

Montsant's "Institutional Wines"

Over the summer I was asked to participate in rating the "institutional wines" for DO Montsant. These are wines they select to be the most representative of the region at that given moment. Once selected, in addition to bragging rights by the cellar, the wines are served at promotional events for the DO.

They aren't randomly chosen and need to meet certain requirements such as in the case of the whites being a minimum of 70% from White Grenache and/or Macabeu and the reds a minimum 70% from Grenache and Carignan. A group of 20 of us blind tasted the wines in various orders so that one person's number one may have be another's number ten to account for "palate fatigue".

It's an interesting exercise to try and define a region that produces some five million bottles of wine in just two. Overall though I'd say that the result was good and if you want to understand DO Montsant in two wines, these offer up a good interpretation, although I would posit there are many other reds that you can try as well.

Acústic - Blanc 2015 12€

A wine that's been getting attention for several vintages now, this blend of 60% White Grenache, 25% Macabeu, 10% Grey Grenache, and 5% Xarel·lo is exciting. While you get some tropical notes in it, owner, Albert Jané has done well to round it out with a touch of barrel aging to make a modern interpretation of the "field blend" from days past.

Celler El Masroig - Les Sorts Vinyes Velles 2013 15€

This cooperative makes somewhere around 30% of all the wine in DO Montsant and has the arduous task of blending together massively varying plots of grapes. The resulting blend of a Grenache and Carignan is impressive in what it pulls off. Expressive red and dark fruits come out immediately as well as a generally spicy character that's balanced by good acidity in what was a showstopper of a vintage.