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Dear Wine Club Member,

Somehow, we've made it to the end of the year, and we're so grateful that you've been by our side along our wine journey. 2023 was a big year for us! This was the year that we brought back our roster of customer tastings in full force, including our beloved Champagne Tent Event in Hollywood and San Francisco. We started meeting up with our Wine Club members regularly at each store to taste the monthly selections and to connect with our fellow wine lovers. Our team traveled to Bordeaux to taste the En Primeur wines, and came back with news of a stunningly good 2022 vintage. Along the way, we drank some amazing wines and had many great chats with our unparalleled customers. Thank you so much for being the best customers in the biz. We can't wait to see you in 2024—exciting things are in store!



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Best Buy Wine Club

2021 La Cappuccina Soave Classico Club: \$9.99, Retail: \$14.99



The Tessari family of La Cappuccina crafts a rich, ripe, opulent version of Soave Classico that'll wow anyone who likes luscious texture and flavor in their wines. They've had time to perfect their winemaking—the estate was founded over a century ago and has been in the Tessari family for generations. Located in the heart of the Soave production zone, at Costalunga di Monteforte d'Alpone in the province of Verona, it is named after a small 15th-century chapel where Capucin monks once celebrated.

Sisto, Pietro, and Elena Tessari, along with their father Lorenzo, are currently at the helm, and this wine shines with their capable winemaking. Produced from Garganega grapes, it shows lovely tropical fruit tones that would make it a great aperitif or accompaniment to a roast chicken.

2020 Ragtag Wine Co. "Greengate Ranch" SLO Coast Pinot Noir Club: \$9.99, Retail: \$14.95

by Ryan Woodhouse, Domestic Buyer

Probably one of the best deals ever included in our Best Buy Club... and that's saying something! But I mean how often do you get legit, single-vineyard, Pinot Noir with an original price of \$56... for \$9.99!? This bright, fresh, red-fruited Pinot comes from Greengate Ranch in the Edna Valley, part of the newly minted SLO Coast AVA. Greengate Ranch is a source of beautiful fruit for many top producers. The vineyard sits on a west-facing hillside at the top of Price Canyon where cool winds from the nearby Pacific funnel in and moderate temperatures. The soils here are of marine sedimentary origin, a mix of limestone and clay, perfect for Pinot Noir! Ragtag is a small family producer with a brother and sister collaborating on the wines. Unfortunately, pandemic tasting room and restaurant closures left them with a little more wine than anticipated, hence the incredible deals we've negotiated on some of their wines. The 2020 Pinot Noir is bursting with bright cherry fruit, pomegranate, baking spice, ripe raspberry, brambly elements, dried flowers, and dusty earth. A beautiful bottle of Pinot inside and out, and an exceptional value at our rock-bottom Club price.

Signature Red Collection

2020 Bondar “Junto” GSM McLaren Vale Club: \$24.99, Retail: \$29.99

by Thomas Smith, Australia Buyer

Bondar, established in McLaren Vale, Australia in 2012, is the brainchild of husband-and-wife duo Andre Bondar and Selina Kelly. Andre brings extensive winemaking experience to the table, having worked with the late Allain Graillot in Crozes-Hermitage, as well as with Mitolo and Nepenthe in South Australia. Meanwhile, Selina has built a career in wine marketing with Hentley Farms, Yangarra, and Hickinbotham.

As a true boutique winery, Bondar prides itself on its handmade, small-batch wines. In 2013, they acquired Rayner Vineyard, one of McLaren Vale’s most historic vineyard sites, and their venture has been thriving ever since. The vineyard’s plantings date back to the 1950s when it was owned by the Rayner family, and primarily consist of Shiraz and Grenache, the region’s signature varietals. The Junto, which means “together,” is Andre and Selina’s interpretation of a classic Rhône Blend. Comprising 68% Grenache from Rayner and nearly equal parts Shiraz, Mourvèdre, and Carignan, all varieties co-fermented. The end result is a delicious, beautifully composed wine that expresses their unique site.

2021 Folktale “Whole Cluster Reserve” Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir Club: \$24.99, Retail: \$39.99

by Ryan Woodhouse, Domestic Buyer



Folktale is a very exciting winery founded back in 2015. The winery took over the original Chateau Julian property that was built back in the 1980s and had long been a landmark in Carmel Valley. Folktale’s owners quickly brought in rising-star winemaker David Baird to make the wines, and he’s taken the quality to a whole new level. Previous winemaking positions at Halter Ranch, Justin, and Fess Parker mean that Baird was already well versed in crafting wines with top-quality Central Coast fruit.

