

Ask Ms. Merlot...

WITHOUT FAIL, AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, LIKE SPARROWS TO CAPISTRANO, WINE NEOPHYTES SUBJECT MS. MERLOT TO A VERITABLE BARRAGE OF QUESTIONS REGARDING THE HOW-TOS AND WHY-NOTS OF HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING AND GIFT-GIVING. ENOUGH! RATHER THAN CONTINUING TO ANSWER YOUR PATHETIC, WHINING ENTREATIES PIECEMEAL, MS. MERLOT HAS DECIDED TO PUBLISH HER FIRST EVER TOP TEN LIST OF THE DOS AND DON'TS OF HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING. READ ON AND LEAVE ME BE!

10. *DON'T OVER PLAN YOUR PARTY!* UNLESS IT'S REALLY GOING TO BE A BONA FIDE WINE TASTING OR ALL YOUR GUESTS ARE CERTIFIED WINE GEEKS, OFFER THREE OR FOUR WINES...A SINGLE RED, A SINGLE WHITE, A SINGLE SPARKLING WINE, MAYBE A ROSÉ. RUNNING AROUND MAKING SURE THAN A DOZEN WINES ARE ALWAYS AVAILABLE IS UNBECOMING. YET...

9. *DON'T RUN OUT OF THE BOOZE!* A GOOD HOSTESS NEVER SENDS HER GUESTS AWAY UNSATED. WHETHER IT'S BEER, WINE, COCKTAILS OR EGGNOG, IF YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO HAVE THAT EXTRA CASE OF HOOCH AROUND, DON'T ENTERTAIN! AND SPEAKING OF EGGNOG...

8. *DO ALWAYS SPIKE THE EGGNOG!* REALLY, WHO WANTS TO DRINK VIRGIN EGG-ENRICHED HALF-AND-HALF? THE RUM, BRANDY, BOURBON AND WHATEVER ONE ADDS TO EGGNOG ARE WHAT REALLY KEEP THE HOME FIRE BURNING. AND WHILE WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT...

7. *DO LIGHT THE FIREPLACE!* YES, YES, WE KNOW, IT MAKES A MESS AND DRAWS HEAT FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE HOUSE, BUT WHY DID YOU INSIST ON THAT ENORMOUS HEARTH IN THE GREAT ROOM OF YOUR MCMANSION IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO USE IT AT LEAST ONCE BEFORE YOU TRADE UP TO AN EVEN LARGER AND MORE GROTESQUE PRESENTATION OF YOUR CREDIT RATING? AND SINCE YOU MENTIONED RATINGS...

6. *DON'T EVER BUY YOUR HOLIDAY WINES BASED UPON SOME CRITIC'S RATINGS!* THAT WINE WRITER, WHO'S STILL DESPERATELY SEEKING A REGULAR PAYCHECK, OR AT LEAST TENURE, HAS NO MORE SENSE OF WHAT YOU LIKE IN A WINE THAN THE MAN IN THE MOON! PLEASE, JUST BUY WHAT YOU LIKE, AT A PRICE THAT MAKES SENSE TO YOU, AND SERVE IT UNASHAMEDLY TO YOUR GUESTS. UNINTERESTING GUESTS MAKE PARTIES DULL, NOT UNINTERESTING WINES. BUT RATHER THAN SERVING UNINTERESTING WINES...

5. *DO ALWAYS HAVE A COLD BOTTLE (OR 12) OF SPARKLING WINE AROUND!* CAVA, SEKT, PROSECCO OR EVEN CHAMPAGNE IS SURE TO ENLIVEN ANY AND ALL HOLIDAY FETES! I, OF COURSE, PREFER BRUT ROSÉ, AS THE LUSCIOUS AND LIVELY PINK HUE IS SURE TO IMPROVE BOTH THE WIT AND THE COUNTENANCE OF MANY A DOLEFUL HOSTESS. AND AS A GIFT FOR THE HOSTESS...

4. *DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT RE-GIFTING WINE!* A TIN OF BISCUITS, A BOX OF TRUFFLES, YES, INDEED, A BOTTLE OF WINE (WRAPPED, OF COURSE!) ARE APPROPRIATE HOSTESS GIFTS, BUT NEVER, EVER EXPECT YOUR GIFT TO BE SERVED THAT EVENING! UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU'VE BROUGHT ENOUGH TO SERVE ALL THE INVITED GUESTS! AND SINCE YOU'RE AN INVITED GUEST...

