

Herb's Half Case Wine Club June 2017
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The year is almost half over – yikes! I better finish my 2016 Christmas cards. It starts with a celebratory sparkling rosé and continues with a refreshing white and some June-appropriate reds. Enjoy!

P.S. - My non-Wine Club selection for the month is the **2014 Thymiopoulos Naoussa Xinomavro** Complex, virtually unpronounceable name, but simple to explain – it's a Barolo alternative. It has a rich, dark berry fruit aroma with nice spice and earth. It's medium-dry on the palate with concentrated cherry/berry fruit, nice acid and a hint of earth. The finish is complex with earthy/woody notes, muted cherry fruit, touch of vanilla and medium length. Expand your wine horizon and try one today!

NV J.P. Chenet Sparkling Rosé (France)

Tasting Notes: The year is almost half over and, in my humble opinion, we haven't done enough celebrating. J.P. Chenet is here to help. This sparkling rosé from the Gascogne region is a blend of Grenache and Cinsault. It has pretty red fruit flavors of bright, slightly ripe, raspberry and strawberry on the palate. What I really like about this wine is the finish, which turns wonderfully crisp. Too many everyday drinking sparkling rosés are too sweet, especially on the finish. This one isn't and, in fact, the acidity is just right and perfectly balances the fruit. The finish is bright, crisp and full of dried red fruits.

Food Pairing: Sparkling wine can always be enjoyed by itself or with fried foods, like chicken, shrimp or fish. You really can't go wrong because with a decent fruit component and plenty of acidity, you can pair this sparkler with just about anything.

2015 Domaine de Couron Viognier (Cotes du Rhone, France)

Tasting Notes: This single varietal Viognier from the Rhone Valley is a winner. Balance of flavor (i.e. not too floral) is the key with this varietal and Domaine Couron nailed it. Aromas of fruit cocktail and soft honeysuckle, lead to a pleasantly round texture on the palate, due to extended skin contact during maceration. It's a mélange of flavor on the palate with hints of citrus, fresh fruit cocktail and a nice, subdued, floral component. The finish shows ripe lime, floral notes and decent length. A very well-balanced presentation of Viognier.

Food Pairing: Since this white has so much flavor, drink it by itself on the back porch and enjoy the copious amounts of fruit. If you want to serve it with a main dish, serve it with lighter salads or light fish dishes.

2014 Mercer Canyons Chardonnay (Columbia Valley, Washington)

Tasting Notes: This Columbia Valley Chardonnay has an expressive aroma with light spice, cream and tropical fruits. The grapes are sourced from the Horse Heaven Hills Vineyard and the wine is made in a bigger style. On the palate, I found somewhat ripe, tropical fruits with a round and creamy texture. There's a small floral component that comes from the 3% of Viognier that's added. The finish is creamy with light acid, medium length and fresh mango and tangerine fruit. This is a solid crowd pleasing white.

Food Pairing: This is a white to serve with traditionally red wine dishes, like pork or roasts. Just don't serve it with anything too heavy-bodied.

2013 Casa Ferreirinha Esteva Tinto (Douro, Portugal)

Tasting Notes: As I've said (harangued???) in the past, Portuguese reds are where it's at! They're still under the radar, so pricing isn't artificially elevated and they offer TREMENDOUS value. This red blend (35% Tinta Roriz, 30% Tinta Barroca, 25% Touriga Franca & 10% Touriga Nacional) has a beautiful aroma of fresh red fruits. It's delicate on the palate with pretty red fruits with pure flavor and a nice offsetting splash of earth/cedar flavor. There's a consistently dry backbone to help balance the fruit and the finish is pure raspberry and strawberry fruit with ripe tannins and nice length.

Food Pairing: This is a good everyday red to pair with everyday meals, such as burgers, pizza or even chicken.

2013 Domaine de L'Ermitage Victor Rouge (Costieres de Nimes, France)

Tasting Notes: I like that this red Rhone isn't Grenache dominant (it's 40% Syrah, 40% Mourvedre & 20% Grenache). While I love a good Grenache-based red, Syrah is the more interesting grape. This example has a complex aroma of medium-dark red fruits and white pepper. It's smooth on the palate (thank you bottle aging!) with elegant red fruits, hints of dried herbs and near perfect ripeness. The finish shows bright, dark red fruits, nice tannic grip and good length.

Food Pairing: Syrah-dominant reds can pair with heavier foods, so try any beef or pork dish from the grill. I don't know why, but I find Rhone reds pair well with grilled food.

2013 Errazuriz Max Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon (Aconcagua Valley, Chile)

Tasting Notes: I really like this Chilean Cabernet, because it doesn't taste like Chilean Cabernet. Before you take the June Wine Club out of your cart, let me explain. Chilean reds can have an abundance of earth, asphalt and bell pepper. What I like is a hint of this component rather than an abundance. Hello Errazuriz Max Cabernet! It has a fruit-forward aroma of baked cherries and a slight hint of asphalt. This red is surprisingly quite elegant on the palate with great flavor – roasted black cherries and light earth/mineral notes. The finish is fuller-flavored with nice grip and plenty of cherry/berry fruit.

Food Pairing: Pair this with beef or lamb. It's hearty enough to stand up to any full-bodied dish. Don't be shy.