



The Wine Steward's

RED COLLECTOR

WINE CLUB

April 2020

WINE: 2016 William Harrison Cabernet Sauvignon

SOURCE: Rutherford, Napa Valley

GRAPES: 86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Merlot, 7% Petit Verdot

ATTITUDE: A Producer's Poise, A Region's Honest Remark, A Vintage's Endearing Depth of Fruit

FOOD: Cowgirl Creamery's Mt Tam cheese – or a damn good steak

FACTUAL TIDBITS: No stranger to your wine club, this producer has long impressed us with its down-to-earth pricing (relative to the Napa norm, of course). William Harrison's neighbor just down the Silverado Trail is Quintessa, whose flagship bottle costs at least three times as much as what we're handing you here. This wine is no less representative of Rutherford's regional character than that more iconic bottling. Along with the delicious dark fruit for which 2016 vintage Cabernet is admired, there is a hoped-for sense of place; that comforting feature commonly called "Rutherford Dust." This Cabernet is also perfectly "sized," to my palate. While fully ripe with its fruit and generous with complexity, it isn't a jammy sex bomb. You can almost assume by the label design that you're in for a classically-proportioned Napa red.

JIM'S WHIMS: Sending you to William Harrison's tasting room might cut into my own store's action, but I do advocate a visit all the same. The location is unpresumptuously humble in aspect, outside and within, with a sense of "how Napa used to be" kept refreshingly intact. Perhaps the secret to its survival is Bill Harrison's "alternative income." It is said this vineyard and facility were financed by his establishing the valley's first mobile bottling line business. Investing in Chappellet's winemaker Phil Titus for consulting work hasn't hurt either! It's a great comfort to me that a place like William Harrison sustains itself in a wine region where egos and prices can be a bit extreme!

49.99 / 44.99 for all wine club members



WINE: 2017 Andrew Will Cabernet Franc

SOURCE: Two Blondes Vineyard,
Columbia Valley, Washington State

GRAPES: 100% Cabernet Franc

ATTITUDE: Levitated Old World / New World Fusion

FOOD: Duck Breast, Veal, Mushrooms,
Washed-Rind Cheeses

FACTUAL TIDBITS: I'm not keeping perfect track of this, but imagine that Washington State now accounts for at least a fourth of our provisions to your club. The variety, value, and intensity of color, scent, and flavor coming from here combine to make this region impossible to ignore. – But with THIS submission we're going out on a limb a little. Yes, the place is a great one, as we've already submitted. The Cabernet Franc variety is also on nearly everyone's list of what's expected to happen in this club. What's a little more adventurous and risky this time, however, is the style of this wine. We are identifying and championing elegance here, without the prerequisite of easily-identified power of color or alcoholic weight.

JIM'S WHIMS: . . . And one reason for this temporary shift in wine provision style is the always prevalent Andrew Will style. Over the many years I've been tasting their wines I've learned Andrew Will emphasizes the svelte, balanced, and nearly European-style way of wine expression. Alcohol content remains checked, keeping the wines more drinkable and amenable to food pairings. One might say varietal expression is also encouraged at this more discreet heat level. Now, to Cabernet Franc. This varietal is known for being fantastically – or freakishly - nosy. A certain Livermore Valley winemaker and I politely/playfully spar per Cab Franc's tendencies and how "useful" (sellable) they are. This is my take: I'm not a great fan of Loire Valley (French) Cabernet Francs from the region's cooler vintages. They say TOO much about pepper and green foliage. Nor am I an advocate for over-ripening the grape in a warm place, where all of that varietal distinctiveness dissipates to fruit jam. Cabernet Franc, for me, is a wonderful, frequently-frustrated pursuit of something "in between" that works for MY mouth and those of my consumers. This wine club provision represents that search. For some of you, I know we have fulfillment. To the rest: I hope you can drink out of the box this time!

