

The Press Democrat

Wine of the week: OVR, Old Vine Red, NV, Lot No. 72, Geyserville, by Marietta Cellars



The holiday party, put on hold last year, is making a comeback as we make our way out of the pandemic with cautious optimism.

With this newfound revelry in mind, we did a blind tasting of inexpensive party reds to set you up with a tasty lineup for your celebrations.

The winner of the tasting is the OVR, Old Vine Red, NV, Lot No. 72, Geyserville, by Marietta Cellars, at \$15. This red blend is approachable, with a smooth texture and layered aromas and flavors of strawberry, black raspberry, licorice and white pepper. It's a steal for the price and a terrific party red to buy in bulk for the holiday festivities.

Other tasty, inexpensive party reds include: Burnside Road, NV North Coast Sunset Red Wine, 14.8%, \$14; Joel Gott, 2018 California Zinfandel, 14.4%, \$14; Freakshow, 2019 Lodi Cabernet Sauvignon, 14.5%, \$20; and Pedroncelli, 2019 Sonoma Classico, Dry Creek Valley Red Wine Blend, 14.4%, \$20.

With his family making wine for four generations, Bilbro said the OVR sets a high bar.

“The Old Vine Red has to sing,” he said. “As one of the originators of the red blend category, it needs to showcase real quality and also be delicious right now.”

There are no rules when crafting this blend, Bilbro said. Every year, it’s brand new.

“Every lot of OVR is unique,” he said. “We don’t follow a recipe or work towards prescribed wine chemistry. So we’re constantly playing with style, balance and heft. With Lot 72, we found a beautiful tension between brightness and weight as well as fruit and savory expression.”

Founded in 1978, Marietta is a small independent family-owned and -operated winery. It farms more than 300 acres of vineyards.

Bilbro, 41, grew up in Healdsburg but spent time away traveling in the mountains of Colorado and working on a fishing boat in Alaska. He found his way back to Sonoma County and was transfixed by its beauty. Once he decided he wanted to work among the vines, he studied at UC Davis and graduated with a degree in viticulture and enology in 2007.

The OVR, Bilbro said, is a great holiday pick because it has always been made for the family table.

“It has great acidity, so it is lively and refreshing while the tannins and body will work well with rich foods,” he said. “OVR is all about local traditions, family and fun ... so it’s already in the holiday mood.”