

**From:** The BrightWines Beacon [lighthouse@brightwines.com](mailto:lighthouse@brightwines.com)  
**Subject:** wine brackets fun, plus opening day  
**Date:** March 29, 2025 at 12:26 PM  
**To:** The BrightWines Beacon newsletter



**The BrightWines Beacon for March 28th - 31st:** wine brackets fun, plus opening day

Wine is historic, wine is artistic, wine is scientific, gastronomic, environmental, controversial... wine is for thinking, wine is for feeling, wine is for contemplation, and wine in moderation. You know what else wine is ??? **Wine is FUN.**

This weekend's newsletter is going to have some fun, with wine! I mentioned in last week's newsletter that while we're enjoying tournament season and opening day (glorious weather yesterday) but also waiting out the last roar of winter during the madness of March, I was going to have some fun with the range of wines in-stock here at BrightWines. This weekend's newsletter is more-or-less a "wines of the weekend" edition, but it's more than that too! **So read on to BRIGHT LIGHTS and have some fun with wine!**

**THE LAMP IS LIT:** Store Hours and newsletter schedule, March 21st - March 29th

**\*\* SATURDAY March 29th: OPEN from 10:30am until 5:30pm** (regular Saturday hours)

BrightWines will be OPEN this Saturday for order pickups from this newsletter, other recent newsletters, and for Dave-as-personal-shopper requests too. email orders are preferred, just reply to this newsletter or contact Dave and be sure to mention when you prefer to pick up your order so I can reply and prepare accordingly to fill your order.

**\*\* SUNDAY March 30th: CLOSED** per usual

**\*\* MONDAY & TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY March 31st - April 2nd: OPEN** from 11am until at least 5:30pm (order pickups preferred)

BrightWines will be OPEN next week for order pickups from this newsletter or other recent newsletters and for Dave-as-personal-shopper requests too. email orders are preferred, just reply to this newsletter or contact Dave and be sure to mention when you prefer to pick up your order so I can reply and prepare accordingly.

**\*\* THURSDAY & FRIDAY & SATURDAY April 3rd - April 5th: OPEN** after 10:30am on the weekends

BrightWines will be OPEN next week for order pickups from this newsletter or other recent newsletters and for Dave-as-personal-shopper requests too. email orders are preferred, just reply to this newsletter or contact Dave and be sure to mention when you prefer to pick up your order so I can reply and prepare accordingly.

STAY TUNED for an exciting month of April too! Hint: it's "anniversary month" at BrightWines, plus the easter bunny always has plenty of wine in his basket, and more!

**BRIGHT LIGHTS:** wine brackets and opening day wines

**\*\* The BrightWines Invitational, Wine Regional Brackets 2025 \*\***

Matching up a range of recent BrightWines **favorite wines and new arrivals, region vs region, in a "sweet 16 bracket" format.** (maybe I should say it's a "*dry sixteen*" because they are all dry wines)

I know we're missing some regions, and styles of wine, that could easily be included... and do stay tuned for options from those regions/countries left out that are sure to be featured here later this spring (sparkling wine, Germany, South Africa, to name just a few). This **bracket is based purely of currently available BrightWines stock**, from recent events and features and newsletters. The SEEDINGS, and most importantly, the **WINNERS have been determined based on a combination of factors related to BrightWines current stock, wine ratings, customer popularity, and Dave's personal preference.**

In the RED WINE REGIONAL the top seeds are **France, Italy, California, and Spain**, while the mid-major conference champs are **Chile, Argentina, Oregon and Washington** reds.

In the WHITE WINE REGIONAL: the top sees are **France, Italy, California, and New Zealand**, while the mid-major conference champs are **Austria and Greece**, and the play-in game winners are **Spain and Australia**.

Remember, **ALL of these wines are big winners just by virtue of being in the tournament**, and I encourage you to see what you do - or don't - agree with!

RED WINE REGION MATCHUPS:

(top seed) California: **PEDRONCELLI "Mother Clone" 2022 Dry Creek (Sonoma) ZINFANDEL @ \$19.99 per bottle**

- VS -

(mid-major conference champ) Argentina: **BROQUEL (Trapiche, selected barrels) 2021 Mendoza MALBEC @ \$12.99 per bottle (91 pts J.S.)**

*the WINNER and goes to the Final Four...*

**PEDRONCELLI "Mother Clone" 2022 Dry Creek (Sonoma) ZINFANDEL @ \$19.99 per bottle**

Suggested Retail: \$24 per bottle CASE PRICE \$225/case (mix/match is ok, just \$18.75 ea)

**Rated 92 points Wine Spectator!**

This is the flagship red wine for Pedroncelli nowadays, and each vintage that goes by just reminds us of how rare these full-bodied, dense, peppery, oaky, classic Dry Creek Zins are. Wine Spectator notes: "Supple and brambly, with jammy raspberry, licorice and cracked pepper flavors that end on a zesty accent. Drink now through 2032. 92 rating."

