

Amherst Wines & Spirits

July-August 2012

FALL WINE FESTIVAL

Please join us for a very special “mega-tasting” as we celebrate the wonderful and diverse world of wines. This will be a “walk around” tasting, a room ringed with tables, each with many wines and staffed by pourers who can speak knowledgeably about these wines. Wines from all major wine producing countries will be represented – whites, reds, bubbies, & Ports. When you enter, you will get a program listing all of the wines, a wine glass, and you’re off on your own! This is a great opportunity to come with friends and share experiences. There will be light munchies (cheese & crackers, etc.) so please plan to eat before coming. Reservations essential.

Here's What You Need To Know

- DATE: October 6 (Saturday)
- PLACE: The Alumni House, Amherst College
75 Churchill Street (behind the Lord Jeff)
Parking in lot in front of Alumni House
- TIME: 7:00 – 9:00
- COST: \$40.00

Other Things To Know

Reservations must be prepaid. We cannot accept payment at the event. Phone or email (info at bottom) to save your spots. All wines shown will be available for purchase at special show discounts (pickup following week at store) and there is absolutely no requirement to buy anything. Just come and enjoy. It's good to bring a pen to record your notes on the program. With the holidays just ahead it's a great opportunity to check out wines which might appear on the Thanksgiving table or under the tree. We look forward to seeing you there. This will be fun.

SATURDAY IN-STORE TASTINGS

Please join us on Saturdays as we pop corks (or twist off caps), slice fresh baked baguettes, set out tasting sheets, and pour the wines. A great way to taste before buying, or just to increase your wine smarts. Fun, casual, and all compliments of the house. We segue into summer this month.

July 7: Whites from France's Rhône Valley

About 97% of Côtes-du-Rhône is red. In the good years, however, the whites are really special. The major grapes are Marsanne and Roussanne. Come and learn some new stuff.

July 14: Italian Whites

Fresh, crisp, bold flavors . . . the whites from Italy just continue to impress. We'll lay out a few from different growing regions and taste some things which, we're guessing, will be new to you.

July 21: Washington's Emerging Reds

If you haven't been paying attention, there's a lot happening winewise in Washington. Their reds – Cabernet, Merlot, & Syrah - are quite stunning and you will be able to check them out at this tasting.

July 28: Oregon Whites

Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, Chardonnay – all from the cool hills of Oregon's Willamette Valley. These are undiscovered gems, dry and with loads of personality.

LIGHT & SUMMERY

Two of our favorite summer drinks: **Martini & Rossi Red** vermouth (\$7.99) and club soda with a slice of lemon on the rocks and . . . **Aperol** (\$21.99), also from Italy, either straight on the rocks with a slice of orange or mix in some Prosecco for a bubbly experience. The 11% alcohol in Aperol is another plus.

PORTUGAL'S UNDER-THE-RADAR REDS

Every so often we stumble across something which has been undiscovered, not because it didn't want to get found but because no one was looking for it. Portugal has been in plain sight for many years because of Port, its great sweet wine. But these same grapes can be fermented differently to become a dry red, and this is what we're so excited about. The grapes are indigenous to the area, the names close to unpronounceable. As a group Portugal's reds are deeply flavored with a backbone of natural acidity to support the big fruit. You may find flavors of black cherry, blackberry, olives, and wild herbs. In our opinion these represented astonishing value in reds. It's a big world. Check 'em out.

