

Amherst Wines & Spirits

November 2012

SMOKED SALMON FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Tracklements is the artisanal smoked salmon guy, T.R. Durham, who used to live in Amherst. Now T.R. is in Ann Arbor and, after multiple write-ups from the NY Times which stoked national demand for his salmon, he still has a warm spot for the Valley and keeps us supplied from time to time. He will be shipping us a limited quantity of his "Highland" salmon, akin to a fine Scottish salmon this Fall. TR gets his salmon from the Faroe Islands (between Norway and Iceland). He is a quality nut, using only center cut pieces hand-rubbed with a dry cure of sea salt, brown sugar, and spices known only to T.R. and then gently cold smoked over a blend of oak, apple, and alder. The silky texture and light smoke make for an unforgettable experience. For most of us it's the best we've ever tasted.

STUFF YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Reserve your salmon now by phone (413-549-0900) or email (steve@amherstwines.com). The salmon should arrive in early December. We will have none to sell except what has been reserved in advance.
- The salmon will be hand cut into ½ pound pieces. These are approximate, and you will be charged for the actual weight. If you need an extra large piece, let us know. We can do this.
- Price is \$36/pound, pay when you pick up.
- All salmon is shipped unsliced to preserve freshness and flavor. It freezes well.
- Orders must be received by November 24.
- The quantity we can get is limited, so please do not delay if interested.

And to go with . . .

Tracklements smoked salmon makes an exciting pre-meal palate teaser. Also, it can be a dramatic first course to an elegant meal served by itself with chopped onion and lemon wedges. The flavors are delicate and so the choice of wine should consider this. We love a dry bubbly such as **Vouvray**, **Domaine le Capitaine** from France's Loire Valley (\$16.99) or a crisp white like **Regaleali** from Sicily (\$12.99). One of our favorites is to pair it pre-meal with a fine single-malt scotch, such as **Glenmorangie 10yr** (\$41.99) or **Clynelish 14 yr** (\$58.99). If you're a malt lover, this is a magic pairing

SATURDAY IN-STORE WINE TASTINGS

With Thanksgiving and Christmas on the horizon we want you to taste some of our holiday suggestions. Drop by any Saturday from 2:00 – 5:00 and taste with us, compliments of the house.

November 3: The Syrah Grape Around the World

Full, meaty, smoky reds, the kind we love on a brisk Fall day. We'll taste from California, Washington, France, and Australia. These are for real red wine lovers.

November 10: Port, the One and Only

If there's a better after dinner sipper than real Port, we'd like to know. Always one of our most exciting tastings. We'll taste the full range from Tawnies to Rubies. Stilton cheese and walnuts to accompany. Don't miss it.

November 17: Pinot Noir, California & Oregon

The quintessential Thanksgiving red. Some stellar examples in the shop now, the best group of Pinots we've found in a long time. Elegant, complex, food-friendly. A spectacular tasting.

November 24: Malbec

Argentina's Malbecs have emerged from obscurity to a household word in a very short time. The good ones offer an unique and wonderful wine experience for lovers of full-bodied reds.

December 1: White Burgundy

Some of the sexiest (and priciest) whites in the world come from France's Burgundy region. Dry, elegant, complex, very special. The grape is 100% Chardonnay, but quite different in style from California Chards.

THANKSGIVING

Truth be told, almost any wine can find its place on the Thanksgiving table, so varied are the flavors (and people). Here are a few which we think would add something special. Many, many more, of course. Come in. We'll talk.

WHITE

Chardonnay, Echelon 2010 . . \$9.99

Excellent CA Chard buy, full flavors, dry but not too, with a lovely toasted vanilla bean slant.

Soave, Re Midas 2011 . . \$9.99

Soave is making a comeback, no longer the wimpy whites of yesterday. This is full bodied and a terrific value.

Mas Carlot 2011 . . \$11.99

Rich, creamy, expressive blend of three grapes from the south of France. Flavors of pear, melon, & peach. Really good.

Chenin Blanc-Viognier, Pine Ridge 2011 . . \$11.99

Fresh, crisp, lively flavors of honeydew melon. Hint of sweetness upfront, crisp, dry finish. A zesty, aromatic white.

