

The San Diego Union-Tribune

What's orange wine? Here's a primer



Bracero sommelier and general manager Woody Van Horn is a fan of orange wine. His top recommendation is the COS Pithos Bianco, from Sicily. (Courtesy of Bracero)



Michele Parente Contact Reporter

Is orange wine the next rosé? Wait, what's orange wine?

For the past few years, people in the wine business from New York to L.A. have been buzzing about this trendy, oddly-hued wine, with the din a little quieter here in San Diego.

Respected local wine pro J.M. Woody Van Horn, sommelier and general manager of [Bracero](#), in Little Italy, is trying to change that, trying to spread the word on orange wine and bring others into the fold.

First, what orange wine isn't: It's not a red, white or rosé. And it has nothing to do with citrus, à la sparkling and OJ mimosas.

Orange wine has been made for thousands of years, mostly in cooler parts of Europe. Some liken it to a sour craft beer, others to a bold red that can stand up to complex food flavors.



Woody Van Horn. (Courtesy of Bracero)

Van Horn put together this explainer to help familiarize you with – and perhaps pique your interest in – this quirky wine.

How is it made? Orange wine is made from white grapes with extended skin contact. This changes the wine texture, flavor and aromas, so there will be, say secondary flavors of dried fruits and nuts, versus straightforward oak or fresh fruits. A lot of these wines are traditionally made in large amphora with some exposure to air while aging which assists with the oxidation and overall complexity of these wines.

What makes it different from red, white and rosé? There are no oak tannins in this wine, different than most reds. This wine is not fresh and fruity, very different than

most whites. It is similar to rosé, in that it is a variation of a mainstream wine, but this wine is very mineral driven and has fantastic texture.

Will orange wine eventually catch on? Orange wine is a very classic style of wine with a lot of history, but the complexity does not always please everyone. People are very particular when it comes to red or white. You need to approach orange wine with a sense of adventure.

A favorite bottle? [COS Pithos Bianco](#), from Sicily, made from 100 percent greco bianco grapes, aged in amphora. It's yellow-orange in color and described as complex, taut and nutty, having a spicy palate, with savory, mineral notes. It's a powerful wine with flavors of dried apricot, spice and nuts.

Any pairing suggestions? Try this wine with a full meal and pour it into a large Burgundy glass. I love how the wine evolves and changes with temperature and time in the glass. I think this wine pairs well with fall dishes. Anything with nuts and dried fruits. Currently we are running the following dish which pairs amazingly well: Chile en Nogada, poblano roasted pepper filled with ground beef and pork, a mix of dried fruit, walnuts and pinenuts, topped with a walnut-goat cheese cream sauce and pomegranate arils.

Where can I buy some? There is a shop in Little Italy that carries some of these hard to find wines: Vino Carta (2161 India St., 619-564-6589, www.vinocartasd.com). Sommelier Evan Vallee runs the shop and we put this list together:

Kabaj 2012 Rebula, Goriška Brda, Slovenia, \$24; Radikon 2014 Pinot Grigio, Venezia Giulia, \$38; Swick 2015 Pinot Gris, Crooked Acres Vineyard, Columbia Gorge, WA, \$22; Skerk 2012 Vitovska, Carso, Friuli, \$37; Jolie Laide 2015 Trousseau Gris, Fanucchi-Wood Road Vineyard, Russian River Valley, \$31.

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