



The Wine Steward's

RED COLLECTOR

WINE CLUB

June 2020

WINE: 2014 Petit Bâtard Red Wine

SOURCE: Napa Valley

GRAPES: Roughly 1/3 each Merlot, Malbec, and Cabernet Sauvignon

ATTITUDE: “Light Heavyweight” in proportions, and fights above its weight class in character!

NOTABLE: Rare is the club provision seeing **38 MONTHS** in French oak!

FOOD: A steak, ESPECIALLY with a sauce recalling the actual wine’s wonderful scents and flavors.

FACTUAL TIDBITS: This may be the fourth time we’ve “clubbed” this little bastard, more kindly named “Petit Bâtard” - an irreverent reference to its “2nd Wine” status. Forget for the moment there’s a more expensive, supposedly “better” big brother bottling; THIS is characterful *stuffe* for the price – again! I would equate it in quality, value, and even character to another wine we often “club,” the “D2” blend by DeLille Cellars. Even though the latter comes not from Napa but Washington, the two are aligned by a rejection of bombast; waving the flag instead for reds that needn’t be huge in size to be big in character.

JIM’S WHIMS: It’s my duty to find you delicious value in the higher-end Cabernet and Cab-Blend world. I therefore taste A LOT of them here at the store with vendor after vendor, but once I’m home I’m usually reaching for a bottle of anything but - unless Cabernet lovers are in my midst, of course. That said, Napa reds such as Petit Bâtard still engage me. I would happily reach for this “European-sized” red with “Classical California” styling. The fragrance is engaging, nearly nostalgic, with kirsch and cedar high-tones and balsamic aspects happening beneath. The mouth is lively with acidity but comfortably “sauced” as well, and at the developed age of nearly six years the tannins have fully integrated into the wine. That sense of “sauce” is prevalent in the actual flavors. There is something complex and mysterious happening here, reminding me of Worcestershire or some kind of steak treatment. That’s anything but a negative; it’s a GOOD thing. I can imagine a good steak with an intense sauce echoing the message. Hmmm!

39.99 / 35.99 for all wine club members



WINE: 2014 XTANT Red Wine

SOURCE: Napa Valley

GRAPES: 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Merlot,
13% Malbec

ATTITUDE: DARKER and HEFTIER
than its 'Bastard' little brother

PAIR WITH: Heaps of meat, and shiitakes.

FACTUAL TIDBITS: XTANT is the aforementioned “big brother wine” you were asked to ignore while contemplating Petit Batard. That’s right: This is a rare provision of two small-production wines from the same maker – and the same 2014 vintage to boot! The thoughtful shepherd of both is veteran winemaker Jeff Gaffner. We’ve been following his work for nearly two decades now. His own winery is Saxon-Brown, and he also fashions Black Kite Pinot Noir and some of the “Meyer” reds in the Hestan family of wines (Meyer has landed in your club once or twice as well). Jeff was on the team that fashioned Wine Spectator #1 wine, 1996 Chateau St. Jean ‘Cinq Cepages’ and, more importantly, he’s a thoughtful and affable dude who’s generous with his knowledge. This XTANT blend, coming from very important St. Helena (Lewelling and Kletter) and Oakville (Oakville Station) vineyards, has always impressed me. However, the price was never right. Given the times and factoring in the buying power your club membership avails, our price has gotten better and so has yours.

JIM’S WHIMS: The barrel program mentioned in the Petit Batard notes is the same for XTANT, a 38-month sojourn in French oak. If you weren’t already hip to this, know that most Cabernets see about 18 to 24 months in wood before bottling. A three (-plus) year duration is very rare. Getting it into the market sooner would be cheaper - rather than “sitting on money” - but Jeff Gaffner obviously had a certain effect in mind with his more patient and spendy wait. Does the extended oak time confer more “oaky-ness” to this wine? No. Rather, the idea is that at some point oak flavors reach a threshold and, later on, integrate into the wine and become less apparent. My guess is Jeff was going for a more “settled-down” style of wine, relaxed by years in a semi-oxidative environment.

Finally, how is XTANT different or “better” than its little Petit Batard brother? Well, that’s your call, but if the popular notion of a darker wine with a fuller body being “better” is valid, then XTANT is certainly the more significant of the two. For me, it’s about the comparison of two very good Napa reds by one thoughtful winemaker!

57.99 / 52.19 for All Wine Club Members

The Wine Steward's

World Class

WINE CLUB

June 2020



WINE: 2018 Aléofane

SOURCE: Crozes-Hermitage,
Northern Rhone, France

GRAPES: 100% Syrah

ATTITUDE: Benchmark!!

