

SML-Uncorked



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Fort Collins, Colorado

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Wine-of-the-Month

Domaine des Cassagnoles Cotes de Gascogne 2005

Reg. price: \$7.99

Sale: \$6.99

Gascony, a region located just north of the Pyrenees in southwest France, secures its culinary reputation through two of the world's great gastronomic treats: foie gras and Armagnac. The latter, one of the world's finest brandies and cousin to Cognac, comes from the distillation of the simple white wines grown in the region using grapes like Colombard, Ugni Blanc, and Folle Blanche, among others.

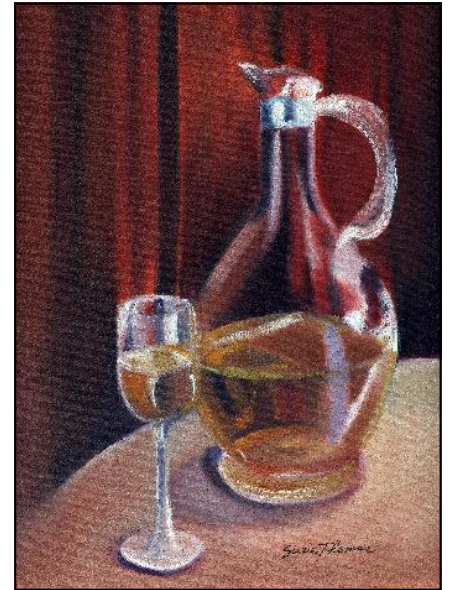
About a generation ago growers discovered that their grapes could produce light, zesty whites and quickly established a solid market for these charming, inexpensive wines that resemble Sauvignon Blanc.

The 2005 Domaine des Cassagnoles uses a blend of 80% Colombard, 15% Gros Manseng, and 5% Sauvignon Blanc in its Vin de Pays de Cotes de Gascogne, a wine that is a perfect match for the torrid days of summer. Light in body, yet effusively aromatic, its aromas of grapefruit and lemon leap right out of the glass. The wine's bright flavors, crispness, and minerality confer a refreshing zippiness made for the lighter fare of a summer evening.

Light-bodied, brisk whites like this display their innate charm during only the short months of their youth, losing a significant bit of freshness after about nine months to a year in bottle, so you can confidently enjoy this little charmer through the winter holiday season. For now, match with any parched palate.



* newsletter prices on all wines are in effect through August 32 and limited to stock on hand



Carafe & Glass of White Wine by Suzie Thomas
courtesy www.suziethomas.com

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Summer Whites

Umberto Cesari Albana di Romagna Colle del Re 2005 (Italy)

SML price: \$6.49



The Bolognese pride themselves on the quality of their table, so much so, in fact, that Bologna's nickname is La Grassa (the fat), a term of respect, not derision, that dates from generations when near-starvation was the everyday menu of many Italians. Bologna is situated in the region known as Emilia-Romagna, the area directly north of Tuscany that gives us some of our favorite Italian specialties: Prosciutto di Parma, Reggiano Parmigiano, and salsa balsamico. Its wines, on the other hand, are little noticed outside the area, with the exception of Lambrusco, a light, fizzy red that dominated the import market some thirty years ago. Remember Riunite Lambrusco? The wine known as Albana di Romagna hails from a zone extending from Bologna in a southeast direction almost to the Adriatic coast. It is Emilia-Romagna's best known fine wine, although Sangiovese di Romagna is establishing a name for itself as the flagship red of the export market. The 2005 Cesari Colle del Re sits on the light side of medium body, and shows the typical lemon/citrus profile of Albana, along with the lightest note of bitter almonds, a common characteristic of many Italian whites that effectively balances a wine's innate fruitiness. Its freshness is unmistakable, its poise true. This would pair nicely with many of the fish-based dishes of summer, as well as a range of salads featuring grilled chicken.

Alexanderfontein Darling Sauvignon Blanc 2005 (South Africa)

SML price: \$9.49

This is *not* a darling Sauvignon Blanc; rather, it comes from the Darling region of South Africa's Western Cape. This is an emerging wine zone, cool climate, about which we'll be hearing much more in the future. An increasing number of well-made to superb Sauvignon Blancs are coming out of South Africa today, especially in the inexpensive to moderate price range. They are, perhaps, not as glitzy as New Zealand's, but it might be fair to say that they have a quiet depth the others lack. The Alexanderfontein is imported by Peter Koff, one of the very few Masters of Wine living in the United States. Underlying the wine's expansive aromas of citrus and grapefruit are notes reminiscent of herbs de Provence and additional hints of minerality that provide levels of complexity not often found in Sauvignon Blanc at this price. The flavors drive deep, and while not at all subtle, this is a satisfying mouthful of white wine for those who enjoy wines with a touch of attitude.

