

HIGHLAND FINE WINE DECEMBER 2017 HALF CASE - RED

Domaine des Ouches 'Les Freres Gambier', Bourgueil, France - (Mixed/Red Club) \$14.99

Bourgueil is a small sub-region in the Loire Valley, located between Saumur and Tour, and is famous for its Cabernet Franc. As with many varietals, the locals have their own name for it - in Bourgueil it's commonly referred to as Breton. Cabernet Franc is an important grape because without it, we wouldn't have its offspring, Cabernet Sauvignon. Can you imagine a world without Cab Sauv? But where Cabernet Sauvignon is traditionally full bodied and rich, Cab Franc is light to medium bodied and is famous for its bell pepper flavor. It's a wine that begs to be paired with food - think dishes that are full of fresh herbs. We like to make a simple herb chicken to go with this bottle of 100% Cabernet Franc.

Azoi Dão Tinto - Dão, Portugal (Mixed/Red Club) \$13.99

A lovely table wine from the Dao region of Portugal, this bottle features two grapes we can almost guarantee you've never heard of - it's equal parts Touriga Nacional and Jaen. Sometimes compared to Cabernet Sauvignon in France, Touriga Nacional is known for being a bold varietal with firm tannins and hints of leather, spice, and dark fruit on the palate. Jaen on the other hand is a mild grape, commonly used for blending. It has low acidity and is excellent for toning down harsh tannins. This bottle is medium bodied and would pair nicely with a weeknight roast.

Domaine des Verchères - Burgundy, France (Mixed/Red Club) \$14.99

There are five regions in Burgundy and this 100% Pinot Noir is from Mâcon, the southernmost region (just north of Beaujolais) and is the largest of the five. Like many Burgundian wineries, Verchères is a family affair. The family is committed to reducing pesticides and fertilizers and achieve this by spreading straw and growing grass between the vines (alternating rows). This technique has the benefit of also reducing erosion while helping to keep their wine in the organic realm. We love this Pinot with its supple tannins and good acidity. The majority of wines grown in Mâcon are whites so enjoy this unusual red with basically anything off the grill.

Bura Plavac Fresh - Dalmatia, Croatia (Red Club) \$18.99

We're taking you to some lesser known wine regions this month, starting with Croatia. Even though you may not have had a bottle of Croatian wine, it's been made there since before the Roman Empire. In fact, Croatia is where Zinfandel originated, although of course it's called something else there. What we have for this month is an indigenous varietal called Plavac Mali and it is very similar to Zinfandel in nose and palate. Plavac Mali translates to 'small blue' and is the most planted grape in the country. It's rich but nicely balanced. Put a little chill on this bottle and enjoy it with whatever is for dinner tonight.

Cantine Valpane 'Rosso Pietro' - Piedmont, Italy (Red Club) \$14.99

Barbera from Monferrato might not be as familiar to you as Barbera from Asti or Alba, but some argue that wine from this Piedmont sub-region is where Barbera shows its truest expression. Monferrato is a bit warmer than Asti and Alba and sees more sunlight, allowing the grapes to ripen longer. Unlike Nebbiolo, the more famous grape usually grown higher up on the mountain, Barbera doesn't need years to age and should be enjoyed while it's young. The beauty of this varietal lies in its higher acid - it's splendid with any Italian dish and pairs particularly well with mild truffle flavors.

Browne Family 'Heritage' - Columbia Valley, Washington (Red Club) \$14.99

You wouldn't believe how rapidly eastern Washington wine country is growing. A new winery opens every 15 days! And for good reason. Washington has become home to high quality but less expensive Cabernet Sauvignon. It's generally a cooler climate than Napa and the region produces cabs that are a bit milder than Napa cabs. This bottle of Cab has been blended with very small amounts of Malbec and Petit Sirah and is aged in oak. It's medium bodied and you'll notice berry pie flavors and subtle notes of vanilla (a common flavor that is imparted from the oak). This would be delightful alongside flank steak with chimichurri sauce.

