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2017 Ravines Wine Cellars Cabernet Franc

The 2017 Cabernet Franc was aged for nine months in new and large oak casks (half French, half Austrian-Slavonian). It comes in at 12.9% alcohol. This is the first vintage of the Cab Franc made in the large oak casks—meant to reduce the oak impact. It's beautiful, fresh, structured and classic. There are olive nuances around the edges, black fruits and plenty of power. The structure is superb. It handles the wood beautifully—the new regimen seems like a big success. It could use another year or two of cellaring, although it is approachable now, and it will age well. This is another super value from Ravines. There were about 1,800 cases made. It's terrific, reasonably priced, available and able to age. What's not to like?

- Mark Squires (June, 2019)

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2016 Ravines Wine Cellars Pinot Noir

The 2016 Pinot Noir was aged for ten months in 90% used French oak and comes in at 13.2% alcohol. This was mostly sourced from 16 Falls Vineyard, with about one-fifth of the grapes from White Springs Vineyard. This is a dense, concentrated and powerful Pinot Noir that comes from a warm vintage. Despite that, it also shows good balance and some freshness to go along with the darker fruits, more black cherries than raspberries. Beautifully structured as well, this has a real tannic backbone to support the fine mid-palate depth. It should age very well—owner Morton Hallgren says he still drinks his Pinots back to the beginning (2002). This could really use a couple of years of cellaring. Let's take the aging curve in stages, but it will be interesting to see how this develops. It may yet be entitled to an uptick. And the price is very nice for this quality.

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2015 Ravines Wine Cellars Maximilien

The 2015 Maximilien is a Bordeaux blend, mostly Cabernet Sauvignon, with 18% Cabernet Franc and 17% Merlot, aged for 16 months in an 80/20 mixture of French and American oak. Per the winery's often-seen aging regimen, the first nine months in wood were in mostly well-used barrels, meaning a mix of new to fourth use; the last seven months were in all neutral wood. It comes in at 13% alcohol. In this vintage, said Morton Hallgren, the wines had good ripeness—not as much as 2016, but good. This does well; it's a little lean, structured and reasonably concentrated. The wood adds a touch of vanilla now, but that fades quickly. The finish is excellent. For a cool-climate blend, this succeeds on many levels and has some old-school finesse. Don't expect fat and sweet, of course—that's not the Finger Lakes. It will be better in 2021 or so and will age well. It is a nice value in a well-constructed food wine.

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