(top seed) France: **Domaine Saint Leocadie 2022 "Leukadios" Minervois rouge @ \$15.99 per bottle**

- VS -

(mid-major conference champ) Washington: **Lone Birch 2022 Syrah @ \$12.99 per bottle** (Como list top-seller)

*the WINNER and goes to the Final Four...*

**Domaine SAINT LEOCADIE 2022 "Leukadios" MINERVOIS rouge @ \$15.99 per bottle**

(\$14.99 each, mix/match case price)

**Drinks like a Crozes-Hermitage, but is actually a mature vineyard blend of Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvedre** from Minervois AOC in the heart of the Languedoc. **Juicy blueberry tones galore, with good peppery qualities too.** Really good bang for the buck! This style of Syrah blend from France has inspired countless similar wines from around the world, especially in Australia and California, and yes Washington State too.

(top seed) Italy: **Tolaini "Al Passo" 2021 Rosso TOSCANA (SuperTuscan) @ \$22.50 per bottle**

- VS -

(mid-major conference champ) Oregon: **PIKE ROAD 2023 Willamette Valley PINOT NOIR @ \$19.99 per bottle** (Elk Cove smart-buy)

*the WINNER and goes to the Final Four...*

**Tolaini "Al Passo" 2021 Rosso TOSCANA (SuperTuscan) @ \$22.50 per bottle**

\$270 per case (mix/match okay)

**Rated 94 points** by noted Italian expert Antonio Galloni in the highly respected Vinous Media publication! Here are his notes: "The 2021 Al Passo is a very beautiful and expressive wine. Dried cherry, tobacco, cedar, licorice and incense lend notable aromatic nuance. This **Sangiovese/Merlot/Cabernet Sauvignon blend has a ton to offer. 94 points.**" (AG/VM)

(top seed, value bracket) Spain: **Caracol Serrano 2021 Jumilla (Spain) Red @ \$8.99 per bottle** (W.E. and Decanter recommended)

- VS -

(mid-major conference champ) Chile: **Ventisquero "Root 1" estate Maipo (Chile) 2022 Heritage Red @ \$10.97 per bottle**

*the UPSET Winner and goes to the Final Four...*

**Ventisquero "Root 1" 2022 estate Maipo Heritage Red @ \$10.97 per bottle**

Rated **90 points** by James Suckling and drinking superbly for fans of Chile, or fans of "red blends" looking for the aromatic complexity from Carmenere. **A full-bodied and modern styled blend of Cabernet, Carmenere, Syrah, and Petit Verdot made by a longtime favorite winery (Ventisquero)** who's only locally available wine is this importer's label called "Root 1" that has its roots in a small importer in Seattle who Dave knew well all the back to the late 1990's (a long time).

WHITE WINE REGION MATCHUPS (includes rose):

(top seed) Italy: **Farina 2023 Soave Classico @ \$16.67 per bottle** (mix/match Como event price)

- VS -

(play-in game winner) Greece: **SKOURAS 2023 wild ferment ASSYRTIKO @ \$19.99 per bottle** (compares to Santorini)

*the WINNER (in overtime) and goes to the Final Four...*

**Farina 2023 Soave Classico @ \$16.67 per bottle** (mix/match Como event price)

This matchup of traditional old-world famous dry white wines really comes down the wire. The edge (this time) goes to the more famous and "classic" name, the Soave Classico, for its broad appeal among long-time Italian wine lovers, and for anyone looking to move beyond Pinot Grigio - or have their friends try it. This is a very safe bet that Wine Enthusiast rated 88 points.

(top seed) New Zealand: **Babich 2023 Black Label (Marlborough) Sauvignon Blanc @ \$13.33 per bottle** (\$159.99/case)

- VS -

(mid-major conference champ) Spain: **Casamaro 2023 RUEDA Verdejo @ \$13.33 per bottle** (\$159.99/case)

*the UPSET Winner and goes to the Final Four...*

**Casamaro 2023 RUEDA Verdejo @ \$13.33 per bottle** (\$159.99/case)

If you love the exuberant and identifiable citrus/grapefruit zing of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc but are looking for a similar personality, and even some minerality, but that offers more "**orange**" citrus flavors like tangerine (orange, peach, apricot) instead of grapefruit, you need to get to know Verdejo (aka Verdelho) and especially Verdejo from Rueda in northwestern Spain.

(top seed) California: **Wente 2023 "Riva Ranch" Arroyo Seco Chardonnay @ \$15.99 per bottle** (oaky/buttery but dry)

- VS -

(mid-major conference champ) Austria: **Weszei 2022 "Langenlois" (Kamptal, Austria) Gruner Veltliner @ \$21.99 per bottle**

*the UPSET Winner and goes to the Final Four...*

**Weszei 2022 "Langenlois" (Kamptal, Austria) Gruner Veltliner @ \$21.99 per bottle**

(\$250 per case = \$20.83 ea. mix/match)

Can it really be an "upset" when even winemakers in California are seeking out locations to source Gruner Veltliner at home, a category that was famously once the top-selling white wine at some of the top restaurants in Napa Valley. But still, Chardonnay is hard to dethrone so a different pairing could mean a different result, LOL. This "Langenlois" vineyard sourcing in the Kamptal is all about quality and so is this producer. This is truly outstanding and serious Gruner Veltliner.

