

Tastings - Vi Novell

As you read this, the first olives are being pressed and bottled as *oli nou*--an atomic bomb of liquid gold that sells out fast. In meat-related news, the first pigs of the season are traditionally slaughtered as well in conjunction with Sant Marti on November 11th, hailing a season of porky deliciousness for the long winter months to come. But most importantly, the *vi novell* is released.

For those who follow all things wine-related, you might know this better as the *vins de primeur* in France and if so, you've probably tasted the most famous of the lot in the wines released as *Beaujolais nouveau* which have a rabid band of followers. Despite 55 AOC regions making vins de primeur north of us, the French don't have a lock on this and Catalonia celebrates its own first release of wines starting in the second half of November.

It's important to understand that these wines are wickedly different than those released with longer aging cycles. As the wine has just barely become wine it is still prone to continue fermentation. Thus, when opening up a bottle, you'll typically get a waft of CO2 and might even find a little bit of effervescence in the bottle. The flavour profile is light, fresh, and incredibly accessible making it a wine that all level of drinkers can immediately enjoy. And immediately you must as the wines are intended to be consumed within the first part of the year after their release. Aging vi novell will not win you any taste points.

There are festival aplenty in most of the wine producing regions from Empordà to Pla de Bages to Penedès to Terra Alta. The fun also comes to Barcelona in the form of a festival devoted to these wines put on by Vila Viniteca in the La Ribera/Born neighbourhood since 1994.

In this onslaught of bottles from all over the region, I generally pick out the Vi Novell from Celler El Masroig in DO Montsant as one of my favourites. Each year features a different pork-centric design as an homage to how the wine was traditionally drunk as part of the first pig slaughter. This cellar also does a big push to educate the public about the history of the wine all starting in the third week of November.

Celler El Masroig Vi Novell 2013 6€

It holds red fruit notes in the nose along with a freshness that transitions in to the body and makes for a wine that's very much alive in the mouth. A very approachable and versatile wine for immediate consumption and easily fit in to just about any table and meal.