Toad Hollow Blanquette de Limoux Methode Ancestrale (France)

SML price: \$13.49

This may well be the most vivacious wine in the store! The staff loves it and it has quickly become a customer favorite. Blanquette di Limoux is a sparkling wine made in southern France from the Mauzac variety of grape (90% minimum). Toad Hollow's is slightly sweet, smelling and tasting much like a lower case Moscato d'Asti. It is made using the *methode ancestrale*, a production technique that involves bottling the wine before fermentation is complete, the resulting wine being low in alcohol (6%), slightly sweet, and not quite as effusively sparkling as Champagne. Vivid white peach and lemon infuse the character of this lively wine made for a casual summer evening.

This is a hand-in-glove match with a dessert of ripe Rocky Ford melons.

A guaranteed pleaser!



Fruity vs. Spicy Reds

The limited vocabulary we use to describe wine often employs contrasting categories to clarify a point. Is a wine full or light bodied, sweet or dry, acidic or soft, red or white, for example? Another comparison involves a wine's relative fruitiness versus its spiciness. Fruitiness in a red usually describes a palate impression that is soft, heavy on berry-like flavors, and low in tannin, while spiciness is a bit more difficult to describe. Some few wines possess distinct flavors of black or white pepper, for instance, while a tiny handful of others show hints of nutmeg, cinnamon, or Provencal herbs, but in large part the notion of spiciness refers to the edgy, tannic, acidic tingle found in wines like Cotes du Rhone, old style Rioja, or Salice Salentino. Fruity wines display a cushy, opulent mouthfeel, spicy ones a lively sharpness. That being said, here are two wines that demonstrate the difference. Try them and see which one your palate favors.



Campus Oaks Lodi Old Vine Zinfandel 2002 (California)

Reg. price: \$10.99

Sale: \$9.79

Here is a super bargain in California Zinfandel that is an unmistakable example of a fruity red wine. Medium-bodied and juicy, the 2002 Campus Oaks overflows with the typical raspberry, blackberry, jammy flavors that make Zinfandel so endearing. The jamminess is so concentrated, in fact, that it might be perceived as being sweet. The wine is extremely soft, showing no harsh edges or raspy texture, yet delivers a big mouthful of flavor. So good, in fact, that a staff member poured it at his wedding in July. Fabulous value in a category that has few under-\$10 jewels.

Garnacha del Fuego Calatayud Old Vine Grenache 2005 (Spain)

SML price: \$8.79

This wine contrasts nicely with the Campus Oaks to demonstrate the personality of a spicy wine. The name itself is a tipoff – "fuego" equals "fire." Grenache produces both fruity and spicy reds, and in this case a fine example of a spicy Spanish wine. While it is deeply flavored with that distinctive Grenache flavor recalling red fruits, it is much firmer than the Campus Oaks Zinfandel, and so comes across as spicy. Give this a try with virtually any cut of beef or pork off your summer grill. Spain continues to rock with great values!



A Fresh Take on New Zealand - Steve Kershner

Our old friend and compatriot Jim Drevescraft, a well-known Colorado wine industry personality, has brought a stable of very fine, interesting New Zealand wines to our shores. We highlighted a few of these about a year ago, to raves by our customers. We have some additional wines, a few new vintages of wines which sold out, and a few returning products that we were able to replace. These are very small family farm producers, with quantities that are extremely limited. We only have access to them twice a year. We are fortunate to be able to offer them to our clientele.

Ransom Clos de Valerie Pinot Gris 2004

Reg. price: \$15.99

Sale: \$14.49

This comes from the North Island near Warkworth, about 60 miles north of Auckland. The growing area here is a bit warmer and more rainy than the typical New Zealand growing regions to the south, similar to that of Sonoma County. Pinot Gris is a very "hot" variety in New Zealand currently, as it is here in the USA, with many producers selling out quickly or severely allocating their sales. This is one of New Zealand's best, and were lucky to get a few cases. This Pinot Gris (Pinot Grigio) is stylistically somewhere between those of Oregon and those of Italy, with deep, ripe fruit, but with that typically fresh, bright New Zealand acidity. There are hints of hazelnut, peach, lychee nut, honeysuckle, and a long, persistent mineral-laden finish. This is simply superb!



Mystery Creek Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2005

Reg. price: \$15.49

Sale: \$13.99

This winery is located at Waikato, just south of Hamilton in the North Island. The winery is young, having released their first wines in 2000, but already garnering Gold Medals and lots of kudos from the New Zealand wine trade. This Sauvignon blanc is from fruit grown in the Marlborough area, classic Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, but with lees aging giving a fleshier, rounder body than most. Deeply fruited, ripe, and complex, this wine shows lime, herbs, gooseberry, mango, and passion fruit flavors, and that persistent and marvelous Marlborough acidity which propels the Sauvignon Blancs from this area to among the world's finest.