Folktale’s Whole Cluster Reserve Pinot takes select parcels of top-notch Santa Lucia Highlands fruit and ferments them separately in small, open-top fermenters with 100% whole clusters. Only native yeast is utilized, and the ferments are gently punched down by hand several times daily. This stem inclusion and the resulting whole-berry fermentation captures a lot

of complexity in the aromas and flavors of the wine. Lots of floral tones lead to the crunchy red berry fruits, savory elements of forest floor, bay laurel, and toasted spices. Fine-grained tannins and juicy acid give great length on the palate. The finish even takes on a timely festive note with hints of pine needle, orange peel, and mulling spices. Despite this wine landing a big 94-point score from the *Wine Enthusiast* we were still able to negotiate a deep discount for our Wine Club members, so I hope you enjoy it!

Premium Club

2022 Lungarotti “Torre di Giano” Bianco di Torgiano Club: \$12.99, Retail: \$14.99

With values deeply rooted in tradition, innovation, and stewardship of the environment, the Lungarotti Winery is one of Umbria’s star producers. It’s based in the Torgiano region near Perugia and Assisi, a lush, verdant area that is known for its distinctive microclimate and nutrient-rich soil profile.

This blend of Trebbiano, Grechetto, and Vermentino grapes boasts a fresh and vibrant palate. In the glass, you’ll find aromas of crisp green apple, ripe pear, and delicate white flowers, underscored by a resonant zing of refreshing minerality. Its light-bodied character and citrus-laden acidity impart a distinctive freshness, making it an exquisite accompaniment to seafood and creamy pasta dishes. The name “Torre di Giano” is after the tower in Torgiano; literally translated it is the “Tower of Janus” for the Roman god of war and peace. This tower is today the symbol of the village. At \$12.99 for Club members, this is a wine to stock up on.

2018 Babcock "Galvanized Synergy" Santa Barbara County Red Club: \$16.99, Retail: \$21.99

The Babcock family bought a piece of land in Santa Ynez in 1978 and planted Gewürztraminer, Sauvignon Blanc, and Chardonnay. Soon the wine bug infected their son, Bryan, and he's since gone on to be a pioneer in Santa Barbara winemaking, earning the title of one of the "Top Ten Small Production Winemakers in the World" by *Wine Spectator*.



This wine hails from Santa Barbara County, known for its cool oceanic climate and diverse soil types. The vineyard's unique position allows for optimal sunlight exposure and fog influence, resulting in wines of remarkable depth and distinct personality. The 2018 Babcock "Galvanized Synergy" perfectly encapsulates this charm, offering a wine experience that is authentic, harmonious, and decidedly unforgettable. The blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Syrah leads with luscious dark berries, followed by hints of vanilla and soft baking spices, beautifully integrated with notes of leather and cedar. The wine is medium to full-bodied, showcasing ripe, firm tannins and a well-balanced acid structure that culminates in a smooth, lingering finish. It complements robust dishes with pronounced flavors like grilled meats and spicy stews.

Le Club Français

Trudon "Emblematis" Brut Champagne Club: \$29.99, Retail: \$34.99

by Gary Westby, Champagne Buyer

The Trudon "Emblematis" Brut Champagne is a meticulously made wine that will impress you and your holiday guests this December. It is composed of 70% Meunier and 30% Pinot Noir entirely from the family estate of Hélène and Jérôme Trudon in the village of Festigny in western Marne valley. Jérôme spent more than 20 years on the winemaking team at Champagne Louis Roederer before returning to take over the family business, and his master's-level education in winemaking has elevated his wines to the top tier of quality. Everything is done in stainless steel, and you could eat off the floor at the winery. With a gorgeous tarte tatin nose and a perfect texture in the mouth, this is a Champagne that can make a great aperitif on its own or go fabulously with a pâté starter.

2020 Moulin de la Gardette "Tradition" Gigondas Club: \$29.99, Retail: \$34.99

by Keith Mabry, Rhône Buyer

Gigondas is one of my favorite wine regions to visit in the Rhône. It is picturesque, with the Dentelles de Montmirail forming a ridge along the slopes of the region. Recently, the wines have reached the same high quality of their more famous (and pricier) cousin, Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Vigneron Jean-Baptiste Meunier of Moulin de la Gardette is one of our longest-standing partners in the Rhône, and his vineyards sit just below the upper ridges near the Dentelles, in the foothills below the village of Gigondas. We began working with JB in the mid-1990s because his wines were so exemplary and have been fortunate to keep that relationship going for nearly 30 years. The soils of Gigondas are primarily marl and calcareous-clay, producing bold and rich reds that are informed by the surrounding forests that help perfume the grapes while they are growing on the vine.