Quinta de Bons Ventos 2010 . . \$8.99
Vale dos Barris 2009 . . \$9.99
Loios 2010 . . \$9.99
Quinta de São Cristovão 2009 . . \$10.99
Follies 2009 . . \$11.99
Vale do Bomfim 2009 . . \$11.99
Monte Cascas 2009 . . \$15.99
Crasto 2008 . . \$16.99
Vila Santa 2007 . . \$19.99

Portuguese Red Discounts

Choose any 4 bottles & deduct 10%

Choose any 6 bottles & deduct 15%

BARGAIN BIN

When next you drop into the shop, you may want to check out our "bargain bin". When we cannot get a wine anymore or it's the end of the vintage, or the label has a slight tear – into the "bb" it goes and the price drops **25%**. These are all first quality wines and it's a great place to look for real bargains. Hit or miss, as these things tend to be. Here are some of the things in the "bb" right now (they may be finished and others added by the time you get this): Jim Barry "The Cover Drive" Cabernet Sauvignon (\$19.99), Ravines Cabernet Franc (\$19.99), Tio Pepe Fino Sherry (\$16.99), Peter Lehmann Semillon (\$11.99). Prices in () are before discount.

OREGON'S WONDERFUL WHITES

The cooler vineyard sites in Oregon's Willamette Valley provide ideal growing conditions for Pinot Noir. This is pretty well known today. Less well known are the superior whites which have been coming from this region. As with Pinot Noir, whites depend on good acidity to balance out the ripe fruit flavors. Cooler climate makes this possible. These are exuberant wines flashing oodles of personality. We're urging you to check some out.

Borealis 2010 . . \$12.99

A blend of Muller-Thurgau (German grape), Riesling, Pinot Gris, & Gewurztraminer from organically farmed vineyards. Just a touch off-dry, showing ripe apple, pear and peach with a hint of spice to make it more interesting. Truly tasty stuff from Montinore Winery. And at 11.5% alcohol it's easy to stay with.

Pinot Gris, Benton Lane 2009 . . \$17.99

The flavor of toasted almond fits beautifully with the white peach and apple flavors in this fairly dry white. The grape's natural acidity comes on in the finish, elevating both bouquet and flavors. Full flavored. A beauty.

Pinot Gris, Cristom 2009 . . \$18.99

This small winery has been soaring with its Pinot Noir and the Pinot Gris is not far behind. Fairly dry, showing flavors of melon and tangerine, hints of spice, all wrapped in a velvety texture. Long finish, full flavored.

Pinot Blanc, High Hook 2009 . . \$19.99

A bit drier than the Pinot Gris above. Here's a small label owned by a guy from . . . Leverett! He has handpicked several barrels of Pinot Gris at Willamette's Yamhill Vineyards and had them bottled under his label. The wine is terrific – delicate, pure, aromatic, unoaked. A light herbal touch gives dimension to the granny smith apple & white peach flavors.

KIR

This cocktail, so popular in the summer months, has been around since the mid-19th century. It was "re-invented" by the mayor of Dijon, Felix Kir, in the late 1940's, perhaps as a way to use up the excess stock of white Burgundy (the Germans confiscated most of the reds which had been the basis for the drink). Mayor Kir's version used crème de cassis (blackcurrant liqueur) mixed with Bourgogne Aligoté, a less noble version of white Burgundy made from the Aligoté grape. We recommend a teaspoon or less of a good crème de cassis, such as Lucien Jacob (\$13.99/375ml) mixed with a cold, very dry white (no ice). Don't cheap out on the cassis – the domestic blackcurrant liqueurs don't cut it – and a half bottle will go a long way. As for white, try the Bourgogne Aligoté from Marc Morey (\$14.99) or any very dry white, such as the French Chardonnay from Bouchard Aîné (\$8.99). Mixed with a sparkler, such as the Blanc de Blancs from Jean Louis Denois (\$19.99) or the Loire based Varichon & Clerc (\$11.99) it is called "Kir Royale". Another way to go, and so festive.

SUMMER WHITES

Nothing too heavy is our mantra for summer whites. Fresh, clean, crisp – these seem just right to cope with the weather and the lighter summer fare. Perhaps you've never thought a Ribolla Gialla would go beautifully with chef's salad. You get the point – it's a big world. Be brave. Here are a few to ponder.

Ribolla Gialla, Ca'Stella 2011 (IT) . . \$8.99

The Ribolla Gialla grape is native to northeastern Italy where it is often found in the carafes of the local trattorias. Crisp, dry, fresh with hints of lemon rind and hints of anise and vanilla bean. This is an interesting grape, worth checking out.

