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On Friday, I enjoyed a carnivorous feast, paired with a fantastic array of extraordinarily high-ABV wines with winemaker René Barbier, Jr. and a group of fellow writers and drinks pros at Il Buco. Now, when the wines came out I felt slightly trepidatious simply because when I see 15.5% ABV on a label, I brace my palate for a volcanic onslaught ... But these tasted juicy, even, dare I say it, fresh? Now René and the Clos Mogador label are renowned for their magical rendering of Priorat terroir, but he is the first to give full credit for the complex, but surprisingly light flavor, to the beautiful, extraordinarily dry terrain. I would add that the dry farming, organic production methods, use of wild yeasts, patience in the winery (they give whites up to 16 months to fully ferment) and intolerance for any additives to the list. The red

blends were stunning. We tasted through four from 2004 on up, and each one was distinct. My favorite was the 2016, for its electric verve, sassy attitude, mysterious complexity. If there's a wine that can be likened to my daughter, this is it. But I keep returning to the white (Nelin). It is extraordinarily savory, salty, dry. The blend is fascinating: Grenache Blanc, Viognier, Pinot Noir (vinified as a white, say what?), Roussanne, Marsanne, Macabeo, Pedro Ximenez and Escanya Vella. You get the exotic tropicality of the Viognier with the earthier Pinot. It's vinified and aged in a mix of stainless steel, concrete eggs, and oak barrels. About 9 months are spent chilling on the lees. It's soft, rich, laced with lightning heat. It stood up to the steak, the grilled cheese and salumi, the croquettes, the pastas, the risotto, the olive-oil soaked bread, the calamari and the sausage. Currently, René produces about 8,000 bottles of whites, but he hopes in the coming years to increase his production to 25,000, which would comprise about half of his annual production. I'll be waiting. In the meantime, I'm just going to go do some sprints and pound some green juice.