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May 2022

Dear Wine Club Member,

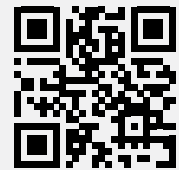
Welcome to May! The most important day of the month for me is Mother's Day. I came to this job about a year ago when my predecessor, Heather, stepped down to take care of her two toddlers. She coached me through the ins-and-outs of the role over the phone while keeping an eye on her little ones. We would also chat about the challenges of being a mom during this unprecedented time. Mothers have had to try to make sense of everything and help their children navigate life, no matter how confusing the world may be. All this is to say that I have gained so much respect for the mothers out there. In the past two years, I've come to appreciate my mom for her advice more than ever. I've also gotten to see her more often in person, bringing with me sparkling wines and Riesling that she loves, which all go well with my favorite Chinese dishes that she makes for me.

If you're still deciding on what to get for your mom this Mother's day, you might want to consider getting her a wine club subscription, which will remind her how much you appreciate her on a monthly basis! I'd love to hear about what your mom's favorites are.

In San Francisco, May can be such an unpredictable month in terms of weather, but I am happy to say that we've got a range of wines picked out in our Clubs that can either comfort you on those chilly nights or cool you off on those warm afternoons. You'll find classic California Cabernet, Zinfandel, and Pinot Noir for cozy nights in. On those hotter days, pick up a bottle of our Muscadet or Spanish Chardonnay-blend selections for a perfect picnic. As always, all Club selections are available at discount for our Members!

Tchin-tchin,

Jin Zhang | Wine Club Director & Head Sommelier



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Best Buy Wine Club

2020 No Curfew California Pinot Noir \$9.99

This is a yummy, no-fuss Pinot from the folks at Amici Cellars and Olema Wines. Based in Calistoga, these two well-known wineries are popular for making every-day wines that overdeliver. The grapes used for this wine come from hidden-gem vineyards throughout the state, together making an exemplary California Pinot! The wine is aged in 25% French oak for 12 months, providing intrigue behind the lush red fruit that flows immediately onto the palate.



I was asked recently where I have had my best meal in San Francisco. As an ex-restaurant cook turned sommelier, I have worked and eaten at plenty of good spots in the city. However, a list of the best restaurant meals did not readily come to mind. Instead, I found myself recounting meals I've had with my closest friends and the occasions we've celebrated together. I will say the same for this wine: no doubt this would pair with any number of fancy dishes, but what I think this would be most memorable with? Good company.

2019 Domaine de la Chaboissière Muscadet Sèvre et Maine Sur Lie \$9.99

Melon de Bourgogne is the name of the grape and Muscadet is the name of the wine made from it, but also a local name for the grape. To add to the confusion, Muscadet is also the name of the region located in the westernmost part of the Loire where the river flows into the Atlantic ocean. You may be wondering, what's Burgundy (Bourgogne) got to do with the name of the grape? We're in the Loire after all. There was a frost in 1709 that destroyed the majority of Loire's vineyards, after which the monks from Burgundy came to the rescue, replanting the regions with a frost-resistant grape, Melon, native to Burgundy but outlawed in its home in favor of its cousin, Chardonnay.



Chaboissière's winemaker Philippe Bodineau follows traditional practices of leaving the wine on its lees in the tanks over the winter to allow the lees to impart extra flavor and texture. Due to the proximity of the ocean, Muscadets often have a saline mineral characteristic, which is not to say salty. This bottle is a brilliant example of it. Together with prominent citrus and stone fruit notes, this is the perfect wine to wash down freshly-shucked oysters. I also love a simple beurre blanc preparation on some halibut or other white fish. Put a splash of the wine in the sauce and then a hearty splash in your glass.