FOOD: Woolly mammoth – or lamb.

FACTUAL TIDBITS: Crozes-Hermitage is near the bottom of the long and narrow, north-to-south Northern Rhone wine region following the river by the same name. Like its neighbors Hermitage, Cornas, Saint-Joseph, and Cote Rotie, it features Syrah. This is not the Syrah of Paso Robles or Australia. It's the original idea, as the variety was born here. So was Natacha Chave, the daughter of Bernard Chave, maker of some of the region's most sought-for bottlings. "Aléofane" (a fictional island) is her personal project, sourced from vines she acquired in 2007 and now farms biodynamically. It is intriguing to be trying a wine with such lineage. It is gratifying when the wine turns out to be as excellent as this.

JIM'S WHIMS: Sniff and sip this beauty from a Pinot Noir-style glass (the wider bowl) to fully honor it. If you have already enjoyed the Northern Rhone provided last month (the Saint-Joseph) you will notice a similarity . . . and a difference. Exotic as its nose is, this Aléofane differs from the Alleno & Chapoutier with less blue/purple fruit and more beef, cherry, and musk components. Even from the scent you can anticipate both richness and tanginess, and this is confirmed with the sip. This combination of gratifying fruit and salivation-inducing nerve may seem unusual to Northern Rhone Syrah first-timers. The rest of us who "get it" will sympathize; we were all there with this wine type at some point in our respective wine journeys. The first impression of this kind of Syrah might be, "WTF?!" The next, for those willing to try again, is "Hmmmmmm." - And then there happens the night when the food is right, the stemware is correct, and the stars are all aligned for your arrival at a lifetime commitment to this wine type. Yes, like other "arrival wines" Barolo and Red Burgundy, Northern Rhone Syrah can be a challenge to grasp. Those who are up to the challenge, investing repeated uncorkings, will ultimately "get there." This great wine from a scion of a legendary maker should help you along!!

34.99 / 31.49 for Wine Club Members 34.99 / 31.49 for Wine Club Members



WINE: 2017 Simonsig 'Redhill' Pinotage

SOURCE: Stellenbosch, South Africa

GRAPES: 100% Pinotage

ATTITUDE: A Rare Success

FOOD: Match the wine's intense concentration:
Beef with rich sauces. BBQ. Grilled (marinated) Portabellas.

FACTUAL TIDBITS: How does a new grape variety come to be? It can happen naturally, out in some vineyard, where two local varieties like Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc get together to make Cabernet Sauvignon. That sounds a lot more romantic than the other way, happening in a

laboratory/nursery *via* human intervention. The latter is always done with a certain result in mind. Henri Bouschet was looking for color when he developed red-fleshed Alicante Bouschet. The Germans were always looking for a more sturdy tolerator of their colder, northern latitude locations. Larger crops, disease resistance, and fragrance and/or flavor nuances might also be pursued. The Pinotage grape was the result of a crossing (during the 1920's and 30's) of Pinot Noir and Cinsault, happening (perhaps) because Pinot Noir on its own is so hard to manage. In a few short decades Pinotage became South Africa's signature grape, just as Carmenere is to Chile, Malbec to Argentina, and so on.

JIM'S WHIMS: The prevailing question in our industry, and my voice is often included, is "Should Pinotage have even ever come to be?" As a grapevine it succeeds with robust growth and a healthy crop. As a wine, it usually . . . well, um . . . sucks. Fewer and fewer Pinotages are uncorked for me these days, but when they are it's hard to not draw a foregone conclusion: This wine will suck. Confirmation happens early, with an aroma resembling a tire fire, janitorial chemicals, or several rubber Band-aids being shoved up your nose. If I unwisely choose to prolong this experience with an actual sip, I'm punished with a continuation of the same unfortunate impressions.

By now, you must be pretty excited to have received this wine. Now that your expectations are minimized, I'll assure you that there ARE in fact more careful and caring renditions of Pinotage. South Africa's heirloom grape is getting better treatment from old timers Kanonkop and Simonsig, as well as fresh perspectives from a new generation of smaller, thoughtful producers (in 2017, Beeslaar's Pinotage was named South African Wine of the Year). I chose you this because - not only does it NOT suck - it is distinctively good red wine. To the eye it offers a massive saturation of inky color. Sniffed at cellar temperature (this is important), freshly-crushed blackberries, *crème de myrtille* (look it up), and a comforting tinge of smoke (anything but a tire fire) greet the nose. Now, there might be just a TINGE of Pinotage's quirky-earthly-smoky personality happening in the wine, particularly as it warms up, but what do we want, after all? Brain-dead Pinotage?! The pleasure in the mouth is the real sell, after all those intriguing flavors are cataloged. A remarkable concentration of black fruits, kept energetic with brisk acidity, gratifies and satisfies. This is not a shy wine, so respect the food-pairing recommendations above!

