

the drunken cyclist



I have three passions: wine, cycling, travel, family, and math.



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My Brother-in-Law is a Hooligan

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A funny thing happened this past Fall: my brother-in-law (he is actually married to my wife's cousin, but in their family they are practically siblings and "cousin-in-law" sounds ridiculous) realized that I write about wine. I guess he knew that I had a wine blog, but I am pretty sure that he did not read it, or take it all that seriously.

Why?

Well, he has worked in the wine industry for a while, but we never really "talked shop." That observation might not be all that revelatory, but once you figure in that when we see each other there are a bunch of kids running around screaming and punching each other in the head, well, I doubt he wants to sit around and talk about work. We both married into a Korean family and if he is at all like me, my biggest concern during family gatherings is to prove that this white guy can indeed use chopsticks.

Don't get me wrong, I shoulder at least half the blame here as well as I could have approached him and asked what he thought about the three-tier system to break the ice, but we all know that is a complete dork move when bulgogi, kalbi, and kimchee are waiting to be inhaled.

This past November, I was **ranked as the 42nd most influential wine blogger in the world** by a wine retailer in England and it was my brother-no-wait-cousin-in-law who was the first to let me know. (By the way, for some reason, I am now #41, thus I am no longer Paul Konerko but Jason Giambi—not sure how I feel about that.)

Well, I was recently out in California, and at the latest Korean BBQ-fest, he brought over a ton of wine from his relatively new employer, the Wine Hooligans, for me to try.

I should (will?) write an entire post (or three with considerably more research) about Wine Hooligans, but in brief (really brief), the Hooligans currently comprises five brands and four winemakers, brought together by the "Head Hooligan" Dennis Carroll.

As the writer of the Drunken Cyclist, I am perhaps most excited about these next wines. I hope to have yet another broader post in the future, but for now, it is important to note that Dennis Carroll's shrewdest move (among many) was to bring original Cycles Gladiator winemaker, Adam LaZarre, back to the brand (another long story). The great art-deco label is back as well, and I have to say that these wines have vaulted back to the top of my "value wines" list. For twelve bucks? They over-deliver.

2014 Cycles Gladiator Chardonnay Central Coast:

Retail \$12. Under Stelvin. Fruity and fresh green apple and stone fruit with a hint of buttered popcorn (20% New French oak, 10% New American oak). A bit of weight and roundness, but driven by the acidity. I know Cycles has had some issues, but they seem to have worked them out. **Very Good. 87-89 Points.**

2014 Cycles Gladiator Merlot Central Coast:

Retail \$12. A bit of blackberry on the nose, but rather tight. On the palate though, this is pretty good: fruit, a bit of complexity, and fairly good balance. I am really starting to dig these wines and they really are well made, particularly at the price. I really have no problem recommending them. None at all. **Very Good to Outstanding. 89-91 Points.**

2014 Cycles Gladiator Pinot Noir Central Coast:

Retail \$12. I always say that it is tough to make a decent Pinot for under \$30. While this wine will not make you think of wines at that higher price point, it is perhaps one of the better sub-\$20 Pinots I have tried. Rich cherry fruit, a bit of earth, and a tart acidity that holds it all together. Not bad at all, I am surprised, really surprised. **Very Good. 87-89 Points.**

2014 Cycles Gladiator Cabernet Sauvignon Central Coast:

Retail \$12. 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Merlot, 8% Syrah. Another solid effort from the Adam LaZarre. Blackberry and cedar initially, which persist on the palate with a bit of black pepper. Not overly fruity like some wines in its class, but I do think it would be a crowd pleaser nonetheless. A bit of tannin on the back-end suggests maybe 3-5 years of life, but it is tasting so well right now, why wait? **Very Good, maybe more. 88-90 Points.**

2014 Cycles Gladiator Petite Sirah Central Coast:

Retail \$12. 82% Petite Sirah, 18% Syrah. A bit of black cherry cola, blueberry, cedar, and vanilla. On the palate, this is certainly bigger and bolder than the other Cycles Gladiator wines as you might expect from a Petite. But this stops short from being a big bruising behemoth that many Petite Sirahs insist on being. There is good fruit and solid structure—a good wine for that Korean barbecue, for sure.... **Good to Very Good. 86-88 Points.**