Vernaccia di San Gimignano, Rocca della Macie 2011 . . \$12.99

Floral bouquet, quite dry with notes of lemon zest, zippy acidity with a mineral underpinning. Long finish.

Grillo, Fondo Antico 2010 . . \$13.99

Full flavored Sicilian white can pair well with big flavors of the holiday. White peach, apple, a hint of anise.

Chardonnay, Balletto 2010 . . \$15.99

Unoaked Chard from the Russian River Valley, Sonoma's prime region for this grape. Try this and see why

Sauvignon Blanc, Hansel 2010 . . \$20.99

We rate this as one of the best California Sauvignon Blancs we've tasted in a long time. Perfect turkey wine.

Châteauneuf-du-Pâpe, Domaine Vieux Lazaret 2009 . . \$34.99

Yes – white Châteauneuf. Dramatic, full and lush with dried fruits – fig & pear – silky and long. A show-stopper.

RED

Baron d'Arignac 2010 . . \$6.99

Having a big crowd? Here's a French table wine, the kind you'd get in any bistro in France. Serious value vibes.

Cabernet Sauvignon, Harlow Ridge 2010 . . \$8.99

This California Cab is packed with ripe fruit flavors. Lush, plump style, easy drinking.

Zinfandel, Gnarly Head 2010 . . \$10.99

Zin is a must on our Thanksgiving table. This value-priced bottling offers plenty of wild berry & spice flavors.

Côtes-du-Rhône, Domaine des Chanssaud 2010 . . \$13.99

Juicy, ripe red from France's Rhône Valley. The flavors of raspberry/strawberry with a hint of spice are just delicious.

Moulin-A-Vent, Duboeuf 2009 . . \$15.99

One of the "grand crus" of Beaujolais, a terrific example of how good this can be. Fuller, more complex than most.

Syrah, Fess Parker 2010 . . \$18.99

From Santa Barbara. Soft style, full and deeply flavored with notes of cracked pepper, mineral, cocoa, and crushed herbs

Pinot Noir, Carr 2009 . . \$19.99

Perhaps the best Pinot at this price we've found this year. The ripe, earthy, red fruits slant and silky texture is awesome.

Malbec, Archavel Ferrer 2011 . . \$24.99

Malbecs are hot, but this rises well above the pack. Juicy yet structured with layered flavors of spice, cherry & mineral.

Cabernet Sauvignon, Counterpoint 2008 . . \$31.99

Only 800 cs produced from vineyards high up on Sonoma Mountain. Gorgeous Cab, velvety texture. perfect balance

ARMAGNAC – THE OTHER GREAT BRANDY

Although it predates Cognac by 200 years, Armagnac is a much smaller area and has never achieved the fame and snob appeal of Cognac, its more famous neighbor to the north. Armagnac is made in southwestern France, a product of several local grapes – Ugni Blanc, Folle Blanche, and Bacco. It differs from Cognac in several ways. Cognac is distilled twice, Armagnac only once at relatively low temperatures which helps foster robust flavors. Cognac is aged in white oak, Armagnac in black oak which results in more pronounced tannins. Good Armagnac (avoid the mass market brands) is racier, rounder, fruitier, earthier, and with a more pungent aroma than Cognac. It is a wonderful after dinner "digestif", a superb alternative to Cognac. We urge you to get acquainted with this classic brandy.

Chateau Tariquet "Classique" . . \$31.99

Labiette Castille . . \$34.99

Chateau de Laubade VSOP . . \$42.99

Cerbois VSOP . . \$45.99

Chateau Tariquet VSOP . . \$49.99

Chateau de Laubade XO . . \$67.99

Darroze "Les Grands Assemblages" 20yr . . \$84.99

How to Enjoy your Armagnac

Riedel, world famous stemware designer, has introduced a beautiful Cognac/Armagnac stem. It's the way to go. Come fondle it in the shop.

1 stem . . \$11.95, set of 2 . . \$21.95

BEER CORNER

For many beer buffs Belgium represents the holy grail of beerdom. We've been doing some tasting and have added some spectacular new Belgian brews. These would be wonderful additions to your holiday tables. Here's a peek.

