

Great Wine Buys

Newsletter: August & September 2015

Last of the Summer Wine

Et Fille Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 2012 \$24.99/\$19.99 by the case

We are plenty happy to see the arrival of this late-release value from the terrific 2012 vintage. The father-daughter duo at Et Fille make lovely Pinot Noir year after year but their charming elegant style really dovetails with the opulence of 2012. This captures the essence of the vintage: generous and immediately accessible, but with a classiness that makes it taste like a more expensive bottling. A blend of six different vineyards spread across four AVAs, it offers a range of flavors and moods that keeps the palate engaged, all encased in a smooth silky package. Mellow black fruit dominates while piercing raspberry and candied anise spice notes weave in and out. The fullness of flavor makes it seem bigger than it is yet it never loses its core purity of fruit and balance.

Sineann Abondante Columbia Valley 2012 \$21.99/\$17.50 by the case

Here's a jazzy party-time wine for what's left of this party-time season. (Aren't they all?) Crowd-pleasingly juicy and smooth, this delivers a heady wash of ripe marionberry and cassis fruit with accents of red licorice, cocoa powder and a campfire roasted meats smokiness. Despite its richness, it stays lively and punchy throughout, finishing with a structured beefiness. Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Merlot.

Sentinelle de Massiac Minervois 2014

\$13.50/\$10.80 by the case

Through all the tasting we do, the best moments are when an unexpected wine jumps out at us simultaneously as being really good. Often that is followed by learning that the price, while fair enough, puts the quality in context. Every now and then though, the price is lower than expected, as is the case here. A blend of 65% Syrah and 35% Carignan grown not far from the Mediterranean Sea, this has a sunny happy-go-lucky disposition that belies the quality of organic fruit and conscientious winemaking. Imported by the uncompromising Neal Rosenthal, this has to be one of the best deals in his impressive portfolio. Perfumed, floral and inviting, there's a youthful purity to the fruit that, while delicious, doesn't seem manipulated or simple. The deep flavors of smoky blueberry and red currant are delivered in a supple caressing way with just enough herb-inflected dusty tannin to crave a pairing with a good meal. Already we've noticed its crossover appeal with customers; domestic wine fans like its juicy open-knit vibe while Francophiles appreciate its subtle complexity and savory aromatics.

Cameron Pinot Noir Rosé Dazzle 2014

\$14.99/\$11.99 by the case

Most Cameron wines sell out soon after release but as testament to the abundance of the 2014 vintage, there's some of this pink still around. A new label for John Paul, this was born of inspired winemaking and quick thinking during the process. The fruit is from Johan Vineyard, left two days on the skins and fermented in new oak. John originally did this to pull out tannins, in a sense tempering them for future use for his reds. This gives this rose an underlying structure without any oak flavor. Then 30% Pinot Blanc was added to lighten the color, add aromatics and depth. The final ingredient was a tiny splash of CO2 at bottling which gives it

a fresh burst of liveliness. The result: a delicious slightly serious Pinot Noir with good body and vibrancy, a nice way to roll out of summer.

Apaltagua Carmenère Envero Gran Reserva Apalta Vineyard 2013

\$14.99/\$11.99 by the case

So much promise, and yet... an ancient Bordeaux varietal inadvertently widely planted in Chile (they thought it was Merlot), Carmenère could be to Chile what Malbec has become to Argentina- a signature red varietal unique enough to their country that when you say "Malbec" I say "Argentina". I've heard tales of wonderful Carmenère to be had in Chile itself, robust smoky reds, seamless in texture and redolent of peppery herbs, blond tobacco and leather. Many examples that we see in the US however fall short of that ideal, this being one notable exception. Produced from 50 year old vines, this new vintage is even better than previous years. Beautifully balanced, this is full-bodied and concentrated yet clean and bright, the pretty floral notes just hinting at a green herb spiciness. The black raspberry and dark boysenberry fruit is pure and focused and the texture soft and smooth. It's a great example of what the varietal can offer, made more impressive by its reasonable price. If Chile could just share a few more like these, it wouldn't be long before I say "Chile" and you say "Carmenère!"

**A Piedmontese Duo,
Saved from Extinction**

Burlotto Pelaverga 2014

\$19.99/\$15.99 by the case

Loss of diversity in any field is almost always lamentable which makes success stories like Pelaverga a happy counterweight. An obscure red varietal, it had almost disappeared by the 1970s, replaced by more popular and easier to sell Barbera, Nebbiolo and even Dolcetto. Elisa Burlotto's father called her crazy when she asked to plant a section of the family vineyard with Pelaverga in 1972. Luckily, he himself had a bit of the "crazy" and gave his blessing to the project. Now all these years later, Burlotto has to allocate this wine and Portland is limited to just thirty cases. Given that, this typically sells out quickly but the 2014 just arrived so let's hit it while we can. Light to medium-bodied, it's extremely expressive aromatically, mixing the complexity of Nebbiolo with the drinkable accessibility of Barbera. The nose offers floral rose petal, fresh thyme and sweet leaf tobacco while the palate delivers a refreshing raspberry cherry kick. A versatile food wine, it is supple and inviting with an underlying intensity, allowing it to pair with a variety of dishes.

