



Volute Single Serve Wines Tasting Notes



Could these Volute wines qualify as the cutest on the market? Judge for yourself from the photo. The bear in the photo is Smash, the official 2005 US Open Tennis Banie. As Smash is known for his many serves, Volute wants to make a name for itself as a single serve wine. The concept works, not just because of the packaging, but because this is good French wine at an excellent (\$4 suggested retail) price.

Each specially-treated aluminum container of Volute brings 187ml of wine, hence a quarter of a standard bottle: a glass or a glass-and-a-half depending on who does the pouring. You open the crown cap just as you would a soda bottle. You can drink it at home just like any other wine of course, but the packaging gives it some special flexibility.

According to the company's press release, "the introduction of its new line of single-serve Bordeaux AOC wines packaged in shatterproof, eco-friendly, aluminum bottles... is a big breakthrough because for the first time, wine lovers can enjoy premium wine outdoors, or in venues that ban glass, thanks to Volute's new line of premium wines that come in truly portable single-serve containers." (The purist in me hopes the wine lover will pour the wine into an appropriate glass, insofar as circumstances allow.)

"As opposed to glass," the release continues, "aluminum is ecologically more responsible since it is more commonly recycled, unbreakable, and generates less transportation-related pollution due to its lower weight... Aluminum containers are also better for the wine, since they shield the wine from damaging ultraviolet light, protecting its delicate, fragrant aromas." There wasn't the slightest tinge of a metallic taste to any of the wines I tasted, I must add.

Since these wines are Bordeaux AOC, they naturally reflect typical Bordeaux varietal blends. The red wine—85% Merlot and 15% Cabernet Sauvignon—is deep ruby in color, with a nose of plum, prune, blackberry, clove and nutmeg. Once in the mouth the wine is dry, with soft tannins, respectable acidity and palate notes of sour cherry, raspberry, plum, cedar and vanilla. The finish is clean with a tangy edge. This is good well balanced wine with a distinct old-world richness.

The rosé ratio is exactly the reverse of the red—i.e. 85% Cabernet Sauvignon and 15% Merlot—yielding a wine that though transparent, is no tame red. Strawberry and deep floral notes were first to caress my nose, next mineral and stone, with some black cherry. The wine is medium dry. The mouthfeel is full and powdery. On the palate red fruit is the best descriptor. The arc from first attack through mid-palate to finish is well conceived. The wine finishes cleanly with a good balance of fruit, acid, some sweetness and stone.

The Volute white is 85% Sauvignon Blanc and 15% Sémillon. The wine is a light greenish lemon in color. Lemon and white flowers with white stone characterize the nose, with an overlay of orange blossom and some apricot. This wine is dry with medium though tangy acidity, a bit of grassiness, some floral warmth, stone, medium body with good mouth-feel, and a fairly quick though refreshing finish. The Sémillon melds well to add body and weight to the Sauvignon Blanc's acidity and fruit.

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The frontiers of wine packaging are only starting to be explored. We'll have to see what the market accepts.



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Volute produces a red, a white, and a rosé, all Bordeaux AOC in 187ml containers (one-fourth of a standard 750ml bottle).

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Despite the “outdoor” and “portability” aspects in the company’s release, it seems natural to me to stress the fact that even indoors, at home, the single serve concept is a winner. I use my VacuVin, of course, to stretch full bottles of wine over several days, but even here, I do commit myself to the same wine for the entire period and often the sink gets the final bits. Think again of a situation where some people want white and others red or rosé. The math works. Incidentally, I tested my VacuVin stopper on the elegant neck of the Volute and it does work, just in case you want to save a taste for tomorrow.

Volute is a great concept at an attractive price. I have, however, a qualm about the presentation of the wine. The aluminum containers are well designed, with a visual elegance to match the seductive gentle taper of the necks, but I find the silver lettering on gray backgrounds difficult to read. The wines are color coded, but the green patch for the white wine, the purple for the red, and a light red for the rosé don’t really impart any useful information. You’ve got to pick up and examine these bottles under a decent light (and in my case with my reading glasses) to distinguish one from the other.

These niceties are, of course, lost on Smash, who is very excited about this line of wines because they so nearly approximate his diminutive size. He won’t be drinking any of these offerings from Volute, however. He’s only three after all.

Verdict: Good wine, but you'll still need a proper glass.
