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# Texas Wine: A Category-Defining Blanc du Bois Produced by The Vineyard at Florence

Posted on October 10th, 2011 9:33am by [Andrew Chalk](#)  
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As SideDish reported earlier this year, Blanc du Bois is one of the most widely planted white wine grapes in east and southeast Texas. It is resistant to Pierce's Disease: a vine-killing disease that can destroy whole vineyards of many types of grapes. The problem with Blanc du Bois is that the wine made from grapes may have given people the idea that resistance to Pierce's Disease was the grape's only redeeming feature. It has been used to make white wines that range from dry to sweet, but the flavor profile has never placed it very high in consumers' estimations. Adjectives generally applied to these wines include 'foxy' and 'earthy.' One exception is Haak's Madeira. This isn't a true Madeira, and the choice of name is unfortunate, but it is an enjoyable dessert wine in its own right. It's also the first example of a truly innovative use of the grape to my knowledge.

As table wine, Texas winemakers don't seem to be sure what they want from Blanc du Bois. Sometimes it appears in a crisp, dry version that might be described as a Sauvignon Blanc style. The same grape is also at the base of a nauseating, simple sweet or semi-sweet wine that sold by the boat load in tasting rooms.

However, now comes a true breakthrough Blanc du Bois table wine. The Vineyard at Florence, situated in Florence Texas just north of the Hill Country and a short diversion off I-35 at Salado, has produced two Blanc du Bois wines that redefine the grape. The 2010 Aura, Estate Grown, Williamson County (\$49.95) and the 2010 Aurelia, Estate Grown, Williamson County (\$31.95) are both made from the same vineyard at the winery.

Jump for the juicy bits.

The Aura is vibrant golden yellow in color, has a nose of mango, hints of oak and just a perception of the aroma of the Blanc du Bois grape. The mouth feel has plenty of body and intense flavors of mango and pineapple. The acid is quite sharp, reflecting the fact that this wine did not go through the softening process of malolactic fermentation. Overall, it most reminds me of a new world Chardonnay. There is so much appealing tropical fruit that it is easy to quaff. With



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food, I would pair it with heavy cream sauces or succulent boldly-flavored flesh like lobster tail. The Aurelia is made in a similar manner, which means aged on the lees with minimal use of French oak and bottled in May and June. However, the defining difference is that it goes through a full malolactic fermentation where the sharp malic acid converts to softer lactic acid which takes out the sharp bite. The acid levels are still good, preventing the wine feeling flabby, but this stylistic change will be to many people's tastes. In the mouth there is also less sensation of mango or tropical fruit and instead the flavor of pears.

The wine at The Vineyard at Florence is made by Dan Gatlin, who is the owner and winemaker at Inwood Estates Vineyards. He has brought a refreshing outsider's perspective to Blanc du Bois winemaking and given other winemakers a reference point. These wines are significant because they answer the question of what Blanc du Bois table wine can be. They present a template for the grape as a Chardonnay substitute in a lush new world style. Commercially, this should be attractive to winemakers who thought they would have to compete with Sauvignon Blanc. Not only is Sauvignon Blanc typically sold at lower prices than Chardonnay, the latter accounts for about 70% of white wine sales in the US and is the largest selling varietal in the country. Those Gulf Coast Texas wineries could be in for a growth spurt.

These wines are produced in small quantities and are for sale directly from the winery here.