3. *DON'T EVER BE THE LAST TO LEAVE!* FOUR HOURS AT A COCKTAIL PARTY IS ABOUT AN HOUR TOO LONG AND AT A DINNER PARTY JUST A PERFECT TIME TO BE SAYING GOODNIGHT EVEN IF YOU'RE FAMILY. ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE FAMILY. AND SPEAKING OF YOUR FAMILY...

2. *DON'T TAKE WINE ADVICE FROM YOUR BROTHER-IN-LAW. OR SON-IN-LAW. OR FATHER-IN-LAW. OR MOTHER-IN-LAW.* WHETHER YOU LIKE THEM OR NOT, THEIR BARELY READ SUBSCRIPTION TO *THE WINE SPECTATOR*, *ADVOCATE*, OR *ENTHUSIAST* MAKES THEIR EXPERTISE LESS THEN, SHALL WE SAY, SUBSTANTIAL, AND IN THE CASE OF THE SON-IN-LAW, THAT ONE SUMMER AS A WAITER IN REHOBOTH DOESN'T MAKE HIM A SOMMELIER. NOR DOES THAT YEARLY TRIP TO NAPA WHERE HE'S ALWAYS DRUNK BY NOON. AND AS DRINKING MAKES DRUNKS...

1. *DON'T GET DRUNK AT YOUR OWN PARTY!* OR YOUR OFFICE PARTY, OR AT YOUR SPOUSE'S OR PARTNER'S OFFICE PARTY. JUST DON'T GET DRUNK. IF YOU HAVEN'T LEARNED TO HOLD YOUR ALCOHOL BY NOW, THIS HOLIDAY SEASON MAY BE THE PERFECT TIME TO PRACTICE TEMPERANCE.



WINES FOR HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

IF THE HOLIDAYS ARE NOT FRAUGHT WITH ENOUGH TENSION FILLED DECISIONS, THE QUESTION AS TO THE PROPER WINES TO SERVE ADDS YET ANOTHER FEARFUL COMPLEXITY TO MANY. BUT RELAX! ITS ONLY WINE, NOT AN INDICATION OF YOUR SOCIAL STATUS OR CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE, AND IT'S OUR OPINION THAT THE CORK DORK THAT TRIES TO BULLY YOU ABOUT YOUR WINE CHOICES HAS NEITHER, NOR DOES HE (YES, ITS INVARIABLY A HE) REALLY UNDERSTAND WINE. FOR SOME 8000 YEARS, WINE HAS BEEN USED MEDICINALLY, AS A SAFER BEVERAGE THAN WATER, AS A NECESSARY COMPONENT TO THE MEAL, AND, NOW AND THEN, IN CELEBRATIONS. SO YOUR HOLIDAY WINE CHOICES SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE FAMILIAR RATHER THAN THE SCARCE, THE COMFORTING RATHER THAN THE BOMBASTIC. WHAT FOLLOWS ARE OUR RECOMMENDATIONS, BASED NOT UPON SCORES OR HYPERBOLE, BUT RATHER COMMONSENSE AND QUALITY.

SEGURA VIUDAS ARIA BRUT CAVA, NV

REGULAR PRICE \$9.99 TWS PRICE \$7.99

PENEDES, SPAIN

THE HOLIDAYS PRACTICALLY SCREAM FOR SPARKLING WINE, AND OFTEN THE PRICE TAG ON CHAMPAGNE MAKES THE NOTION OF A PUNCH OR MIMOSAS IMPRACTICAL. EUREKA! THIS CAVA FROM NORTHEASTERN SPAIN OVER DELIVERS; CHEAP ENOUGH FOR ANY USE; BRIGHT, FRUITY (FRUITY, NOT SWEET!) AND TASTY ENOUGH TO POUR IN A FLUTE AND DELIGHT YOUR GUESTS. (PW)

2004 ARNOLD PALMER RED

REGULAR PRICE \$9.99 CASE PRICE \$96.00

CALIFORNIA

IS EVERYONE IN THE WINE BUSINESS THESE DAYS? DOES CELEBRITY SPONSORSHIP MEAN THE WINE IS BETTER? WELL, THE CYNIC IN ME WANTS TO DIS THIS WINE; DOES ARNIE KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT WINE? HOWEVER, UNDER GREATER SCRUTINY, OTHER FACTS EMERGE. THIS WINE IS MADE BY NAPA VALLEY'S LUNA VINEYARDS, WHO ARE CREDIBLE TO SAY THE LEAST. BLENDING SANGIOVESE WITH CABERNET AND MERLOT (AMONG OTHER GRAPES) AND LETTING IT LAY IN OAK, THE WINE IS FULLER AND RICHER THAN THE PRICE TAG WOULD INDICATE - AND WHAT A PRICE TAG! IF YOU LIKE ARNIE, THIS WINE'S A STEAL; IF YOU DON'T, IT'S A STEAL ANYWAY. (PW)