34.99 / 31.49 for Wine Club Members

The Wine Steward's

CALIFORNIA

(West Coast)

WINE CLUB

June 2020



WINE: 2018 The Fableist Tempranillo

SOURCE: Central Coast – which deserves elaboration

GRAPES: 100% Tempranillo

ATTITUDE: Dark. Ripe. Fun.

FOOD: Grilled anything.

FACTUAL TIDBITS: “The Fableist” is a line of wines made by two friends of The Wine Steward, each of whom has his own winery. Curt Schalchlin is the proprietor / winemaker of Sans Liege. Perhaps his best-known work is “The Offering,” which consistently appears on our shelves and has at least twice appeared on Wine Spectator’s Top 100 List. Andrew Jones has his own “Field Recordings” winery, and yet another industry gig to boot: Andrew is a nurseryman, having a role in planting many a vineyard in the Central Coast. “Central Coast?” That’s a pretty big swath of wine land. The Livermore Valley is actually part of it – the top part – and it extends all the way south to include Santa Barbara County. Curt and Andrew are strategically located roughly at its midpoint, in Paso Robles, allowing for fairly easy access to points north and south. In the case of this wine, fruit is accessed from Pomar Junction in Paso Robles AND from farther south – from Arroyo Grande’s Laetitia Vineyard. The former is warmer. Laetitia, just south of Pismo Beach, is decidedly more maritime-influenced.

JIM’S WHIMS: Our best reference points for what Tempranillo should behave like come from Spain, where it is ubiquitous and considered that country’s “noble grape.” - But even there, the variations are myriad, with some Spanish Tempranillos being “monumental” (along with their prices) and others being more stylistically “careless” for everyday quaffing. Is the Tempranillo we are handing you “representative,” recognizable as Tempranillo? I’d say, “Hell yes!” The requisite dark color is immediately recognized. An inquiring sniff brings endearing fresh tobacco, damp loam, and chocolate to the nose. The palate is extremely friendly with ripe dark fruits – berries and cherries – and Tempranillo’s final verification happens in the form of an accompanying tanginess; a feature sometimes surprising the domestic palate, and encouraging the use of protein (meat!!) as a resolving counterpoint.

But that’s a drawn-out dissection, and not how you’re bound to be drinking. More quickly addressed – smelled and tasted over three seconds’ time – this wine is simply delicious; Spain’s noble variety with the tilt of California’s laid-back affability!

19.99 / 17.99 for ALL Members



SOURCE: Golden West Vineyard, Washington State

GRAPES: 4 different clones of 100% Pinot Noir

ATTITUDE: Happy fruit at first,
getting more serious as
you inquire further.

FOOD: Pork chop, perhaps smoked.

FACTUAL TIDBITS: Facts? Data? Toss out those textbooks – it’s revision time! For years now I’ve provided a tidy little generalization of the Northwest’s wine geography. Main point: Washington and Oregon couldn’t be more unlike. Oregon’s wine scene is (mostly) based in its Willamette Valley, one coastal range away from the cooling, rain-conveying Pacific Ocean. It champions the Pinot Noir varietal. Washington State’s vineyards are to the east, in high desert seeing – sometimes – just five or six inches of rain annually. Besides apples, hops, and pumpkins (etc.), Washington State grows just about every wine grape you’ve ever heard of – except Pinot Noir. Until now. Dammit, they just screwed up my tidy little generalization!!

JIM’S WHIMS: James Suckling has awarded this wine 93 points. Jeb Dunnuck weighs in with a “91” and calls it “easily the best Pinot Noir I’ve tasted from Washington State.” He’ll be having better ones. How do I know? This is an early, ground floor Pinot project; one of but few so far. AND it’s the work of Charles Smith and henchman Brennon Leighton, who are at the top of Washington State’s winemaking game with about five gazillion highly-rated bottlings under their collective belt. This is just the beginning.

The Golden West Vineyard comes from an AVA known as Frenchman Hills near Yakima, and this is its first Pinot Noir release. Pinot lovers know the wonderful capacity of this grape to express the uniqueness of location. Red Burgundy smells and tastes one particular way, as compared with all the myriad California Pinot Noir situations which, in their own turn, speak particularly. Given this, we have absolutely no precedent so far for what to anticipate from this inaugural Washington State example. That’s exciting – or scary – depending on your sense of wine adventure.