Signature Red Collection

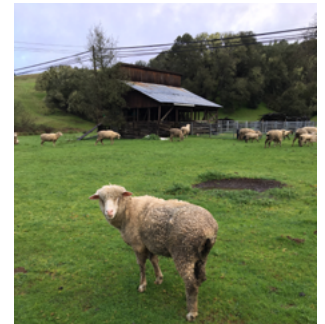
2018 Hendry "Block 7 & 22" Napa Valley Zinfandel \$24.99

Before a DNA analysis linked it to Italy's Primitivo and Croatia's Crljenak Kastelanski, Zinfandel was considered California's native grape. Today, it ranks third in the state's wine production behind Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, and there are still many vineyards scattered throughout the state planted with old-vine Zin. These old vines produce smaller yields, but the little that does get harvested carries great complexity and depth of flavor.

Block 7 is the mother block of Hendry, planted all the way back in 1975 and featured in their first vintage in 1992. Prior to making wine, George Hendry sold his fruit to other vintners and built his reputation as a grape grower. In 1995, Block 22 was planted on a benchland west of the town of Napa. You won't find this wine jammy like other California Zins; instead, you will find the familiar dark fruit notes elevated by cedar and spice. Sophisticated with approachable tannins, the winery suggests pairing this with eggplant parmesan or pasta with braised meat ragu.

2018 Lichen "Moonglow" Anderson Valley Pinot Noir \$24.99

Pronounced "liken," the winery is named after this composite organism found on the oak trees of Mendocino's Anderson Valley. Winegrowers Douglas and Ana Lucia Stewart bought the estate in 2000 and started making wine under the label Breggo Cellars with fruit from surrounding vineyards. In 2008, they repurposed this 150-year-old sheep ranch, planting their own vineyard. (Don't worry, the sheep are still around!) The first vintage of estate-grown wines was released in 2014. Sheep, along with bears, tree frogs, crickets, and bees, coexist on this land and are part of the biodiversity and organic farming practices the Stewarts are trying to promote. Pinot Noir is the leading grape of Anderson Valley, along with Chardonnay. The Valley's cool climate make it an ideal location for the two noble varieties.



Typical of Anderson Valley Pinot Noir, this wine is not shy on blackberries or oak, and hugs you like a warm shawl. It is medium- to full-bodied. I would consider this an "unwind wine," but you could also pair it with some pork tenderloin or pork chops with a cherry sauce while they're in season.

Premium Club

2020 Vegalfaro “La Grava” Blanco Utiel-Requena \$14.99

Utiel-Requena is located in the central part of Spain’s east coast, just a little west and inland from the coastal city of Valencia. The region is renowned for paella, and I can tell you that this would be a great wine to go with that traditional fare. The name comes from the neighboring towns, Utiel and Requena, where wine production has been around for more than 2,000 years. Like many lesser-known wine regions of Spain, Utiel-Requena has attracted new investment in the last few decades and shifted its focus from bulk production to quality-driven winemaking. Only 11% of the wine production here is white, and this one consists of 85% Chardonnay and 15% Macabeo. Macabeo has traditionally been used as one of three varieties (the others being Xarel.lo and Parelleda) in Cava, which this region also produces. It is fairly neutral but provides acidity and structure to the blend. It contributes a freshness to the Chardonnay, and the resulting wine is bright with aromatic citrus and green apple notes. A chilled glass goes down incredibly easy on a warm day.

2017 Tahbilk “Estate” Shiraz Nagambie Lakes Victoria \$14.99

The name Tahbilk comes from the Taungurarung word for the area “tabilk-tabilk” which means “place of many waterholes.” Nagambie Lakes is located in Central Victoria, about 90 miles north of Melbourne. Contrary to what the name suggests, water is not abundant here. Reginald Purbrick purchased the property back in 1925, his grandson John set up the marketing side of the business, and John’s son, Alister, became the estate’s first trained winemaker in the family. Today, Alister’s daughter Hayley is the fifth generation running the winery, and she is focused on leaving a sustainable legacy for future generations.



Winemaking at Tahbilk adheres to traditional values. Fermentation takes place in open oak vats that are over 155 years old. Afterward the wine is aged in similarly mature large French oak barrels, which do not impart prominent oak flavors. The resulting wine is fruit-driven with notes of juicy plums and berries. Oak is there but used judiciously for balance. It is medium-bodied and the brightness from the fruit begs for food. Our Redwood City staff Stephanie Vidales suggests barbecued meats or pizza as a good pairing—perfect for the upcoming Memorial Day weekend.



