

Great Wine Buys

Newsletter: May 2015

This One Goes up to Twelve

Abeja Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley 2012

\$47.99/\$38.50 by the case

We've been anticipating this arrival ever since early March when we tried it at the big Walla Walla event. Across all price points, this was a standout- one of the most complete and straight-up delicious Cabs tasted - and there was plenty of good wine that day. Since Abeja's first vintage in 2001, winemaker John Abbott has quietly created a reputation as crafting one of Walla Walla's best Cabernet. They aren't flashy about it, they didn't triple the price after some great scores and although it certainly is more limited than the early years, you don't have to get on a waiting list to try a bottle. Given their past success it is no surprise that the 2012 wows. Generous and expressive, this has plenty of flavor intensity but it's the way those flavors are delivered that makes it so compelling. Polished smooth and lithe in texture, there's a dynamic vibrancy that's often hard to conjure in bigger reds. A lively whirl of blue and black fruit notes, brown spice and light cocoa powder practically dances across the palate, gently melting into the seamless finish. Limited availability, this just arrived and is already selling quickly.

Cristom Pinot Noir Mt. Jefferson Cuvée Willamette Valley 2012

\$27.99/\$22.40 by the case

A so-called entry-level cuvée typically made in a more drink-now style, this 2012 far outshines its entry-level moniker. Made with the same care and methodology as the reserve and single vineyard wines, this does what it is supposed to do, capturing the essence of Cristom's style while offering near-term pleasure, but ultimately drinking like a more serious wine than the price would suggest. As is common at Cristom, whole cluster fermentation was used for 40% of the fruit; this not-common practice gives the wine an underlying brambly woody feel with aromatics of licorice, violets and damp earth. The palate is broad-shouldered and dark with a satisfying warm spicy backdrop to the plum and black cherry fruit. Little pops of crisp pomegranate and fresh raspberry add dimension and vitality before finishing with a gentle grip. In a positive way, this has a more Burgundian feel compared to many flashy fruit-forward 2012 Oregon Pinots and those with enough patience to decant or age will be richly rewarded.

Gifford Hirlinger Cabernet Sauvignon Walla Walla Valley 2008

\$22.99/\$18.40 by the case

Last month's Sineann Cab deal sold out so fast we were like "uhhh, better look for something else..." Surprisingly we actually found this; same varietal, same price, just one year younger and from Walla Walla, not Napa. The winery currently lists the 2010 at \$34; not sure where this 2008 got lost but we're happy to have it. Several years in bottle have been kind to this wine, allowing its powerful structure to soften and reveal subtle layers of flavor. Inky red fruits and warm wood on the nose lead to mellow blackberry and currant on the palate and the texture is chewy yet playful. Still ageworthy but drinking so well right now, it'll be hard to wait. Limited availability as this is the last of it.

Domaine Labet Chardonnay Fleurs Côte de Jura 2012

\$21.99/\$17.60 by the case

We're always needing an affordable white Burgundy fix whether it's from Chablis, Mâcon or anywhere in between. Or in this case, the Jura. Proudly off the beaten path, this region lies just east of Burgundy and its white wines are mostly known (and prized) for their purposely oxidized style. Not this one: the back label specifically states "aged in topped-up barrels" and this tastes more like good white Burgundy. Aged 15 months on its lees in old oak casks, this is flavorful, complex and richly-textured. Musky floral and white pepper aromatics lead to bread dough, toasted nuts and poached pear on the palate, flavors that are layered in a creamy-like-Sunday-morning texture. A gentle lemony lift on the finish pulls it all together while those leesy spicy notes linger on.

Vajra Langhe Rosso 2011

\$14.99/\$11.99 by the case

Home to some of the most sought-after northern Italian reds, Piedmont has something for every wine enthusiast including elegant and structured Nebbiolo, fresh and fruity Barbera and the workhorse local's favorite - Dolcetto. All said, if you're unsure or just looking for something to pair with this week's Mediterranean meal, look no further. This Langhe Rosso is a blend of the aforementioned grapes with the unusual and delightful knit work of Freisa, Albarossa and Pinot Noir. The result: touchdown, the crowd goes wild! Beautiful, heady floral aromatics with red fruit, plum and Asian spice. The palate mirrors the nose adding an earthy component to its supple and generous mouthfeel. The finish is long and elegant with smooth tannins. Think Lauren Bacall, only she's in color! As an introduction to Piedmont or even if your cellar is full of it, no matter... This is the ultimate gateway drug and we certainly approve!