Let’s go in: The color (or lack of color) is honest to type; a transparent red/maroon. The nose evokes a lot of happy red fruit at the start, and at this point some might dismiss this as a simple wine. Patience, Young Grasshopper; there is more to discover. With air and more inquiry baking spice, fruit cake, damp leather, ash, and potpourri reveal themselves. The palate likewise moves from “obvious fruit” to compelling flavors happening from all sides and adding to a long, warm finish. Truly, this is its own unique Pinot Noir type. And it’s damn good for the money.

20.99 / 18.89 for all wine club members



The Wine Steward's

Wine

Adventurer's

WINE CLUB

June 2020

WINE: 2016 ColleMassari “Rigoletto”

SOURCE: Montecucco, Tuscany, Italy

GRAPES: 80% Sangiovese, 10% Ciliegiolo,
and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon

ATTITUDE: Liquid Affability

GOOD TO KNOW: This is where Tuscan
Vermentino (current fad) also proliferates.

FOOD: Very versatile, from pizza and pasta
to steaks and chops!

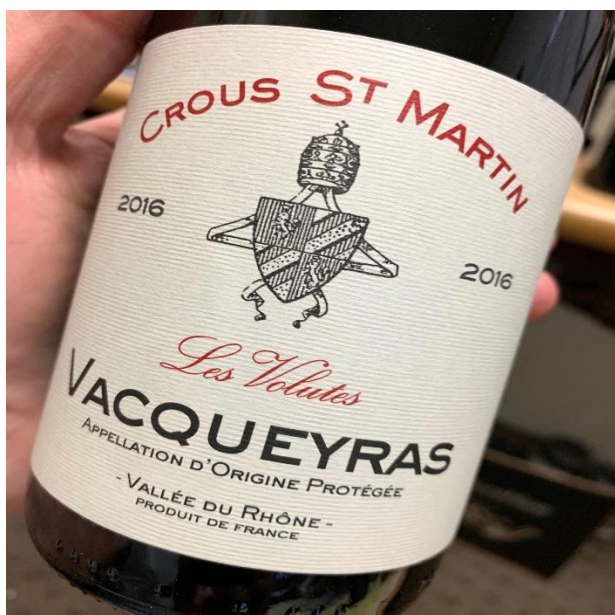
FACTUAL TIDBITS: We are visiting southern Tuscany, heading past Brunello-bearing Montalcino to a place with better wine value and – arguably – a more smiling, approachable style of wine. Montecucco is a relatively new “DOC” (Denominazione di Origine Controllata), but that term is but the government’s stamp of approval. More interestingly, the region has been in the grape and wine biz ever since the Etruscans farmed it in the 8th century.

One grape ingredient you may not recognize is Ciliegiolo. It actually happens in many Sangiovese-based blends here and in other parts of Tuscany; normally as a 5% or 10% addition. Some Italians say it is one of the parents of Sangiovese, while others counter that it is the offspring of Sangiovese. This is an argument I’d love to observe, should it happen in noisy Italian along with lots of hand gestures and kicking up of dust. I’d just sit back and listen, big glass of Rigoletto in hand.

Wanna sound really smart? Learn how to say Ciliegiolo: “chee-lee-ay-gee-YO-lo!!!” Very good!

JIM’S WHIMS: I love the relaxed nature of this wine, as I visit and revisit the glass for successive sniffs. The dark plum and black cherry fruit is downright charming. On the palate, the theme of “easygoing” continues. The wine, while clean and bright with acidity, exudes friendliness with a medium-rich cherry/chocolate/woodsmoke delivery. I want something to eat.

19.99 / 17.99 for all wine club members



WINE: 2016 Crous St Martin 'Les Volutes'

