

Amherst Wines & Spirits

February 2012

WINE DINNER: THE FOODS & WINES OF SPAIN

We are pleased and excited to announce our first wine dinner of 2012 featuring the wonderful foods and wines of Spain. Gastronomically, Spain flew under the radar for a while, but no longer. Some of the world's most exciting cuisine originates from the Iberian peninsula and we will offer a menu faithful to the ingredients and preparations found in Spain. We will, of course, pair these with wines which illustrate the excitement and spirit of innovation running rampant in this historic wine region. Mauro Aniello, chef/owner of Bistro 63 at The Monkey Bar – his name sounds Italian but he is a student and fanatic of classic international cooking – is the chef de cuisine for the evening. Please attend if you can. This should be a beauty.

First Course

Gazpacho – classic regional soup, includes tomato, Spanish onion, bell pepper, zucchini, Spanish olive oil. Served with an Albariño from the region of Galicia.

Second Course

Calamari a la Plancha – delicately seared calamari with a garbanzo bean puree, roasted potato with chorizo, and pequillo pepper. A red from the Penedes region to accompany.

Third Course

Cochinillo Asado – roast suckling pig robustly seasoned with sea salt, black peppercorn, rosemary & chives drizzled with romesco sauce (sweet roasted red pepper & tomato puree, garlic, olive oil, paprika) and served with bean sofrito (puree of Spanish beans sautéed in brown butter). Served with a robust red.

Dessert

Pasteles – cold Catalan custard with crispy caramel coating.

Cream sherry (an excellent one) to accompany.

THE DETAILS

- Date: March 21 (Wednesday)
- Place: Bistro 63 at The Monkey Bar, private room in rear (parking in town lot just behind)
- Time: 6:30
- Cost: \$80, includes tax & gratuities

THE FINE PRINT

**** Reservations a must.** Phone (549-0900) or email (steve@amherstwines.com)

**** Prepayment required.** Cancellations within 72 hours of the dinner will be honored with a 50% store credit if seats cannot be filled.

**** Seating by place card.** If you're coming with friends, let us know and we'll seat you together.

FOR BEER GEEKS

Some folks in the Pioneer Valley have put together a really neat booklet guiding you through the elements of beer tasting and providing a structure for recording your tasting notes. It's called *The Little Book of Beer*. Included are the different taste and aromatic descriptions, both good and bad, of beer as well as pages where you can record tasting notes. This will sharpen your tasting skills, no doubt. Also a cute gift idea for the budding beer-o-phile. Only \$4.99.

PORTUGAL, WHAT ELSE YA' GOT?

When most of us wine freaks think of Portugal, it's about Port. This is as it should be. If you've been paying attention, however, you know we have been singing the praises of their red table wines for some time. Recently, the NY Times did a feature on this (*wish they'd stop stealing our ideas*). We have been adding to our selection recently and urge you to explore this little known and undervalued source of terrific wines. Come take a look. We'll talk.

SATURDAY IN-STORE TASTINGS

Come join us any Saturday anytime from 2:00 – 5:00 as we taste a bunch of wines and have some fun. We slice fresh baked baguettes, set out tasting sheets describing the wines we're opening, and taste in an informal atmosphere. You get to taste stuff you probably wouldn't have, all compliments of the house. It's a good deal.

February 4: Chile's Cabernet Sauvignon

Cabs are Chile's best red wine grape and the one's we'll be tasting represent superb value at all price ranges. The good ones strike a balance between the fruit-forward California style and the more structured, reserved French style.

February 11: Malbec, the World's Hottest Red

Argentina has struck gold with its Malbecs. We have assembled some beauties which we are anxious to share with you.

February 18: Whites from the South of France

Don't you sometimes hanker to explore the road not taken? The variety and value of whites from southern France presents serious opportunity for new discoveries. Some really fine stuff here.

February 25: Italy's Dolcetto

From the Piedmont region in northwestern Italy, famous for its pricey Barolos. Dolcetto has long been a mainstay here for the locals and there are some strong vintages in the pipeline.

BUBBLIES ON SALE

Valentine's Day is around the corner. There are very few gifts which send a message of specialness and affection more than sparkling wine, and so we're making it a bit easier by putting some of our current faves on sale. (sale prices are net, no further discounts apply)

