

VINOGRAPHY® : a wine blog

Wine and food adventures in San Francisco and around the world

02.06.2016

Vinography Unboxed: Week of January 31, 2016

Hello, and welcome to my periodic dig through the samples pile. I'm pleased to bring you the latest installment of Vinography Unboxed, where I highlight some of the better bottles that have crossed my doorstep recently.

This week included a couple of nice white wines, starting with a very nice Viognier from Anaba in Sonoma Valley. California Viogniers often end up too syrupy and ripe, but this wine avoids that trap nicely.

The Smith-Madrone Chardonnay also breaks the stereotypical mold, and offers juicy bright citrus fruit without overt oak.

On the red end of the spectrum I was quite pleased to taste the first release of a collaboration between Raymond Vineyards and musician John Legend called LVE. It's quite a crowd-pleaser of a wine.

I also enjoyed the much leaner style of the Smith-Madrone Cabernet, whose more savory qualities make for a restrained and elegant mouthful.

Also of note this week was the Bila-Haut Côtes du Roussillon, which represents a pretty great value for anyone needing a food friendly wine with character.

All this and more below. Enjoy!

2013 LVE Wines "LVE" Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, Napa, California

Dark garnet in color, this wine smells of black cherry and tobacco. In the mouth, bright juicy black cherry and chocolate flavors nestle into a suede blanket of tannins even as they are bouncy with excellent acidity. Supple and plush, this wine has a great presence and betrays little of its prodigious 15% alcohol. Nice finish. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$95. [click to buy](#).

2013 Buena Vista "Aristocrat" Red Blend, Calistoga, Napa, California

Dark purple in the glass, this wine smells of black cherry and cassis layered over with new oak. In the mouth, black cherry, plum, and cassis flavors are wrapped in a dusty sheath of tannins. Good acidity keeps the fruit bright, and only a modest touch of wood emerges from the black-tea-stained finish. The wine is missing some depth that would take it to the next level. 14.5% alcohol. Score: around **8.5**. Cost: \$85. [click to buy](#).