Crab Farm Hawke's Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2005

SML price: \$13.99

This winery is now a familiar one in our selection, and this Sauvignon Blanc sold out relatively quickly twice last year in the 2004 vintage. 2005 was a difficult year, but despite that, Hamish Jardine's ruthless crop thinning and fastidious work was able to produce a stunningly fine wine, one which was recently made "Wine of the Month" by industry journal *New Zealand Food and Beverage*. Stylistically this is NOT your typical New Zealand "gooseberry" Sauvignon Blanc; rounder, more tropical fruited, with hints of herbs, capsicum, sea salt minerals, and that ever-present bracing acidity. Delicious!

Crab Farm Hawke's Bay Gewurztraminer 2004

SML price: \$13.99

The Hawkes Bay vineyards of Hamish Jardine have a mix of soils which facilitate the ripening of a wide variety of grape types. This Gewurztraminer is dry, Alsatian in style, with intense lychee scents and flavors, rose petal and Asian spices, rich and full of character, with the fresh New Zealand acidity cleaning up the finish. This is a perfect compliment to Asian and Pacific Rim cuisine.

Margrain Martinborough Chardonnay 2004

Reg. price: \$19.99

Sale: \$18.49

This comes from the Martinborough region at the south end of the North Island, the first area in New Zealand acclaimed for the production of Burgundy varieties, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Our initial allocation of this wine last year sold out quickly. We were able to acquire a few cases more of it. Small yields, barrel fermentation, full malo-lactic, lees stirring, provide a wine that is a dead ringer for Meursault at half the price. It is a bit more subtle, more lacy and introverted than Meursault, no doubt due to the fine bracing acidity which will provide long term freshness and ageability. One of the top 10 Chardonnays at the last New Zealand Wine Expo. Superb polish!

SAVENNIERES

The little enclave of Savennieres, in the Anjou region of the Loire Valley in France, just to the south of the village of Angers, is much celebrated by the wine cognoscenti, but little known by the casual wine drinker. Here the ubiquitous Chenin Blanc produces some of the most interesting dry white wines in the world. These pale yellow/green wines are concentrated, bracingly high in acidity, nervous, very dry, and extremely long-lived for dry white (10-20 years or more). They are wines for the right foods and proper place at the table, preferably with fresh shell fish, caviar, white meats, or as an aperitif. The schist soils here provide the taste of minerals in the wine, and there are often flavors and scents of dried fruits, white flowers like acacia, chamomile, and hints of honey. Delicate but complex, harmonious and well structured, Savennieres are always interesting and unusual to taste, yet these are wines certainly more for intellectuals than for neophytes. Historically, the area once produced sweet white wines, but that style of wine production is now just to the southeast, across the Loire River at Bonnezeaux, Quarts de Chaume, and the larger Coteaux du Layon appellations. We offer in our selection the two finest grower-producers in the Savennieres appellation, one from each of the two sub-appellations, Coulee de Serrant and La Roche-aux-Moines.

Nicolas Joly Savennieres Les Clos Sacres 2002

Reg. price: \$29.79

Sale: \$26.79

The Nicolas Joly family runs their 17 acre estate under biodynamic practices producing wines that are the unquestioned benchmark of the appellation. White peach, ground stones, seething, bracing acidity, incredible complexity and forthright structure. Drinks beautifully, even at this young age with Joly's incomparable ripeness of fruit, always a challenge in this zone that is prone to frosts.

Domaine des Baumard Savennieres Clos de St. Yves 1997

Reg. price: \$20.99

Sale: \$18.99

This domain produces wines on a par with Joly's, though the style is usually crisper, lighter, not as deeply fruited, with more intense minerality and a salty note. Most Savennieres is tough to drink when very young due to the generally stiff, tart acidity. This wine is just beginning to reach maturity, taking on a slight golden hue and now softening in texture.



Rose Season

Vega Sindoa Navarra Rosado 2005 (Spain)
SML price: \$7.49

Domaine de Gournier Cevennes Rose 2005 (France)
Reg price: \$9.99
Sale: \$7.49

Domaine La Fond Tavel Rose 2004 (France)
Reg. price: \$12.79
Sale: \$11.79

Bodegas Lurton Mendoza Rosado 2005 (Argentina)
Reg. price: \$6.99
Sale: \$5.99

Chateau Grande Cassagne Costieres de Nimes Rose 2005 (France)
Reg. price: \$10.99
Sale: \$7.99



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