

Herb's Half Case Wine Club March 2017
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I'm hoping for some cooler weather, so we can all still enjoy these heartier reds I've included this month. Never fear though, I've included a couple of fresh whites as a contingency plan. Enjoy!

Cheers, Herb

P.S. - My non-Wine Club selections for the month aren't wine, but beer and the world's oldest alcoholic beverage, mead. The 20th anniversary of **Highland Brewing Co's Cold Mountain** is a great choice for one of our last winter nights. It's a spiced winter ale that has a malty body and light hops and is one of my favorite seasonals. **Monk's Mead** is my next choice. It's made locally and offers a taste of the past with effervescent honey flavors that turn drier on the finish, like a dry honey champagne.

2014 Bougrier Vouvray (Loire, France)

Tasting Notes: I've always been a fan of Loire Valley Chenin Blanc. Good fruit, good acidity and nice complexity - what's not to like. The Bougrier has an aroma of honeyed, Golden Delicious apples with a hint of minerality. It's crisp and clean on the palate with ripe apple fruit. I like the honeyed note found in most Vouvrais that helps boost the flavor. There's also an offsetting hint of slate, as well. The fruit to acidity ratio here is wonderful - neither outshines the other. The finish is bright and juicy with crisp orchard fruit and nice length.

Food Pairing: Loire Valley Vouvray is a versatile food wine. It has enough flavor to serve alone and enough acidity to pair with everything from spicy Asian dishes to pork or chicken. Feel free to experiment with this.

2014 Legado del Conde Albariño (Rias Baixas, Spain)

Tasting Notes: You will enjoy this Albariño significantly more if you follow this one-step - do not serve it directly from the fridge. The fruit will be hidden and the acidity will be too high. Let it warm up a bit, say 15 minutes, and you'll find a lovely, balanced white. The Legado del Conde has an aroma of orchard fruit with Granny Smith apple fruit on the palate. There's even a nice honeyed note on the mid-palate with a mineral component as well. The finish has bright lemon curd flavors and nice length.

Food Pairing: This white has some body, so feel free to pair it with something slightly heavier than poultry. Pair it with medium-bodied dishes like sausage or pork.

2014 The Seeker Pinot Noir (France)

Tasting Notes: I'm finding more of these projects, a single brand - in this case The Seeker - with varietals from different countries (for example, Pinot Grigio from Italy, Chardonnay from California), and I like the results. This Pinot Noir is from France and offers a great compromise from the riper, Syrah-laden, Pinot Noirs from California. This red has a nice aroma of medium-dark, berry fruit. It's pleasantly ripe (and not overripe!) on the palate with bright cherry and raspberry fruits, a hint of vanilla, small earth notes and a touch of mineral. It has nice ripeness and nice acidity with a solidly dry backbone and shows a surprising amount of complexity of flavor. The finish has nice length and ripe cranberry fruits. Solid Pinot Noir!

Food Pairing: I'm always a fan of pairing salmon and Pinot Noir, but feel free to experiment with heavier dishes. You can also use this red to enhance any everyday meal.

2013 Montevina Skyland Ridge Barbera (Amador County, California)

Tasting Notes: This is a unique California offering of the everyday varietal of Italy's Piedmont region. The Montevina has an aroma of dried cherry fruits, dried herbs and a hint of tobacco. It has good weight and brightness on the palate with nicely concentrated cherry/berry fruit. This is an elegant offering with fruit and acidity in perfect tandem. The finish has bright berry fruit, nice grip and good length. This is a well-made representation of a typically Italian varietal..

Food Pairing: This red has enough body to pair with meat dishes, just don't serve it with anything too heavy.

2012 Conde de Alicante Merlot (Alicante, Spain)

Tasting Notes: Who'd have thought I would need to go to Spain to find a good Merlot, currently one of the world's most underrated varietals, in my humble opinion. In the land of Tempranillo and Garnacha, I find Merlot. This one from Conde de Alicante is a beauty. It sees six months of oak aging and has a dark plum aroma with a hint of cedar. This Merlot is rich and robust on the palate with lots of flavor - dark plum, light vanilla and a slight hint of caramel on the back end. This is a fresh tasting, yet fuller-flavored offering with great balance. The finish has dark berry fruits, nice length and medium tannins. Great Merlot!

Food Pairing: This red has a heavier body, so you can't go wrong with any medium to heavy-bodied meat dish.

2010 Formby & Adams Leading Horse Cabernet (Langhorne Creek, Australia)

Tasting Notes: It's interesting how you can usually tell Australian Cabernet just from its aroma, which involves eucalyptus. What separates the good ones from the bad is the level of this component on the palate. Since you're reading this, you know my answer. Yes, this Cabernet has a big eucalyptus note in the glass, but it also has a great dried cherry aroma. It's quite a mouthful on the palate with medium concentrated, baked berry fruits and hints of earth and eucalyptus. This red has nice intensity and complexity, and the fruit is in the foreground while the eucalyptus is in the background. The finish shows concentrated black fruits, black raspberry and nice length.

Food Pairing: This is the heaviest offering this month and would be a perfect match with lamb or steak.