38.99 / 35.09 for all wine club members who "get" it

The Wine Steward's

World Class

WINE CLUB

April 2020



WINE: 2016 Chateau des Landes 'Cuvée Prestige'

SOURCE: Lussac-Saint-Émilion, Bordeaux, France

GRAPES: 100% Merlot

ATTITUDE: Serious

FOOD: Charcuterie, Grilled Chicken,
Blue & Parmigiano cheeses

FACTUAL TIDBITS: This is our second provision of this Bordeaux. The first time you or anyone else in California ever saw it was the 2015 vintage. That placement happened because of a trip to France I enjoyed with its importer. We visited the producer in Saint-Emilion's "satellite" region of Lussac on a cold winter afternoon, touring his small winery while a massive roast was tended on the grill just outside. The subsequent lunch with the whole family involved that delicious beef and other great plates, and one wine after another representing Chateau des Landes' entire lineup. This 'Cuvée Prestige' and the 'Maltus' red we've previously provided your club are the producer's top wines, signifying the lesson on Bordeaux value that bears repeating: Find a famous place like Saint-Emilion and head next door for similar flavors and quality at a much better price!

JIM'S WHIMS: This Right Bank blend is less ready for prime time (prime rib COULD work!) than was its 2015 counterpart when you were handed that. While 2015 and 2016 are both considered Bordeaux's best vintages since 2010, they differ in impact. 2015's tended to be more affably red-fruited; a bit more charmingly ready to love. 2016 Bordeaux, on the other hand, are more impressively structured; darker and sometimes a bit more stoic upon release, and therefore perhaps a little more age-worthy. This wine growls with gravel and graphite scents, warning you to keep your distance. Naturally, you can't resist and take a sip anyway. Well, you were warned: This wine "bites" with significant tannins and earthy dryness. I, for one, have developed a resistance to this Bordeaux propensity for pain infliction, and rather like it. I know to incorporate either food or patience - or both - to tame the beast. To you who are new to this kind of thing: You're having very good - if rather primary - Bordeaux here, and at a very good price for the type. . . . And you're the only ones in California to have it!

31.99 / 28.79 for Wine Club Members



WINE: 2016 Perinet 'Merit'

SOURCE: Priorat, Spain

GRAPES: 35% Merlot, 30% Syrah, 19% Garnatxa, 16% Carinyena

TWO FUN FACTS: Some Carbonic Maceration applied
NO OAK aging (all stainless steel).

ADMONITION: This air-starved wine presents
“reductivity” at first. Air it out!

FOOD: Juicy proteins – Baby back ribs, grilled sausages

FACTUAL TIDBITS: Let’s say you’re studying for some kind of wine professional certification, about to take a 100-question exam on the wines of Spain. Surely, one question to anticipate is, “What are the two most significant red grapes of the Priorat Region?” Your answer should be, “Garnatxa (Grenache) and Carinyena (Carignan).” This wine from that region reminds us: The anticipated is not always the reality. As you can see above, Perinet’s ‘Merit’ bottling emphasizes two international varieties instead. — Yet this wine remains wholeheartedly “Priorat” in sensory effect. Abundant and glowing color, intense fruit and mineral scents, and a ripe yet formidably-structured palate feel all say so. Why? It’s the dirt – or lack of it. First and foremost, regardless of the grape variety at play, the local slate called ‘*llicorella*’ makes itself felt in every honest Priorat. The vines struggle in this infertile rock, and declare it in the wine before you. “Verily, this wine in my glass is PRIORAT!”

JIM’S WHIMS: You’ve heard from us about Priorat before. Some of you have even visited this place southwest of Barcelona, and a few of you had me as a companion. This producer, Perinet, was unknown to me until but a month ago when I first tasted this, learning at the same time the owners of Napa’s revered Alpha Omega now own a significant interest in this situation. An unlikely bedfellow? I’d say, “Who cares, as long as Priorat’s message of slate continues to be truthfully told?” Last thing to mention: This wine is reductive. That means its stainless-steel-only aging experience intentionally kept it from air (alternatively, a barrel breathes a little, permitting metered oxidation). I have no more delicate way to describe this wine’s initial, just-uncorked need but that it wants to “fart” a little, and then it’s fine. Upon opening, expect a little “gassiness” and don’t freak; just wave that wine around! Perhaps my explanation of reduction is a little rough, but you’re sure to remember it the next time you smell such a thing!

