

As we head into the warmer weather, I've made the annual shift to equal whites and reds. I'll be finding interesting whites for you over the next few months! I think the rose, from Germany no less, and Albarino I've chosen will help with that quest. Enjoy!

Note – Herb's Half Case Wine Club or a Wine Club Gift Certificate makes an excellent Mother's Day present!

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Cheers, Herb

P.S. - My non-Wine Club selection for the month is the **2017 Early Mountain Rose** from Virginia. I'll be exploring Virginia wine country later this month (full report to follow!) and wanted to whet your appetite with this Merlot-heavy rose with crisp strawberry, peach and floral flavors.

2016 Maïor de Mendoza Fulget Albarino (Rias Baixas, Spain)

Tasting Notes: Albarino is a perfect wine for the transition to spring/summer because it's crisp and refreshing with a lot of flavor. I chose this particular Albarino because it showed an impressive Viognier-like quality. The Maïor has a dry backbone with green apple notes, but starts with honeysuckle and light, white flower perfume notes. This example is fairly bright, like most Albarinos, but has an added dimension that really distinguishes it from the crowd. The finish has bright citrus fruits, more honeysuckle and good length.

Food Pairing: This white would be a great starter wine served by itself or can be served with any shellfish, fish and white meat dish. This would also be a good choice for spicy foods.

2015 Donati Un-oaked Chardonnay (Central Coast, California)

Tasting Notes: This Chardonnay has an expressive aroma with lots of tropical fruit. The fact that it has some weight on the palate, is surprising given that it sees no oak, but that makes it a great transition wine into spring. This unoaked, white has somewhat rich, heavy tropical fruits like mangos and ripe peaches. It's rich yet balanced with nice brightness throughout. The finish has more tropical fruit flavors and medium length.

Food Pairing: This is an interesting pairing choice because it's somewhat heavy, flavorful and has decent acidity. This makes for expanded food pairing options from light appetizers to somewhat heavy chicken and pork dishes. Feel free to experiment here.

2017 Villa Wolf Pinot Noir Rose (Pfalz, Germany)

Tasting Notes: With the plethora of roses from Provence, it's always a treat to find good rose from an unexpected region, like Germany! I really like this winery (BTW - they have a fabulous Pinot Gris located in our Italian white section) because they produce consistently good and affordable wines. This rose is a perennial favorite. It's 100% German Pinot Noir and I really like that it's a bit drier, yet still full-flavored. The 2017 has a mineral and pleasantly tart red fruit aroma. It's fuller-flavored on the palate with a light spritz, bright red berry fruit and hints of minerals. The finish is solid with ripe rhubarb and nice length. Another vintage, another Herb's Choice!

Food Pairing: The appeal of rose is its versatility. It can be simply enjoyed by itself or with practically any food, especially fried foods. Try it with everyday meals or push the boundaries and try it with grilled foods.

2016 Old Pearl Pinot Noir (California)

Tasting Notes: This is a well-balanced Pinot Noir. Let that sink in a second. With the amount of juicy, fruity Syrah that's added (legally up to 25%) to most everyday Pinot Noirs, balance isn't a given. This example, which is 100% Pinot Noir, has aromas of medium-bright, red fruits. It has ripe, dark red fruits on the palate with good acidity and hints of spice. The acidity is the key here, in that it tames the ripe fruit. The finish has medium tannins, spice notes, dark red fruits and a hint of caramel. This is a solid 100% Pinot Noir!

Food Pairing: My go-to pairing with Pinot Noir is always salmon, but I think it's also a great choice for any everyday meal. It has flavor and acidity, which really expands the pairing options.

2015 Ravenswood Petite Sirah (California)

Tasting Notes: Full Disclosure - I typically do not prefer large national brand wineries, like Ravenswood. I still try their wines, because even I can be surprised. Cue their Petite Sirah. The inherently dry nature of this variety and its richer fruit profile won me over. This red starts with a full-flavored aroma of dark berry fruit, spice and a hint of caramel. It's ripe on the palate, with nice fruit - black and blue fruits - and decent acidity and grip, which provides nice structure. The finish shows dark blue fruits, big and ripe tannins, and nice length.

Food Pairing: With the acidity and tannins in this red, I'd choose something a bit heavier. Pair it with grilled meats, burgers or anything with a higher fat content. The tannins will be able to cut through the fat.

2013 Donati Claret Paicines AVA (Central Coast, California)

Tasting Notes: This red blend has all five Bordeaux varietals (48% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Franc, 9% Malbec & 1% Petite Verdot) and sees 23 months of oak aging. You can immediately tell that it's European influenced in the aroma where I found light bell pepper notes that complimented the dark berry fruit. It's quite rich and dense on the palate (Yeah!) with dark cherry/berry fruit, light earthy notes and good balancing acidity. The finish has dark berry fruit, hints of bell pepper, light toast notes and good length. This is a great combination of the fruit of California with the complexity and structure of Bordeaux.

Food Pairing: This is the heaviest wine this month, so pair accordingly. Beef, lamb and game dishes would pair nicely with this red. Also given the Bordeaux influence, I'd suggest trying this with herb rubbed meats