

BI-RITE DECEMBER 2006 WINE GUIDE

What is it about wine that causes people to wax poetic, form special organizations, don funny-looking robes, and even collect thousands of bottles without hope of ever drinking them? One suggestion could be that wine is a living, mutable thing; it changes as it gets older—there's an air of mystery that can only be solved with the pop of the cork. As wine ages in the bottle, it develops complex flavors that are difficult to place, enigmatic, and somehow inviting and addictive—you want to go back for a second sip, and third, and soon the bottle is empty and you're still talking about the wine a month later.

This month's wine guide highlights a few wines from older vintages that are still affordable—actually, some of them are downright steals. If you're not sure what all the fuss is about, and don't want to wait ten years for your bottles to rack up some age, you'll find some ideas right here.

SPARKLING

N.V. Parigot & Richard Brut **\$22.99**

WHITE

2005 Boniface Apremont **\$13.99**

1994 Wegeler Spatlese "Wehlener Sonnenuhr" **\$29.99**

RED

2003 Chateau Musar Cuvee Rouge **\$19.99**

1996 Cascina Morassino Barbaresco "Ovello" AMAZING PRICE **\$29.99**

DESSERT

1996 Broadbent Colheita Madeira **\$44.99**

LIQUOR

N.V. Michel Couvreur Scotch "12 Year Old" **\$59.99**

PARTY WINES

RED

2004 Bishop's Peak Rock Solid Red FULL BODIED CA RED BLEND **\$9.99**

2005 Quattro Mani Montepulciano D'Abbruzzo VALUE OF THE YEAR **\$8.99**

WHITE

2005 McManis Viognier AROMATIC AND LUSCIOUS **\$9.99**

2005 Winzer Von Erbach Riesling 1 L BOTTLE, DRY AND FLORAL **\$9.99**

10% OFF MIXED CASES

SPARKLING

N.V. Parigot & Richard Cremant Brut "Blanc de Blancs" **\$22.99/btl**
100% Chardonnay **\$248.40/cs**

For two summers I lived in Burgundy. My job was to take small groups of people around the wine country on bicycles. You could say I was a bicycle tour guide. The highlight of every tour was a visit to Greg Parigot in Savigny-les-Beaune. Parigot & Richard have been making cremant (the generic term for French sparkling wine) for well over two hundred years. After explaining the labor-intensive aging process behind each bottle, Greg would lead the group to the 'cave'—the candlelit storage room with vaulted ceilings, and 1774 engraved in the capstone above the door. The group would sit around the table, eat gougeres still hot from the oven, and taste through five or six different cremant. The blanc de blancs, very crisp and dry, was always the favorite

WHITE

2005 Boniface Apremont **\$13.99/btl**
100% Jacquere **\$151.20/cs**

Let's say you're trapped in the French Alps on a ski holiday. Chamonix, perhaps. You're done with the slopes for the day, ready to cook up a big fondue dinner, or maybe a piping hot soup. But *Zut Alors!*, you forgot the Mouton-Rothschild. And the hotel just ran out of Romanee-Conti. Oh well. So you head down to the grocery store, and pick up a bottle of the local wine—Apremont, made from the jacquere grape. You've never heard of it, but what the hey... So you open it, pour it in a glass and take a sip—"My, that's fantastic," you say out loud. "It's got just a little bit of sparkling, just a hint of sweetness—perfect with winter food, but would do great on a summer picnic also. It's got aromas of white flowers, and peaches." Who knew you were such an expert? Boniface Apremont—give it a go.

1994 Wegeler "Wehlener Sonnenuhr" Riesling Spatlese **\$29.99/btl**
100% Riesling **\$324.00/cs**

Wehlener Sonnenuhr, the "Sundial" vineyard in the town of Wehlen ranks as one of Germany's most famous vineyards. This is a wonderful, lemony Riesling with a noticeable amount of residual sugar—some might call it sweet. But it also has a good amount of acidity to balance it out, and the bottle age to deepen the flavors. This wine can stand on its own, or last through an entire dinner party—it's great as an aperitif, with food, or with dessert. It's rare to see a Riesling with this much age on it, especially at this price—a great opportunity to try a beautiful vintage wine.