31.99 / 28.79 for Wine Club Members



The Wine Steward's
CALIFORNIA
(*West Coast*)
WINE CLUB

April 2020

WINE: 2017 Smith Devereux Red Wine

SOURCE: Mendocino County and Lodi

GRAPES: Syrah, Zinfandel, and Cabernet Franc

ATTITUDE: Careless, Supple, Easygoing, Ripe!

FOOD: Pastas with bold, meaty red sauces.

FACTUAL TIDBITS: Smith Devereux is the unlikely coming-together of a music industry insider, a travel and wine writer, and – most importantly to me – John Anthony Truchard. The latter is a wine industry veteran, son of the proprietor of the famed Truchard Vineyard in Carneros, and knows a thing or two about accessing fruit from all across California's regions. He was the originator of "JaM" Cabernet and even better-known "Butter" Chardonnay. As the names imply, these wines are designed with appealing affability in mind; the casual wine consumer's sought-for effect. Like those, this red blend is hardly an intellectual pursuit. These are not scents and flavors you must quietly contemplate to understand. Rather, they land in your lap (your palate, rather) with unconcerned and happy laughter. This submission is this wine geek's own reminder to self: Such juice is useful, depending on the day of the week, the humble food pairing, and the people in your sphere.

JIM'S WHIMS: If there is a geek factor anywhere to be found here, it is the *cepage*. First of all, if that's a new word for you, know that it's the good-to-know / fun-to-pronounce French term for the grape ingredients. - Ya learn something new every day! In my experience, this particular *cepage* is fairly unique. I've never seen these three varieties – a Rhone, a Croatian (originally), and a Bordeaux – in bed together. I'm imagining Syrah accounts for the dark color and "meaty" scents. The Zin is giving acidic jazziness, adding refreshment. The Cab Franc brings just a dab of peppery earth. – At least, those are the roles frequently assumed by these three players. Enjoy this happy-go-lucky red at cellar temperature (not fully warmed-up) to enjoy its best expression of fruit. - And enjoy the nearly-harmless price!

18.99 / 17.09 for all wine club members



WINE: 2018 Browne Family Vineyards
Cabernet Sauvignon

SOURCE: Columbia Valley, Washington State

GRAPES: 97% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Petit Verdot

ATTITUDE: Solid and sure of itself!

ADMONITION: Observe how this young Cab “fills in”
with airing

FOOD: Steak. Blue Cheeses. Aged Gouda.

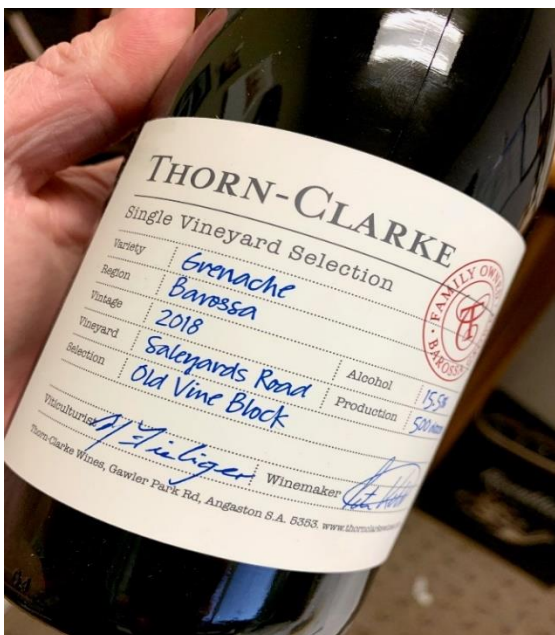
FACTUAL TIDBITS: Washington State strikes again! While we’ve brought you these regional bullet points before, we’re bound and determined to drill the Washington State Difference into your head so what happens in your nose and on your palate is fully appreciated.

