

The Whole Truth Network

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Wines of the Negrette Grape By Brad L Johnson



Nate Barlow is an exceptional actor, writer, director and producer. He also knows his way around a grape. During a recent interview he shared with WTN his new found love of the Negrette grape. Nate says he likes to try varietals that are not the norm. "The Wild Horse was definitely a Negrette varietal; I just wasn't sure if it was 100% Negrette (it is—I looked it up). The port-styled wine was from Roxo Port Cellars."

So we did a little digging so you too can experience this wonderful varietal.

"The grape that sets Fronton apart from other winemaking regions in France is its principal grape, Negrette. Whereas neighboring Gaillac is allowed to use Negrette, vineyards in the Côtes du Frontonnais, by law, must be planted with at least 50% of this varietal. In some ways, Negrette doesn't have much going for it; it lacks acidity, color, and tends to oxidize easily. Yet when vinified carefully and complimented



with small proportions of other grapes (Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah for color and tannin, Gamay and Cabernet Franc for aroma), it yields wonderfully fresh wines rich in nuances of blackberry and fresh cherry, with a supple texture and light finishing tannins. These wines provide a wonderful accompaniment to the rich foods of the region and are priced for everyday consumption."-Charles Neal Selections

Crusaders from the Order of St. John of Jerusalem returned to France from the Middle East in the 12th Century. With them they carried numerous treasures and souvenirs. Included were vine cuttings of grapes of a variety called Negrette, native to Cypress. When you treat yourself to this rare grape and lose yourself in the dark perfume like a Mediterranean garden, you are drinking history. The grape may have been lost to antiquity had it not been for some viticulturalist around Toulouse who resisted ripping out the vines out and planting Cabernet Sauvignon in their place.

You will not find a similar grape today.

"The Chateau Bellevue La Foret Ce Vin is a 100% Negrette wine, and was not blended with other red varieties which is common in the region. (\$11.84, Garagiste; available elsewhere for under \$10) It was deep plum verging on aubergine in color, and smelled like a garden. I detected aromas of violet, plum blossom, and jasmine with a touch of spice that managed to keep it from becoming cloying. Flavors of rich plum and sour cherry were combined with nice, spicy notes. The wine was low in tannins, and when it was first opened the aromas overwhelmed the other aspects of the wine. I think it could do with 6-12 months more age in the bottle, or about an hour of decanting to be at its best. Very good QPR.

Negrette is not on most food and wine pairing charts, so you may be stumped with what to have with it. I would recommend something aromatic and meaty, like Korean BBQ beef ribs or a tasty stir-fried pork with tomatoes and basil. Both dishes will pick up the peppery spiciness of the wine, and the wine will do its bit to accentuate their full flavors. If you like Syrah and Grenache, you will love Negrette. Keep your eyes open for a bottle, and taste some history."-Deb Harkness