vol. 2, no. 24

two



2005 CAPASALDO PINOT GRIGIO

REGULAR \$12.99 TWS \$9.99

VENETO, ITALY

MAYBE PINOT GRIGIO IS YOUR THING AND MAYBE IT ISN'T, BUT ONE THING THAT IT FOR SURE IS THAT THIS AIRY WHITE IS A TIME-TESTED WINE TO SATISFY THE THIRST OF THE HOLIDAY MASSES THAT COME TO CONGREGATE IN YOUR LIVING ROOM. IT MIGHT BE A NICE IDEA TO HAVE A COUPLE BOTTLES OF THIS CROWD-PLEASING GUZZLER AVAILABLE TO GREASE THE WHEELS OF THOSE LONG LOST RELATIVES THAT APPEAR THIS TIME OF YEAR. AND IF YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE SOME AROUND IT MIGHT AS WELL BE GOOD AND AFFORDABLE. THE 2005 CAPASALDO IS TEXTBOOK PINOT GRIGIO, LIGHT, CRISP, AND, DARE I SAY, DOWNRIGHT MILD WHILE MANAGING TO OFFER ENOUGH MINERALITY TO KEEP THE AVID WINE DRINKER INTERESTED. AT \$9.99 THIS MAY BE THE MOST ECONOMICAL KIND THING YOU'LL DO FOR YOUR HOLIDAY CROWD. (IAS)

2005 BURGENS ALBARINO

REGULAR PRICE \$12.99 TWS PRICE \$9.99

GALICIA, SPAIN

WE'VE FEATURED THIS WINE BEFORE, AND ALTHOUGH ITS AVAILABILITY HAS BEEN SPOTTY, IT'S STILL ONE OF OUR FAVORITES; THE AGGRESSIVE PRICING MAKES IT, FRANKLY, A NO-BRAINER! BOLD AND PERSISTENT ACIDITY FOLLOWS THE LUSCIOUS PEACH/NECTARINE FLAVORS OF THE WINE. THIS IS NO WIMPY WHITE, BUT DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME TRYING TO GET THE WINE BIGOTS TO TRY IT; SERVE IT TO THOSE THAT KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THAT COLOR IN A WINE IS A SURE INDICATION OF ITS...COLOR. (PW)

2005 MERIDIAN CHARDONNAY, 1.5 LT

REGULAR PRICE \$17.99 TWS PRICE \$12.99

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

EVERY YEAR, THE WINE PRESS TRASHES CALIFORNIA CHARDONNAY. EVERY YEAR, SALES OF CALIFORNIA CHARDONNAY OUTSELL ALL OTHER WHITE VARIETALS. HMM, YET ANOTHER REASON TO NOT LISTEN TO THE WINE PRESS, BUT, I DIGRESS...MERIDIAN STILL GETS MY VOTE AS THE BEST CALIFORNIA CHARDONNAY FOR THE MONEY. RIPE, WITH TELLTALE OAK-DRIVEN VANILLA AND CARAMEL FLAVORS, THE WINE IS NONETHELESS BALANCED AND CRISP. NO, IT'S NOT BURGUNDIAN; IT'S FROM SANTA BARBARA, HON! HAVE SOME FUN AND DON'T LET THE NEIGHBORHOOD WINE SNOB SEE THE LABEL BEFORE TASTING THE WINE, THEN LAUGH AS HE SPUTTERS IN INDIGNATION AFTER ADMITTING THAT HE LIKES THIS WINE! (PW)

"AFTER THE WAR, PROHIBITION WAS PASSED, AND WITH LIQUOR NO LONGER LEGALLY AVAILABLE THE NATION PLUNGED HEADLONG INTO THE GREAT DEPRESSION." ~ DAVE BARRY

2005 CARRIL DE COTOS TINTO

REGULAR PRICE \$9.99 **TWS PRICE \$7.99**

LA MANCHA, SPAIN

THIS IS AN EASY AND FRIENDLY INTRODUCTION TO SPAIN. MADE FROM 100% TEMPRANILLO WITH NO OAK AGING, IT'S BRIGHT, CRISP AND ENGAGING. SOFT AND FRUITY (FRUITY, NOT SWEET!), IT'S NOT UNLIKE THE FRIENDLY (AND INEXPENSIVE) MERLOTS THAT YOU FELL FOR IN THE 80S. (PW)

