

SAINT GOOSE

Volume 54: Back to Wine School

August 2026

This month's lineup is all about learning. Every bottle teaches a different lesson that helps explain why wines taste the way they do. We'll explore ancient vineyard traditions in Greece, discover how geography shapes the wines of Rioja, learn how winemaking decisions influence style, challenge our expectations of California Cabernet Sauvignon, and compare Syrah from its birthplace in the Northern Rhône with the richer styles many people know from Australia.

Whether you're new to wine or have been collecting bottles for years, there is always something new to learn. We hope these six wines help you see familiar grapes and regions through a different lens.

Thanks for being a part of The Flock.

Lesson 1: Ancient Vines, Modern Wine

Wine #1 Thymiopoulos Atma Assyrtiko 2025

2 bottle + 4 bottle mixed

Varietal: 100% Assyrtiko

Region: Naoussa, Macedonia, Greece

Taste: Lemon, peach, herbs, wet stone, citrus zest

Elevage: Stainless steel fermentation and aging to preserve freshness

Serve: Well chilled

Pairings: Grilled shrimp, oysters, Greek salad, roasted chicken

Assyrtiko is one of Greece's signature grapes, prized for its remarkable acidity and mineral character. Across Greece, many vineyards are still farmed using traditional methods, including the famous basket trained vines of Santorini that protect grapes from intense sun and wind. These historic practices continue to influence modern winemaking today. Thymiopoulos combines those traditions with thoughtful, low intervention winemaking to produce a wine that is vibrant, textured, and unmistakably Greek.

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Lesson #2: Sense of Place

Wine #2 **Sierra de Tolono Rioja Blanco 2025**

4 bottle mixed

Varietal: 100% Viura

Region: Rioja Alavesa, Spain

Taste: Citrus, pear, white flowers, limestone minerality

Elevage: Primarily neutral oak to preserve freshness and texture

Serve: Well chilled

Pairings: Grilled fish, Manchego, roast chicken, tapas lads

Rioja is often associated with American oak, but Sierra de Tolono tells a different story. Working in the higher elevation vineyards of Rioja Alavesa, Sandra Bravo focuses on expressing the vineyard rather than the barrel. Cooler temperatures, limestone soils, and mountain influences create wines with energy, freshness, and a distinctive mineral character. This wine reminds us that geography often has a greater influence on a wine than winemaking itself. One of the most important lessons in wine is understanding that every great bottle reflects where it was grown.

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Lesson 3: Winemaking Shapes Style

Wine #3 **Christina Netzl Kühlbar Chillable Red 2025**

4 bottle reds

Varietal: 100% Zweigelt

Region: Carnuntum, Austria

Taste: Raspberry, cherry, cranberry, fresh herbs

Elevage: Gentle extraction with minimal oak influence

Serve: Slightly chilled

Pairings: Charcuterie, pizza, grilled vegetables, burgers

Not every red wine is meant to be rich and powerful. Christina Netzl created Kühlbar specifically to be fresh, lively, and enjoyable with a slight chill. Gentle extraction preserves bright fruit while keeping tannins soft and approachable - 60% is de-stemmed and direct pressed, 40% ferments as whole bunches with a short four day maceration. The result is a wine that is incredibly versatile with food and a great example of how winemaking decisions can completely shape the final style of a wine.

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Lesson 4: Geography Creates Character

Wine #4 **Sierra de Tolono Rioja Tinto 2024**

2 bottle + 4 bottle mixed + 4 bottle reds

Varietal: 100% Tempranillo

Region: Rioja Alavesa, Spain

Taste: Red cherry, raspberry, herbs, crushed stone

Elevage: Neutral oak with minimal intervention

Serve: Cellar temperature

Pairings: Lamb, grilled pork, mushrooms, Manchego

Our second wine from Sierra de Tolono reinforces one of wine's most important ideas. Place matters. Although this wine is made from Tempranillo, it is the vineyards of Rioja Alavesa that define its personality. Higher elevations, limestone soils, and cooler growing conditions produce wines with elegance, freshness, and vibrant acidity rather than heavy extraction. Tasting both Rioja wines together shows how a region's geography creates a recognizable sense of place across different grape varieties.

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Lesson 5: California Cabernet, Reimagined

Wine #5 Doris Cabernet Sauvignon 2024

4 bottle mixed + 4 bottle reds

Varietal: 92% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Merlot, 1% Petit Verdot

Region: California

Taste: Black cherry, plum, cassis, cedar

Elevage: Restrained oak influence to preserve freshness

Serve: Cellar temperature

Pairings: Burgers, grilled steak, roast chicken, barbecue

Many people think California Cabernet Sauvignon always means ripe fruit, high alcohol, and generous new oak. Doris offers a different perspective. Rather than overwhelming the palate with richness, this wine emphasizes balance, freshness, and drinkability. The oak plays a supporting role instead of dominating the wine, allowing Cabernet Sauvignon's fruit and structure to shine through. It is a reminder that great producers often choose elegance over power.

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Lesson 6: Syrah's Original Home

Wine #6 **Barruol Lynch Crozes-Hermitage "Tiercerolles" 2022**

4 bottle reds

Varietal: 100% Syrah

Region: Northern Rhône, France

Taste: Blackberry, violet, black pepper, olive, smoked meat

Elevage: Traditional aging in French oak

Serve: Cellar temperature

Pairings: Lamb, duck, grilled sausage, mushroom dishes

Northern Rhône is the birthplace of Syrah, and its wines are often very different from the Shiraz styles that made Australia famous. Instead of rich jammy fruit and sweet oak, Northern Rhône Syrah emphasizes pepper, savory herbs, floral aromas, and earthy complexity. Cooler temperatures and granite soils produce wines with freshness and structure that reward slow appreciation. This final lesson reminds us that climate and place can completely transform the personality of the same grape variety.