- Washington State is (obviously) located at a much different latitude than California’s famous Cabernet places. The summer day is longer (more sunlight for the developing fruit). Is this a good thing? ‘Seems so!
- Washington State’s main wine region is quite unlike rainy Oregon’s, a high desert situation receiving but five or six inches of rainfall in some years. Growers compensate with irrigation water accessed *via* canals from Mount Hood, etc. Water is therefore applied judiciously, not as recklessly as Mother Nature might.
- Washington State tends to provide exceptional value when compared to other great wine regions, based on the cost of land.

There were going to be more bullet points but I’m out of room.

JIM’S WHIMS: My vendor for Browne was smart to leave me with a whole bottle rather than merely proffering a “sound bite” sip before scrambling. I got to witness a development I might have otherwise missed: This wine fills in. The color was automatic, of course. The telltale Washington State Cab scents of “briquette” and black cherries and chocolate were also immediately available. The flavors on the palate were in full swing, too, BUT the middle was a little vacant and the finish a touch too abrupt. I had to remember two things: This is a young wine, and it’s from Washington. – So be patient! Come back in ten minutes! Swirl the stuff! I’ve done all this to multiple bottles of this Cabernet by now, with the same results. The wine enriches with air. Even the nose does, adding sappy soy and cedar complexities. What was lean is now endearingly plump, and I’m reminded once again to be patient with a great wine.

22.99 / 20.69 for all Wine Club Members



The Wine Steward's

Wine Adventurer's

WINE CLUB

April 2020

WINE: 2018 Thorn-Clarke Grenache

SOURCE: Saleyards Rd. Vineyard,
Barossa, Australia

GRAPES: 100% Grenache

ATTITUDE: Pure, unembellished FRUIT

GOOD TO KNOW: TWS Customers are
California's only wine lovers to know of it

FOOD: Grilled pork chops, Manchego,
Camembert

FACTUAL TIDBITS: The prevailing expectation for Australian reds – especially those from Barossa – is extravagance; jammy fruit with a distinctive menthol aspect derived from the local eucalyptus trees. For our palates, that's often TOO much of a good thing. Many of these reds are in "self-disagreement," with crazy acidity accompanying that jammy-ness. An Aussie red that curbs its fruit enthusiasm, omits the menthol, and doesn't appear to be acidified is our rarely-satisfied objective. It happened here, however, from this very good Barossa producer. Even Thorn-Clarke – with its myriad bottlings – produces several wines I'd call "too much," but here happens that rare, Goldilocks-preferring "just right" red. It emulates those of my favorite Australian producer, Torbreck, with PURE and balanced fruit.

JIM'S WHIMS: Balance and purity of fruit that's rare for Australia? That's just one remarkable feature of this 500-case production red from half a world away. The other is its non-existence on our west coast, save the shelves of The Wine Steward where it will reside but briefly, while current supplies remain. -But rarity doth not a great wine make. Let's speak to the juice itself. The color – a bright yet dense ruby red – is admirable for a varietal that can otherwise look a little "dilute". The nose is immediately engaging with wild strawberries and cherries, and a mild tinge of tobacco and/or dried herbs. On the palate it is pleasingly full, but not TOO full. It has satisfying length, but doesn't last TOO long. This fully ripe beauty knows when to stop, with just enough coyness to remain irresistibly attractive. Boil down the entire experience to one image: A warm fruit pie cooling down on a windowsill.

23.99 / 21.59 for all wine club members while it lasts!



WINE: 2013 Zuccardi 'Q' Tempranillo

SOURCE: Valle de Uco, Mendoza, Argentina

GRAPES: 100% Tempranillo

ATTITUDE: Comfort

FOOD: Roast beef, roast lamb.

FACTUAL TIDBITS: We have long admired Argentina's Zuccardi for its provision of quality regardless of price point. They make serviceable reds and whites nearly 1/3 the price of this club submission, as well as Andean masterpieces weighing in at more than five times as much. Their 'Q' series which treats several different varietals is where a lot of you frequently shop, price pointwise, and always gives great value. That said, it wasn't until recently that I tasted their Tempranillo. I didn't know they had one! Let's devote two more lines to geographical source. "Valle de Uco," or "Uco Valley," is in southern Mendoza, and the first sub-region everyone was talking about ten years ago. Many of the vineyards here are a little cooler, higher in altitude, and more mineral-laden. To me, "Uco" is where it's at, Mendoza-wise!

