

Spotlight: Natural Wine

Meinklang & Florez Wines



*Natural Wine. Just uttering the term around winos gets people amped up. Is all wine natural? Nope. There is A LOT of intrusive winemaking needed to take cheap fruit and make a palatable \$10 or under bottle of wine and/or create enough of that wine to fill shelves across the country. Forego hand-harvesting for a machine-harvest? Cheaper, but you'll be breaking grape skins in the process. You'll have to spray sulfites to keep the grapes from rotting. Oh, did you crop for a high yield? More grapes for more wine, but you might want to add powdered tannin, oak chips, and mega-purple to give the wine concentration and palate presence. Also, over-extract it, micro-oxygenate, cold stabilize ... **Mass-produced wine at its worst will use any and all modern winemaking mechanisms to create a homogeneously-acceptable beverage at as little cost as possible.** Call it market forces, call it lack of conviction — mainly, the more intrusive you are in the winery, the more muddled the expression of grape, place, and season... and the less exciting wine is, in general. We don't need all wine to taste the same — in fact, we want the opposite. We want wine to exude character.*

What digs at me is when highly-fabricated wines are priced similarly to wines made by families with small vineyards who make wine like they have been for centuries. A lot of 'Old World' (European) wine follows natural winemaking principles, not for the purpose of making a natural wine, but to allow the grape and vineyard to express themselves unadulterated by inorganic influences and inputs. And, many of these traditionally-made wines won't exude the qualities akin to the wines of the 'natural wine movement'. More on that...

"Natural wines" i.e., spontaneous fermentation, little to no filtration and fining, little or no added sulfites, and biodynamic/organic farming principles... they too can have arching commonalities and their natural fermenty elements can get in the way of their ability to transfer a sense of place and time — terroir. It's just that, in these cases, its nature getting in the way of nature, to provide us with a 'new style' of wine. And, in this sense, it's different. It's fun. It's new and, yet, the modern natural wine movement draws on old winemaking principles. Natural wine might only be here for a few years, or it might linger on as a permanent facet of modern wine language and preferences. Let's go for a ride.



Meinklang Solo Foam White

Grape: Harslevelü & Juhfark **Region:** Somlo, Hungary **Price:** \$19
Volcanic Soils · 30-60 Year Old Vines · Biodynamic · Hand-Harvested · Method Ancestral · Spontaneous Fermentation · No Fining or Filtration · 20 mg/L added SO2

Meinklang is a polyculture farm. They're a standard bearer of crushable, bright, fresh natural wine. Somlo Foam is made in what is commonly referred to as the Pet-Nat method wherein a continuous fermentation finishes in bottle to create natural effervescence. This wine is so deliciously juicy and sour. Think pineapples, papaya, and a cut of fresh acidity. Meinklang's sparklers are playful, wild and capture what I love about natural wine. This isn't a serious wine. It's a real wine.

THE CELLAR D'OR

WINE & CIDER

Wine Club • May 2020



Cow at Meinklang, a polyculture winery



Biodynamic Horn



James Jelks



Florez Wines "The Pope's Smoke"

Grape: Grenache **Region:** Santa Cruz Mountains, California **Price:** \$27
138 Case Production · Dry-Farmed · No Pesticides or Herbicides · Hand-Harvested · Whole-Berry Fermentation · Aged 11 Months on Lees in Puncheon and Barrique · No Fining or Filtration

There are wines that we try here at Cellar that we obsess over (yeah, this is one). Wines like these are gone before we can blink, snatched up by other in-the-know wine shops and restaurants. It's hard to get them in the club, but it's what we've done here. James Jelks started Florez Wines in 2017. The fruit comes from the Bates Ranch Vineyard, notably managed by Prudy Foxx — a who's who of soil health and a strong voice for eliminating glyphosate in California vineyards... This wine is bone dry, but carries beautiful strawberry-Grenache-floral-tinged fruit that jumps out of the glass and tingles the senses on the palate. It's pretty. It's raw. It's supple. It's crazy. Serve slightly chilled!