Special Tastings

Fifth Annual Memorial Day Weekend Kickoff

Come enjoy fifteen+ wines from five great local wineries to start the long weekend early

Celebrate the return of summer with some of our favorite Willamette Valley wineries and their friendly winemakers. Rocking good 2012 Pinot Noir from Cristom and Lemelson; new 2013 Pinot releases from Cameron and Walter Scott (including a brand new Cameron rosé); Syrah from Fausse Piste plus whites from everyone. Sounds like a party!

**Cameron - John Paul
Cristom - John D'Anna/Steve Doerner
Fausse Piste - Jesse Skiles
Lemelson - Colleen Glennon
Walter Scott Wines - Ken Pahlow and Erica Landon**

Friday May 22, 5-7:30, Over 15 Wines, only \$15.

A Decade of Bordeaux **with The Wine Trust's Chris Poulos**

Although a hallowed and historical region central to today's

wine culture, Bordeaux can be a minefield. The big names are ridiculously expensive while the other end of the spectrum offers many uninspired wines that hold none of the thrill that makes Bordeaux special. Enter The Wine Trust. Established in 1973 and based in NYC, their mission is "to provide discerning restaurants and retailers a thoughtful array of highly pedigreed wines across the entire price spectrum." As a direct importer with long-term relationships, they can offer a wide range of quality levels and vintages, all at fair prices. This tasting should showcase the exciting variety the region can offer: different blends, styles, prices and vintages including 2011, '10, '09, '07, '05 and '02. As introduction or reacquaintance, this is a great opportunity to taste across a decade of quality Bordeaux.

Friday May 29, 5-7:30, Eight wines, \$20

Southern France with Russ Raney

When winemaker Russ Raney surprisingly sold Evesham Wood a few years ago, everyone wondered what he would do next. Still an energetic champion of handcrafted wines, he recently imported limited quantities of small-production wines from the Languedoc-Roussillon region. With flavors and prices that transport you to France, this is a fun collection. Come by and say hi as Russ pours Corbières, Minervois, Saint-Chinian, a cool white he jokingly calls a Languedoc Montrachet and a 2007 old vine Carignan.

Saturday May 16, 2-5pm, FREE

May Tastings

Friday Evening Tastings:

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

May 8 - It's been a while since we visited **Rioja** and we've plenty of new ones to choose from. Olabbarri, Belezos, Muga and more from 2009, '05, and beyond. \$15

May 15 - No Tasting

May 22 - 5th Annual Memorial Day Kickoff with over 15+ wines. We again host five of our favorite Willamette Valley wineries. **Cameron, Cristom, Fausse Piste, Lemelson and Walter Scott.** Many 2012 Pinot Noir plus brand new releases, including single-vineyard and reserve bottlings. See above for more details. Just \$15

May 29 - A decade of Bordeaux with The Wine Trust. See Special Wine Events for details. \$20

June 5 - Is it summer yet? Let's hope so as we pour a variety of **Loire Valley Sauvignon Blanc** from Sancerre, Pouilly-Fumé and Menetou-Salon. Good producers (of course) plus an aged Didier Dagueneau for fun. \$13

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 own favorites off the shelves.

May 2 - Descending from upriver in Lyle WA, **Cor Cellars winemaker/owner Luke Bradford** will pour Petit Verdot, Malbec, Momentum Red and more. FREE

May 9 - Beverly McKenzie will show **French and Spanish wines from importer Eric Solomon**. Long known for high quality and fair prices it's time for a revisit. Wines from Priorat, Vacqueyras, Ribera del Duero & more. FREE

May 16 - Former Evesham Wood owner **Russ Raney** now lives part of the year in France and just imported a batch of **southern French wines**. And they're really good! More info above. FREE

May 23 - No Tasting. Take a drive down the valley and hit the Memorial Day Weekend wine open houses.

May 30 - Under the radar and often under-valued, **Spanish whites** make for refreshing summer drinking. Taste the differences between Albarino, Verdejo, Viura, etc. from Rioja, Rueda, Rias Baixas and more. FREE

May

Case of the Month - \$110

Fleur de Lyeth 2011

Surprising at every turn, this bargain California red blend is not what we expected. Aromatically it seems southern French with dark meaty, even slight gamy notes wafting from the glass. On the palate, it takes an elegant turn before opening up into a plush mouth-filler with framboise and dark boysenberry fruit backed by notes of dark chocolate and toasted graham cracker. And the varietals? Tannat, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Not sure where they found all that Tannat in California but they made it into a pretty cool wine. \$9.99

Bertani Bertarosé 2013

We see very few pink wines from Italy's Valpolicella region which makes this a fun detour off the typical rose path. 75% Molinara (a main local varietal) and 25% Merlot, this

offers a floral delicate nose with flavors of bright red cherry on the palate. Despite the light color and delicate aromatics, the texture is rounded yet vibrant with a perky citrus note balancing the creamy finish. Normally \$15, this is the last of the 2013 vintage so now just \$10.99.

