

to Bob Lindquist
FYZ Tu

'Grenache's quality has never been better. It has moved from low-grade Central Valley production grape to become a serious contender'

also goes to Tablas Creek, the Paso Robles operation co-owned by the Perrin family of Châteauneuf-du-Pape's Beaucastel, which provided a new generation of vine material to US nurseries. Trying to contend not only with Châteauneuf but Australia might be a foolhardy task, but the arrival of serious bottles and blends from names such as Stolpman or Donkey & Goat marks Californian Grenache's coming of age. (Less auspiciously, so does the success of 16%-plus monsters such as those from the critically acclaimed Saxum.)

TWO TO TRY



A Tribute to Grace, Santa Barbara Highlands Vineyard Grenache, Santa Barbara County 2008 ★★★★★ 19pts/20 N/A UK www.gracewinecompany.com

From a young Kiwi winemaker who worked in the London wine trade, this effort from a sandy, high-altitude spot channels Château Rayas in its transparent, spicy depth. Full of Indian spice and lucid strawberry fruit, with a surprisingly powerful structure. A completely new expression of Californian Grenache.

Drink: 2011-2018. **Alc:** 14.4%

Terre Rouge, L'Autre Red, Sierra Foothills 2007 ★★★★★ 16.5

N/A UK www.terrerougewines.com

Warm berry, tar, plum and garrigue – a proper Rhône blend (almost 75% Grenache) off mountain vineyards from veteran winemaker Bill Easton. Lots of nutmeg and cocoa powder. Impressively wound-up and yet generous on the palate. **Drink:** 2011-2016. **Alc:** 14.5%



Albarino

'Albarino seems to be the rare Iberian grape that thrives in California'

Transporting an aromatic white from Rías Baixas in Spain to California's more tepid corners might seem a fool's errand. But the variety has rallied, sufficiently so that last year marked my first chance to hold a full tasting for American Albarino.

While there's still headwind against affordable Spanish versions, prices are comparable and Albarino seems to be the rare Iberian grape that actually thrives here; if great Californian Tempranillo remains elusive (the tannins often remain untamed), this is a growing success story – spurred by the efforts of such diligent producers as Louisa Lindquist (wife of Bob Lindquist at Qupé; see opposite) the proprietor of the Verdad label, which includes the couple's new biodynamic Albarino vineyard in Edna Valley) and Markus Bokisch, who makes a compelling case that long-unloved Lodi can be a sweet spot for Spanish varieties.

Photographs: Hans-Peter Siffert/Corbis; Per Karlsson-BK Wine.com/Alamy(2)

Above: with Syrah the 'great failed hope' of Californian reds, Grenache stands ready to rally, says Bonné

TWO TO TRY



Verdad, Albarino, Santa Ynez Valley 2009 ★★★ 15 POA Fields, Morris & Verdin

Louisa Lindquist's Santa Ynez bottling remains full of salty stone, basil and lime pith. A chewy almond note to the finish. **Drink:** 2011-2012. **Alc:** 13%

Bonny Doon, Ca' Del Solo, Estate Vineyard Albarino, Monterey County 2009 ★★★ 14.5

£17.95-£20.40 Alfred The Grape, Fields Morris & Verdin, Portland Wine Co, Slurp, WoodWinters The oily, Riesling-like quality of Randall Graham's take on this grape is evident. Green papaya and quince, with hints of grapefruit and a stony firmness. **Drink:** 2011. **Alc:** 12.8%