	<u>Regular</u>	<u>Sale</u>
Villa Jolanda Prosecco . . .	\$9.99	\$8.99
<i>Italy's favorite sparkling wine. Here's a good one at an amazing price.</i>		
Varichon & Clerc . . .	\$11.99	\$9.99
<i>From France's Loire Valley, dry but not tooth-rattling. Lovely bubbles. Hints of pear.</i>		
Aria . . .	\$11.99	\$9.99
<i>Cava, Spain's famous bubbly, produced in the Champagne method by one of the very top producers.</i>		
Crémant de Bourgogne, Bouillot . . .	\$18.99	\$16.99
<i>A beauty from France's Burgundy region. Dry, full-bodied, long-lasting bubbles.</i>		
Denois Blanc de Blancs . . .	\$19.99	\$17.99
<i>A Blanc de Blancs from the south of France. Quite dry, tiny, persistent mousse, closest thing to real Champagne.</i>		
Ferrari Brut . . .	\$23.99	\$19.99
<i>From northern Italy, same grapes (Chard & Pinot Noir) as Champagne, elegant and dry. This is really gorgeous.</i>		
Perrier-Jouet Brut . . .	\$39.99	\$34.99
<i>One of Champagne's top houses. We have gift packs with 2 Champagne flutes. The real stuff, elegant & complex.</i>		
Louis Roederer Brut Premier . . .	\$44.99	\$39.99
<i>Producers of the prestigious "Cristal". Full-bodied, toasty, elegant. Absolutely superb Champagne from an iconic house.</i>		

ADVANCED PURCHASE – ANTONIOLO GATTINARA



Gattinara is a small appellation in Piedmont which is typically overshadowed by the big boy on the block – Barolo. As with Barolo it depends on the Nebbiolo grape, a minimum of 90%. Gattinara is in northern Piedmont where the Nebbiolo struggles to ripen, but in 2007 things were different. This is a textbook vintage here, warm and even, and the good Gattinaras are already showing striking ripe flavors with a full, fleshy style which is quite seductive. We have been offered an early purchase opportunity on the 2007 vintage from one of Gattinara's top producers, Antonioolo, and jumped at it. We pass the savings on to you. This is reservation only – the wine is due to arrive in April, pay when you pick up. Reserve your wine by email (steve@amherstwines.com) or phone the store (549-0900)

Antonioolo Gattinara 2007

Pre-arrival . . \$34.99
After arrival . . \$39.99

What the Press Has Been Saying

"The (Antonioolo) 2007 Gattinara is simply stunning. Freshly cut flowers, red cherries and spices are some of the notes that emerge from this elegant, radiant Gattinara. This is supple, classy and engaging from start to finish. The 2007 is a fabulous wine."

Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate

MALBEC - ARGENTINA'S ROCK & ROLL REDS

We're talking Malbec, arguably the hottest thing to come along in a long, long time. Seems like every week we are being offered five new ones to look at. The wine trade, it seems, can't get enough of a good thing. The grape has been around for a long time and is one of the five grapes permitted in the great reds of Bordeaux. It is the Argentinians, however, who have elevated this once obscure grape to the front page. The Mendoza region produces about 80% of the country's better wines. High altitude vineyards blessed with abundant sunshine and natural irrigation from the Andes Mountains make for ideal growing conditions for this grape, which sometimes has trouble ripening in France. Not here. Moreover, the higher altitude results in a drier climate which means fewer problems from insects, mold, and other vineyard diseases. The need for spraying is substantially reduced and the ease of organic grape growing increased.

These are boldly flavored reds. You'll know you've got some red in the glass. The better ones balance these forward fruit flavors with natural acidity to keep the wine fresh on the palate. We've tasted loads and here are a few you'll find here.

Tierra di Luna 2011 . . \$8.99

Our "starter" Malbec and a great favorite with our customers. French owned property, winemaking family from Bordeaux. More weight than you might expect at this price. Strong value.

Jean Bousquet 2010 . . \$10.99

This organically farmed Malbec presents oodles of upfront fruit – blackberry & cherry flavors with a touch of vanilla. Not for long term storage, but right now . . terrific!!

Punto Final 2010 . . \$11.99

This pulls back just a bit on the upfront fruit to achieve a beautifully balanced style with bright flavors of raspberry & blackberry. Notes of toast and spice add interest.

Broquel 2008 . . \$15.99

You may notice cacao, plum, fig, and currant flavors along with a dollop of vanilla and toast from oak aging. Smooth, supple style from extra time spent in the barrel.

Vina Alicia 2007 . . \$19.99

Here's what we love about this – the flavors show a perfect ripeness, dark plum & blackberry, without being over the top. This balance of ripe fruit flavors and balancing acidity result in a fresh, clean style.

Catena 2009 . . \$23.99

Nicolas Catena is considered the father of the Argentinian wine renaissance, credited with having raised the quality bar to the point where these wines can compete on the world stage. His style is big, to be sure, but not at the expense of complexity. This muscular red shows plum, fig, olive, and wild herbs in its full bore flavors. Lots of "grip" and a long finish.

SOUTHERN FRANCE'S LITTLE KNOWN WHITES

Better known for its reds, southern France's Mediterranean rim is home to some absolutely wonderful whites. One thing to notice about these wines - the grapes and blends are, for the most part, not the standard stuff. So if you're up for some new white wine experiences, we strongly suggest you check some of these out.

Chardonnay, Fortant 2009 . . \$7.99

A no-nonsense Chard very much in the French mold – crisp and dry with flavors of green apple. A terrific "everyday" white if you like this style (we do).

