



Written by
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Virginia - a progress report



Below are notes on a dozen Virginia wines chosen as finalists in this year's Governor's Cup, together with reviews of the latest releases from RdV, probably the most exciting winery in the state. I tasted this last pair just before learning of the death of Jacques Boissenot, the Médoc oenologist who quietly guided so many of Bordeaux's most famous wines - see [Boissenots - Bordeaux's secret ingredient](#). His son Eric consults at RdV, a real exception to his principal diet of red bordeaux. Compare and contrast with the collection anointed with this honour in 2013 and 2012.

WHITES

- [Two Twisted Posts Chardonnay 2012 Virginia](#) Very sweet and toasty on the nose - very retro! Butterscotch and a hint of diacetyl. Pretty hot on the finish. Salted caramel. Not the most appetising but sincere. Just a bit green and metallic on the finish. A tad heavy. 13.8% Drink 2013-2014
15
- [Barboursville, Malvaxia Passito 2008 Virginia](#) *In a smart Italian bottle. Grapes dried for 120 days before pressing. Six-month fermentation followed by ageing in barrique.* Translucent orange. Completely scrummy nose. Delightful mix of candied peel and appley sweetness. Not at all heavy. Very graceful. 13.9% Drink 2013-2017
16.5

REDS

- **Barboursville, Reserve Nebbiolo 2010 Virginia** Bright, translucent red with just a hint of orange. Not the most haunting Nebbiolo you ever smelt but certainly recognisably varietal on the nose. The distinctly tarry on the palate. Dried orange peel and very chewy. I don't think you would love this if you didn't already understand Nebbiolo, but this Zonin-owned American outpost are definitely on the way towards Nebbiolodom. Bravi! Work in progress but definitely in the right direction.15.1% Drink 2013-2018
16
- **King Family, Meritage 2011 Monticello** Light crimson. Clean if relatively simple nose. Fruity start and then nicely reined in on the finish. Already quite fun to drink. Good balance. Fairly lightweight. But there is a hint of complexity on the palate. Pretty marked tannins on the finish. Ambitious. And admirably restrained.13.5% Drink 2015-2020
16
- **North Gate, Meritage 2011 Virginia** Dark crimson. Nose is rather dank - were all the bottle spotless? A bit sour and then an overlay of sweet oak. Green notes on the end. Not an appetising whole.13% Drink 2015-2018
14,5
- **Barboursville, Octagon 2010 Virginia** This is Barboursville's Meritage blend. Healthy crimson. Appetising and confident on the nose. A suggestion of graphite and succulent fruit before a dry finish. Lots packed in here. Very juicy fruit inside the ambitious framework. Dry finish for the moment but it's all tucked in here.14.3% Drink 2015-2022
16.5
- **Williamsburg Winery, Adagio 2010 Virginia** 42% Cabernet Franc, 30% Merlot, 28% Petit Verdot aged in French, American and Hungarian barrels. I am trying desperately hard not to be prejudiced against this wine on account of its quite absurdly heavy bottle... Dark crimson shaded towards the rim. Very gravelly - as though some stones had been macerated in the fruit. A bit sour on the end. I can see the appeal of this wine because it's not just simply sweet (though the fruit is pretty sweet at the beginning). It's certainly ambitious. 13% Drink 2016-2020
16
- **Sunset Hills Vineyard, Mosaic 2010 Virginia** Dark crimson. Light leathery nose. Good ripe fruit but was all the oak topnotch, I wonder. Thick and still quite tannic. The oak has certainly left its imprint. Rather brutal finish. 14% Drink 2015-2019
15.5
- **Barren Ridge, Meritage 2009 Virginia** Pretty heavy bottle! 45% Petit Verdot, 35% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. Unusually low alcohol. Mid crimson. Toasty but not aggressive oak on the nose. Nice balance without going to any extremes. Already appetising. An amazing amount of flavour if it really is only 11.5%! Excellent balance and it doesn't seem at all forced.11.5% Drink 2014-2019
16
- **Rockbridge, DeChiel Reserve Meritage Unfiltered 2008 Virginia** 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Cabernet Franc, 25% Merlot, 8% Petit Verdot, 4% Malbec. Amazingly deep crimson for a six-year-old wine. Sweet nose lightly suggests gypsum. Gentle and mild. Nicely integrated though not that subtle overall. Tastes much younger than the label says; I wonder whether this was very aggressive in its youth? Rather assertive acid and tannin on the end. A bit crude and raw. I wonder whether it will ever be perfectly balanced?13% Drink 2016-2019
15

- **Fabbioli Tannat 2011 Virginia** The back label acknowledges that it is 'a nod to the visionaries that saw the potential of this grape in Loudoun County'. It is claimed it will see off any Syrah... Pretty light nose actually. Pretty simple with lots of acidity and not the trademark gripping tannins usually found in this variety. Unappetising finish. Just a bit sour and simple. 13.5% Drink 2015-2018
15
- **Horton Tannat 2010 Virginia** Unusually deep crimson for a Virginia wine. Pretty luscious nose. This seems a cut above most other wines in this Governor's Cup selection. Lots of work seems to have gone into making even a rustic tannic Tannat acceptably luscious. There is the structure of a Tannat but there is also a whole load of fruit and charm. Well done! 13.5% Drink 2014-2021
16.5
- **RdV, Rendezvous 2011 Virginia** 59% Merlot, 23% Cabernet Franc, 18% Petit Verdot. Mid to dark crimson. Fresh and appetising on the nose but just a little grainy and skinny. The oak is pushing through the fruit at the moment. It is appetising and reminds me of a very well-groomed St-Émilion. Good savoury finish but just a bit gawky at the moment. 13.5% Drink 2016-2021
16+
- **RdV, Lost Mountain 2011 Virginia** 49% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Cabernet Franc, 19% Merlot, 2% Petit Verdot. Mid crimson. Complex, fragrant, pretty nose. Not heavy at all with great fruit integration. Real lift and freshness on the finish. Excellent tannin management so that you could (just) drink this wine pretty soon but I think that would be a waste as it is clearly going to go on and on. Very far from a blockbuster but delicately managed. Was this a lighter than usual vintage? Lovely savoury finish but extremely youthful. Neat and contained. 13.5% Drink 2016-2026
17