

It's a healthy mix of cold weather wines this month and one selection to share with your Valentine or anyone for that matter. Also this is a good time to revisit that bottle of Port in your wine cabinet. Nothing beats a contemplative glass of port on a cold-ish winter night. Enjoy!

Cheers, Herb

P.S. - My non-Wine Club selection for the month is the **2010 Domaine Duclaux Chateauneuf du Pape**. It starts with a brambly, red fruit aroma and a hint of eucalyptus. It's not over-ripe on the palate with lightly baked, dark red fruits, hints of earth, small tobacco flavors and good acidity. The finish has spicy, dark red fruits, ripe tannins and nice length.

Affordable, aged CDP is a rare sight, so when I find one, I like to shout it from the rooftops, so...TRUST ME AND TRY ONE TODAY!

2015 Errazuriz Max Chardonnay Reserva 750ml (Aconcagua Costa, Chile)

Tasting Notes: Winter Wine Clubs are the perfect time to include oaky whites. For me, they simply taste better when the temperatures are cooler. This example from Errazuriz uses oak, but very judiciously (yeah!). It starts with a tropical fruit aroma that reminds me of what Australian Semillon smells like. This white is slightly lean on the palate with lemon curd/lemon zest, toasty notes and light baking spices. The mid-palate shows more tropical fruits with well-balanced woody notes from the oak. The best part is the balanced acidity throughout, which maintains structure. The finish has bright lemon and tropical fruit, light toast notes and decent length. Well done!

Food Pairing: This is a good choice for heartier foods, which typically require a red pairing. Oakier whites with acidity can pair well with hearty chicken, pork or light beef dishes.

2014 Domaine de Durban Muscat de Beaumes de Venise 375ml (Rhone, France)

Tasting Notes: It's February, which means it's dessert-ish time for the Wine Club. I chose one of the few sweet wines from the Rhone appellation, Muscat de Beaumes de Venise. It's made from the Muscat grape, which has been cultivated in this area for almost 2,000 years, and is fortified with neutral spirit to stop fermentation and maintain sweetness. The Durban is a great choice because it's not overly sweet and viscous. This example is smooth on the palate with slightly rich honeyed apricot fruit that doesn't overwhelm the palate. The finish is a nice mix of ripe stone fruits and roasted nuts with a lengthy finish.

Food Pairing: This is one to enjoy with your Valentine on the 14th or anytime during the month for that matter. It's very enjoyable by itself, but if you'd like to pair it with something, I'd stick with fruit desserts and stay away from chocolate.

NV Mercato Carne Vino Rosso (Italian)

Tasting Notes: This non-vintage, Italian red is a great bistro wine that's easily quaffable. It's a blend of Montepulciano and Cabernet and has a fresh, slightly dark berry aroma that turns to darker berry as the wine opens. This red is smooth and somewhat bright on the palate with fresh cherry/berry fruit, hints of spice and just enough acidity for balance. The finish has juicy, pleasantly tart red fruit, low tannins and decent length.

Food Pairing: This is a great everyday red to pair with any everyday meal. My only qualifier would be to stay away from foods that are too heavy-bodied because this is a low to medium-bodied red.

2014 Seven Daughters Rich Red (California)

Tasting Notes: This California red blend has the Herb seal of approval. It's mostly Merlot, Zinfandel and Petite Verdot. I'm finding that Petite Verdot is used more often as a blending grape in larger quantities, and I like the results. This example has a fresh red fruit aroma with a larger raspberry component. It's fresh and lively on the palate with ripe, red fruits - strawberry and raspberry - light spice notes and a hint of caramel. This is a fairly clean offering with lower, but present, acidity. The finish has fresh berry fruits, small spice flavors, medium tannins and medium length. Great everyday red.

Food Pairing: This is heavier-bodied than the Mercato above, so pair this with medium to heavier-bodied dishes. Heartier poultry or pork dishes, lighter beef dishes would pair nicely with this red.

2016 Trivento Reserve Malbec (Mendoza, Argentina)

Tasting Notes: All it takes is one smell to realize this is an above average everyday wine. It has a big aroma of deep, dark boysenberry fruit with light vanilla notes. It's clean on the palate with rich, ripe boysenberry and blue fruits. There's a pleasant note of white pepper in there as well. The acidity is good throughout and offers structure to the bright and juicy fruit. The finish has gobs of blue fruits, integrated tannins and nice length. This is a fuller-flavored red and a great example why most Argentina Malbecs are much better than California Cabernets in the everyday price range.

Food Pairing: This is a heavier red with good structure, so you can pair it with heavier beef and game dishes.

2015 Dona Paula Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Lujan de Cuyo, Argentina)

Tasting Notes: I was surprised to see that this everyday priced Cabernet is from Lujan de Cuyo, a sub-appellation of Mendoza with higher elevation and higher quality grapes. This is the heaviest red this month. It has an aroma of dark cherry fruit, light spice notes and evolving meatier flavors. It has a richer mouthfeel that's slightly fat, with dried black cherry fruit and cedar flavors. The finish has stewed cherry fruit, medium to heavy tannins and nice length. This is a drier style of Cabernet with good fruit, nice complexity and decent structure.

Food Pairing: Pair this with juicier meats, given its acidity and body, and almost anything from the grill.