What was Old is New Again: A Survey of "New" Heritage Cool Climate Grape Varieties for the Northeast

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This article details Heritage and French-American grape varieties that I have grown and evaluated for the past twenty years or more. The grape varieties covered in this article are different from the grape varieties covered in our earlier articles published in *Fruit Notes and Horticultural News.* My farm, Cedar Cliff , is located in Athens, NY, which is on the west bank of the Hudson River about fifty miles north of Newburgh, NY. These quality heritage and French-American varieties were bred in eastern Massachusetts or in the Hudson Valley between 1840 and 1880. Many also came to the Hudson Valley from France before World War II via the grape pioneer Philip Wagner of Boordy Vineyards of Maryland.

These varieties are suitable for most of New England and the Middle Atlantic States except for its coldest regions. Some of these varieties can be used for both wine production and as table grapes. They are all productive, winter hardy, and fungus disease resistant. Because of their resilience, they need less labor, spray material, and other cultivation practices than most of today's commercial varieties. Consequently, they can be grown profitably in the Northeast. Further, since many are locally developed heritage grape varieties, they should command heightened interest and demand from wineries and the wine consuming public

White Grape Varieties

BACO BLANC (Baco 22-A) – Created in 1898 by François Baco (1865-1947) who lived south of Bordeaux, France. It is a hybrid of Folle Blanche x Noah. It is still recommended in France to make brandy in Armagnac. This variety is highly productive, very fungus disease resistant, and winter hardy. The white/green cluster is long and cylindrical (Picture 1). Its bud break is fairly early, and it ripens late in the season to attain proper sugar levels. While recommended to be distilled in France, in the Northeast, it makes clean and fresh white wines that are high in acid. Its flavor profile includes green apples, pink grapefruit, lemons, and flint that melds with softer flavors of melons. While overall it is a neutral wine, it is a good blender that adds substance to the middle of a white wine blend. In addition, its skins can be used to make superior brandy as is done in Armagnac.

Picture 1. BACO BLANC (Baco 22-A)

BOORDY WHITE ROGUE – A superior white grape variety that was sold by Philip Wagner (1904-1996) of the former Boordy Nursery, Riderwood, Maryland. Unfortunately, the name tag of this variety was lost, but since it was such a superior grape variety, Philip continued to grow it and sell it in his nursery catalog as Boordy "White Rogue". Wagner said it was "one of the earliest, extremely vigorous and productive, winter-hardy, disease resistant, [and of] good wine quality." This variety (Picture 2) was a keeper for Wagner especially in places that have a short growing season and harsh winters. I agree on both counts. Wagner suspected that this was a François Baco white hybrid.

Picture 2. BOORDY WHITE ROGUE

BURDIN 4672 – A hybrid of S. 5455 (Plantet) and an unknown white *vinifera.* The cluster is of medium size, compact and winged, fungus disease resistant, productive, and cold hardy (Picture 3). The wines are soft, with elements of pears, pink grapefruit, and slight peach and banana flavors, with a firm acid profile. These fragrant wines are bright with a clean finish. This variety ripens by mid-season and is suitable for the cooler, but not coldest areas of New England.

J.S. 12.428 – Bred by Joannes Seyve (1900-1966) of the Rhône-Alpes region of France, that is of unknown parentage. The white/pink cluster (Picture 4) is large and compact, with solid fungus disease resistance, which is moderately winter hardy and productive. The wine quality is very good either on its own or in a blend. When blended with Valerien, listed below, it makes a brilliant, complex, and very-French white wine, reminiscent of a Sancerre, with integrated flavors of green apple, lemons, pink grapefruit, white peaches, and melons, that is overlaid with soft vanilla elements. It is aromatic wine that has interesting layers. As this wine ages, it become more Alsace-like, with a delightful weighty viscosity, with flavors of melons, older pineapple, white peaches, and lots of vanilla.

Picture 3. BURDIN 4672

Picture 4. J.S. 12.428

SIEBEL 13.047 – A white Seibel hybrid (S. 5658 x S. 4995) that was bred by Dr. Albert Seibel (1844-1936) in an area south of Lyon, France. It is moderately winter hardy with moderately tight clusters of white/pink berries (Picture 5) that are of medium size. It ripens early, but can stay on the vine in cooler locations to attain very high sugar levels. It needs a solid spray program for fungus disease protection. It is best suited to cooler, but not coldest parts of the Hudson Valley, Mohawk Valley, New Jersey, and New England. The wines are exceptional that is "very French" in its flavor profile with elements of white peaches, pears, melons, and light bananas. It has substantial body for a white that conveys a soft, creamy, and velvet finish.

Picture 5. SIEBEL 13.047

VALERIEN (S.V. 23-410) – Bred by Bertille Seyve, Jr. (1895-1959), who lived south of Lyon, France. The white/pink cluster (Picture 6) of unknown heritage is medium-large and loose, with moderate winter hardiness. It is fungus disease resistant with a good spray program and productive. It is a vigorous variety of unknown genetic heritage that tends to bud out late and ripens by mid-season or earlier. The wines are very good that are well balanced, fruity, with good mouth feel. Valerien is good alone and compliments most white blends, especially J.S. 12.428, which is listed above.

