

Wines for Romance

"We live on the leash of our senses." So wrote Diane Ackerman in her 1990 bestseller, *The Natural History of the Senses*. According to Ackerman, the senses "define the edges of consciousness." Her viewpoint may or may not be factual, but it's at least thought provoking when attempting to recommend wines for romance. Wine provides first and foremost a sensory occurrence, initially with the eyes—we observe the hue, the intensity, the vibrancy, the limpidity; then the nose—we smell aromas that gently waft from the glass or burst forth fully-formed; and finally, the mouth—we taste the grape, the soil that it was grown in, the inherent sweetness, and the spark of acidity. These experiences set the stage, create a sense of anticipation, and lighten the mood. The glass of wine evokes serenity and contented relaxation. Daily problems and stress are pushed aside momentarily, as the senses (with some help from alcohol) take over the body's systems.

Despite that, wine and romance are seemingly at odds in today's point-addled world. With more and more clinicians (read: critics) attempting to numerically quantify 'wine', we're in danger of losing sight of that quixotic, fleeting link. Likewise, hedonism, the wine buzzword *du jour*, may be enjoyable, but its very meaning defies the ideal. However pleasurable self-gratification may be, it surely is *not* romantic.

To be sure, all wines and wine experiences are not romantic. Tossing down a ubiquitous Pinot Grigio in a crowded barroom is decidedly *not*. Ditto the public tallying of one's cellar contents like so many baseball cards (got it, got it, need it, got it...). Context—the set and setting—is crucial to the romantic viewpoint of wine. Where and when was the bottle opened? Inside or outside? In public or in private? Any room can be romantic, especially the kitchen (rent 9 1/2 Weeks for tips). With whom were you with and why? And the wine...an old favorite? An impulsive stop on the way home? Finally, every and all types of wine can be romantic. One need only to relax and let the senses do their work.

Sparkling: Why are bubbles romantic? Does the lazy spiraling to the surface in the flute suggest the slow awakening of passion? Is it the taste of sparkling wine that evokes romance; slightly sweet, a bit tart, lively on the tongue?

Cabernet Sauvignon: Cab needn't only bespeak power; great Cabernets combine raw sensuality with a lingering elegance. And, like great romance, they age well and beautifully.

Pinot Noir: Pinot Noir evokes passion—the shimmering, deep, yet translucent garnet color, the gentle fruit and floral fragrances, the supple texture on one's palate

Sauvignon Blanc: It suggests the heady zeal of new love. Bursting with exotic tropical and citric flavors and scents, Sauvignon Blanc provides instant gratification while awakening the taste buds and feeding your hunger.

Rosé: The color of oft-kissed lips, it's barely sweet, touched by rose petals, strawberry and watermelon, delicate yet enduring, perfect for an afternoon tryst.

Chardonnay: Romance needn't be always new and different to be satisfying. Chardonnay, the grape and wine that we've loved long and well, still charms. It entices with vanilla, apple, honeysuckle, and spice as it slowly evolves in the glass. One moment fresh pear appears, the next a fleeting river stone. The wine is both satisfyingly familiar and achingly impulsive.

Syrah: Warming, enveloping, lusty, Syrah wraps itself around you and dares you to leave. Lush and intense, the randy aromas of roasted coffee and blackberry intertwine with lilting peach and vanilla. It'll make your head spin. [PW]

Wines for Lovers...

FREE WEEKEND WINE TASTING!

Friday, February 10, 4:30-7:30

Saturday, February 11, 1:30-5:30

Join us this weekend for a tasting of the following six wines and four meads, all chosen in honor of Valentine's Day.

Mont Marçal Brut Rosé NV Cava Reserva Penedès, Spain

Reg. Price: \$16.99

The Wine Source Price: \$12.99

If both bubbles and rosé are romantic individually, then the combination must act like a veritable Cupid's arrow. Made from the indigenous grape varietal Trepat, this pale pink Spanish sparkler is soft and bright with hints of dried cherry and cocoa. A lovely aperitif or bedtime sipper. [PW]

2005 Yalumba Y Series Viognier South Australia

Reg. Price: \$10.99

The Wine Source Price: \$8.79

This exotic Viognier from South Australia is a perfect white for Valentine's Day. It's packed with ripe tropical fruit and peaches. Full bodied and high in viscosity, this wine is a rich treat and sure to delight your sweetheart. A great match for spicy Thai or Indian cuisine...avoid the madness of dining out and instead have a romantic night at home with this Aussie Viognier and some take-out. [IAS]

