and night time temperatures. Regions that see cooler nights will produce grapes that retain more acidity through ripening, even in warmer climates. Dao is special, in that you get the ripeness expected from fruit grown on the Iberian Peninsula as well as the acidity-retention of a cooler climate. The Dao region is roughly circular in shape and tucked right in the center of northern Portugal. **If Portugal was Tony Stark from Iron Man, Dao is the electromagnet implanted in its solar plexus and it will be vital to the Portuguese wine renaissance.**

'Lero-Lero' spends just two days of time on its skins in open top fermenters, resulting in a lighter skin extraction and a lighter wine. This wine is bright-fruited but there is a sneaky depth that shows itself with some time open. Both wines this month benefit from some time open!