Burlotto has a long distinguished history; the current winemaker's great-great grandfather pioneered selling his Barolo in bottle (as opposed to casks or barrels) and they were considered one of the top producers in the early 1900s. A hundred years later, they are still influencing the history of Piedmont wine.

Deltetto Roero Arneis Daivej 2014

\$14.99/\$11.99

Arneis may now be more familiar than Pelaverga but in the 1970s only two producers were bottling this white varietal on its own, Bruno Giacosa and Vietti. Its story mirrors that of Pelaverga; unloved, difficult to sell and ready to be swept

aside as Piedmont streamlined and modernized. Thankfully, these two wineries kept the flame alive, producing vibrant lovely wines that sparked renewed interest in the varietal worldwide. This bottling from a small family winery is a great example of the charms of Arneis at a great price. It shows surprising weight and complexity (Arneis is typically fairly light and airy) paired with a stainless steel attitude that delivers excellent lift and cut. Floral and lemony on the nose, the palate brings pear, apple and nectarine into focus, all delivered on a laser beam of fresh acidity.

August/September Tastings

2010 Brunello di Montalcino

The vintage of the millennium! A little tongue in cheek there with that comment but by all accounts it does seem to be something special. Many wines have come and gone but we stashed some winners to share, including Casanova di Neri, La Gerla, and La Fortuna. They will be young but we'll find a way to struggle through...we will also pour an older vintage for comparison. Tuscan red wine fans, come on down!

Friday September 25, 5-7:30 pm, \$20

Friday Evening Tastings:

Flights From 5-7:30pm - just come on by!

August 14 - No Tasting

August 21 - Let's dip our toes in the under-explored whites of the **Rhône valley and Provence**. Châteauneuf du Pape, Cornas, St. Joseph, Cassis and more. Exciting small-production wines that just happen to be white. \$15

August 28 - No Tasting

September 4 - No Tasting. Happy Labor Day Weekend

September 11 - The cooler weather and crisp leaves of fall always brings a jonesing for the **wines of Alsace**.

Conveniently we have many new arrivals to choose from including such favorites as Deiss, Sipp, Zind-Humbrecht and others. Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Gris and more. \$15

September 18 - Let's check in on the latest greatest releases of **2012 Oregon Pinot Noir**. Shea Wine Cellars, Belle Pente, Suzor, Et Fille and more. \$17

September 25 - Even though they're young we can't resist cracking some bottles from the highly celebrated **2010 Brunello di Montalcino** vintage. All the details above. \$20

Saturday Afternoon Tastings:

FREE Tastings From 2-5pm - Drop on in!

Come by and try new arrivals and old favorites from visiting winemakers, local distributors or our favorites off the shelves.

August 15 - No Tasting

August 22 - Paul Markgraf will pour a **range of Bordeaux** from Aquitaine, a serious importer of both value-priced and

the good stuff. Doisy-Daene, Blaignan 2009, & more. FREE

August 29 - As we hit the waning days of summer, let's raise **one more glass of Rosé**. After all the torrid heat, it seems appropriate. FREE

September 5 - No Tasting. Happy Labor Day Weekend

September 12 - The tall voluble Gorge winemaker, **Alexis Pouillon from Domaine Pouillon** takes a break from harvest to share current releases and harvest gossip. Rhône-style white and reds paired with up-to-the-minute harvest 2015 happenings. FREE

September 19 - Newsletter picks. Not sure you want to buy a bottle of Pelaverga, Carmenère or Minervois without first tasting it? Come on by! FREE

September 26 - Gordon Rappole wants to show how well **Zinfandel** goes with BBQ so...he is bringing BBQ! Lusty Zin & Petite Sirah with a **Podnah's BBQ** sandwich. FREE

August/September Case of the Month - \$110

Montfaucon Les Gardettes 2012

Medium bodied and elegant, this caught our attention with its pretty nose, silky texture and overall flavorful profile. An unusual blend from the southern Rhône's right bank, this has 50% Cinsault, 15% Mourvedre, 15% Grenache, 10% Syrah and 10% Carignan. That high percentage of Cinsault probably accounts for its inviting floral aromatics and fresh personality while the other varietals fill in the rest: strawberry jam and black raspberry fruit with a balancing dose of dusty earth on the finish. **\$11.99**