Rochefort Trappistes 10 - About 15 monks live at the Abbey of Notre Dame de Saint-Remy which has been brewing beer since 1595. This is their top bottling and uses water drawn from a well inside the monastery walls. The color is quite dark with complex fruit flavors, malt backbone, and a symphony of aromatic themes. Very big league. **\$6.95** (11.2 oz.)

St. Bernardus ABT 12 - St. Bernard is a traditional abbey ale brewed in the classic style of Belgium's Trappist Monks. A dark ivory colored beer with a high fermentation. Full-bodied with rich, creamy texture. Bold flavors with hints of coconut, brown sugar, dark fruits. A head that won't quit. **\$11.95** (25.4 oz.)

Maredsous 10 Tripel- Bottle conditioned golden ale with a characteristically fresh bouquet and sweet after-taste. Creamy body, and luscious head. Elegant and smooth, the 10% alcohol is barely noticeable. Perfect balance of the yeasty, floral aromatics and the fruit/nutmeg flavors. Long, warming finish. **\$11.95** (25.4 oz.)

De Ranke XX Bitter- XX is made with pale pilsner malt and loads of Brewers Gold and Hallertau hops, creating a perfect combination that has the beer press swooning. This ale has been a real trendsetter for the current comeback of bitter ales in Belgium. A weighty beer brewed to be the hoppiest in Belgium. Love at first taste for us. **\$13.95** (25.4 oz.)

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER

We're constantly tasting new stuff, receiving intriguing buying opportunities, having a restaurant experience, or just developing points of view about the state of the wine scene. We thought it might be fun to share some of these as they happen. This makes good sense as we make quick buying decisions on wines of limited quantity, announce special events, and learn of something important happening in the world of wines. Follow us at [@winosteve1](https://twitter.com/winosteve1). We promise to keep it relevant, interesting, opinionated, and (necessarily) short.

CIDER

Ciders are happening. France and England have traditionally been the focus of cider production and consumption, but within the past several years we have seen impressive ciders being made closer to home. These are not the sweet ciders most of us are familiar with, but range in style from mostly dry to very dry. The alcohol levels are lower than wine, typically around 7%. The light sparkle adds fun.



Crispin "Natural" . . **\$7.49** (4-12oz. bottles)

This oh-so-lightly sweet California cider has a crisp edge. Truly delicious stuff from fresh apples, no concentrate used. Clean and refreshing. 5.0% alcohol.

Crispin "The Saint" . . **\$5.95** (22oz)

A bit more serious, fermented from fresh pressed juice using Belgian Trappist beer yeast and "smoothed off" a bit with organic maple syrup. Elegant and full, dry without any bitterness. 6.9% alcohol.

Farnum Hill "Farmhouse" . . **\$12.95** (750ml)

This local orchard from Lebanon, NH, has been growing traditional New England apples since 1960 and special cider apples since 1980. Fairly dry, balancing a very light sweetness against the sharper, slightly bitter cider apple flavors. Comparable to the classic English ciders, elegant and complex. 7.4% alcohol.

Farnum Hill "Dooryard" . . **\$15.95** (750ml)

This is the cider they sell most of if you visit the orchard. It changes according to what the recent harvest has provided. The current batch is very dry with an effervescent sparkle and slightly fruity/bitter flavors. Fresh, crisp, delicious. 7.5% alc.

Carr's "Farmhouse" . . **\$12.99** (750ml)

Our most local cider - from North Hadley. Family owned, small production, barrel-aged ciders from Honeycrisp and Fortune apples. Crisp, very dry, mouthwateringly good.

STARTERS & FINISHERS

In anticipation of a large meal we often choose something lighter pre-food. We especially enjoy a wine which is a bit higher in acidity, something crisp and quite dry, to set up the palate for the heavier flavors to come. We're talking bubbly, especially **Aria** (\$11.99) from Spain or **Denois Blanc de Blancs** (\$19.99) from southwestern France. Area offers a dry, rounder style and is one of the best cava's at this price we've found. The Denois is 100% Chardonnay, made in the crisp, very dry style of the best blanc de blanc Champagnes.

