

Tastings - Beyond the Top 10

The World Cup of wine-related things happened at the beginning of last month in that the Wine Advocate scores were released. Also called Parker Points after the founder of this peculiar system that runs from 50-100, many in the wine world will pretend to be "beyond" them. But the fact is, we all look at them and whether we agree or disagree, they influence retail wine sales more than anything else in the world.

This year a Vi Ranci (give it a try if you don't know it) from Priorat was the only wine from Catalonia with the "perfect" score of 100. It, as well as its compatriots at the top of the list are indeed wonderful wines. But what about those a little further down the list? Let's take a look at a couple of them.

Can Rafols dels Caus - La Calma 2010 25€

In the world of Robert Parker, a 94 is a very good score and this white from Penedès received the highest white wine score in all of Catalonia. So why mention it here? For the simple fact that red wine lovers will often dismiss whites, myself included.

I was admittedly a bit skeptical of this wine as well given that it's made of Chenin Blanc which is a very nice grape--in France. But this is indeed a fantastic bottle. It has fresh citric notes to the nose as well as a light, wonderful minerality. It's well balanced in the body and smooth in texture with some orange blossom notes in the finish. It loves to be paired with lighter meals of sea bass, chicken, or pork. Of course you could very well inhale the whole bottle unaccompanied if desired.

Venus La Universal - Venus 2009 28€

While just one point below the La Calma and still high at 93 points, this score bumps the Venus to the second page and a bit out of sight. It's a shame really as this DO Montsant project of DOQ Priorat husband and wife legends, René Barbier IV and Sara Pérez continually pleases me.

Year after year the fully organic, Venus is one of the most wonderful bottles to emerge from DO Montsant. The aromas might initially seem like "modern" DOQ Priorat with the fresh red fruits and black pepper but the body backs off a bit while remaining meaty, although not spicy and brash. Wonderfully balanced and well crafted. A great companion to duck and rabbit as well as the compendium of grilled meats.