

The Press Democrat

Wine of the week: Roederer Estate Brut



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It's the suspense in the bottle that makes sparkling wine the most challenging to produce.

That's how Arnaud Weyrich of Anderson Valley's Roederer Estate sees it.

“You never taste the ‘finished’ wine before it is bottled,” Weyrich said. “You bottle your blend of base wines along with yeast and sugar, and the second fermentation (known as Methode Champenoise) happens in the bottle, making it sparkling. You have to trust your teacher, mentor and peers with their experience before you can actually build your own.”

Weyrich is the winemaker behind our wine-of-the-week winner – the Roederer Estate, N.V. Anderson Valley Brut at \$24.

“The style of the Roederer Estate Brut is one of layered complexity, bringing a crisp fruity character as well as aged yeasty aromas and creamy texture,” he said. “The wine is elegant and approachable.”

The French native said there wasn’t one moment in time that he became fascinated with bubbly. For him, it was an on going curiosity.

“My parents liked to open a bottle of Champagne whenever they felt like it,” Weyrich said. “That’s how I discovered Champagne from large houses and from smaller growers. They were particularly fanatics of the wines from the Cramant village in Champagne.”

The winemaker said this sparkling wine is a great white wine that can be enjoyed in a multitude of ways.

“You can sip your sparkling in a tall flute to enjoy seeing the bubbles rise in the glass,” Weyrich said. “But you can also enjoy it in a larger white wine glass where you can discover more of the aromatics and layers as the wine warms up in the glass. The Roederer Estate Brut is indeed a friend of a relaxed party, but also the companion of a more focused food pairing, building upon its focused crisp acidity and layered aromatics.”

The brut is non-vintage, which means the wine is a blend of several vintages. However, Weyrich prefers to call it MV or “multi-vintage” because the brut is actually a blend from multiple lots of different vintages — at least three.

What happens behind the scenes to make the brut a standout? Aging, and plenty of it. By the time the brut is uncorked, some of the wine inside the bottle is at least 6 years old.

“There is the careful selection of approximately 15 percent of the best wine of every vintage to be set aside and aged in large wood casks for four years on average,” Weyrich explained. “When time comes to create the blend for the second fermentation in the bottle, only the casks making the best match are selected — the ones that bring complexity, length and smoothness without sacrificing purity.”

Weyrich said the most gratifying part of producing the brut is tasting the results.

“It’s finding out that the magic of the Method Champenoise or second fermentation in the bottle works.”

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Wine of the Week: Scouting for the tastiest whites to celebrate summer’s end

Wine writer Peg Melnik had a blind tasting this week with a flight of white wines to relish the final days of summer. Bottlings included a broad range, from sparklers to chardonnays to sauvignon blancs. Our wine-of-the-week winner is the Roederer Estate, N.V. Anderson Valley Brut at \$24.

TOP PICK:

Roederer Estate, N.V. Anderson Valley Brut, 12 percent alcohol, \$24. ★★★★★ An elegant sparkler with complex notes of pear, hazelnut and mineral. It’s light on its feet with great acidity. Impressive. A smart pick for the price.

Other impressive wines:

Iron Horse, 2009 Green Valley of Russian River Valley, Sonoma County Brut Classic, 13.5 percent, \$40. ★★★★★ 1/2 This is a striking sparkler with great complexity and a seamless texture. It’s lush with notes of baked apple, brioche and nut. Nice mousse. Lingering finish. Outstanding.

Ousterhout, 2013 Redwood Ranch, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County Sauvignon

Blanc, 13.5 percent, \$22. ★★★ 1/2 A refreshing sauvignon blanc with a range. Its breath of flavors is what gives this wine its intrigue. Notes of grapefruit, mango, papaya and lemon peel. Bright finish. Tasty.

Small Vines, 2012 Sonoma Coast, Sonoma County Chardonnay, 13.8 percent, \$53. ★★★ 1/2

A tasty chardonnay with depth. It has bright fruit, good minerality and crisp acidity. Seamless and complex.

La Crema, 2013 Monterey Pinot Gris, 13.5 percent, \$20. ★★★ A tropical pinot gris with aromas of pineapple, apricot and lemon zest. Bright acidity. Nice length. A refreshing summer pick.