

Herb's Half Case Wine Club December 2016
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Happy Holidays! It's a perfect mix this month for entertaining or gifting – Wine Club Gift Certificates are available and make excellent presents! In either case, we'll try to make your holidays a little easier. Enjoy!

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

Cheers, Herb

P.S. - My non-Wine Club selection for the month is the **2014 Volador Montsant**. Priorat can be a bit expensive, so I say, go for the region next door – Montsant, which has the same varietal makeup with less expensive land. The Volador is a superb, Grenache-heavy wine. It has gobs of darker red fruits, rich palate weight and just enough acidity for balance. It's full-flavored AND easy drinking, which makes it a great choice when you want something nicer this month.

2014 Candoni Organic Pinot Grigio (Italy)

Tasting Notes: This fresh, easy drinking white has enough structure to make you, and your guests, want another glass. It starts with fresh melon aromas and a hint of almond. This PG has bright apple fruit on the palate with great ripeness. The mid-palate shows some roundness and the finish has melon fruit and nice length. This is the no-brainer white for the month - simple and easy drinking, but has good acidity to keep your interest - and as an extra bonus in this unhealthiest of months, it's made with organic grapes.

Food Pairing: This is a great entertaining wine because it has flavor and acidity, the two best friends an appetizer or buffet could have.

Mumm Napa Blanc de Blanc (Napa County, California)

Tasting Notes: I think this was the biggest surprise this month. I've had Mumm's Brut and Rose and have enjoyed both, but their Blanc de Blanc is superb. It's a blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Gris and has the typical sparkling aroma of dough and yeast. I was expecting this to be fairly dry on the palate, but was elated to find a full-flavored sparkler with ripe apple fruit and a hint of truffles. The acidity is solid on the mid-palate, which helps this wine avoid ripe-ish Prosecco territory. The bubbles produce a nice mousse and the finish has beautiful lemon curd flavors. This is a full-flavored sparkling wine that isn't bone dry, but has just enough acidity for balance.

Food Pairing: Fact - Champagne and sparkling wine can pair with almost any food or occasion. A friend of mine alerted me to a WSJ article for an all-sparkling Thanksgiving. What a great idea. So please don't save this for toasting on December 31st. Enjoy it during the month with apps or a meal and buy another bottle (may I suggest the Antech Cremant de Limoux) for the 31st.

2014 Poggio Anima Nero D'Avola (Sicily, Italy)

Tasting Notes: I really like the new balanced version of Nero D'Avola. This used to be a baked, overripe, generic red, but not anymore! The Poggio Anima (Hill of Soul) has a lightly juicy, concentrated dark berry fruit aroma. It has beautiful fruit on the palate with dark blue fruits and violets. The acidity arrives on the mid-palate and nicely tames the bounty of fruit. The finish has more concentrated blue fruits - blueberry and black raspberry - and nice length.

Food Pairing: I'm finding Nero D'Avola to have less ripe fruit (a good thing since it's typically overripe) and more acidity. This is a food pairer's dream. Use this as your starter red when entertaining this month or pair it with an everyday meal.

2013 Colonia las Liebres Bonarda (Mendoza, Argentina)

Tasting Notes: Bonarda - what a great second fiddle! Obviously, everyone has either heard of or tried a Malbec from Argentina, but have you tried the second most planted red, Bonarda? I believe Bonarda is one of the most underrated varieties in the world. To be honest, I've never had one that I truly disliked. This Las Liebres is a winner! It has a concentrated black fruit aroma. This red has fresh, dark blueberry and blackberry fruit on the palate with a hint of underbrush. It has nice brightness and superb balance. The finish shows bright, brambly fruit with excellent concentration and length. Viva Bonarda!

Food Pairing: All my Argentine friends would laugh at me if I recommended pairing this with anything but meat. Just in case they're not reading this - this is a fairly versatile red, so you can also pair this with heartier poultry or pork dishes.

2011 Chateau Tuilerie Pages Bordeaux Rouge (Bordeaux, France)

Tasting Notes: This was another surprise for the month and, to me, a perfect example of Bordeaux. It's 60% Cabernet and 40% Merlot and has the absolute PERFECT balance of fruit and *terroir*. Let me explain. This red has great fruit with solid dark cherry and vanilla flavors. This red also has good *terroir* with a hint of earth/forest floor and nice acidity, which are two traits usually found in Bordeaux and not the West Coast. It's this touch of complexity/local flavor, combined with a climate change-induced ripeness, that sets this Bordeaux apart. Add a lengthy, dark berry filled finish with integrated tannins, and you have one heck of a wine!

Food Pairing: This Cab-heavy red is sturdy enough for any meat dish, but with the earthiness I'd also try this with herb-rubbed cuts from the grill.

2014 Buried Cane Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley, Washington)

Tasting Notes: This is the yang to the Tuilerie yin above. As the Tuilerie is all French, the Buried Cane is all West Coast, and that's a good thing. This also allows me to spotlight one of the last remaining regions, Washington State (the other being Argentina), where, generally speaking, Cabernet over delivers. The 2014 Buried cane has an aroma of ripe and lush black cherry fruit. This is a fatter and richer style of Cabernet with ripe black cherry fruit, vanilla and light acidity. The acidity is important here because there's just enough, so this red isn't too fat or cloying. The finish has dark berry fruit, spice/clove notes, vanilla and nice length.

Food Pairing: I would suggest that this is a stand-alone Cabernet that's rich and round enough to serve by itself. It will also work with heavier, yet leaner, cuts of meat, such as pork.