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Royal Tokaji 2020 Furmint Rakoczi, Hungary

About the wine: The 2020 Royal Tokaji Furmint showcases Hungary's signature grape in a dry, elegant style. Produced by the Royal Tokaji Wine Company, one of the key players in reviving the Tokaj region after the fall of communism, this wine demonstrates why Furmint is gaining attention well beyond Hungary. Fermented in both stainless steel and oak and aged on its lees, the wine combines freshness with texture and complexity. Think of it as a wine that is equally comfortable being refreshing or thought-provoking.

About the Region: The wine comes from the historic Tokaj region in northeastern Hungary, a UNESCO World Heritage Site famous for its legendary sweet wines. In recent decades, however, dry Furmint has emerged as one of the region's most exciting styles. Tokaj's volcanic soils, rolling hills, and cool climate produce wines with bright acidity and distinctive minerality. If Riesling and Chablis had a Hungarian cousin, it might look a lot like dry Furmint.

Tasting Notes: The 2020 Royal Tokaji Furmint offers aromas of apples, pear, citrus, and white flowers. The palate delivers ripe peach, apricot, and lemon notes layered with minerality and crisp acidity. What makes Furmint so appealing is its balance of fruit, freshness, and complexity. Just when you think you've figured it out, another layer appears.

Food Pairing: This is an exceptionally food-friendly wine. It shines alongside oysters, shrimp, scallops, grilled fish, sushi, and roast chicken. It also pairs surprisingly well with Thai cuisine, spicy tacos, and other aromatic dishes where its acidity helps balance bold flavors. For a fun pairing, try it with fish and chips. The crisp acidity cuts through the richness, proving that great wine doesn't always require fancy food.

Domaine De Leyre-Loup 2023 Morgon Villie-Morgon, France

About the wine: The 2023 Leyre-Loup Morgon is a classic expression of Gamay from one of Beaujolais' most respected crus. Produced by **Domaine de Leyre-Loup**, a family-owned estate founded in 1993, the wine comes from sustainably farmed vineyards rooted in the granitic soils of Morgon. The estate focuses on expressing terroir rather than winemaking tricks, allowing the vineyard to do most of the talking. The 2023 vintage earned 91 points from James Suckling, who praised its silky texture, freshness, and floral character.

About the Region: Morgon is one of the ten crus of Beaujolais and is often considered among the most age-worthy. While many people associate Beaujolais with simple, fruity wines, Morgon offers more depth, structure, and complexity. The region's granite-rich soils help produce wines that combine bright red fruit with earthy, savory notes. Morgon wines are known for their ability to "morgon"—a local term describing how they develop Burgundian character as they age. It's Gamay with a serious side.

Tasting Notes: The 2023 Leyre-Loup Morgon offers aromas of violets, cherry, blackcurrant, plum, and forest floor. On the palate, it is fresh and medium-bodied with fine tannins, lively acidity, and a touch of pepper on the finish. What makes Morgon so appealing is its balance. It delivers juicy fruit without being simple and earthy complexity without becoming heavy. Think of it as the wine equivalent of showing up to a backyard barbecue wearing a sport coat—and somehow pulling it off.

Food Pairing: This is a versatile food wine that pairs beautifully with roast chicken, pork tenderloin, duck, grilled salmon, and charcuterie. For a more casual match, try it with mushroom pizza, burgers, or even a Thanksgiving turkey sandwich. The bright acidity and moderate tannins make it remarkably adaptable. Serve it slightly cool (or not, as I'm offended by chilled reds), and don't be surprised if the bottle disappears faster than the appetizers.

Plaimont 2024 Papa Roc Cotes De Gascogne Plaimont, France

About the wine: The 2024 Papa Roc is an easygoing red from Plaimont, one of Southwest France's most respected cooperative producers. Based in Gascony, Plaimont represents hundreds of growers and has played a significant role in preserving the region's historic vineyards and grape varieties. Papa Roc is designed for uncomplicated enjoyment. Light-bodied, fruit-forward, and modest in alcohol, it's the kind of wine that doesn't demand your full attention—but rewards it if you give it some. Think "Tuesday night pizza wine" rather than "special occasion cellar trophy."

About the region: Côtes de Gascogne lies in Southwest France, better known to many as the home of Armagnac. In recent decades, however, the region has earned a reputation for producing fresh, affordable wines that consistently overdeliver for the price. The area's Atlantic influence helps maintain freshness in the grapes, while warm summers ensure ripe fruit flavors. The result is wines that tend to be lively, approachable, and made for the dinner table rather than long-term aging.

Tasting notes: The 2024 Papa Roc bursts with aromas of red berries, cherries, and flowers. The palate is light, juicy, and vibrant, with plenty of fresh fruit and soft tannins. Wine Enthusiast described it as energetic and youthful, highlighting its red-fruit character and juicy finish. This isn't a wine trying to impress you with power or complexity. Its charm lies in its freshness and drinkability. Serve it slightly chilled (or not, and you know why) and you'll quickly understand why the French have a habit of opening bottles like this on ordinary weeknights.

Food: Papa Roc shines with casual fare: burgers, grilled sausages, roast chicken, charcuterie, and thin-crust pizza. Its bright fruit also makes it a surprisingly good companion to picnic foods and backyard barbecues. For a particularly Gascon pairing, try it alongside duck breast or duck confit. If that sounds too ambitious for a weeknight, a cheeseburger works just fine. This is a wine that appreciates good company more than culinary perfection.