10% OFF MIXED CASES

RED

2003 Chateau Musar Cuvee Rouge

Blend of Carignagne, Cinsault, and Cabernet Sauvignon

\$19.99/btl

\$216.00/cs

After a long stay in France in the 1920's, Gaston Hochar returned to his native Lebanon and began making wine in the cellar of the 'Mzar' castle in Ghazir, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. After the Second World War, his son Serge attended oenology school in Bordeaux, and in 1959, the family began making exceptional wines from a blend of French varietals planted in the Bekaa Valley. The resulting wines have the elegance and earthiness of a great French wine, but also a unique national character that makes them a perfect pairing for Mediterranean food—especially grilled meats. An unusual, wonderful find.

1996 Cascina Morassino Barbaresco "Ovello"

100% Nebbiolo

\$29.99/btl

\$324.00/cs

The name nebbiolo comes from the Italian word *nebbia*—meaning fog. In the evenings, the fog rolls over the hills of Piedmonte, lowers the temperature of the vineyards, and allows the finicky nebbiolo grapes to ripen properly. The resulting wine is rich in raspberry fruit, full bodied, and high in tannins. Significant ageing is required for the wine to soften and show its best. This 1996 "Ovello" vineyard, ten years old, is just starting to round out- the tannins are still huge, the fruit is bright, but it has the wonderful tertiary aromas of black tea, chocolate, and earth that are only found in vintage wines. For me, this wine defines complexity—after each sip you want to go back for another taste because you keep discovering new flavors. We're lucky to have this wine at an amazing bargain price—when the wine was released in 1998, it was \$46 a bottle!

DESSERT

1996 Broadbent Colheita Madeira

\$43.99/btl

People seem to be afraid to drink Madeira. They buy a cheap bottle to use for cooking around Thanksgiving, and it sits around until next year. They forget that Madeira is one of the longest-lived, greatest wines on earth. It was used to toast the Declaration of Independence, and 17th century bottles exposed to full sunlight are still delicious. Madeira is a fortified wine (like port) from the island of Madeira—and was the perfect beverage to take on long sailing trips to the India. The most valued casks of Madeira were those that came from ships that had made a double circumnavigation of the globe! This 1996 Colheita (single vineyard) Madeira has amazing caramel, honey, and spice flavors with great acidity that cuts right through to make it enjoyable after a heavy meal. Because the wine has already been exposed to oxygen during the ageing process, an open bottle will last for over a year without a problem. Buy a bottle, pop it open, and enjoy a sippy sip for months on end.

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LIQUOR

N.V. Michel Couvreur Scotch "12 year old"

\$59.99/btl

A Scotch whisky made in Burgundy by a Belgian using Portuguese sherry casks. In the small town of Savigny-les-Beaune (home also to Parigot & Richard—see SPARKLING), Michel Couvreur is a local legend. If you go to visit him in his whisky cellar, he'll insist that you hold out two hands cupped together. He'll pour the whisky into your hands, tell you to rub them together vigorously, and then splash the whisky on your face—the best way to get the full taste of the whisky. Using Scottish water and used sherry casks, Michel Couvreur produces a full-bodied whisky with a bit of sweetness. It's big, round, and smooth—bracing like a good scotch should be, but somehow seems to have picked up a bit of elegance—maybe from hanging around for so long with all those great Burgundies. This is a small-production, artisanal product that is clearly a labor of love. If you know a whisky fan, they'll appreciate this one.

**Stocking up on presents or getting ready for a party?
Buy any 12 or more bottles of wine...
receive 10% off your entire wine purchase!**



10% OFF MIXED CASES