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Cooper Mountain Vineyards - Willamette Valley, Oregon (Mixed/White Club) \$14.99

This 100% Pinot Gris has, believe it or not, some local ties. The winery owner spent time in Atlanta many years ago, earning a degree from Emory's medical school. Not long after graduation though, Dr. Robert Gross settles in Oregon and opened Cooper Mountain. They are known for being 100% organic and biodynamic - quite a feat when you take into consideration that they have 100 acres of vineyards! Now approaching their 40th vintage, they have reduced their impact on the environment significantly and make a wine that is free of added sulfites, pesticides, and anything even remotely GMO. This Pinot Gris is rich with nice minerality and hints of pear on the palate.

Domaine des Aubuisières, Bernard Fouquet 'Silex' - Vouvray, France (Mixed/White Club) \$17.99

Vouvray is a famous region in the Loire Valley located near Tour. This bottle is 100% Chenin Blanc, the only white varietal that's allowed to be labeled as Vouvray. Chenin Blanc is a grape that can produce wine ranging from sec (dry) all the way to moelleux (very sweet). This particular bottle is dry. Organically farmed, the 'silex' in the name refers to the soil type - it's a flinty, sandy soil made from a mixture of clay, limestone, and silica. A glass of this Chenin Blanc would pair nicely with a deli sandwich at lunch.

Kobal 'Old Vine Selection' - Hozale, Slovenia (Mixed/White Club) \$14.99

Continuing our exploration of lesser known wine regions, we've brought you a delightful white from Slovenia. Despite not being a mainstream region, the oldest producing grape vine in the world is found in the country - planted 500 years ago during the Ottoman Empire. The Kobal vines are merely 35 years old! Furmint is a grape native to Hungary that is sometimes compared to Sauvignon Blanc or Albariño. Pair this wine with a light dinner of grilled chicken and roasted veggies.

Bodegas y Viñedos Shaya - Rueda, Spain (White Club) \$13.99

Rueda is an ancient winemaking region - it's documented as making wine as early as the 10th century. Located in central Spain, Rueda has a fairly extreme climate with long, cold winters and very hot summers. It's not an easy place to live but somehow the climate is perfect for producing exceptional Verdejo. The region is known for its Verdejo, as it's indigenous there and there are not many other regions where it thrives. This particular bottle is 100% Verdejo, light bodied with nice citrus fruit and subtle grassiness on the palate. Verdejo in general drinks beautifully young or try picking up another bottle and aging it for 5-10 years to see how the flavors change. For now, though, have this bottle with some Thai takeout.

La Selve 'Saint Regis' - Rhône, France (White Club) \$19.99

This beautiful white is 100% Viognier (vee-own-yay) that's organically and biodynamically farmed (notice a trend?) in Ardèche, in northern Rhône. Ardèche is a lesser known but important sub-region in Rhône, sitting on the western bank of the river, only about 60 miles from the Mediterranean Sea. La Selve is a relatively new operation at only 15 years old. Viognier is an aromatic varietal so spend a few extra minutes enjoying the beautiful citrus and peach nose. Given the close proximity to the sea, pair this Viognier with a meaty white fish.

Las Perdices - Mendoza, Argentina (White Club) \$10.99

Everyone is familiar with Malbec from Argentina but probably less familiar with the lovely Sauvignon Blanc that's grown there. This bottle of 100% SB comes from the sub-region Agrelo. If you ever find yourself in Mendoza, please do yourself a favor and visit Agrelo. It's located in the foothills of the Andes and is not only beautiful but the wineries are clustered together in a way that makes visiting tremendously easy. Some Argentine Sauv Blancs can show a subtle smokiness (which is lovely in itself) but this wine is fresh and aromatic with a long finish. Drink Las Perdices on its own or with a spinach salad.