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Wine of the Week: Gary Farrell, 2017 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

On the Fourth of July, there will be a quiet revolution playing out on Webers across America. Plant-based burgers are on the rise, according to MarketWatch. It reports that today most people who order vegan burgers at restaurants aren't even vegetarians.

With this in mind, The Press Democrat decided to do a blind tasting for the holiday, pairing a line-up of wines with a Beyond Burger.

As for the winner, it was a close call. The Gary Farrell 2017 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir at \$45 edged out the Anaba 2017 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir at \$48. Both paired exceedingly well with the meatless patty. Other tasty matches, at a range of price points, include: Pedroncelli 2018, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County, \$22; Siduri 2018 Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir, \$30 and the TL 2018 Petaluma Gap, Sonoma County Pinot Noir, \$60.

The Gary Farrell is crisp, fruit forward and savory. It has notes of Bing cherry, cranberry and mushroom. Balanced, with bright acidity, it has a lingering note of cherry on the finish. The pinot works exceptionally well with the juicy and smoky flavors in the burger.

The Anaba also has great appeal because it's a breezy pinot, with crisp acidity and tangy fruit, including cranberry, cherry and pomegranate. It has a supple texture and irresistible quench. It marries well with the Beyond Burger because its bright acid and high-toned fruit stand up to the smoky, savory flavors of the burger.

Theresa Heredia, winemaker of Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery, said she hasn't tasted the Beyond Burger yet, but she was intrigued by a YouTube challenge of the Beyond Burger versus the Impossible Burger.

This Fourth of July, Heredia may host a socially distanced gathering of six to 10 people in her backyard.

"I was thinking we could set up small tables around the pool so that each section can accommodate each couple," she said. "We wouldn't offer shared food though. We would prepare the food on the grill and serve to each table ourselves wearing masks, so no sharing. And we would ask guests to bring their own sides. Maybe glassware could

be provided by guests as well, or we offer disposable plastic glasses. We've done the same with wine, where only we touch the bottles, and we pour while wearing masks."

Entertaining in a pandemic isn't hard for this winemaker who has mastered health protocols at the winery.

Heredia joined Gary Farrell in 2012. She earned a master's degree in enology and viticulture at UC Davis.

Asked if she's had any epiphanies about winemaking during a pandemic, Heredia said sheltering in place may actually benefit the wine.

"I tasted all of our 2019 blends at my dining room table and sanitized the bottles in my dishwasher before sending them back," Heredia said. "I was able to take more time than usual, because I was tasting in my own space. I think it worked out well for the wines. ... It's possible to make great wines, even during a pandemic."

This Week's Blind Tasting

Beyond Burger Reds

Gary Farrell 2017 Russian River Valley, Pinot Noir, 13.3%, \$45. 4 ½ stars. A great pick for our Beyond Burger Reds tasting because this pinot is crisp, fruit forward and savory. Notes of Bing cherry, cranberry and mushroom. Balanced, with bright acidity. Lingering note of cherry on the finish. Works well with the juicy and smoky flavors in the burger. Striking.

