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Dear Wine Club Member,

Happy Valentine's Day and Happy Lunar New Year! Whether you celebrate one or both of these holidays—or neither!—we've got your wine needs covered, especially for fans of Champagne. In addition to February being a Champagne Club month, we have also chosen a bottle of Launois' Vinim Dei for our Club Français. All of these wines are available to you at the Club discount, no matter which you subscribe to.

I don't believe that you need a special occasion to drink Champagne—not only because it is delicious, but also because it is versatile at the dinner table. Here's a quick pairing tip: if you are planning on wooing your sweetheart with Champagne and strawberries, pick out a demi-sec instead of brut. The rule is that the wine needs to be sweeter than the food. When you pair a brut Champagne with sweet strawberries, the wine will taste overly acidic. Personally, I like to wait for the strawberries in the summertime and opt for brut Champagne at the beginning of the meal at this time of year. The Club selections this month are perfect to pair with caviar or oysters—a surefire Valentine's Day hit. Champagne is also beautiful alongside Asian cuisine, so grab a bottle for your Lunar New Year feast as well.

Tchin-Tchin,

Jin Zhang | Wine Club Director & Head Sommelier



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Best Buy Wine Club

2012 Castello di Gabbiano Chianti Classico \$9.99

Finding perfectly aged wines at great prices is one of the things we do best. This Chianti Classico is a great example! The Sangiovese (95%) and Merlot (5%) were grown on Castello di Gabbiano's finest estate vineyard, a site that has been producing wine all the way back to 1124. Secondary and tertiary aromas from the aging process come forward on the nose, with aromas of baking spices, espresso, tobacco, and earth. The palate reveals bright strawberry and red cherry notes. While you could easily enjoy this with pasta and tomato sauce, I think a board of cured meats and hard-aged cheeses would bring out its very best.



2015 Valentons-Canteloup, Bordeaux Supérieur \$9.99

Château Valentons-Canteloup sits along the Dordogne river in Bordeaux's subregion of Entre-Deux-Mers. Proprietor Jacques Meynard makes two different wines—Valentons-Canteloup, dominated by Merlot, and Bois Malot dominated by Cabernet Sauvignon—and both are perennial staff and customer favorites. From a well-lauded vintage, the Valentons-Canteloup is an old-school wine offering a nose of tea, dried herbs, licorice, and fresh earth, underpinned by notes of ripe black cherries and strawberries. The palate is soft and round with gentle, velvety tannins on the finish. This is a food wine, perfect for grilled meats with a Bordelais or mushroom sauce.

Signature Red Collection

2011 Pedro Martínez Alesanco Gran Reserva Rioja \$24.99

In the mid-19th century, Rioja Alta became the center of trade with France when the Phylloxera louse attacked the vineyards of France, and Rioja stepped up to fill the vinous demand. Pedro Martínez Alesanco is a bodega based in the Southern Rioja Alta village of Badarán, 30 minutes away from Haro, the capital of Rioja wines. The family has been producing wine here for centuries.



The fruit for this wine is sourced from vineyards that are over 50 years old. A blend of 90% Tempranillo and 10% Garnacha, the wine is aged for 3 years in a mix of American and French oak barrels. With 10 years of aging, the secondary and tertiary aromas readily jump out of the glass—wood smoke, tobacco, and wet gravel. On the

palate, sour cherry notes dance on the tongue making you salivate for some food. I recommend some simple lamb chops basted with rosemary and garlic-infused oil.

2016 Minasa “Riven Granite Reserve” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon \$24.99

Named after a traditional Maori handmade cookie that is ceremoniously shared with friends, Minasa wines embody the same handmade quality and philosophy. Winemaker Barbara Spelletich sums up her philosophy: “I predominantly focus on the smells and flavors. My focus is fruit. The wine must smell and taste like the fruit from which it is made. Wood and age add nuances.” And indeed, this is a bright and fruit-driven expression of Napa Cabernet, perfect as a glass to unwind with after a busy workday or alongside a weekday meal. On the nose, there is dark, rich black fruit, notes of cherry cola, with just a touch of vanilla from the oak. On the palate, it is soft and round with a smooth cherry finish. The tannins are gentle and balanced. Drink now or hold for up to five years.