2003 Mommessin Saint-Amour Beaujolais, France

Reg. Price: \$22.99

The Wine Source Price: \$17.99

This wine arrives to us from perhaps the most romantic of all Beaujolais Crus—the appellation Saint-Amour. Sometimes the origin of a wine can be the most interesting thing about it. Fortunately such is not the case with this graceful, full flavored 2003 offering from Mommessin. The nose is rife with the fresh strawberry aromas so desired from the Gamy variety. The palate also contains a hint of earth to balance the fruity personality of the wine. The finish is clean, focused, and satisfying. A charming Beaujolais to cuddle up with this Valentine's Day. [IAS]



2004 Alexander Valley "Temptation" Zinfandel Healdsburg, California

Reg. Price: \$14.99

The Wine Source Price: \$11.99

The soul of romance is temptation. Whether lustful or contemplative, we're enticed by others, by circumstances, or even by wine. This fresh and fruity Zin is anything but sinful, but will lead you to temptation. Lusty but far from evil, it will take you to the very brink of satisfaction. Then you're on your own. [PW]

2004 Icardi Brachetto Piedmont, Italy

Reg. Price: \$18.99

The Wine Source Price: \$14.99

Valentine's day is an excuse for all of us (whether attached or not) to treat ourselves and others to something out of the ordinary. Why not give in to your sweet tooth with this lovely bottle of red bubbly from northern Italy. Brachetto is a regional grape specialty of the Piedmont zone and possesses a vibrant strawberry color and flavor. It's is the perfect partner to some dark chocolate at the end of the evening. [IAS]

2004 Cantine Aurora Tortona Moscato Piedmont, Italy

Reg. Price: \$12.99

The Wine Source Price: \$9.99

Succulent, effervescent, lush, pleasantly sweet, yet not cloying, this wine captures all that nature can provide. Embodying the essence of a Bacchanalian harvest, the golden rays of a diminishing sun, the ripe sensual nature of fruit hanging on the vine, and the freshness and caress of a gentle breeze, this Italian delight begs to be savored, and at the same time, pleads to be guzzled! [PW]

Love is like wine. To sip is fine, but to empty the bottle is a headache.

--Julio Iglesias

Honey Wine

The history of honey wine, or mead, goes back more than 8,000 years. The oldest recorded were created on the island of Crete. Fermented honey was seen as a hallucinogen for use in religious ceremonies, and bees were sacred to the goddess Demeter. As wine had not yet been created, mead was the drink of the Age of Gold, and the word for drunk in classical Greek translated to "honey-intoxicated."

The word "honeymoon" stems from this same honey wine, and the Saxon tradition of drinking mead for one full lunar cycle starting on the first night of a couple's wedding. Not that one should limit consumption of mead only to that period, but it does explain why we're offering these great meads from Redstone Meadery in Boulder in our St. Valentine's Day edition. [PW]

Black Raspberry Nectar

Reg. Price: \$16.99 / TWS Price: \$12.99 (.750 ml)

Redstone's first mead released in July 2001. With the mouth feel and texture of beer and the light taste of a lower alcohol mead, this beverage is the very definition of "refreshing."

Sunshine Nectar

Reg. Price: \$16.99/ TWS Price: \$12.99 (.750 ml)

Slightly effervescent and fresh, the addition of apricots gives this mead a dryer, tart, more traditional taste.

Traditional Mountain Honey Wine

Reg. Price: \$22.99/ TWS Price: \$17.99 (1 liter)

Mostly orange blossom honey, this mead is medium in sweetness, slightly acidic, and warming.

Mountain Honey Wine

with Vanilla Beans & Cinnamon Sticks

Reg. Price: \$21.99/ TWS Price: \$16.99 (.750 ml)

Along with two parts Alfalfa and one part Wildflower, this is fermented on whole vanilla beans and fresh cinnamon sticks. Simply put, a fantastic combination of ingredients.

CHOCOLATE STOUT

Like the world of wine, the beer world is a diverse one. With the rich history and many styles, one can find a beer to fit almost any occasion. In the case of Valentines Day the choice is, for obvious reasons, Chocolate Stout.

Stouts evolved in England and Ireland out of the Porters traditionally brewed there that used malts roasted in a kiln, which gave them a dark, inky appearance. These Porters were brewed at several different levels of strength and gravity, and the term "stout" was reserved for the more robust styles. As the brewing process evolved chocolate malts, and in some cases actual dark chocolate, were incorporated and chocolate stouts were born. Like Victorian Londoners, enjoy one with lobster and oysters, or fix your valentine a Black Velvet. Fill a flute halfway with stout and carefully top off with champagne so that the two remain separate. [Bear]

Brooklyn Black Chocolate Stout (New York)

\$8.99 per 6-pack

\$31.99 per case

With a densely creamy mouthfeel, strong bitterness, and darkly sweet malt, this is luxuriously rich and intense.