As for "finishers", we recommend something sweet - **Taylor Fladgate First Estate** (\$17.99), a ruby port vinified in the richer, more fruit-driven style this Port lodge is world renown for. For something just a bit lighter, try **Kopke Fine Tawny**, which has aged about 8 years in barrel until it acquires an elegance, complexity, and length you will love.

NEW ARRIVALS

WHITE

Passerina 2011 (IT) . . \$9.99

From organically farmed vineyards along Italy's Adriatic coast. The flavors are quite full, on the dry side, with perfect balancing acidity. Hints of anise adds depth and interest. Just lovely, especial for the \$\$.

Savigny-les-Beaune, Domaine Bize 2010 (FR) . . \$39.99

Gorgeous white Burgundy from a less well-known region in the Côtes de Beaune. Here's a small production white from an excellent grower. Rich, vibrant flavors, full bodied, long finish. Notes of butterscotch and apple. Dry with excellent balance. Don't re-mortgage the house, but if it fits . . .

St. Aubin 1^{er} Crû, Clos de Meix, Domaine Hubert Lamy 2009 (FR) . . \$57.99

A really special white Burgundy from a superb grower. Lamy bottles only a few hundred cases of this 1er Crû rated vineyard's production, so we were fortunate to get some. Superb bouquet, rich with flowers, fruit, and minerals. Full and creamy, this white shows layers of flavors and a finish that doesn't quit.

RED

Sangiovese, Donna Laura 2011 (IT) . . \$8.99

The grape of Chianti, this plump Tuscan Sangiovese is a perfect Tuesday night pizza wine. Ripe, medium full, with that wonderful earthy/red cherry style. Inexpensive Sangiovese can be sharp, but not this one.

Shiraz, False Bay 2010 (S. AF) . . \$12.99

One of the best examples of this grape for the \$\$ we've tasted. Earthy, smoky, black fruits flavors, forward and ripe. Whats special here is the balance between the ripe fruit flavors and the grape's natural acidity. Fresh, clean style. A treat.

Pinot Noir, Petit Clos 2010 (NZ) . . \$17.99

New Zealand is really coming on with Pinots. Here's a fine example at the lower priced end. We love it because it is true to the grape – delicate, earthy, perfumy - not jacked up with other grapes to add heft. It captures the purity of this elusive grape beautifully. We think it's a great buy.

Cabernet Sauvignon-Malbec, Amancaya 2010 (ARG) . . \$19.99

This is the Argentinian jewel birthed by Bordeaux' Chateau Lafite Rothschild. A blend of 67% Cab & 33% Malbec aged in barrels from Lafite. Spice, cedar, black fruits – combines new world intensity with Bordeaux elegance. Fabulous.

Zinfandel, Rombauer 2010 (CA) . . \$32.99

Ripe, lush boysenberry and blackberry jam, deeply colored and flavored from this superb Napa winery. Hints of mandarine, cranberry, and spice touch up the wild berry flavors. This is a Zin lover's Zin. Not to be missed.

Pinot Noir "Yamhill Cuvée", Domaine Serene 2009 (OR) . . \$47.99

One of Oregon's most decorated winery is bottling small quantities of Pinot Noir of unusual finesse and elegance. The ripe red berry flavors are supported by tannins which provide structure and length. This impressed us as a real thoroughbred, still youthful, and needing about 1+ years to reach its full potential. We loved it.

Cabernet Sauvignon "Signature", Chappellet 2009 (CA) . . \$51.99

Dense, deeply flavored Cab from one of Napa's pioneers. These old vines yield concentrated flavors and this is built for the long haul. Ripe tannins over blackberry/cassis fruit with sage and dark plum highlights. Serious stuff.

Shiraz, d'Arenberg "Dead Arm" 2008 (AUS) . . \$64.99

Big league Aussie Shiraz from d'Arenberg, a producer we think is tops. A bit young but still showing aromas of black fruits & anise with a gamey slant. Very full-bodied with flavors of currant, black plum, dusty tannins, and smoke. Lots going on here - big muscles, ripe fruit, long earthy finish. One of Australia's benchmark reds, much sought after.

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