JIM'S WHIMS: While accessing a seven-year-old Tempranillo from Rioja, Spain would be a typical endeavor, wines from what we call the "New World" are rarely this developed upon release. Kudos to Zuccardi for understanding well-oaked Tempranillo can be disjointed in its youth. I'm certain that three or so years ago this would have put juvenile, tangy fruit in one part of your mouth and a lot of unintegrated lumberyard effects in another. But now it is one wine, mellow, supple, and warmhearted. It is ready. So am I.

21.49 / 19.34 for all wine club members ready to mellow out



The Wine Steward's
'Here 'n There'
White Wine
WINE CLUB

April 2020

WINE: 2019 Bornos Verdejo

ATTITUDE: Intense fun

SOURCE: Rueda, Spain

BRIGHT IDEA: Livermore should plant Verdejo!

GRAPES: 100% Verdejo

FOOD: Grilled shrimp or fish tacos

FACTUAL TIDBITS: Verdejo happens in your club for the second time in two months. We anticipate no complaints, based on the numbers of club members hastily returning for more of the last one. I've had to re-order that Cuatro Rayas twice already, so we must have struck a loud and major chord. This Verdejo hails from the same place as the last: Rueda, on Spain's "*meseta*," with its severe continental climate. It is nearby Madrid's favorite foil to that city's sweltering summer afternoons. It's finally about to warm up around here, too, so Tri-Valley denizens would be wise to emulate the *Madrileño*.

JIM'S WHIMS: Some time ago it dawned on me: There are a hell of a lot of grape varieties beginning with the letters VER. Just off the top of my head I'm remembering Vermentino, Verdicchio, Vernaccia, Sauvignon Vert, Verdelho, and this Verdejo. There really is no relationship between these, except that they're all "green" (verde, etc) grapes being differentiated by their farmers from the red ones in the vineyard. **Another whim:** While you'll be seeing this a little later, as I'm writing we're anticipating Easter this coming Sunday. I can imagine the vivacious fruit of this Bornos delightfully enhancing a good Easter ham. Over the ham thing? Back to fish tacos!!

18.99 / 17.09 for all wine club members



WINE: 2018 Antoine Ogier 'Artesis'

SOURCE: Cotes du Rhone, France

GRAPES: (*this is fun*) 35% Grenache Blanc,
20% Clairette, 20% Roussanne,
15% Viognier, 10% Bourboulenc

ATTITUDE: A True Reflection of the
Sunny Southern Rhone!

FOOD: Fish, Salads, Unembellished Pork Chops,
Cremaux de Citeaux Cheese

FACTUAL TIDBITS: We head to France's sunny Southern Rhone; land of sundresses, sunflowers, and copious amounts of sunshine. Here, red wine production exceeds that of white and rosé, but all colors do happen. Per the American market, however, Cotes du Rhone **Blanc** is only now on the rise. Why? There are two main, related reasons. Wineries in southern France were slower to modernize with white winemaking-specific equipment, notably temperature-controlled stainless steel tanks. Without the fruit preservation of cold fermentation, whites from here were too drab to drink. Reason Two: Even with the updated facilities, Cotes du Rhone Blanc is not an age-worthy wine type. More often than not, it landed on our shores too mature in flavor development (a fancy way of saying "OXIDIZED!!"), attracting but few fans to the type. Finally, the Rhone is getting it right with white; with the winemaking and the more hasty deliveries. Finally, we're getting THIS.

JIM'S WHIMS: From Cotes du Rhone Blanc we should expect something different from the nervy acidity of Sauvignon Blanc, Verdejo, Albariño, or Grüner Veltliner. Its ingredients are too affable to be so corseted, so austere, so narrow. Anticipate, rather, a sun-drenched fruit basket / fruit cocktail effect of fully ripe peaches, pears, and citrus. Honeysuckles happen, too. Keeping all of this somewhat in check is the restraint of orange peel bitterness, but just a little thereof. We hope you recognize the goodness happening here. It is a wine type our own Livermore Valley could achieve. Someday, maybe . . .