Principe Pallavicini Frascati 2014

For all the kajillion bottles of wine that Italy produces very little of it comes from the area around Rome, that despite its outsized presence in history. This white is one notable exception and as the winery notes, the traditional blend for Frascati goes back over 1000 years. The owners of this winery probably know what they are talking about, their family (noble no less) has over 300 years of viticulture experience. Frascati makes for good late summer drinking: light bright and very dry, the mild peach tang says summer but the overall vibe is less excited than say, a Vinho Verde, and the minerally earthy notes foreshadow autumn's falling leaves, subtle yet inescapable. **\$9.99**

Matua Pinot Noir 2013

A clear winner out of a round of similarly priced Pinot Noir, this Marlborough value is supple yet vibrant, light on its feet but complex enough to keep it interesting. The vivacious tangy cherry fruit is fresh and clean, accented by notes of black tea, brown spice, orange zest and a light pumice stone minerality. **\$10.99**

Sanz Rueda 2013

This 100% Verdejo offers a dual personality in a tight little package. Ample, round and slightly waxy in texture, its richness is offset by lively grapefruit and pineapple flavors that slide toward apple on the crisp finish. Throw in a little floral grass and fleeting gunflint on the nose and you are good to go. **\$11.99**

Luchetti Lacrima Morra d'Alba 2013

And now for something completely different. From the school of highly aromatic Italian reds comes this closeout deal. There aren't many Lacrima available in Portland and certainly not at this price so this is a fun opportunity to try one. One whiff and you'll know why this varietal is a breed apart;

intensely fragrant, it's like walking through an overflowing garden mid-summer, late afternoon where every flower and plant is at peak scent output. Iris, rose and violet roll into boysenberry and wild strawberry while crushed marjoram and an exotic Chinese five spice mix hangs in the background. Soft supple and medium bodied, it fills out nicely with air but stays bouncy on the palate. **\$9.99**

Lavradores Douro Blanco 2014

Hiding behind a simple label and a modest appellation, this Portuguese white offers surprising personality and kick. Bursting with a tart lime and powdery rock intensity, this races through flavors of green apple, under-ripe nectarine and musk melon before finishing stony and almost tannic. It's as refreshing as a Vinho Verde but with a lot more character. The main varietal here is Rabigato, as fun to say as this wine is to drink. **\$9.99**

Ridge Crest Syrah 2011

The label may not be the most exciting but the wine itself is more than solid. On a day when we tasted close to 50 wines, this Columbia Valley red was appreciated for its clean medium bodied fruit, smooth texture and restraint in the oak/alcohol department. Riding a wave of black cherry, light blueberry and muted pepper it's satisfyingly rich without being too heavy. **\$9.99**

Altos de la Hoya Monastrell 2012

A hearty old vine Spanish favorite, this new vintage seems brighter and better delineated than recent examples offering saturated blue/black fruit with plenty of savory old world aromatics. It's nice to pick out lavender, cured black olive and licorice notes while the smoky fruit rolls across the palate. 91 points from critic Josh Reynolds who calls it "a remarkable value". **\$9.99**

Thulon Beaujolais-Villages Rosé 2014

Ok, one more rosé to rock before the summer fades and this is a fun one. We don't see many pinks from Beaujolais which is too bad since Gamay makes such a lively summer-friendly wine. This is light on its feet with a lemon zestiness balancing cherry peachy flavors that duke it out on the long clean finish. **\$9.99**

Hawk Crest Cabernet Sauvignon 2007

We couldn't help ourselves. This is such a deal, customers loved it, amazingly we can get more and it's really good! A second label of Stags Leap, this tastes surprisingly serious, rich but structured; the macerated raspberry and black currant fruit is deep, briary and persistent while grippy tannins hang on the finish. **Was \$15+ now just \$7.99.**

Morrison Lane Viognier 2012

A label change deal takes this from \$24 down to just \$11. Despite its Walla Walla appellation from a warm year this is made in a crisp fresh style for Viognier, delivering flavors of juicy green grapes, white peach and dried apricot before finishing snappy and lightly saline. **\$10.99**

Roc de Segur Bordeaux 2013

Reminding me of the *vin de maison* at many simple Paris bistros, this has a charming youthful rusticity to it, offering a nice mix of true Bordeaux character and accessible fruit. That fruit starts medium red before turning darker mid-palate finishing savory and muscular with a cigar/graphite edginess. Pair with grilled steak or lamb, preferably dusted lightly with herb and see how the flavors expand when paired with food. **\$9.50**