Sables Fauve, Labelle 2010 . . \$8.99

One of the most exciting of the group, especially in the value department, is this blend of Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Colombard, Ugni Blanc, and Gros Manseng from the southwest. You'll forget that some of these sound like characters from Star Wars when you experience the explosive bouquet of pine, mint, & forest floor. The flavors are fresh, clean, and show a citrus/herbal slant with a crisp finish. Delicate and with loads of personality. Great aperitif white.

Poule Blanche 2010 . . \$9.99

This is one of the best-selling whites in the shop. The blend of Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, & Viognier offers flavors which are both bold and dry with a lovely bouquet of apple and flowers. At this price . . tough to beat.

Mas Carlot 2009 . . \$11.99

Here's a 50/50 blend of Marsanne & Roussane grapes showing impressive concentration for its price. The flavors of green plum and anise are pure and vivid with good weight and a round, silky finish. Really lovely.

Milou Chardonnay 2010 . . \$12.99

At last, a French Chardonnay with guts! The flavors have good weight and flavor definition. What makes this one special is the acidity which gives the wine lift and a crisp finish. Bold yet very food friendly . . a rare combination.

Côtes-du-Rhône, St. Cosme 2010 . . \$19.99

97% of Côtes-du-Rhône is red. Here's the 3%. Except for the very good years (2010 is one) we do not love them. This, however, is a "must try" wine. The blend of Viognier, Marsanne, Roussanne, & Picpoul is ripe and full, showing white peach, melon, apple, fresh herbs, and a mineral underpinning. The texture is silky and the finish is long with the Viognier adding gorgeous floral notes to the bouquet. Is it clear how we feel?

NEW ARRIVALS

WHITE

Quincy “Cuvée des Victoires”, Philippe Portier 2010 (FR) . . \$18.99

Here's one flying under the radar. Quincy is a small appellation not far from Sancerre in France's Loire Valley. Like Sancerre, it is 100% Sauvignon Blanc and, to most, indistinguishable from its more famous neighbor. Except – less \$\$. Crisp and quite dry. Minerally, gooseberry, a whiff of smoke in the bouquet.

Pouilly-Fuissé, Bouchard Père & Fils 2009 (FR) . . \$22.99

Bouchard Père is one of the pillars of Burgundy. Try this and see why. The bouquet is rich with apple and other citrus blossoms. The flavors display ripe green apple with mineral underpinning. The thing to notice here is how elegant, ibalanced and perfectly composed this is. Tough to describe (as you can see) but when you taste it, you'll know.

RED

Venta Morales 2010 (SP) . . \$8.99

The Tempranillo grape from the La Mancha region in central Spain. This arid, rocky vineyard area can yield wines of impressive intensity, more than the price would suggest. That's what we've got here. Deeply colored with a forward, spicy bouquet. Good size and concentration to the flavors, dark fruits wrapped in dusty tannins. A lot of wine for the \$.

Loios 2010 (P'TGL) . . \$9.99

Medium-full bodied Portuguese red, on the dry side with flavors of plum, dried herbs, and cola. The style is firm, rather than fruity, which matches up well with lighter fare such as chicken, pork, even fish.

Pinotage, Six Hats 2010 (S. AF) . . \$9.99

The Pinotage grape, a hybrid of the French Pinot Noir and Cinsault grapes, is unique to South Africa. Here's a “starter” Pinotage (they get more serious) showing ripe flavors of cherry, raspberry, hints of smoke. This is really tasty stuff.

Tannat, Rodolfo 2008 (ARG) . . \$10.99

Tannat is a rather obscure grape from southern France known for its muscular, rough-hewn style. The Argentinians are now playing with it with surprisingly good results. This is about 1/3 the price of its French cousin. It shows a lovely bouquet of dark fruits laced with anise. The flavors are full, deep, and chewy with a wild berry sense. Worth a shot.

Domaine de Perillièrre 2010 (FR) . . \$11.99

A blend of Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, & Carignan grapes from southern France. A more delicate red than the Tannat above. The sense of this is pure and elegant, yet with an understated complexity we find fascinating. Drinking a bit young just now and a quick decant helps bring out smoke, earth, and black fruits.

Château Saint-Roch 2009 (FR) . . \$16.99

From high altitude vineyards in southern France, home to 50 year old vines of Grenache, Syrah, & Carignan. The wine spent about 10 months in oak, which imparted a light toast to the saturated flavors of plum & black cherry. Despite impressive concentration the wine is never heavy or overbearing, remaining fresh and food-friendly throughout. A beauty.

Plungerhead Zinfandel, Dry Creek 2009 (CA) . . \$18.99

What is it about this grape that brings out the craziness in names and labels? However - we know a beauty when we see it. Dry Creek in the northern Sonoma Valley, is ground zero for great Zinfandel. This is richly spicy, something we look for in better Zins, with a ripe, wild berry sense. All the components mesh nicely, there's a sense of harmony and balance.

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