

2014 GRAVITAS

Flavorful, Fun, and Comestible-Friendly

By Mary Ewing-Mulligan | May 19, 2015

Just look at the price and you know that this wine is not positioned in what marketers call the “aspirational” category -- wines that people aspire to own but can’t really afford. But the wine itself does have aspirations. Specifically it considers itself the antithesis of the typical affordable New World white wine. In fact, it is a very good wine and not at all a typical California white.

This new white is a companion to the red wine, “A Proper Claret,” released by Bonny Doon Vineyard in the 2012 vintage. Like the red, the label depicts a fusty Englishman circa early 20th century, who espouses what would now be considered antiquated notions about how wine should taste. Except that some wine drinkers agree with those notions, including, obviously, winemaker Randall Grahm, the alter-ego of the stuffy old Englishman named Reginald.

On the wine’s back label, Reginald presents the dilemma: the difficulty of finding a proper white wine to consume with comestibles. He seeks a white wine that has “proper gravitas,” meaning that it is not obviously fruity nor overly oaky nor buttery but “demonstrates its stones” with a pleasant quality of minerality and a persistent finish. (Some of us might wonder whether he is a mind-reader.)

Gravitas 2014 is a Semillon-Sauvignon Blanc blend (54 percent Semillon to 28.5 percent Sauv Blanc) with a 2.5 percent hit of Orange Muscat. The grapes come from various parts of California, mainly Lakeport, in Lake County; Santa Ynez; and Yountville.

As for a typical Old World Semillon-Sauvignon Blanc, the aroma of this wine is only moderately

intense; its aromas per se are fruity and floral, with notes of ripe figs, along with a bit of peach and citrus. In your mouth, the wine is dry and full-bodied with an unusual, seductively unctuous texture that suggests waxiness or oiliness rather than creaminess. This rich texture masks the wine’s acidity somewhat, but the freshness and lightness of acidity break through on the mid-palate, bringing with it lively citrus flavor to contrast with ripe fig and melon notes. Underlying the rich texture and the uplifting acidity is a broad, tactile minerality, an earthy note that grounds the wine. In summary: a flavorful, textured, un-oaked white wine of large proportions but good balance and attractive subtlety.

Because Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc are classic grape varieties of Bordeaux, this wine invites comparisons with white Bordeaux. Personally, I find the wine’s taste, weight and texture suggestive of a white Rhône.

Gravitas is easy to drink, but it is not simple. Perhaps Reginald would be pleased to know that it holds my interest glass after glass. Although it is approachable right now, I know that Semillon can evolve with aging, and would not be surprised to find this wine going strong a few years from now.

