

toast

Natural wine has great balance, taste, and minerality—and no additives. Top sommelier **Jorge Riera** tells you what to look for and shares his favorite bottles to try.

BY PAM O'BRIEN

Natural wine is having a moment, with more and more restaurants, bars, and wineshops selling it. And no wonder: "It's energetic, lively, fresh, mineral-driven, with low ABV [alcohol by volume]," says sommelier Jorge Riera, wine director at Frenchette in New York and an expert in natural wine. "Great with foods, lifting flavors and cutting through richness, these are wines you can drink all day long!"

Natural wine is an "unadulterated expression of the grapes fermenting into a highly drinkable beverage," Riera explains. All the work is done by hand, from the farming to the bottling and labeling, no herbicides or pesticides are used, and, "There's a healthy look to the soils and vines," he says. "There is no manipulation within the cellar, so the grapes are harvested and undergo fermentation with Indigenous yeasts, and the wine is allowed to just be."

"I discovered [natural wines] in Loire in France 25 years ago and fell in love with the winemakers' artisanal and laborious way of life," Riera says. "Not to mention, the wines are damn good and gave me a direct sense of place—what they call terroir."

Find importers and shops that specialize in these wines, Riera says. He recommends these importers: Louis/Dressner Selections, Jenny & François Selections, Zev Rovine Selections, De la Viña Selections, José Pastor Selections, Camille Rivière Selections, Wine MC2, and Terrell Wines.

THE BEST NATURAL WINES

Here are Riera's top six picks:



Le Clos de Tue-Bœuf, Buisson Pouilleux, Vin de France 2019

"A textured sauvignon blanc—great with shellfish." (\$30, Louis/Dressner Selections)



La Famille Mosse, Marie-Besnard, Vin de France 2015

"A beautiful mineral-driven old-vine Chenin. Enjoy with poultry." (\$70, Louis/Dressner Selections)



Claude Courtois, Le Cailloux du Paradis, Racines, Vin de France 2016

"A truly unique blend of many grapes." (\$48, Jenny & François Selections)



Christian Tschida, Himmel auf Erden, Rosé, Burgenland, Austria 2019

"An energetic rosé of cabernet franc." (\$37, Jenny & François Selections)



Domaine Matassa, Blanc, Vin de France 2019

"Mostly grenache gris and macabeu." (\$70, Louis/Dressner Selections)



Marie et Vincent Tricot, 3 Bonhommes, Vin de France 2018

"A wonderful pinot noir—great with meats." (\$45, Zev Rovine Selections)