Sauvignon Blanc, Touton 2011 (FR) . . \$8.99

White Bordeaux are usually blends with Sauvignon Blanc as the main player. Here's a 100% Sauvignon Blanc from one of Bordeaux' best cooperatives, crisp and dry, with a wonderful herbal slant. Crisp, dry, refreshing

Sauvignon Blanc, Pellegrini 2010 (CA) . . \$9.99

About 125 miles north of the San Francisco lies Lake County, famous for its pear orchards and, increasingly, for its wine grapes. Here vineyard land is relatively inexpensive and bargains can be found. This SB is more crisp and dry than most from California and we like its delicate touch in the warm weather. A refreshing pinprick of acidity seems just right.

Chenin Blanc "Petit", Ken Forrester 2011 (S. AF) . . \$9.99

Chenin is an important white wine grape in South Africa. This producer bottles pricy ones but when it comes to summer, it's his "starter" bottling we favor. The flavors of lime & pear are dry, lively, and brisk. This is a beauty.

Prosecco "Spago", Villa Jolanda (IT) . . \$9.99

Not your normal Prosecco – this one is "frizzante", the way the locals prefer. A very light sparkle, we call it a "crackle". The yeasty, broad flavors of the Prosecco grape, same as the full bubbly, with just a hint of a sparkle. If there's a better summer white, we'd like to know about it.

Chenin Blanc-Riesling, Pine Ridge 2011 (CA) . . \$11.99

Unusual blend from this Napa winery. They have been doing it for years and we are almost always loving it. The bouquet of melon and Spring flowers explodes from the glass. The medium dry flavors of stone fruits and melon are fresh and zesty, a bit of sweetness upfront and a dry finish. Really tough not to like this one. Worth more.

Riesling, TJ 2011 (GERM) . . \$13.99

Terry Thiese, importer of small, exquisite estates from Germany, has put together this blend under his own label. It captures his (and our) notion of what makes Riesling special. The 10.5% alcohol makes a difference. Aromas of fruit blossoms is followed by a symphony of fruit flavors held together with crisp acidity. Refreshing and way delicious.

GRILLING REDS

When we fire up the barbie, a frequent happening these days, we tend to favor big, bold reds. What matters here is the ripeness of the fruit and the acidity, which keeps the wine fresh and makes the food taste better. And nothing too pricey. Here is where we're headed this summer. There are lots more, of course. Come in. We'll talk.

Shiraz, Indaba 2010 (S. AF) . . \$8.99

A simple but very satisfying Shiraz from South Africa. Dark plum and cherry flavors in a full, fleshy style. Impressive weight and ripeness for the \$\$.

Coq Rouge 2010 (FR) . . \$9.99

A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Grenache, & Syrah from a growers' coop in southern France. Smooth, medium-full, dark fruits with a touch of earth & cacao. A really lovely blend, priced right.

Cabernet Sauvignon, Santa Ema 2010 (CH) . . \$9.99 (\$17.99/1.5L)

Soft and full, black plum and blackcurrant flavors, chunky and forward. A light herbal nuance adds interest. Great "everyday" Cab from Chile.

Malbec, Septima 2010 (ARG) . . \$9.99

Juicy and ripe, this is the best \$10 Malbec we've come across. Full, but not over-the-top.

Zinfandel, Healdsburg Ranches 2009 (CA) . . \$10.99

A simple but juicy Zin offering oodles of soft, ripe, wild berry flavors from CA's North Coast. Not to overthink, just enjoy.

Crimson, Stephen Vincent 2010 (CA) . . \$12.99

This unusual blend of Cabernet Sauvignon & Syrah has become one of our largest sellers. There's a peppery/spicy note to the flavors. Full and round, the Syrah adds structure for a firm finish.