Premium Club

2020 Skouras Moscofilero Arcadia Greece \$14.99

Don't let the name of this grape intimidate you! Moscofilero, pronounced moosh-ko-fee-lair-oh (say it with me), is a delicious grape native to Greece that I only recently discovered. I was studying for a wine exam, and, to make the less common Greek grape names stick, I brought home a bottle of each from the K&L shelves. Of all the whites, the Skouras Moscofilero was my favorite (but it was hard to choose; I love Greek whites!). Why? It's got the beautiful aromatics of Gewürztraminer and the crisp acidity of Riesling! Wine Folly's Madeline Puckette recommends pairing Moscofilero with high tea favorites such as cucumber sandwiches, lox with cream cheese, and mini fruit tarts. I will not object to that, but might I add Southeast Asian options: fresh Vietnamese spring rolls; fried crispy Imperial rolls wrapped in lettuce and herbs; spicy and savory Thai noodles, or laab. I hope your mouth is watering.



2017 Mourre de Tendre “Cuvée Paul” Côtes-du-Rhône \$14.99

Located in the heart of Provence in Courthézon between Châteauneuf-du-Pape and Orange, the Château du Mourre du Tendre is a family property with a history of seven generations of passionate winemakers. It sits on the crest of a hill locally known as Mourre du Tendre, meaning the hill of love. The current patriarch, Jacques Paumel, took the reins in 1962; his daughter Florence now runs the property and grandson Paul makes the wines.

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The château has 10 hectares of old-vine Grenache, Carignan, and Cinsault on gravelly clay soils. Farming practices follow a minimalist and traditional approach. Everything is done by hand and pesticides have never been used in the vineyard. Paul gives this wine the same detailed attention as his more prestigious Châteauneuf-du-Pape. The finished wine expresses notes of blackberry and black currant at first followed by licorice, pepper, and wet earth. It finishes with nice minerality and acidity. Wines from the Côtes-du-Rhône are extremely food-friendly. You can pair this with many different preparations of different red meat, of course, but this can also be a great option for a flavor-packed veggie burger. Try some caramelized onion and/or pepper jack cheese on top of that patty!



Le Club Français

2019 Cécile Chassagne Gigondas \$24.99

Cécile's friendship with K&L goes all the way back to 1991. She was a French girl turned Broadway dancer turned wine salesperson, who came into the Redwood City store one day in 1991 bearing samples of wine and olive oil. We bought everything she had. Soon after, Cécile left the Bay Area and returned to France because her father was sick and needed her to look after the vineyard. But the story didn't end there. In 1994, Clyde was headed to France on a buy trip, and on his flight from SF to Paris, he ran into Cécile. Turns out, both were headed to Rhône, and Clyde was staying very close to Cécile's family. They met up for dinner at her family home,

tasted the wines, and Cécile spent the evening teaching Clyde how to say "leek" in French (poireau). Many years of friendship and lovely wines later, and her Gigondas is as good as ever: a rustic and bright Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre blend. You'll catch notes of red berries but also leather, tea, lavender, and dried herbs.

Launois "Vinum Dei" Brut Champagne \$34.99

The Launois "Vinum Dei" Brut Champagne comes from our one of our fan-favorite Champagne Direct Import producers, and we could honestly call this a "cult" wine. Normally, it sells for \$44.99, and like everything from this producer that we are lucky enough to get, will be gone very soon. It is entirely estate grown and composed of 60% Chardonnay and 40% Pinot Noir from Vindey in the Côte de Sézanne. This village was originally planted by the Romans, and legend has it that the village's wines were thought to be so good in Roman times that they were called Vinum Dei, or Wine of the Gods. The clones for the Pinot Noir came from Burgundy in this vineyard, while the Chardonnay was massal propagated by the Launois family from their old mother vines in Mesnil. This wine is a refreshing aperitif, with subtle brioche toast, nice creaminess and a great, bracing, clean finish. I find it great on its own, but it can also be paired with anything from nuts to smoked fish.