2005 CHATEAU HAUT RIAN BLANC

REGULAR \$9.99 **TWS \$7.99**

BORDEAUX, FRANCE

HAUT RIAN HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST TRIED AND TRUE CRISP FRENCH WHITES TO GRACE OUR SHELVES. COMPOSED OF SAUVIGNON BLANC AND SEMILLON, THE 2005 EDITION IS AS REFRESHING AND DRINKABLE AS EVER WITH A BIT OF ADDED FLESHINESS TO THE CHARACTER OF THE WINE. RIPE WHITE GRAPEFRUIT FLAVORS COMBINE WITH BRIGHT ACIDITY TO RENDER AN EASY DRINKING APERITIF OR FOIL TO ANY FRESH SEAFOOD. (IAS)

2001 LEZONGARS ROUGE

REGULAR \$14.99 **TWS \$11.99**

BORDEAUX, FRANCE

AN ENTICING BLEND OF 80% MERLOT AND 20% CABERNET SAUVIGNON ILLUSTRATES THE ELEGANT BALANCE OF THIS CLASSIC BORDEAUX VINTAGE. WHILE LEZONGARS CERTAINLY COULD NOT BE ACCUSED OF BEING RUSTIC, THERE IS A DISTINCT EARTHINESS UNDERNEATH THE SLEEK RED FRUIT OF THIS BARGAIN BORDEAUX. GREAT WITH ANY BEEF-BASED DISH, THIS CHARMER IS SMOOTH ENOUGH TO BE ENJOYED ON ITS OWN. A BRILLIANT, CLASSIC CHOICE FOR ALL THE HOLIDAY HOOPLA, ONCE YOU TASTE THIS ONE YOU MAY WANT TO KEEP IT ALL FOR YOURSELF. (IAS)

2004 UMANI RONCHI MONTEPULCIANO D'ABRUZZO 1.5L

REGULAR \$12.99 **CASE PRICE \$70.20**

D'ABRUZZO, ITALY

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT EVERY TIME I HOST SOMEBODY AT THE HOLIDAYS, THE WINE SEEMS TO DISAPPEAR MORE QUICKLY THAN ANY OTHER TIME OF THE YEAR. IN ORDER TO COMPENSATE FOR THE GREATER VOLUME INGESTED, IT MAY BE A GOOD IDEA TO HAVE A FEW LARGE FORMAT BOTTLES HANDY. UMANI RONCHI MONTEPULCIANO IS AN ESCAPE FROM THE USUAL AUSSIE SHIRAZ MAGNUM OPTION: IT'S A CHERRY SCENTED RED FROM CENTRAL ITALY POSSESSING MEDIUM WEIGHT AND FRESHNESS WHICH PREVENTS THIS VALUE FROM EVER BECOMING TIRESOME. LET THERE BE WINE...LOTS OF IT. (IAS)

HOLIDAY GIFT PACKS

CHARLES HEIDSIECK BRUT RESERVE WITH GLASS SET:

REGULAR- \$43.99

SALE- \$34.99

TANQUERAY 10 750ML WITH MARTINI SHAKER \$28.99

GREY GOOSE 750ML WITH MARTINI GLASS \$27.99

KETEL ONE 750ML WITH COCKTAIL SHAKER \$23.99

GLENLIVET 12YR 750ML WITH 2 GLASS SET \$39.99

GLENMORANGIE 10YR 750ML WITH 2 GLASS SET \$39.99

EL CORAZON BLANCO 750ML WOODEN GIFT SET \$42.99

STEENBERG BELGIAN BEER SAMPLER 6PK \$15.99

BREWERY OMMEGANG SAMPLER WITH GLASS \$23.99

CHIMAY GIFT PACK WITH GLASS \$15.99

DUVEL GIFT PACK WITH GLASS \$16.99

THE WINE SOURCE WILL ALSO HAVE ASSORTED WINE, CHEESE, AND BEER GIFT PACKAGES AVAILABLE IN THE STORE.

...AND DON'T FORGET A WINE SOURCE GIFT CARD FOR THE STOCKING!!

Mark Your Calendar!



CHAMPAGNE DINNER

We will pop the corks and let the Bubbly flow for this festive holiday dinner.

Saturday, December 2, 8 pm
Abacrombie, 58 W. Biddle St.

\$10 TASTING AT IGGIES

Fine Wine and Iggies gourmet
Neapolitan-style pizza.

Tuesday, December 5, 5 - 7 pm
Iggies, 818 N. Calvert St.

FREE TASTING

It's the time of year for Bubbly.
Stop by and taste some for free.