Le Club Français

2016 Reignac, Bordeaux Supérieur \$29.99

Château de Reignac is ideally situated in the Entre-deux-Mers region of Bordeaux, at the confluence of the Dordogne and Garonne rivers. Its terroir—featuring clay, gravel, and chalk—combines the best qualities of the Right and Left Banks in one place. The final blend is 65% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 5% Cabernet Franc.

Bordeaux Supérieur is a designation that requires stricter production standards than just Bordeaux AOC. Production under this designation must adhere to lower maximum yields and higher alcohol levels (read: riper grapes). It must also be aged for at least nine months, though Reignac ages this wine for 12 months in 100% French oak barrels. With six further years of aging in bottle, the wine has integrated blackberry and mocha notes. The tannins are noticeable, pleasant, and provide the all-important structure. This may be a bit controversial to the Bordelais, but I’m going to be drinking this with a carne asada burrito, and it’s going to be phenomenal.

2019 Domaine Faiveley Mercurey Rouge “Clos Rond” \$29.99

I don't usually like to pick favorites from our monthly selections, but this month is different: I have to admit that this one is my top pick of the May lineup. Mercurey is located in the upper half of Côte Chalonnaise, which in turn is located south of Côte de Beaune and north of the Mâconnais of Burgundy. The village takes its name from Mercury, the God of trade.



The Faiveley family has been in the Côte Chalonnaise for 4 generations, and, in 2005, Erwan took over from his father, François (pictured in the middle), while his sister Eve joined in 2014. This red Burgundy is easy on the tannin, fresh and bright, with notes of red berries and a rhubarb tang finish. I recommend any preparation of poultry to go with this wine, or just luxuriate in a glass by itself!

Il Club Italiano

by Greg St. Clair, Italian Buyer



2018 Tedeschi “Capitel San Rocco” Valpolicella Ripasso Superiore \$24.99

I truly have a soft spot in my heart for Valpolicella. I think it is one of Italy's most overlooked red wines in the U.S. Perhaps this is because of its ignominious introduction to America decades ago as simple plonk served on a red checkered tablecloth, often as an alternative to the equally-as-insidious-at-the-time cheap Chianti. Thankfully, those days are gone, and the last 30 years have produced previously unimagined quality increases.

Valpolicella comprises a blend of grapes that grow nowhere else in Italy—or, for that matter, the world. These unique varieties offer some of the most exhilarating aromatics and flavors that you can find today in a glass of wine. It goes through a “refermentation” by being over the lees from Amarone wine; hence the name *Ri-Passo*, or to pass over again. It is like hardly any other wine made. For me it is the marasca cherry aromatics, that hauntingly seductive wispieness that beckons me ever closer for another glass. This wine goes well with so many things but for me just sit down with a chunk of really good Parmigiano Reggiano and a glass of this wine—you need nothing else for a complete night.

2020 Ronco Blanchis Sauvignon Collio Retail Price \$14.99

Perhaps one of the most misunderstood varietals in Italy is Sauvignon Blanc—in fact they don't even call it Blanc, just Sauvignon. I think much of the confusion has to do with the difference between the rest of the world's Sauvignons and what the grape tastes like when grown in Italy. Certainly, the most distinct profile is the New Zealand version that express aromas that are euphemistically referred to as gooseberries; there's also the wood-dominated white Bordeaux or the flint-driven wines from the Loire Valley. In Italy the variety is still a bit undefined, mostly because it isn't planted as the dominant grape in any one area. In Italy the Alto Adige and Friuli are the most popular homes for Sauvignon, with the Alto Adige wines trending towards fruitier and those from Friuli being a bit muskier. This Ronco Blanchis wine is from the Collio in Friuli, and it is mineral driven with great acidity. A note before tasting: I would suggest decanting this wine for an hour ahead of time, and don't try it too cold—you'll get much more of what it is really about. Have it with a creamy Spaghetti Carbonara and be sure to use Guanciale...not bacon or pancetta!