Picture 6. Valerien S.V. 23-410

Pink/Red Grape Varieties

CAPTIVATOR – A hybrid developed by T. V. Munson (1843-1913) of Denison, Texas, that is a hybrid of various E. S. Rogers varieties. (Herbert x Meladel (Delago (Delaware x Goethe) x Brilliant (Lindley x Delaware)). This variety is productive, winter hardy, and fungus disease resistant. It has a medium small bunch of large pink colored berries (Picture 7). This is a dual-purpose grape that is good for the table and for wine production. The white wines are bright, very fruit forward, and aromatic with a soft and approachable muscat flavor. It is good either on its own or when used in blends to brighten them up. It reminds me of Lindley in many ways (see Lindley entry).

Picture 7. CAPTIVATOR

LINDLEY – A high quality dual-purpose red/pink grape (Picture 8) bred in 1851 by E. S. Rogers (1826-1899) of Salem, MA. Lindley is a hybrid of Carter x White Chasselas. It is a physically attractive table/wine variety that is vigorous, fungus disease resistant, moderately winter hardy, and a healthy grower that produces a quality white wine. Its flower is somewhat self-infertile, but it can be fully fertilized by Baco Blanc, Concord, Delaware, and Corot Noir. The fruity wines are of at least the quality of Delaware, with more bright Muscat overtones that complement its guava and mixed tropical fruits of mangoes and pineapple. It is a quality grape that was used extensively by the grape breeder T. V. Munson to bred Brilliant, Captivator, Hidalgo, and others.

Picture 8. LINDLEY

Blue/Black Grape Varieties

ANNIE NOIR – A chance seedling found in the Hudson Valley around the year 2000. In the field, it is productive, fungus disease resistant, and winter hardy. Its canopy has open growth, the canes grow laterally, and before its fruit ripens, its canes harden off so that it is winter hardy. Annie Noir clusters are large, open, with large blue-black berries and clusters (Picture 9). The berries start to fall off as it ripens, so it is best to harvest when it is at or before maturity. The wines are clean and pleasant with lots of berry fruits and soft tannins. It has slightly cooked blueberry, blackberry, and strawberry jam notes, with some elements of black cherry, raisins, and anise in its nose and flavor profile, that is grounded with burnt toast and wet bricks. While it is a relatively soft wine, it has darker notes of light chocolate, cooked plums, and light black pepper. Its fruit/acid profile is balanced with an under pinning of charcoal, light tobacco, and tannin to support its fruit.

Picture 9. ANNIE NOIR

B.S. 3408 – It is a hybrid bred by Bertille Seyve, Sr. (1864-1939) who lived in the Rhône-Alps region of France. A blue-black grape of great promise in the field and cellar whose heritage is B.S. 872 x S.5410. It is very productive in the field, moderately winter hardy, with good fungus disease resistance. The cluster is medium-large (Picture 10) and loose that readily accept a spray application. This light ruby red wine is bright and aromatic with flavors of cranberry juice, red and black raspberries, and slight strawberry jam, with a soft, but substantial flinty tannin structure.

Picture 10. BS 3408

HUMBERT # 3 – Developed around 1912 by Monsieur Humbert of the Jura, France. One of its grand-parents is the Hudson Valley Heritage variety Eumelan. It is a hybrid of Roi des Blancs (Gaillard 157) x Gaillard 2. The cluster is medium in size and loose, with medium sized blue-black berries (Picture 11). The variety is productive to very productive and of medium winter hardiness. It has good fungus disease resistance, except for powdery mildew. It ripens early-late to late season. Its wine is of a crimson color and is balanced for acids with a great tannin structure. It is integrated with a burnt raspberry nose, and cranberry/cherry flavors, black olives, cedar, and smoke that has some herbaceous overtones. This wine can age, with a medium-bodied flint middle and finish. Because of its tannin structure, it is a good blender to beef up lighter red wines.

Picture 11. HUMBERT # 3

LE COLONEL (B.S. 2667) – Bred by Bertille Seyve, Sr. It is Couderc Noir x B.S. 872 hybrid. While not commonly grown in the Northeast, it shows much promise at our farm at Cedar Cliff, Athens, NY. It is moderately winter hardy, with solid fungus disease resistance. The vine is of standard size, is a vigorous grower, with moderately high yields. The variety buds out late to avoid late spring frosts and has an airy growth habit (Picture 12) to help minimize fungus disease pressure. It is in the cellar where Le Colonel shines, with complicated flavors of cherry, cranberry juice, raspberries, and beach plums that combines with tobacco box and cedar flavors. The body of the wine is serious, which is steely and flinty, with great tannin structure. The wine is big, aromatic, and approachable, with complex layered fruit. Le Colonel is good on its own or when used in blends to lend its hefty tannins to such a blend.