Friday, December 15, 4:30 - 7:30 pm
TWS, 3601 Elm Ave

FREE TASTING

It's the time of year for Bubbly.
Stop by and taste some for free.

Saturday, December 16, 1:30 - 5:30 pm
TWS, 3601 Elm Ave

For a complete up-to-date
listing of our events, check our website
at www.the-wine-source.com

THE WINE SOURCE

3601 Elm Avenue

Baltimore, MD 21211

(410) 467-7777

www.the-wine-source.com

Comments from the Cheese Cave

DELICIOUS FRESH OLIVES FROM BARNIER HARVEST AND MOULIN MAHJOUB

BARNIER OLIVES ARE THE FINEST AND FRESHEST OLIVES IN ALL OF FRANCE. PRODUCED IN LANGUEDOC BY A SMALL FAMILY BUSINESS WITH MORE THAN 60 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, THE OLIVES ARE HAND SELECTED AND CURED USING LOCAL ARTISANAL METHODS. THE RESULTS ARE OLIVES THAT ARE FRESH, FIRM, FLAVORFUL AND LOW IN SALT. THE LINE INCLUDES PICHOLINES, NICOISE, LUCQUES AND NYONS, WHICH WON THE GOLD MEDAL AT THE CONCOURS DE DEGUSTATION DES OLIVES DE NYONS.

FROM BARNIER HARVEST:

PICHOLINES- CRISP AND NUTTY! THESE ARE OUR MOST POPULAR OLIVES.

BASQUE MIX- A COLORFUL MIX OF GREEN AND BLACK OLIVES ALONG WITH BELL PEPPERS, LEMONS AND SPICES.

OIL CURED OLIVES WITH HERBS DE PROVENCE- COMPLETELY ADDICTIVE! SALTY, OILY AND HERBACEOUS.

RIVIERA MIX- A BLEND OF PITTED GREEN AND BLACK OLIVES MIXED WITH BELL PEPPERS AND LEMON. THIS IS A GREAT BASE FOR MAKING YOUR OWN TAPENADES OR JUST FOR SNACKING.

THE MAHJOUB FAMILY RUNS LES MOULINS MAHJOUB IN THE LUSH MEJERDA VALLEY OF TUNISIA, LOCATED 50 MILES WEST OF TUNIS. KNOWN FOR THEIR STEADFAST COMMITMENT TO ARTISAN STANDARDS, THE MAHJOUBS ARE RECOGNIZED IN THE HIGHEST ECHELONS OF THE CULINARY WORLD AS ONE OF THE PREMIER PRODUCERS OF NORTH AFRICAN OLIVES, OILS AND CONDIMENTS.

FROM MOULINS MAHJOUB:

GREEN OLIVES WITH WILD MOUNTAIN HERBS- "MUSKI" VARIETY OLIVES MARINATED IN OLIVE OIL, THYME, GARLIC AND ROSEMARY.

GREEN OLIVES WITH SPICY HARISSA- "MUSKI" VARIETY OLIVES IN HARISSA, A PEPPER BASED CONDIMENT MADE WITH SUN-DRIED PEPPERS AND GARLIC. IF YOU LIKE EM' SPICY, THESE ARE THE ONES FOR YOU.

ON SALE THIS WEEK:

TOMME VAUDOISE- THESE LITTLE MOLD-RIPENED COW'S MILK CHEESES ARE RIPE AND READY TO GO. MADE WITH RAW COW'S MILK, WHICH IS A REAL RARITY FOR CHEESES OF THIS STYLE.

SALE PRICE \$6 EACH; REGULARLY \$7

FLEUR DE TECHE- BLOOMY-RIND TRIPLE CREAM CHEESE FROM GONZALES, LOUISIANA. ITS SMOOTH AND CREAMY FLAVOR MAKES IT PERFECT WITH SPARKLING WINES.

SALE PRICE \$11.50 EACH; REGULARLY \$13.50

GABRIEL- AGED TRIPLE CREAM GOAT'S MILK CHEESE BY BITTERSWEET PLANTATION DAIRY. DENSE AND FLAVORFUL WITHOUT BEING TOO GOAT-Y. GREAT ADDITION TO A SALAD OR CHEESE BOARD.

SALE PRICE \$7 EACH; REGULARLY \$8

ROARING 40'S BLUE- IF YOU HAVEN'T TRIED THIS COW'S MILK BLUE CHEESE FROM TASMANIA, YOU'RE REALLY MISSING OUT. SWEET AND CREAMY WITH A PUNGENT, EARTHY FINISH.

SALE PRICE \$10 LB; REGULARLY \$12 LB.

vol. 2, no. 24