

HIGHLAND FINE WINE FEBRUARY 2013 HALF CASE CLUB

Charles Gonnet Chignin Vin de Savoie 2011 – Savoie, France (Mixed & White Club)

Intoxicating like the French Alps themselves, this Chignin has been said to be, “as cool as snow,” but its lasting texture on the palate does not disappoint. Vin de Savoie is the wine’s appellation (like Napa or Bordeaux), and Chignin is its sub-appellation. The wine region of Savoie is situated in Eastern France, and boasts no fewer than 17 “Vin de Savoie” villages, one of them being the Chignin village from which this wine hails. Chignin is distinctly alpine, nestled between lakes and mountains; it is here that the *Jacquere* grape varietal grows on vines clutching to the steep, sunny hillsides. The distinctive soil and terroir enable their special growth and ensure good ripening. This well-balanced white is both round and dry with a discreet floral finish promising to pair well with cheeses - especially fondue, raclette, or tartiflette. If you want to really experience this wine’s capability, let it warm a little so it can showcase its supple notes and lively minerality. Enjoy it while it’s young!

Weingut Steininger Young Gruner Veltliner 2011 – Kamptal, Austria (Mixed & White Club)

Interested in an exotic and versatile alternative to your familiar Chardonnay? It’s time to try out the signature grape of Austria! This particular wine is quite “groovy” as it is a blend consisting predominantly of Gruner Veltliner with Sauvignon Blanc (which adds notes of citrus and grapefruit) and Muskateller (which rounds out the finish with a floral bouquet. It offers aromas of fresh green apple and exhibits a crispy mid-palate with high acidity and a long spicy finish. Enjoy with appetizers of stuffed tomatoes (yemistes), tuna tartare, or a dish of pan-fried snapper with artichoke.

Agricola Castellana Palos Verdejo 2011 – Ribera Del Duero, Spain (Mixed & White Club)

In the vineyards of Cuatro Rayas, the Verdejo grapes that Angel Calleja uses to make his wine bask in sunshine... 2,600 hours of sunshine a year, to be in fact. The secret behind the fine balance of sugars in his wine is his understanding of how the heat of the daytime sunshine and the much cooler night-time temperatures really conduct the way in which the symphony of flavors plays in the end. Grapes need attentive souls to protect them from the perils of extreme temperature, after all! This lovely, stylish aromatic white smoothes out to mellow in a slight buttery fashion, finishing with a fresh, full expression. Seafood welcomes this wine with open arms. Try it with white fish dishes like sea trout and asparagus, bream with thyme and chili, or baked red snapper with garlic and herms. If you’re adventurous, go for a platter of lightly-battered Spanish squid, sushi, or a fresh lobster salad. Drink up!

Charles Back Fairview Sauvignon Blanc 2010 – Darling, South Africa (White Club)

Who wouldn’t be drawn to a wine from a place named Darling?! This sauvignon blanc certainly exemplifies the characteristic of a “darling” with its unforgettable, exquisite balance of citrus, guava, grapefruit, and lime zest, all flavors that fill the palate and linger in the finish. The grape is harvested from cool vineyards on the west coast of South Africa where the winemaker’s focus on innovation and new tastes gives this wine an extra complexity. Straightforward and uncompromising, Fairview Sauvignon Blanc would be a lovely accompaniment to shellfish, vegetables, and dishes such as white asparagus risotto or bluff oysters with dill.

Vinosia Falanghina Benevenuto 2011 – Campania, Italy (White Club)

Falanghina may not be the most well known grape of Italy, but this ancient white wine grape, reportedly of Greek origin, is experiencing a come back as there is a movement to restore the reputation of this once venerated grape. In the region of Campania in Southern Italy, the vines thrive in the warm Mediterranean climate, rooting themselves in porous volcanic soils around Mt. Vesuvius. With notable fragrance and freshness, characteristics underlined by citrus blossom aromas, this wine typically shows classic pear and apple flavors on the palate. Pairing suggestions include pizza with pear, walnuts and arugula or crispy orange beef with steamed broccoli.

Robin K Chardonnay 2010 – Russian River Valley, California (White Club)

Bill Knuttel named his winery after his wife, Robin Knuttel. He didn’t stop there with personal touches! Bill’s approach to winemaking is rooted in an artistic approach that allows experience and instinct set the tone of his wine. This Russian River Valley Chardonnay was first hand-picked and then whole cluster pressed to insure maximum flavor retention. Spending 15 months in French oak (of which 25% is new), it is showing concentrated flavors of red apple, tropical fruits and even lemon spice. Because it goes through malolactic fermentation and spends less time on the lees, it has a lovely creamy finish that gives it a versatile pairing range with white meats and seafood especially enjoying its compliment.

