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the drunken cyclist

*I have three passions: wine, cycling, travel, family, and math.*

## The Random Samples (Imports)—5/8/17

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*It is time for another edition of “Random Samples”—I occasionally get samples from marketing agencies and/or producers, and these can often be grouped together into some sort of over-arching theme: [Drink Them and It Will Come](#), [Summer is Here](#), [So That Means \(More\) Rosé](#), [If It Doesn’t Sparkle, It Doesn’t Matter](#).*

*Other times, I get just a bottle or two that do not have any apparent connection or link. Instead of holding on to those bottles until the “right” combination comes along, I decided to link all these “random” bottles together, making their own category (and, being the math geek that I am, “random sample” has a bit of a double entendre....*

These first four wines come from Sicily, which I will visit for the first time hopefully this Fall.



**2014 Donnafugata Ben Ryé Passito di Pantelleria:** From 375ml. Retail \$45. Zibibo (Muscat of Alexandria). The plan as of right now is to visit Sicily in the early Fall. I am not sure if Donnafugata is on the itinerary, but after tasting through some of their wines, I sure hope it is. Honeyed pineapple and apricot with a bit of a cola aspect. On the palate this is just yummy goodness. Fruit, honey, golden raisins and dried pineapple. Just short of a whoa. 92.

**2015 Donnafugata Sur Sur Grillo Sicilia DOC:** Retail \$15. You know, I might just be coming around to the concept of “Italian White Wine.” There was a time when I really thought that was an oxymoron as most (all?) the whites from the “Boot” were either tasteless, flabby (lacking in acidity), or sadly, both. Well, there are still a few of those wines around, but there are now several regions that are producing world-class whites and Sicily is firmly on that list. If you have not had a Grillo before, search this one out from one of the leaders in Sicilian wine production. Fresh and fruity (lemon and peach) with great balance and a weighty mid-palate. Fantastic. **Very Good to Outstanding. 89-91 Points.**



**2015 Planeta Frappato Sicilia Vittoria DOC:** Retail \$14. Believe it or not, I think this is my first ever Frappato—it will not be my last. While I doubt the variety will ever be considered among the elite in wine circles, I am fairly certain that several have it near the top when considering “fun” wines. Fairly light in the glass with cola and pomegranate dominate. On the palate, lively and playful with plenty of fruit and just the right amounts of acidity and earth. A relatively rare find here in the U.S. but certainly worth seeking out. **Very Good. 88-90 Points.**

**2013 Viticultori Associati Canicatti Nero d’Avola Sicilia Centuno:** Retail \$13. While I am pretty sure that I have not had Frappato, I have had more than my fair share of Nero d’Avola, Sicily’s most famous variety. Dark, and even brooding in the glass, there are oodles of blackberries and black currants. On the palate, that characteristic tart, mocha, earthy goodness that Sicilian Nero has in spades. This wine, though, has decidedly more fruit than most, which sets it apart. **Outstanding. 90-92 Points.**

These next three come from South America, Chile and Argentina, two countries I visited this past Spring for the first (and hopefully not last) time.



### **2014 Concha y Toro Gran Reserva Malbec Ribera del Tinguiririca Marchigüe Chile:**

Retail \$18. I recently returned from a trip to Chile, and I have to say that there are few countries that I have visited that take my breath away like the thin, long South American country. Inky dark with notes of cola, anise, and black currant, the fruit on the palate is surprising as is the tannic finish. This is delicious now, but if you have the patience to wait another year or three, this wine could just convince you to visit its birthplace. **Very Good to Outstanding. 89-91 Points.**

**2015 Trivento Malbec Reserve Mendoza:** Retail \$12. Inky dark with a bit of mocha and black raspberry leads to a full wine with weighty, but not *too much* fruit on the palate. For the price, this is definitely a crowd pleaser—I would suggest buying a case of this to keep on hand for unexpected visitors, or even relatives (you can never be too sure when they are going to pop in). Not a life changer, but, well, non-life changing wines need love too. **Very Good. 87-89 Points.**



### **2014 Trivento Golden Reserve Malbec Luján de Cuyo Mendoza:**

Retail \$20. I first tried this wine a few years ago when [I had lunch with the winemaker Germán di Césare in Philadelphia](#). I was blown away then and I remain a “yuge” fan today—in fact, this might be the single best red wine value on the market. Holy cow. Dark red fruit with a bit of cocoa and pencil lead, this wine has considerable depth and verve. While it might fall *just short* of a “Whoa” it really is close and for the price? Easy. **Outstanding. 91-93 Points.**



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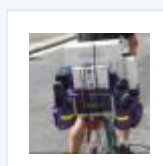
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#### **About the drunken cyclist**

I have been an occasional cycling tour guide in Europe for the past 20 years, visiting most of the wine regions of France. Through this "job" I developed a love for wine and the stories that often accompany the pulling of a cork. I live in Houston with my lovely wife and two wonderful sons.

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