Cabernet Sauvignon, Rock & Vine 2009 (CA) . . \$13.99

Sourced from three vineyards in California's North Coast – a beauty. Soft, full, ripe with notes of chocolate and blackberry. Plenty of weight here. Dusty tannins add interest.

Côtes-du-Rhône, Domaine d'Andezon 2010 (FR) . . \$14.99

An old vine blend of 90% Syrah & 10% Grenache from France's southern Rhône. Fab aromas of grilled meats and wild blackberry. Dense and deep color suggests (and delivers) a concentrated, mouthfilling red wine experience, intense and muscular, but with a freshness that makes the whole thing work.

NEW ARRIVALS

WHITE

Chardonnay, Bouchard Père & Fils 2011 (FR) . . \$8.99

Unlike most CA Chards, this is crisp and dry, a perfect pre-meal sipper or to accompany seafood, omelettes, and other lighter fare. From one of the top Burgundy producers.

Vinho Verde, Ponte 2011 (P'TGL) . . \$9.99

"Vinho Verde for \$10?? I've never tasted one worth more than \$6.99!" That's what I told the importer. He didn't flinch and told me to taste it. Well, you can see how that turned out. This is truly another level of this iconic Portuguese white, richly aromatic and full flavored. Still with that crisp finish which provides "lift" and freshness. Forget what you know about Vinho Verde and try this.

Soave, Re Midas 2011 (IT) . . \$9.99

Here's an old favorite from around Verona in the Northeast. We were stunned when we first tasted this – Soave, especially at this price, can be nasty. But here was a clean, crisp, full-flavored white with enough stuffing to stand up to a variety of foods. Dry, round, deeply flavored. A terrific buy.

Montmélian, J. Vuillien 2011 (FR) . . \$13.99

France's Savoie region sits in the foothills of the Alps. Apart from being jaw-dropping beautiful some really lovely whites are produced here from grapes no one but the locals ever heard of. Jacquère in this case. These are whites with aromas of Spring flowers, bone dry, and with a real sense of place. White peach, a hint of yeast, crisp finish.

Pinot Blanc, Biegler 2010 (AUS) . . \$16.99

Austria is best known for its white Gruner Veltliner grape, but when we tasted this Pinot Blanc we knew we had to have it in the shop. Full-bodied, unoaked, flavors of ripe stone fruits and a natural acidity which lifts both flavors and aromas. This is a real beauty.

ROSÉ

Domaine de Nizas 2011 (FR) . . \$14.99

Not part of the original group we began the season with but once tasted it we know we had to have it. A blend of Syrah, Grenache, & Mourvèdre from southern France. It has become our largest seller. Must be tried.

RED

Le Loup dans la Bergerie 2010 (FR) . . \$11.99

This blend from southwestern France strikes us as just about perfect. It shows ripe flavors and wonderful definition – you can really taste the grapes – 70% Grenache, 20% Syrah, & 10% Merlot. What we especially love is the clarity of the flavors showing dark fruits, earth & smoke – full without being at all heavy.

"The Other" 2009 (CA) . . \$12.99

Blend of 45% each Cabernet Sauvignon & Merlot with 10% Syrah (the other) from vineyards near Lodi. Not really a new arrival, but it has been unavailable for some months and customers are killing us. It's back, ok?

Côtes-du-Rhône "Cuvée des Capucines", Domaine du Vieux Chêne 2010 (FR) . . \$13.99

From organically farmed vineyards in France's southern Rhône Valley. The blend of 90% Grenache & 10% Syrah bursts forth from the glass in a wave of ripe raspberry & strawberry aromas. Still a bit young, a quick decant helps. As with many serious CDR's a streak of minerality underlines the red fruit flavors.

Barolo, Mirafiore 2007 (IT) . . \$38.99

Drinking a bit young but if we wait any longer to tell you about it . . gonzo! Richly flavored with notes of cherry and licorice, dense and chewy. A hint of roses in the bouquet is typical for good Barolos. We know it's not your everyday red but, trust us, this is a very good price for a wine of this quality and pedigree.

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