Il Club Italiano

by Greg St. Clair, Italian Buyer

2018 Torti Pinot Noir Pavia \$17.99

I first met Patrizia and Dino Torti, a dynamic father-daughter team who are passionately committed to championing their region Lombardia, in September of 2003. It is hard to be relaxed around Patrizia, a ball of energy that is just... infectious. She's the marketing force and her sister Laura is the agronomist. Their winery is situated in the hills of Oltrepò Pavese about 45 miles south of Milano, right on the 45th parallel. This has never been a famous growing region, but it has been growing Chardonnay and Pinot Noir for more than a century, the source of grapes for multiple Piedmont sparkling wine producers. Dino decided to start making his own wines instead of selling to the large bottlers who wanted fruit from his vineyards. This "Borgogna" Pinot Noir, as the family refer to it, comes from a 35-year-old vineyard. I love the nose: strawberry compote, laced with a bit of spice and leather. On that palate there's a lushness that just flows but it is sparked by a balanced acidity and hints of tannin, it's supple but with a backbone. Serve it at cellar temperature.



2018 Benanti Etna Rosso \$21.99

Every time I think of Sicily I think of Mount Etna. My first experience there was just magical. There's a different light, air, and vibration (that might be the volcano rumbling). It's truly special, and if you ever get the chance you should go. Despite the fact that grapes have grown there for centuries, if not millennia, Sicily did not experience the fame the rest of Italy did until recently. It was the work of a few pioneers whose faith in the local grapes—the red Nerello Mascalese and white Carricante—that has spurred the growth boom of wine producing in the last 20 years or so.

This month's 2018 Etna Rosso from Benanti is an exceptional wine, and a fitting way to honor Sicilian winemaking as it was Giuseppe Benanti whose early work laid the foundation for so many others. Giuseppe has passed on the day-to-day responsibility to his twin sons Antonio and Salvino, and they have been busy. They decided to get rid of any non-Nerello Mascalese grapes in a complete devotion to Etna's most famous red. I love this wine. Decant it for an hour ahead of time, and serve in a Burgundy glass if you have it. You'll love this wine, I bought a lot so make sure to stock up!

Champagne Club

by Gary Westby, Champagne Buyer

2012 A.D. Coutelas Brut Champagne \$34.99

I am sure you have noticed price increases from the big brands of Champagne this year. I am happy to report that our pair of wines for February both go against that trend. First up: a fabulous 2012 vintage for you at a Club price of \$34.99.

The 2012 A.D. Coutelas Brut Champagne is the product of just two press loads, one Chardonnay and one Pinot Noir, from estate vines in the Grand Cru of Bouzy. Only 6000 bottles were made, so we took a full sixth of the world production for the Club. This is an all-stainless steel fermented Champagne, but it is hard to know that from tasting it as it has the vinous power and authority of a wood-fermented wine. I found lots of great brioche character from the extended lees aging and subtle dried fruit notes to frame the toast. This is great Champagne for the main course and will go especially well with salmon fillet or even poultry. If it hadn't been for the Club, I don't think they would have let so many bottles go to K&L. This won't last long!



Jean Lallement "Cuvée Réserve" Brut Champagne \$34.99

We also have a pure Verzenay Grand Cru that sells at \$67.99 retail, but available for you at the \$34.99 Club price. Your membership and loyalty make these kinds of deals possible, and I thank you.

I have been a huge fan of Champagne Jean Lallement for three decades now, and I could not be more excited to finally have one of their bottlings in our Club. This family has been growing grapes in Verzenay since the 1600s, and Jean-Luc, the current generation, makes the wine almost by himself. The "Cuvée Réserve" is composed of 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Chardonnay exclusively from 40- to 45-year-old vines on four acres in the mid-slope of Verzenay. With exquisite nut bread toast aromas and precise minerality, this Champagne has length I rarely encounter in current-release Champagne. It is a great aperitif and works perfectly with everything from smoked fish to potato chips. And it is

almost half off the retail price! I hope that you enjoy both tiny production gems as much as I have.