

I would be remiss in my retailer duties if I didn't mention that Wine Clubs and Wine Club Gift Certificates make excellent presents. Otherwise, it's a heavier mix of wines to pair with your entertaining needs and the heavier meals of the season. Hopefully, you'll find it to be your red "Easy" button this holiday season. Enjoy!

**From all of us at Decatur Package Store, we thank you for your continued support and wish you and your family the best this holiday season.**

Cheers, Herb

P.S. - My non-Wine Club selection for the month is the **2008 Heredia Cubillo Crianza**. I love older Rioja wines. To me, they offer the most affordable aged wine on the planet. This Heredia is almost 10 years old, yet less than \$30, incredible. Rich, dark fruit combined with vanilla oak notes and other complex flavors make this a treat for the palate. It's both elegant and powerful and a great value.

### **2016 Arrowflite Chardonnay (North Coast, California)**

**Tasting Notes:** This is an excellent Chardonnay that has both texture and fresh fruit. It has a thicker texture and mouthfeel with flavors of fresh tropical fruits - mangoes and tangerines. The fresh fruit is the star here. There's also some balancing acidity, which helps offset this plethora of fruit. The finish turns to stone fruits with nice length. This is a great, fuller-bodied Chardonnay for the cooler temperatures.

**Food Pairing:** This Chardonnay is equally enjoyable by itself as a colder weather cocktail/starter wine or as the white wine offering for heavier dishes.

### **2015 Mont Marçal Reserva Brut Cava (Spain)**

**Tasting Notes:** I've always thought this Spanish sparkler was a tremendous value. It's one of the few vintage dated Cavas (bonus!), it's affordable (double bonus!) and it always tastes better than it's priced (#Herb'sChoiceHallofFame). The 2015 Marçal starts with a fresh aroma of soft apple fruit. It's medium bright on the palate, which makes it a little drier than most Cavas, with pure apple fruits and nice mousse. The finish is pleasantly dry and showcases more citrus flavors.

**Food Pairing:** You can certainly enjoy this as the clock strikes midnight on the 31st, but why wait! Sparkling wine is a great starter wine to serve partygoers as they walk in the door. It always makes any occasion more festive. Also sparkling wines, due to their inherently higher acidity, pair with just about any type of food.

### **2015 Armas de Guerra Mencia (Bierzo, Spain)**

**Tasting Notes:** The Mencia grape is transitioning from polarizing to user-friendly. In years past, it was a fairly funky, gamey, red wine that you either loved or hated. Today's version, though, is cleaner and a great everyday red. The Armas de Guerra is the perfect example of this metamorphosis. It has a dark berry fruit aroma that leads to clean flavors on the palate of black and blue fruits, hints of mineral and balancing acidity. This red has an excellent fruit component. The finish has dark blue fruits, medium tannins and nice length. This is a solid everyday quaffer.

**Food Pairing:** This is a great everyday red for any everyday meal. Any medium to fuller-bodied main dish will pair nicely with this Mencia.

### **2013 Fattoria le Pupille Morellino di Scansano (Tuscany, Italy)**

**Tasting Notes:** Morellino di Scansano is Sangiovese from the warmer, coastal, Tuscan subappellation of Maremma. This example is mostly Sangiovese (85%) with Alicante (10%) and Malvasia Nera (5%) and has a meaty, cherry fruit aroma with a hint of humus/forest floor. It has slightly bright, pure cherry and berry fruit on the palate with less acidity than Chianti. The fruit is the star here with pure flavors that are ripe, but not overripe. The finish has nice intensity with darker berry fruit, medium tannins and nice length. This is a great alternative to Chianti!

**Food Pairing:** I'd pair this with lighter meat dishes and, since it has less acidity than Chianti, you can also pair it with dishes with red sauce.

### **2013 Aguaribay Malbec (Mendoza, Argentina)**

**Tasting Notes:** I'm a big fan of Malbec. This grape overdelivers at whatever price point you buy. That is very unique in the wine world and I can't think of another varietal with this trait. The Aguaribay, owned by the famous Rothschild family of France, has a dense, blue fruit aroma with light toast, vanilla and earth flavors. It's fuller-bodied on the palate with dark, blue fruits - blueberry and boysenberry - that are pleasantly clean. As this red opens, the blue fruits really emerge, but are nicely balanced with good acidity. The finish shows medium-bright boysenberry fruit with bigger tannins and nice length.

**Food Pairing:** I'm going full Argentine on this one - pair it with a big piece of meat from the grill.

### **2016 Parados Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza, Argentina)**

**Tasting Notes:** Here's another observation: At the everyday drinking price, I'm finding that Argentina Cabernet is, on average, better than California Cabernet. They both have ripeness, but Argentina Cabernet has much better structure. This example from Parados has a dark cherry aroma with a hint of earth. It's fuller-bodied on the palate, with rich, dark cherry fruit and slight bell pepper notes up-front; then the balancing acidity emerges (yeah Mendoza!) on the mid-palate. The Parados is a lot of wine for the money. The finish has dried cherry fruit, medium to heavy tannins and decent length.

**Food Pairing:** Pair this Cabernet with heavier meats. It's hearty enough to stand up to anything from the grill.