(top seed) France: **Saint Cosme “Micro-Cosme” 2023 Sauvignon Blanc - Viognier blend @ \$14.99 per bottle**

(play-in game winner) Australia: **Yalumba 2023 “Y” Series dry Rose of Sangiovese @ \$11.99 per bottle**  
*tournament director’s note:* rather than send along their (France inspired) “Y Series” Viognier, **Yalumba wisely entered their DELICIOUS “Rose of Sangiovese”** which in Dave’s opinion is the best wine in the “Y Series” lineup right now! So check it out! (5 cases in stock now)

*the WINNER and goes to the Final Four... (while supplies last)*

**Saint Cosme “Micro-Cosme” 2023 Sauvignon Blanc - Viognier blend @ \$14.99 per bottle**

This NEW blend series by the famed, **Gigondas (Rhône) winery Saint Cosme** offers great value. The red blend is Grenache with Pinot Noir, and is fine. The WHITE blend is **Sauvignon Blanc with Viognier** and is very impressive! **Wine Spectator** recommended: “There’s **real weight and mineral density to this fresh white, with floral, apple and nectarine flavors flanked by crushed flint and savory herbs**. A flash of acidity keeps this vibrant.”

**So which wines come out on top in the Final Four of reds and Final Four of whites? That’s for YOU to decide!**

**\*\* OPENING DAY:** I declare the “spring” wine season open and ready...

Yesterday was baseball opening day, and the local nine have their home opener next week. We have to get through the roar of the lion’s last madness of March yet this weekend, but Thursday was lovely weather and there’s plenty more of that coming soon. I’ve selected some new arrivals in categories that we don’t talk much about in winter, but are always popular for spring (and summer).

**Wines like Vinho Verde and “grilling reds” are coming into stock again**, current highlights include **2 impressive smart-buy reds from Paso Robles** and new and **2 exciting styles of Vinho Verde** from high quality white wine specialists in Portugal.

**“Here By Chance” 2022 Paso Robles Cabernet Sauvignon @ \$21.99 per bottle (\$19.99 each, mix/match)**

Suggested Retail: \$24.99 per bottle CASE PRICE (mix/match is ok, just \$19.99 per bottle, \$239.88/case)

A new project from the company that brings you Bread and Butter and other popular California smart-buys with distinction! **Rated 91 points** by the Tasting Panel, whose (very accurate, imho) tasting notes say: “cocoa and plum skins, followed by a charge of boysenberry, violets, and cigar leaf. Bold, with tilled soil, dark chocolate-coffee, and a plush, sweet oak finish. 91 rating.” This wine can hardly wait for steaks on the grill.

**Reguero 2023 reserve Alvarinho “Secreto” @ \$17.99 per bottle**

(\$199.99 per case = \$16.67 each, mix/match)

This **100% Albarino is from the Minho - Vinho Verde region** of northern coast Portugal, down river from the Douro. This is not a light bubbly style of “Vinho Verde” though, it’s a serious and lovely white wine Vinho Branco Alvarinho (Albarino). One of the real hidden gems of the Como tasting and a favorite here twice recently.

**Austin Hope TROUBLEMAKER #17 Paso Robles red blend @ \$16.67 per bottle**

Suggested Retail: \$20 (*I know, it should be \$17 right? #17 is the batch number*)

Troublemaker consists of **Syrah, Petite Sirah, Mourvèdre, Grenache, and Zinfandel** made by one of the best, but lesser known, growers of Syrah and Cabernet styles in the central coast. Despite their moments of fame in the Wine Spectator Top 100 and their historic connections to Liberty School and Caymus, the Austin Hope wines are not offered in our market nearly enough. I have always loved this full-bodied and rich and dark blend called Troublemaker and I am VERY happy to have it back for grilling season!

**“Lyma” Vinho Verde (2023 vintage, Joao Portugal Ramos) @ \$9.99 per bottle (\$107.88/case = \$8.99 ea)**

A classic style “Vinho Verde” with just enough frizzante fresh spritz and made by one of the best white wine value wineries in Portugal, Joao Portugal Ramos. It’s not even April, and we might have my best and top-selling Vinho Verde of the new season already. The label is great and the name Lyma is a double entendre for the river Lima in Vinho Verde and for limes! This would have been a dark horse cinderella in the brackets, and is the perfect white for opening day (yep, a screwcap).

That’s all for this lengthy edition. It’s another late-night sending, but perhaps you can enjoy it over morning coffee and either email an order for pickup on Saturday (open regular hours) or next week is fine too! And **feel free to let me know what you think of the brackets... but only if you’ve had the right wine!** And we all know that the right wines are BrightWines! —Dave

*ALL of the wines in today’s newsletter are IN-STOCK NOW. email orders are preferred, just reply to this newsletter or contact Dave and be sure to mention when you prefer to pick up your order so I can reply and prepare accordingly to fill your order.*

**The Right Wines are BrightWines!**

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