THE FOURTH WALL’S
WINE TASTING WITH
LINGANORE WINECELLARS

• White Raven
• Medieval Mead
• Retriever Red

DRINK DRAMATURGY

This week’s tasting gives us an excuse to explore a facet of winemaking not often given the spotlight: hybrids! The vast majority of wines produced around the world are made from grape varieties of Vitis vinifera, the European grapevine. Grape varieties of the same species can be combined to create crosses—Cabernet Sauvignon, for example, is a cross of Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc. Hybrids, on the other hand, are the result of crossing grapes from different species.

Wine grape hybrids were first developed in response to a devastating plague. Phylloxera, a small insect that feeds on the roots of grapevines, was unknowingly brought into Europe from America in the 1860s and quickly spread across the continent, destroying more than half of France’s vineyards. Since North American grapevines were resistant to the pest, researchers started to develop hybrids that yielded resilient grapes of European quality. Some of these novel grapes were found to be particularly well suited to American soil and weather conditions, causing local interest in growing high-quality hybrids to increase over the next few decades.

First grown in France in the 1960s, Chambourcin is one of the most popular hybrid grapes in America and Australia. With a strong herbal aroma and peppery, black cherry notes, this grape produces wines that are deep in color, acidic, and low in tannins. Retriever Red combines Chambourcin with Cabernet Sauvignon to create a balanced, structured red wine.

Developed in 1972 at Cornell University, Cayuga is a resilient, high-yield hybrid perfectly suited for cold climates. This is a versatile grape, useful for making wines that range from semi-sweet to dry and acidic. White Raven, a blend of Cayuga and Chardonnay, is dry and light-bodied, with round acidity and bright citrus notes.

CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO DEMO