Picture 12. LE COLONEL (B.S. 2667)

MARION – Either purposely bred or found by Dr. Charles Grant (1810-1881) who established a vineyard and breeding program on Iona Island, near Bear Mountain State Park, New York before 1860. It is a *riparia/labrusca* hybrid which is evidenced by its taste. The must produces a dark juice, with high acids and soft labrusca flavor. The wine has overtones of fresh and cooked strawberries, a soft slightly labrusca middle, that is bright and integrated with a long clean finish. The cluster is medium sized and compact (Picture 13). It is a very vigorous vine that blooms early, but ripens early-late in the season. It is very fungus disease resistant, winter hardy, very productive, has high sugar levels, and does well on many different soil types. This grape is good for wine either on its own or in red blends to brighten them up and to elongate its finish.

Picture 13. MARION

PINARD AND MARECHAL JOFFRE – These two sister varieties have the same genetic make-up as Marechal Foch and Leon Millot (Foster's clone). Like the former, Pinard and Marechal Joffre are hybrids of Millardet 101-14 x Goldriesling. All four are hybrids bred by Eugène Kuhlmann (1858-1932) of Colmar,

Alsace around 1911. Both Pinard and Marechal Joffre (Picture 14) are red varieties that are winter hardy, fungus disease resistant, vigorous, and very productive. Both Pinard and Marechal Joffre should be considered along with their sister varieties Marechal Foch and Leon Millot when planting suitable red varieties for cool and even cold sites in New England and Upstate New York. Of the two, Marechal Joffre ripens about one week to ten days before Pinard, which ripens about the same time as Marechal Foch. Both have good tannin structure that can beef up thinner red wines. The fruit flavors are similar to Marechal Foch and Leon Millot that include blackberry jam, cooked mulberries, black cherry, and soft cooked prunes, with some chocolate, mahogany, and earth elements. These grapes can be used to make bright fruity red wines or to add complexity to other red wines.

Picture 14. PINARD

PALLMER – A chance seedling of unknown parentage found in the Hudson Valley around the year 2000. It has an upright growth habit on a vine of average to above average vigorousness and is moderately productive. Its smallish black berries (Picture 15) are on medium to large sized loose clusters. The variety is hardy to very winter hardy with solid resistance to all fungus diseases. In the cellar, Pallmer shines. It has deep and dark crimson red colors, with aromas and fruit flavors of integrated light cooked prunes, black cherry, black raspberry, cooked mulberries, with a mahogany wood finish. This very aromatic wine has lots of the above cited fruits that integrates well with its big, but soft and meaty tannin structure, and has elements of violets, lavender, black pepper, and raspberry jam. It is a complex wine, which while bright, has the substance and flavor profile of a Malbec. It is good on its own or in red blends to give such blends some heft.

Picture 15. PALLMER

S.V. 18-307 – Bred by Bertille Seyve, Jr., which may be a hybrid of Chancellor x Villard Blanc or Subereux bred after 1935. It is a parent of the Cornell hybrid Corot Noir. This vigorous vine has a thick canopy and is good in the field with modest fungus disease resistance, is very winter hardy, and productive. Its semi-loose clusters help to reduce fungus disease pressure. This small-berried black grape (Picture 16) ripens by mid-season and is a very reliable producer. The wines are deeply colored to inky, with a full rich body, great balance, and tannin structure. While a good blender to add substance to a lighter red blend, it has interesting and integrated flavors of cooked mulberries, blackberries, heavy plums, mint, coffee, and black pepper.

Picture 16. S.V. 18-307

WILDER – A Rogers hybrid bred in 1851 that crossed Carter x Black Hamburg. It is named in honor of Marshall P. Wilder, one of the founders of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and the American Pomological Society. 'Wilder' (Picture 17) is vigorous to very vigorous and winter hardy. It is somewhat susceptible to fungus diseases, but is productive. Its flower is self-infertile, but it can be pollinated by the same varieties that pollinate Goethe (see 'Pink and Light Red Heirloom Grape Varieties for the Northeast', in *Fruit Notes,* vol. 83, no. 4 (2018) and *Horticultural News,* vol. 98, no. 4 (2018). It ripens by mid-season at about the same time as Concord. It is a reliable producer of relatively non-*labrusca* tasting wines. It is a great great-grandparent of the cool climate grape variety Marquette.

Picture 17. WILDER

Conclusion

It is my hope that those in the Northeast who are looking for "new" grape varieties to cultivate and wines to produce from them will consider these "old" grape varieties that had not been closely evaluated in the past. Further, that those interested in low spray programs will consider these grape varieties when developing their own sustainable vineyard programs and practices.

This article is based on the author's over forty years of experience growing cool climate grapes in Athens and Middle Hope, NY and making wine from them; and *Grapes of the Hudson Valley and Other Cool Climate Regions of the United States and Canada*, by J. Stephen Casscles (Coxsackie, N.Y.: Flint Mine Press, 2015), which is going to a new and expanded second edition. This book has more information on some of the grapes covered by this article. The author's email address is cassclesjs@yahoo.com. Heritage Vines of the Hudson Valley.

From Left to Right: Win Cowgill, Trevor Hardy, Megan Haynes, Jacob Wafler, Cristian Ferrari, Alessandro Valente, Kyle Wafler, Susan Wafler, Paul Wafler.

Aslendro Valente and Trevor Hardy discuss converting to a cement trellis post system at Wafler Ochards with Paul and and Kyle Wafler.

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