

Herb's Half Case Wine Club February 2010
Decatur Package Store ~ 1220 Clairmont Rd ~ Decatur GA 30030 ~ 404-633-5250
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My non-Wine Club selection for the month is the **2006 Luigi Bosca Reserva Malbec**. If you hadn't tried at least one Malbec in 2009 then you've been renting from the Unibomber. What you probably haven't heard is that higher end Malbec is a bargain – all the quality of a Napa Cab. at two-thirds (or less!) the price. This example from Luigi Bosca, the Robert Mondavi of Argentina, is 100% estate fruit from the Lujan de Cuyo. It shows dark berry, mocha, and tobacco flavors that are sublimely palate coating. Bosca even recommends cellaring for 10 years! Not too shabby for a mere \$20.

Beaulieu Vineyard Muscat de Beaulieu 375ml (California)

Tasting Notes: I know this is the Wine Club you wait for all year. Drum roll, please...the "Wow! It's been almost a year since I last tried a dessert wine" Wine Club or as I like to say the "what's the point of a Wine Club if you don't expand your horizons" Wine Club. This year's choice is a Muscat from Beaulieu Vineyards. Aromas of honeysuckle and orange blossom lead to ripe apricot and orange marmalade flavors on the palate. This dessert wine has very good viscosity in that it's not too thick. It even has enough acid to temper the sweetness. The finish has a hint of roasted nut flavors as well as more apricot notes.

Food Pairing: Obviously this is a great choice for your Valentine's Day celebration. Otherwise, serve this as liquid dessert after your next dinner party.

2008 Hook & Ladder Cardonnay (Russian River Valley)

Tasting Notes: After the De Loach family sold their namesake winery, they invested in 375 acres in the Russian River Valley. Hook and Ladder is the new winery they created. This Chardonnay has an enjoyable aroma – fresh fruit cocktail (and not that syrupy stuff with the unnaturally colored cherries from the can). It has a round mouthfeel with an excellent texture, that's rich, but not at all flabby (thanks acidity!). On the palate you'll find ripe pear and nutmeg flavors that are perfectly ripe and not overdone. It has all the bells and whistles of a higher end Chardonnay sans the price. Well done!

Food Pairing: This is a relatively heavy Chardonnay, so pair accordingly. No steak, but you could pair this with heavier poultry or pork dishes.

2007 Rocland Estate Ass Kisser Red (South Australia)

Tasting Notes: Only the Aussies could get away with this name. They also "bring the juice" by delivering killer wines from gimmicky labels. This example, a blend of mostly Petite Verdot, shows liqueur-like raspberry and strawberry flavors. It has a lush, ripe mouthfeel, but it's not cloying. In fact, this blend has excellent structure and just enough tannins for grip. This is a stellar value and a ideal choice for the Wine Club.

Food Pairing: I'm feeling a big bowl of chili with this one. Nothing too spicy, though, or you'll mask the flavors in the wine.

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2008 Rocca delle Macie Rubizzo Sangiovese (Tuscany)

Tasting Notes: If you searched Wikipedia for “good, everyday Italian red,” this is the answer you would find. Fresh and juicy red fruit aromas lead to smooth flavors on the palate with clean, lively berry fruit and balanced acidity. The fruit is enjoyably fresh and perfectly ripe with just enough acidity for balance. The finish is dry with medium tannins and cherry fruit flavors. A perfect everyday quaffer!

Food Pairing: Of course you could try this with any pasta dish with red sauce, but expand the choices with pizza or meat dishes. They eat a lot of meat in Tuscany and grow a lot of Sangiovese. You see where I'm going with this one.

2005 Rumbo Sur Cabernet Sauvignon (Central Valley, Chile)

Tasting Notes: This Chilean Cabernet is a perfect everyday red for the colder months. It has dark, red fruit aromas with hints of bell pepper. This leads to surprisingly fresh cherry flavors on the palate. It has a soft mouthfeel with a slightly creamy texture and just enough acidity for balance. Red fruits and light pepper notes abound. The finish shows darker cherry fruit and good length. This is a very well-balanced Chilean Cabernet. Nice wine!

Food Pairing: I find that Chilean Cabernet, as well as Merlot, pairs exceptionally well with just about anything from the grill, especially herbed meats.

2007 Dobiñon Mencia (Bierzo, Spain)

Tasting Notes: The Bierzo region in northwest Spain is producing outstanding wines from the indigenous Mencia grape. This example has a wonderful aroma of fresh blueberries. It's clean on the palate with more “blue” fruits – blueberry & black raspberry – and balanced acidity. This wine shows good grip on the mid-palate with medium tannins and lengthy dark berry fruit. The fruit component of this wine is simply fantastic!

Food Pairing: As in Tuscany, a lot of meat is consumed in this part of Spain, so act like a local and pair accordingly. With the full-flavored fruit component and higher acidity, this one is perfect for heavier meat dishes.

Cheers, Herb