JB's Cuvée Tradition is mostly Grenache with some Syrah and Mourvèdre rounding out the wine. Since it's young, let the wine breathe for an hour or two with a decant. What emerges from the glass is a mix of red and black fruit with aromas of tobacco, wild thyme, lavender, and bay leaf complementing the ripe fruit. Though youthful and quite capable of aging for upwards of a decade, the 2020 is drinking well today. It is elegant in the mouth and shows a seamless balance of tannins and acidity. Just in time for the holidays, this will pair well with a classic standing rib roast, and I think some braised short ribs would also be perfect.

Il Club Italiano

by Greg St. Clair, Italy Buyer

2019 Castello La Leccia Chianti Classico Club: \$17.99, Retail \$21.99



I visited Castello la Leccia this September, always working... ok, I was on vacation but I can't ever pass up an opportunity when I'm close by. I met Guido Orzalesi 20 years ago when he was the general manager at Altesino in Montalcino. He moved on to Castello la Leccia a little more than five years ago. Since arriving at Castello la Leccia, Guido has implemented an organic cultivation across the property, and the results are really evident. It sits on the western edge of Chianti Classico just a little north of the town of Castellina. Wines from this region, traditionally, have been a little edgier and higher-acid, but with the organic conversion improving his vineyards, the wine's richness has increased tremendously. Climate change has helped these vineyards as well, and, although the overall trend is worrying, it has enabled a golden age for Chianti Classico. 2019 as a vintage is stellar; this wine shows its 100% Sangiovese origins, aged in large oak barrels. The results are superb! I would pair this with a rich pasta dish or some grilled pork chops!

2021 Einaudi Langhe Barbera Club: \$21.99, Retail: \$27.99

The holiday season is generally cooler weather—if you're in Florida or Hawaii you could argue that point—but from where I sit the air usually gets a little chilly, enough for me to look for the sweaters in my closet. Then I'm heading to the kitchen for some savory, rib-sticking, comfort food. The many times that I have visited the Langhe region in Piedmont, the food there is always geared for rib-sticking comfort, not to mention that some of Italy's best wines come from this largely untraveled region. Barbera is one of my favorite varieties, and perhaps one of the most underrated wines around. By nature, Barbera has an acidic core which makes it an ideal match for richly textured, savory food dishes, like pot roast, risotto, porcini-filled polenta—I'm getting hungry just writing this. The Poderi Einaudi has been very active in acquiring new vineyards in Barolo and Barbaresco's best sites, but their base has always been Dolcetto and Barbera. The wine is vibrant, full of focused, cherry-like fruit coupled with a bit of leather, spice, and hints of smoke. I've always imagined this wine with grilled sausage and polenta!

Champagne Club

by Gary Westby, Champagne Buyer

This month we have two producers who are about as far apart geographically as they could be and still be in Champagne! Courtois is in the far west of the region, almost in the Paris district, while Lamoureux is in the far south, just three miles from the border with Burgundy. The wines have more in common than one might expect, as both are blanc de noirs made in stainless steel.

The **Courtois "Ex Atris Uvis" Champagne Club: \$34.99, Retail: \$49.99** is composed of half each Pinot Noir and Meunier from the Courtois estate in Crouttes-sur-Marne, about five minutes' drive from Club favorites Fallet-Dart and Baron-Fuenté. This long-aged cuvée is based on Pinot Noir from 2017 and enriched with Meunier from 2016. I was struck by the Gevery-Chambertin-like depth and power of black fruit in the wine. The name is Latin for "from black grapes," and the wine has a golden hue and great sourdough toast. I would love to have this with plank salmon!



The **Jean-Jacques Lamoureux "Cuvée Gabin" Brut Zero Champagne Club: \$34.99, Retail: \$44.99** is an all-Pinot Noir blanc de noirs from estate-grown fruit in Les Riceys, just over the border from Burgundy and on the same Kimmeridgian clay soil as Chablis. This wine has zero dosage, no sugar added, and is racy, bright, but still dark fruited, with a great baguette toast from four years on the lees. It has a full 50% reserves, just like the Courtois, and that balances it out into a wine that could be easily enjoyed on its own, in spite of being a zero dosage cuvée. Of course, it will also be natural with sushi!