17.49 / 15.74 for all wine club members



The Wine Steward's

Tuesday Night

WINE CLUB

April 2020

WINE: 2015 Chateau Beausejour

SOURCE: Fronsac, Bordeaux, France

GRAPE: 85% Merlot, 10% Cabernet
Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc

LESSON: “For value, head next door”

ATTITUDE: Truth and Substance

FOOD: Cold weather meals with truth and
substance (roasted or braised meats!)

FACTUAL TIDBITS: Bordeaux is world famous, sometimes making its affordability a far-fetched notion. In better vintages, the famous “1st Growths” can fetch over \$1,000 - for a bottle, not a case! What’s become of easily-accessed, everyday-drinking Bordeaux? Nothing! It’s still out there, with plenty to go around. This wine place is ten times the size of our own Napa Valley. Outside its circus of famous names there are millions of gallons of darn good, place-representative Bordeaux juice. Your savvy reminder-to-self: Resist the iconic name rut. – And there’s another impediment to surmount...

JIM’S WHIMS: Bordeaux’s other challenge is its styling, per the current American consumer’s misunderstanding of it. “We” (not all, but many of us) are so attuned to more easygoing, fruit-forward local wines that Bordeaux’s challenging tannins, acids, and earthiness can intimidate. This is ultimate “Old World” wine. Its location, plus the expectations of its local culture, shape grape varieties that are familiar to us into forms unfamiliar. When I find you more generous “New World” bottlings (case in point: last month’s Argentine Malbec), I’m fulfilling my mission of pleasing your palate. – But I have other mandates: To represent “place truth.” To compel you to eat with your wine. To provide real wine value: This Chateau Beausejour from the great 2015 year is meant to cost about \$20. Intensity of color, body, structure, and character all say so - as did its former wholesale price. Buy buying the last sixteen cases in California we were afforded a “take-all” deal. I grasp, admire, and embrace this honestly good Bordeaux. Can you?

14.49 / 13.04 for all wine club members



WINE: 2016 Inkarri 'Winemaker's Reserve'
Cabernet Sauvignon

SOURCE: Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina

GRAPES: 100% Cabernet Sauvignon,
organically grown

ATTITUDE: This is Significant Wine!

FOOD: Meats & shrooms. Comté cheese.

FACTUAL TIDBITS: Argentina is best known for Malbec, of course, but its work with other Bordeaux varieties must be recognized. — Especially when significant wine such as this happens at such an attainable price. In my “Whims” section I’ll try to identify what I mean by “significant,” but here I’ll just mention the fruit for this comes from Mendoza, Argentina’s southernmost subregion of Uco Valley. Here, the climate can be a touch cooler and the soils in play more mineral-laden. These two factors contribute to darker color and more acid-tannin structure, which brings us to the “Whims” section . . .

JIM’S WHIMS: “Acids and Tannins?” These are technical wine terms which may not interest the casual consumer. Perhaps they even intimidate, but let’s be openmindedly brave a little less “casual” for a moment, okay? Some wines are very rich and soft in your mouth. These easygoing “cocktails” are that way by either winemaking design (high alcohol / residual sugar / questionable additives) or a vineyard setting where the soil is very fertile and/or the local climate rather hot. These wines can impress with jammy fruit at first sip, but wine lovers can tire of this effect, sometimes even by the end of just one glass.

Tannins and acidity are the two features keeping your palate from being lulled to sleep. To rob a term from the study of electronics, they serve to provide Ohms (resistance) to the wine experience. Without resistance, a wine can slide right through a little *too* easily. With too much resistance, a wine “hurts” your mouth with overly-chalky tannins or tongue-searing acids. With the “just right” amount, the tongue is put on alert; enlivened and salivating for food. What is “just right”? That’s subjective, depending on the taster and his or her use of the wine. Are you in the mood to be soothed? Buy up on the Finca el Origen Malbec we showed you last month. Are you planning on eating (remember, the Argentines love their beef!)? Then you should value this energetic, complex, Cabernet. This wine is SIGNIFICANT for its durability, food-worthiness, and VALUE.

14.39 / 12.95 for all wine club members