

Herb's Half Case Wine Club January 2017
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Happy New Year! Another year has flown by and the promise of a new year awaits. There are some fun surprises this month - a ten-year-old Bordeaux that was a real find and a first time varietal for the Wine Club - Pecorino! The rest of the lineup will suit the, presumably, chilly weather coming this month. Enjoy!

Cheers, Herb

P.S. - My non-Wine Club selection for the month is the **2012 Catena Agrelo Cabernet**. I chose this wine for two reasons. One, to spotlight Catena's efforts to develop varietal specific sub-appellations. And two, to show you the quality of Argentine Cabernet. The Agrelo is what affordable Napa Cab used to taste like – pure, black cherry fruit, good ripeness and concentration and enough acidity. This Cabernet has flavor and structure and is a treat for the palate.

2015 Lindeman's Bin 65 Chardonnay (South Eastern Australia)

Tasting Notes: I haven't tried this Chardonnay in years, and I'm glad I did, because it's really a great value. Finding inexpensive AND good wine for the Club to offset nicer wines is difficult, but this old stalwart saved me. The Lindeman's starts with lightly bright then creamy and slightly buttery aromas. On the palate, I found medium bright tropical fruits, hints of spice, nice weight and a slightly creamy texture. This wine has great structure and deftly balances acidity and creaminess. I've tasted more expensive wines that don't have this balance. The finish has decent length and soft pear notes and a hint of baking spice.

Food Pairing: This white has enough weight and acidity to pair with slightly heavier foods, like poultry and pork, but there's enough flavor and enjoyment here to serve it by itself.

2014 Poggio Anima Pecorino (Terre di Chieti, Italy)

Tasting Notes: Pecorino is an ancient grape from the Abruzzo and Marche regions in Italy. Poggio Anima sources their 100% Pecorino from 20-year-old vines in a vineyard one mile from the Adriatic Sea. I think it's stellar and a testament to the diversity of non-Pinot Grigio white wines from Italy. This example has a spicy apple and almond aroma. It has nice complexity on the palate with ripe apple fruit, almond skin and a hint of spice. The mid-palate shows slightly citrusy, lemon curd flavors that are pure and clean. The finish is dense with soft lemon fruit and nice length. Great example of the varietal.

Food Pairing: This Pecorino has some weight and complexity, but I would under emphasize the food here and let the wine shine. Try with a simply prepared chicken dish or non-red sauce pasta.

2011 d'Arenberg The Stump Jump Shiraz (McLaren Vale, Australia)

Tasting Notes: It's been ages since I've had an Australian Shiraz in the Wine Club, and I'm glad I revisited their signature grape. It's a lot more user-friendly. The 2011 Stump Jump has a pleasant aroma of black, brambly fruit and a hint of eucalyptus. It's clean and medium-bright on the palate with blue fruits and some underbrush notes. The fruit isn't baked or over-concentrated. This style will appeal to all red wine drinkers. The finish has a bit of vanilla and solid black fruits, dry tannins and nice length.

Food Pairing: This has enough body and acidity to pair with many foods. I'd try and pair this with any heartier everyday meal, like burgers, or something from the grill.

2013 La Merika Pinot Noir (Central Coast, California)

Tasting Notes: La Merika is the Central Coast winery in the Delicato portfolio. They've done an excellent job with this Pinot Noir. It has aromas of ripe cranberries and on the palate; it has everything you want in a PN. There's clean, ripe cherry/strawberry fruit, hints of spice, vanilla and balancing acidity. I like the equilibrium with this wine, in that, each component works with, and not against, the others. The finish is solid as well, with soft cherry fruit, hints of baking spices and medium length. Great effort here!

Food Pairing: This one can be enjoyed by itself because it has enough flavor and complexity. Otherwise, I'd pair it with one of my favorite choices, salmon.

2010 Carla Chiaro Reserve Malbec (Mendoza, Argentina)

Tasting Notes: This is a perennial favorite of mine and a great testament to the continued value of the Malbec varietal. This beauty from Mendoza has aromas of ripe, concentrated cassis. This leads to rich, concentrated flavors on the palate - violet, boysenberry, and black raspberry. There's even a pleasant hint of underbrush for complexity. The finish is concentrated with pure boysenberry fruit and great length. At this price, very little from the West Coast can compete in quality.

Food Pairing: Argentine Malbec is made for beef or game. Nothing more to say about that.

2006 Château de Fontenille Bordeaux Rouge (Bordeaux, France)

Tasting Notes: My salesman showed me this wine and my initial reaction was, now we can see if the old adage, that most Bordeaux can hold up for at least ten years, is true. I'm not suggesting you should age all your Bordeaux this long, but in the case of this 2006 Fontenille, it's true. This Merlot-heavy red is drinking beautifully right now. I found muted cherry fruit, light earth, hints of toast and nice acidity. The mid-palate has a light baked cherry flavor, but overall this red is fairly clean with just enough terroir so you'll know it's from Bordeaux. The finish is nice as well, with dried cherry fruit, light earth, toast and a surprising level of tannins. I taste a lot of wine and this was a very pleasant surprise!

Food Pairing: I wouldn't pair this with anything too full-bodied. Try it with lighter beef or pork dishes.