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Vitanza Chianti Colli Senesi 2010 – Tuscany, Italy (Mixed & Red Club)

This 100% Sangiovese Chianti comes from Tenuta Vitanza in Monalcino. Rosalba Vitanza, owner and winemaker with her husband Tenuata, says that the threefold reason for this winery's existence and success is what she hopes to infuse into her wine: charm, love, and passion. It is the charm and beauty of land, the care and love of wine's magical complexity, and the generosity of vines that leads to a deep desire and passion to produce a wine that tells a story, their story. The wine-making process includes an aging of 4 months in Slavonian oak with a bottle refinement of 8 months. Red ruby in color and intense fresh cherry on the nose, this wine is pleasing even before the first sip. Opening beautifully, the wine is dry and tannic on the palate with a smooth body and honest finish. Treat yourself to a bottle with pizza or pasta!

Marlis Salice Salentino Riserva 2008 – Puglia, Italy (Mixed & Red Club)

This dry, full bodied red from "the heel of the boot" in Italy is a blend of Negroamaro and Malvasia Nera grapes that go through a rigorous selection. After that, they go through a process of fermentation on skins at a controlled temperature with constant pumping-over. Malolactic fermentation in stainless steel tanks is the last step before racking into slavonian oak barrels for at least 6 months. The whole process produces an intense ruby red color that tends to garnet with ageing. On the nose, one will get an intense, yet delicate aroma while the palate is pleasing through the velvety, warm finish. Mature cheese and cured meats are delightful appetizer pairings for this Salice Salentino, while a roast pork or lamb dish is sure to carry it through dinner!

Domaine d'Aupilhac Coteaux du Languedoc Lou Maset 2011 – Montpeyroux, France (Mixed & Red Club)

In Southern France, three generations of Fadats have farmed the Aupilhac vineyard in the village of Montpeyroux, yet the vineyards themselves date back to the time of the Romans. This special vineyard sits at a high altitude, situated below the ruins of the village's chateau; the soils are rich in prehistoric oyster fossils which lend to extraordinary length and minerality in the wines. Winemaker Sylvan Fadat blended Grenach, Cinsault, Syrah, Alicante Bouschet, and Aramon grape varieties so that their unique characteristics shine in a beautiful balance of ripe fruit and silky tannins. This graceful, powerful wine, when aged, achieves a complexity rarely found in wines, but their passion and intensity make them equally appealing while they're young. Accompany with charcuterie, white meat or grills, or chicken liver salads, or even a nice leg of lamb with prepared with thyme.

Calcu Malbec Reserva 2009 – Colchagua Valley, Chile (Red Club)

One cannot argue that some wines do magic; this one is already a step ahead as Calcu means "magician" in the indigenous Chilean language Mapuche. With deep notes of blackberry on the nose and overtones of plum and vanilla, the Calcu Malbec is harmony in a bottle. Juicy and well balanced with sour cherries and violets on the palate, this red wine is extremely food friendly and pairs well with chicken, grilled chops, salmon, and tomato-based pasta sauces because the acidity is so spot on. You'll notice it shines in the end with a bright, silky finish.

Chateau Ksara Reserve Du Couvent 2009 – Bekaa, Lebanon (Red Club)

Lebanese wine is sure to please! Jesuit Priests founded the Chateau Ksara winery in 1857; however Lebanese wine tradition dates back 5,000 years when the Phoenicians, ancient inhabitants of Lebanon, first began tending vineyards. In fact, Lebanon is also said to be the place where Jesus performed the miracle of turning water into wine. Chateau Ksara is Lebanon's oldest, largest and most visited winery, and a leader in its industry. This blend of 30% Syrah, 30% Cab Franc, and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon combines finesse and elegance with oaky and vanilla aromas and supple tannins to give it a rich, sumptuous feel with a lasting finish. This wine is a lovely compliment to fillet steak with foie gras and truffles or veal and mixed bell-pepper stew. Traditional roasts and full-flavoured Mediterranean foods are a superb pairing, too!

Tercos Bonarda 2009 – Mendoza, Argentina (Red Club)

Bonarda is the second most planted grape variety in Argentina. The grape originally hails from Piedmont, Italy, and was brought to Argentina by immigrants. The vines grow on the Tupungato mountainside – one of the highest elevations in the Andes. An un-oaked, vibrant wine, it is appealing on the palate with notes of fresh red fruits. Hints of smoke and blackberry are undeniable, and a little spice on the end makes the finish enjoyable. Thai dishes and chocolate are perfect compliments for this easy drinking red.