

Happy 2018 and welcome to the New Year! While I appreciate the hectic nature of the holidays, I'm ready for some post-holiday relaxation. And what better way to relax than the January Wine Club! It covers all your needs - quite time by the fireplace, normal sized, healthy everyday meals and small(er) dinner gatherings where there is no kids table. We have you covered. Enjoy!

Cheers, Herb

P.S. - My non-Wine Club selection for the month is the **2010 Chateau Perron Graves**. This is the perfect season for Bordeaux and especially one with some bottle age. The Perron is Cab-heavy with smooth dark cherry/berry fruit, dry mid-palate, big and integrated tannins, and a cassis filled finish. This is a great alternative to any over-ripe Napa Cab. The Chateau Perron is a stellar wine and a great value!

### **2014 Domaines Schlumberger Pinot Blanc (Alsace, France)**

**Tasting Notes:** This is an excellent surprise and an excellent value because typical Alsatian wines are too expensive for the Wine Club. This beauty starts with a complex aroma of soft apple fruit, mineral and a hint of spice. It's pleasantly bright on the palate with fresh apple and melon fruit, and a nice mineral note. The finish is lively with soft citrus fruits and good length. Alsatian whites, especially Pinot Blancs, are the perfect antidote to the same old Chardonnay or Pinot Grigio, by offering flavor, structure and complexity.

**Food Pairing:** Another trait of Alsatian whites is that they're very food friendly. An abundance of acidity and flavor help these wines pair with just about anything. Try to pair this Pinot Blanc with heavier poultry or pork/sausage dishes.

### **2014 North by Northwest Chardonnay (Columbia Valley, Washington)**

**Tasting Notes:** This is a fabulous unoaked Chardonnay from Washington State, a region that's known for its reds, but is producing impressive whites, as well. The NXNW has a crisp apple aroma that softens on the palate to show lightly ripe apple fruit. There's good acidity with nice brightness, a hint of almond and small spice notes on the palate. I tried this at basement temperature, as opposed to fridge temperature. I suggest you do the same, so as not to mask these flavors. The finish is fuller-flavored with apple and fall fruit, and good length.

**Food Pairing:** This is a good winter Chardonnay. It's unoaked, but has a heavier body and fuller-flavor to pair with the heartier dishes of the season. Pair this white with heavier soups or stews and poultry dishes.

### **2015 Purato Nero D'Avola Organic Grapes (Sicily, Italy)**

**Tasting Notes:** What a difference a decade makes. Ten years ago this wine would have been made in an overly ripe style, which only appealed to the most ardent Zin-lover. In 2015 it's another story, where I found structure and balanced ripeness. The Purato, which has an extra bonus of being made from organic grapes, has a bright, fresh aroma with lightly baked, dark raspberry fruit. On the palate, there is a blast of pure raspberry fruit that's perfectly ripe and bright. There's also good acidity to tame the fruit. FYI – as the wine opens the brightness will diminish and the fruit will flesh out and expand. The finish is fairly dry with juicy, red berry fruit, hints of vanilla and nice length.

**Food Pairing:** This is a very well-structured and versatile food wine. This would be my choice for everyday meals like chili, burgers, pizza, etc.

### **2013 Calipaso Zinfandel (Paso Robles, California)**

**Tasting Notes:** Here's another example of the positive evolution of a varietal. Most of the Zinfandels I'm trying these days are very well-balanced and the Calipaso is no exception. It starts with a brambly, dark berry aroma. On the palate, it's lightly bright with nicely ripe, fresh berry fruit, small spice notes and good acidity. The mid-palate shows delicate berry flavors, which is surprising for this heavier offering. The finish is nicely bright with pretty dark berry fruit, medium tannins and nice length.

**Food Pairing:** I like to serve Zinfandel with just about anything from the grill or even BBQ. The ripe fruit and spice of the wine will pair well with the char of the meat and the spicy sweetness of the sauces.

### **2016 Finca Las Moras Alma Mora Malbec (Argentina)**

**Tasting Notes:** This is a terrific value from Argentina. The good news is that Malbec isn't turning into Merlot just yet, but finding value is becoming harder. This example has a concentrated boysenberry aroma. It's bright and refreshing on the palate with pretty blue fruits. The acidity and concentration are near perfect and the mid-palate has great brambly fruit notes. The finish is fuller-flavored with black and blue fruits and nice length.

**Food Pairing:** I really like Malbec for drinking by itself (so much fruit and balance) and serving with heartier meat dishes (fuller-body and good tannins). It's the best of both worlds with this varietal.

### **2014 Château Vrai Caillou Bordeaux Superior (France)**

**Tasting Notes:** This is a fabulous Bordeaux. It's mostly Merlot (60%) with equal parts Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc and is very complex given its everyday pricing. It starts with an aroma of dried cherries, cedar, mineral and spice. There's a lot going on in the glass. The palate shows dark berry/cherry fruit, light spice and nice acidity – flavor and balance in spades. The finish is lightly bright with dark berry fruits, more spice, integrated tannins and nice length. Superb everyday Bordeaux!

**Food Pairing:** The knock against Bordeaux was that it had structure and tannins, but no fruit. That's no longer the case and this red will pair nicely with a variety of fuller-bodied meat dishes as well as lighter meat dishes. You don't have to pair this with the fattiest steak to overcome the tannins and you can pair it with lighter pork dishes because of the fruit component.