Youngs Double Chocolate Stout (England)

\$3.29 per 16 oz. bottle

\$7.99 per 4-pack cans

Chocolate malt and real dark chocolate are combined with Young's award-winning rich, full flavored dark beer.

Rogue Chocolate Stout (Oregon)

\$5.49 per 22 oz. bottle

The mellow flavor of oats, chocolate malts, and real chocolate are balanced perfectly with the right amount of hops for a bittersweet finish.

Sam Adams Chocolate Bock (Boston)

\$14.99 per .750 bottle

A confectionary concoction that infuses the robust, dark complexity of a German bock with the luscious, semisweet-chocolate aromatics of cocoa beans.

Mark Your Calendar!

FREE CHEESE & SOUP TASTING

Vermont Cheddar &

New England Clam Chowder

Thursday, February 9, 5:30-7:30 pm

FREE WEEKEND WINE TASTING

Wines for Lovers

Friday, February 10, 4:30 to 7:30 pm

Saturday, February 11, 1:30 to 5:30 PM

FREE CHEESE & SOUP TASTING

with fresh soups from Soup's On

Thursday, February 16, 5:30-7:30 pm

FREE CHEESE & SOUP TASTING

with fresh soups from Soup's On

Thursday, February 23, 5:30-7:30 pm

FREE WEEKEND WINE TASTING

A Multitude of Zins

Friday, February 10, 4:30 to 7:30 pm

Saturday, February 11, 1:30 to 5:30 pm



**LAST SUNDAY
SUPPERS
AT IGGIES**

Sunday, February 26, 5:30 pm

at Iggies, 818 N. Calvert St. (Mount Vernon)

\$40 per person, including tax

For reservations, call the store at 410.467.7777

WINE DINNER

Tuscan A.B.C.

"Anything But Chianti" Dinner

Monday, February 27, 6:30 pm

at b Bistro, 1501 Bolton St. (Bolton Hill)

\$75 per person, including tax and gratuity

For reservations, call the store at 410.467.7777

THE WINE SOURCE

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Comments from the Cheese Cave

What do you buy a cheese lover
for Valentine's Day?

Coeur d'Alvignac: Made on a small farm in the French Pyreneese, Coeur (heart) is a hand-moulded, heart-shaped artisanal goat milk cheese, made daily, with fresh milk collected from a co-operative of farms in the surrounding region. It is soft-ripened and displays a luscious, creamy consistency. Serve at room temperature as a dessert, or serve warm, drizzled with honey on toast. *\$5 each*

Coeur du Berry Cendre: Jacquin, one of the premier cheese makers in the Berry region in France's Loire Valley, produces this heart-shaped, fresh goat milk cheese. Covered with a thin layer of Beechwood ash, it is creamy and light. Delicious with fresh salad or on warm crusty bread. *\$6.00 each*



Go for the Gold!

This week we spotlight a few of the lesser-known cheeses of Italy's Piedmont region, home of the 2006 Winter Olympics. Pair them with our favorite Piedmont wines and pretend you're in Torino for the games!



Toma Brusca: A relative newcomer to the US, Toma Brusca is made with pasteurized cow's milk near the town of Biella, about 50 miles north of Torino. It has the full, rich flavor of fresh milk and makes a great partner for crisp whites and fruity reds. *\$10 per pound*

Bonus: This delicate and creamy cheese is made with a blend of cow and sheep's milk. Like its cousin Taleggio, it's made in the washed rind style. The flavor reminds us of ham and eggs, which makes it a great choice for serving with breakfast. *\$8 each*

Fontina d'Aosta: Authentic Fontina made in the high mountain dairies of northwestern Italy. One taste of this nutty, herbaceous, buttery cheese will make you swear off that pale, flavorless, Danish "fontina" forever. This is the cheese used to make the classic dish Fonduta. Ask us for the recipe! *\$12 per pound*

Toma Tartufo: Sinful! Rich and creamy with the unmistakable earthiness of fresh truffles. *\$5.50 each*

Prosciutto di Parma On Sale!

Regularly \$18 per pound, our Prosciutto di Parma is on special this week for only \$14 per pound! Use it to spice up your workday sandwich or weeknight pasta!