Colosi Rosso 2012

An old Sicilian favorite that we haven't seen for a while, this blend of Nero d'Avola and Nerello Mascalese is packed with flavors of chocolate covered cherries, dried black plum spice cake and warm caramel. Its smooth flowing texture makes it easy to drink while an underlying tautness lends definition and grip. \$9.99

Laroque Cité de Carcassonne 2013

Popular in previous vintages, this unique southern French red again delivers. 100% Cabernet Franc from vineyards surrounding the almost-Mediterranean walled city of Carcassonne, this offers an intriguing mix of Bordeaux flavors and a Languedoc personality. Muscular and meaty, it's still open-knit enough to pick out notes of black tea, wild strawberry and red clay earth warmed by the sun. Its mostly bass-note profile shifts to a slight tang of rhubarb and mineral on the finish. \$9.50

Eugene Carrel Jongieux 2013

Maybe this seemed so refreshing because we tried it one afternoon after tasting all day. More likely though is that it really IS refreshing; Carrel makes some darn nice wines from his vineyards in the foothills of the Alps, subtle yet full of life. 100% Jacquère (a favored local white varietal), this is bursting with fresh green floral aromas and zesty lemon-lime flavors, a combination that gets the mouth a-watering. The texture is dappled and pliant and stays lively through to the mineral finish. \$11.99

Col del Mondo Sunnae Montepulciano d'Abruzzo 2012

A well-endowed Italian red, this is rich and full-flavored,

delivering more oomph and intensity than its modest price would suggest. The intro is a wash of bright red flavors, cherry to raspberry while black fruits take over mid-palate. Dried fruit notes and a lingering peppery spice rounds out the finish.

\$11.99

Tarima Monastrell 2013

From the flashy label to its boisterous flavor profile, this Spanish red seems well suited to the season's upcoming BBQs and casual partying. Blackberry liqueur mixes with brighter red raspberry notes while appealing cocoa/baking spice aromas hang in the background. Maybe not the most complex wine in the collection but it's full of personality, easy to like and dare I say, fun...\$9.50

Cantina Sociale Barbera 2013

We joked that this light fresh summery red would be our Pinot Noir of the case and while the flavors are different, its profile isn't far off. Light to medium-bodied but showing nicely defined flavors, this leans toward blueberry and mild black plum with sage and violet aromatics adding a bit of depth. Overall clean and fresh tasting with just a kiss of tannin on the finish.

Surprise! just \$7.99

Hyatt Cabernet Sauvignon 2012

Still fairly small and family-run, this Washington winery produces solid wines at great prices. This cab runs dark and powerful with red currant and plum fruit accented by spicy American oak and brambly earth. \$9.99

Pine Ridge Chenin Blanc-Viognier 2013

This California white is always a cheery springtime addition to the line-up as it delivers a starburst of flavors with what seems like a youthful eagerness. Ripe yellow peach and apricot flavors are balanced by a bracing green apple crispness and the texture keeps the palate guessing, alternating between a lush creaminess and an almost spritzy snappy bite. Sassy and confident but interesting enough to pull it off. \$11.99

Branciforti Catarratto Sicily 2013

The number of unique varietals littered across Italy seems endless and its always fun to stumble across something new (or revisit a rarity). Like this, a white from Sicily that has a personality all its own. Medium-bodied and rounded in texture, the honeydew melon and white peach fruit is satisfyingly plump without being flabby and the light herb and saline notes bring to mind a gentle ocean breeze. Dried mango and a mild peach pit bitter note add interest on the finish. All that for just \$8.99

Doural Tinto 2013

A blend of the usual unpronounceable suspects, this unassuming Portuguese red's whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The nose is airy and pretty with dark red roses enveloping a light dustiness while the texture is supple and inviting. The bright cherry fruit is made even better by an appealing pie crust/toasted oat note before finishing darker with a citrus grip. Made by the Port house Kopke. \$9.50