

**Herb's Half Case Wine Club December 2011**  
**Decatur Package Store ~ 1220 Clairmont Rd ~ Decatur GA 30030 ~ 404-633-5250**  
[decaturopackagestore.com](http://decaturopackagestore.com)

2011, where did you go? The older I become, the days and months just move faster. OK, enough reminiscing. It's nice to have consistently cooler weather to pair with heartier reds. By chance, most of the selections this month are blends, but there is enough geographical and varietal difference in the selections to keep you on your toes. Enjoy!

From all of us at Decatur Package Store, we wish you a healthy and happy holiday season!

Cheers, Herb

FYI - To clarify the Sunday sales issue...we are physically located in unincorporated Dekalb County and not the city of Decatur. Dekalb did not vote on Sunday sales this November. The Dekalb County vote on Sunday sales will occur in March.

My non-Wine Club selection for the month is the **2004 Atalon Napa Cabernet**. This is the perfect non-Wine Club choice. It's pre-aged and doesn't need additional cellar time. It's a bargain because it's made with declassified, expensive Napa juice. And it tastes great – bright, juicy, pure cherry fruit on the palate with good acidity for balance and structure – with a VERY lengthy finish.

**2009 Castle Rock Russian River Valley Chardonnay (Sonoma, California)**

**Tasting Notes:** I've always found great wines from this virtual winery, and their Russian River offering is no exception. It starts with aromas of dried pineapple, nutmeg, and light oak. It's chameleon-like on the palate. At first, when it's still a bit cold, you'll find lemon curd flavors and a slightly creamy texture. As the wine warms and opens, you'll find ripe pear fruit and a touch of spice from the oak. The finish is crisp and quite lengthy with brighter citrus flavors. This is a nice cool weather Chardonnay that isn't overburdened with oak.

**Food Pairing:** I really like this style of Chardonnay when the weather cools. It's fuller-flavored with just a kiss of oak that doesn't overwhelm the fruit. I would pair this with medium-bodied dishes, such as pork or poultry, or even heavier hors d'oeuvres.

**Valdo Brut Prosecco (Valdobbiadene, Italy)**

**Tasting Notes:** This is a perfect sparkler and a testament to Prosecco's consumer appeal. It has an aroma of fresh red apples. On the palate, you'll find clean flavors of ripe apple and peach, with lemon curd on the mid-palate. This sparkler has a light mousse and perfect ripeness. The finish shows more apple and peach flavors with floral notes and great length. Clean and refreshing – what more could you ask of a sparkler?

**Food Pairing:** The easiest pairing for this one is friends, family, and December 31<sup>st</sup>. If you can't wait that long, serve it as a cocktail wine before a dinner party or with foods that are richer, almost fattier. The higher acidity of this sparkler will balance the richness of the food.

**2005 Vidigal Dão DOC (Portugal)**

**Tasting Notes:** I like Portugal's decision to make table wines from traditional Port grapes. From what I've experienced so far, they're fabulous values. This example, a blend of roughly equal parts Jaen, Touriga Nacional, and Alfrocheiro, has an aroma of dried berry fruit, herb, and tobacco. It's clean on the palate with bright, dark berry, raspberry, white pepper, and dried herbs. It has a dry backbone to balance the fruit, and the finish is full-flavored with black fruit, vanilla, and medium tannins. This is a terrific food-friendly red.

**Food Pairing:** This is a good choice for almost anything from the grill – chicken, burgers, pork, or steak. I think the pepper and dried herb component of this wine inherently pairs with grilled foods, especially anything with a rub.

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**2008 Masi Modello delle Venezie Rosso (Italy)**

**Tasting Notes:** This red from the Veneto region in northeast Italy is comprised of Refosco and Raboso, both local grapes, and aged 10 months in oak. Let this one aerate a bit and you'll find aromas of dark cherry, vanilla, tobacco, and even caramel. It's bright and concentrated on the palate with berry/cherry fruit, vanilla, light earth and mineral notes, and cedar. The acidity and intensity lessen as it opens and develops riper cherry fruit. The finish is concentrated with berry fruit, a hint of earth, and great length.

**Food Pairing:** I'm going to avoid the traditional choice and avoid red sauce with this one. Try it with heavier meats or hearty stews. The acidity and concentration in the wine will balance perfectly with these richer choices.

**2008 Shannon Ridge Wrangler Red (Lake County, California)**

**Tasting Notes:** This is a solid red containing mostly Zinfandel, Syrah, and Petite Sirah that sees 14 months of aging in French and American oak. I recommend aerating this wine for 30 minutes prior to drinking to fully bring out its flavor. You'll find dark berry and clove aromas, followed by ripe berry fruit, vanilla, and cloves on the palate. This blend has a solid fruit component and solid acidity, which provides balance and structure. The finish is lengthy with dark, brambly fruit and vanilla notes. Well done!

**Food Pairing:** This red has a higher spice component, so I would keep the food preparation simpler. Sometimes spicy wine and heavily spiced food doesn't work. The wine is medium to full-bodied, so your pairing options are less restricted.

**2010 Ernie Els Big Easy (Western Cape, South Africa)**

**Tasting Notes:** This South African blend is mostly Shiraz and Cabernet made in a "Rhone meets Bordeaux" style. It starts with Rhone-like aromas of blueberries and continues with Bordeaux-like darker berry fruit and earth notes. On the palate you'll find bright, "blue" fruits – black raspberry and blueberry – with good concentration and a hint of minerals. The mid-palate has good grip and well-balanced acidity. The finish has pretty berry fruits, violets, good length, and balanced tannins. Great flavor and structure.

**Food Pairing:** This is a full-bodied wine, and you should pair accordingly. Try it with heavier meat or game or other full-bodied dishes.