

Tastings - Jekyll and Hyde

We arrive again at that crossing point in the year where we can't quite shake winter completely and yet we know that sunny, beachy days are ahead when the thermometer randomly pops in to the higher 20's. As a realistic optimistic, I want to pour something heavy in my glass that isn't going to make me sulk and ponder the meaning of life as whiskey generally fills that bill fine. I want a glass that's fresh, invigorating, and mindful that our evenings will be an hour longer soon.

L'Olivera Vinyes Trobades 2011 12.50€

For those unfamiliar with L'Olivera, I wrote about their Can Calopa project last December but their main winery is out west of us in DO Costers del Segre, based in the lovely village of Vallbona de les Monges. The winery is a social project that also happens to make great wine.

While I love all of their wines, this white hits all the right notes for me. While light and fresh, at the same time it has good body to it, brought about by their using old vineyards from the region. While not at all flabby, it isn't a heavy hitter to the palate like a white further south can be. There are great floral notes and a touch of citrus that make it a fantastic choice given that it pairs with just about anything from seafood to chicken to pork and yes, calçots.

Celler de Capçanes 2/vb 2009 27.50€

Anyone who has spent a bit of time in Barcelona will have probably encountered a bottle from this cellar in DO Montsant. They're very well known for their excellent line of Kosher wines, but they also produce many others including these "backslash" wines.

I've recently finished tasting all the wines produced in DO Montsant for a forthcoming book about the region and this "blanc de negre" stood out as one of the more curious bottles. For those unfamiliar with the process, if you take red grapes and limit the maceration time, you can actually produce a "white" wine from them. Often these are strange, strange beasts that only my most hardcore of wine compatriots adore. This bottle however is very approachable, deep, and fresh. It's considerably larger in the body than the L'Olivera wine, but it isn't heavy and has notes of orange blossoms and raspberries. A very different bottle that's very fitting for a time of year when you need to take an umbrella to play beach volleyball.