



PHIFER PAVITT  
Date Night  
Napa Valley



## Vinography Unboxed: Week of December 7, 2014

December 11, 2014  
by Alder

Hello, and welcome to my periodic dig through the samples pile. I'm pleased to bring you the latest installment of Vinography Unboxed, where I highlight some of the better bottles that have crossed my doorstep recently.

This week included a few more recent releases from Medlock Ames in Sonoma's Alexander Valley. I continue to be impressed with these wines, which I have been following off and on since their first release. I think they've never been better.

Other reliable producers showed up in this week's tasting pool, including Cornerstone and Smith Madrone, both of whom can be counted on for excellent wines. In particular the Smith Madrone Chardonnay stood out as an exceptional wine in the 2012 vintage.

In the oddball department, you might want to hunt down a bottle of sparkling Syrah made by the folks at Solminer vineyards. If you like a good Lambrusco you'll love this wine, which is begging for a slice of pizza to eat with it.

Finally I also opened one of the classic wines of Italy's Veneto region, the Costasera Amarone from Masi. For anyone who loves deep rich wines, this is a real winner.

All these and more below!

PHIFER PAVITT WINE  
4660 Silverado Trail | Calistoga, California 94515 | (p) 707 942 4787 | (f) 707 737 0311  
[info@phiferpavittwine.com](mailto:info@phiferpavittwine.com) | [www.phiferpavittwine.com](http://www.phiferpavittwine.com)

**2013 Phifer Pavitt "Date Night" Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley, Napa, California**

Pale gold in the glass with a hint of green, this wine smells of sweet green apple and gooseberries. In the mouth, silky flavors of vanilla, green apple, and honeysuckle mix in a nice concoction that has a bright crispness to counterpoint the rich texture. Could be a bit more zingy, but tasty enough. 14.5% alcohol. 588 cases produced. Score: around **8.5**. Cost: \$25. [click to buy.](#)

**2012 Smith Madrone Chardonnay, Spring Mountain District, Napa, California**

Pale gold in color, this wine smells of wet chalkboard, oatmeal, and lemon curd. In the mouth, electrically bright flavors of lemon juice and pink grapefruit have a faint herbal quality to them as if strained through chamomile. Very pretty with excellent acidity. Will likely age beautifully. 14.2% alcohol. 779 cases produced. Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$30. [click to buy.](#)

**2013 Solminer "Nebullite - Delanda Vineyard" Syrah, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Barbara, California**

Medium to dark garnet in the glass with medium to coarse bubbles, this unusual sparkling Syrah smells like smoky cassis and blackberries with a hint of an animal undertone. In the mouth, black cherry and blackberry flavors have a SweetTart tanginess to them, and finish dry with a hint of licorice. 13.8% alcohol. 36 cases produced. Score: around **8.5**. Cost: \$38. [click to buy.](#)

**2012 Cornerstone Cellars Chardonnay, Willamette Valley, Oregon**

Light blonde in color, this wine smells of tangy lemon curd and cold cream. In the mouth, cold cream and lemon curd flavors take on a piney resinous note that is quite charming. Good acidity and brightness, with a pomelo and lemon pith finish. Tasty. 13.5% alcohol. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$40. [click to buy.](#)

**2011 Cornerstone Cellars Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon**

Medium garnet in the glass, this wine smells of redwood bark, red apple skin, raspberry and cranberry fruit. In the mouth, the wine has a distinctly savory bent, with forest floor and raspberry leaf flavors mixing with the cranberry fruit. For some reason this wine also tastes fairly evolved for a 2011, suggesting perhaps a decent amount of oxygen contact in its making. 13.5% alcohol. Score: between **8.5** and **9**. Cost: \$50. [click to buy.](#)

**2012 Yangarra "Old Vine" Grenache, McLaren Vale, South Australia**

Dark garnet in the glass, this wine smells of strawberry jam, caramels, and a nice herbal note. In the mouth, wonderfully savory herbal notes mix with bright strawberry and cherry fruit on top of a forest floor and caramelized brown sugar foundation. Rich but not sweet or overripe. Faint tannins dust the back of the mouth, as the wine leaves a faint woody flavor in the mouth. 14.5% alcohol. 574 cases produced. Score: between **8.5** and **9**. Cost: \$24. [click to buy.](#)

**2012 Heintz Syrah, Sonoma Coast, Sonoma, California**

Very dark garnet in color, this wine smells of cassis and white pepper. In the mouth, lean and juicy flavors of cherry, blackberry and white pepper wash over the palate with only the faintest of tannins. Excellent acidity. Delicious. 13.8% alcohol. Score: between **8.5** and **9**. Cost: \$46.

**2013 Medlock Ames "Bell Mountain Estate" Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, Sonoma, California**

PHIFER PAVITT WINE

4660 Silverado Trail | Calistoga, California 94515 | (p) 707 942 4787 | (f) 707 737 0311  
[info@phiferpavittwine.com](mailto:info@phiferpavittwine.com) | [www.phiferpavittwine.com](http://www.phiferpavittwine.com)

Pale gold in color, this wine smells of pink grapefruit and lemon curd. In the mouth, juicy candied lemon rind and pink grapefruit mix with a hint of wet stones and white flowers. Crisp, bright, and with a faint sweetness in the finish. Delicious. 13.9% alcohol. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$25. [click to buy.](#)

**2013 Medlock Ames "Bell Mountain Estate" Sauvignon Blanc, Alexander Valley, Sonoma, California**

Palest gold to near-colorless in the glass, this wine smells of gooseberries and green apples. In the mouth flavors of green apple and cut grass and gooseberries have a distinct sweetness to them that I wish were not there, but other than that the fruit is quite pleasant. Crisp, even zingy acidity. 14.3% alcohol. Score: around **8.5**. Cost: \$22. [click to buy.](#)

**2011 Medlock Ames "Bell Mountain Estate" Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, Sonoma, California**

Medium to dark garnet in color, this wine smells of cherry and tobacco and crushed green herbs. In the mouth, gorgeous cherry and green herbs and tobacco flavors are held firmly in a fist of fine grained tannins. Fantastic acidity and a nice floral highlight in the finish make for a delectable wine. Mouthwatering and quite composed. A real triumph in a tough vintage. 13.6% alcohol. Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$47. [click to buy.](#)

**2010 Masi "Costasera" Amarone della Valpolicella, Veneto, Italy**

Dark ruby in color, this wine smells of cherry and leather and blackberry. In the mouth, leathery tannins wrap around a core of bright cherry and dried cherry, chocolate, licorice, and bitter cedar flavors. That bitterness lingers in the finish with a counterpoint of faint sweetness. Excellent acidity. 15% alcohol. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$50. [click to buy.](#)