SOURCE: Vacqueyras, Southern Rhone, France

GRAPES: 70% Grenache, 15% Syrah, 15% Cinsault

ATTITUDE: A “monolithic” value

FOOD: Grilled meats, ideally with aspects of woodsmoke and *herbes de provence*

FACTUAL TIDBITS: It’s been a while, so let’s head back to one of The Wine Steward’s favorite regions, the Southern Rhone Valley. I need to remind myself: Your knowing this place and its wines is NOT a foregone conclusion, as often as we talk about it. With apologies to you masters of the topic, this time around I’m going back to start! More often than not, French wines identify themselves by the place from which they come, not the grape varieties from which they’re made. “Vacqueyras” is the name of a village and the small region of vineyards surrounding it. Wedged between the regions of Gigondas and Beaumes-de-Venise, Vacqueyras is but a fifteen minutes’ drive from somewhat better-known Chateauneuf-du-Pape. These are all “sub-regions” of the Southern Rhone in northern Provence, so named for the river that traverses it. Each of these villages and others nearby (Rasteau, Seguret, Sablet, and so on) emphasize the Grenache variety in their blended reds. Syrah and Mourvèdre are the common bit players, but Carignan, Counoise, and Cinsault (as happens here) may also be involved. Less expensive wines from the area are called “Cotes du Rhone.” The effect of these (usually) “GSM” blends? Different proportions and degrees of kirsch (cherry liqueur), framboise, white pepper, thyme, lavender, fennel, and - in blockbuster vintages such as 2016 – perhaps an insinuation of dark chocolate. The sundrenched warmth of this Southern French location induces these affable fruit and spice flavors – and fairly high alcohols, as European wine goes. Southern Rhone reds aren’t always reliant on food but are always better with it. Rich proteins such as lamb, chicken, beef, and pork can all work, especially with garlic, salt, pepper, olive oil, *herbes de provence*, and fire involved.

JIM’S WHIMS: Having said all that, let’s recognize lots of you already knew that stuff, and make one point about THIS wine. Reds identified as coming from Vacqueyras range in price from \$20 to about \$35 these days. Some are less dark than this but more elegant in their landing and exotic in their expression. This very financially-feasible Vacqueyras is more monolithic in impact; intense in black, tarry fruit and tannic/acidic structure. It is very satisfying as a foodworth, Southern French power wine. Might it say more someday? This wine buyer believes a year or two will let it reveal a bit more nuance, so stock up!!

21.99 / 19.79 for all wine club members



The Wine Steward's
'Here 'n There'

White Wine

WINE CLUB

June 2020

WINE: 2019 Estreia Branco

SOURCE: Vinho Verde, Portugal

GRAPES: Mostly Loureiro, with help from Trajadura and Arinto

ATTITUDE: A perfect foil to the summer heat, and a great, characterful example of the type.

FOOD: Cold Seafood.

FACTUAL TIDBITS: Even such a ridiculously fun wine as this can teach you a thing or two, so quit your giggling guzzlery for a second and listen up. Vinho Verde is the most famous white of Portugal and is often a little bubbly by design. Know that the name “Vinho Verde” is not a grape variety nor a specific wine type, but a REGION. In other words, this Estreia comes FROM Vinho Verde, hugging the Spanish border in far northern Portugal. It’s nearly always comprised of more than one grape. One not included here but often employed is Alvarinho, better known to some of us by its Spanish name Albariño. Want to sound REALLY smart? Say “Vinho Verde” correctly: “VEE-nyo VERD” (no “ay”).

JIM’S WHIMS: I liked this wine a lot, within seconds of sniffing and sipping it with its vendor. I spoke for five cases for the floor and - upon their arrival - Eric pounced, grabbing a bottle for a quick chill in the fridge. Twenty minutes later we were upstairs, glasses in hand, and that advocate of all things Portuguese proclaimed it “Delicious!” To have Eric’s approval means it will be enthusiastically advocated on the sales floor. Eric has even devised his sales line: “You have to buy two.” I can’t argue: A bottle of this lower-alcohol, flavorful fizzy will empty out faster than usual and another should be chilling in wait.

The flavors happening here comprise fresh limes along with a more compelling sense of leafiness. Specifically, those leaves are green and damp, and you’re pushing them aside as you navigate a shady path. Get it? Could any other sensation cool you off any better?!

9.99 / 8.99 for ALL Wine Club Members



Lulu celebrates her 102nd birthday

WINE: 2019 Bedrock ‘Ode to Lulu’ Rosé

SOURCE: California (we’ll elaborate)

GRAPES: 65% Mataro / 35% Grenache

ATTITUDE: Class in Your Glass!

FOOD: *Salade Niçoise*!!

FACTUAL TIDBITS: Refer to last month’s California Wine Lover’s Club notes for elaboration on the Bedrock Wine Company’s deal. In a nutshell, this is the project of Morgan Twain-Peterson, son of Ravenswood founder Joel Peterson. Morgan emphasizes the exploitation (and preservation) of our state’s oldest “heirloom” vineyards. This particular wine’s sourcing is represented merely as “California” because the Mataro (the old farmer’s name for Mourvèdre) comes from Oakley and the Grenache hails from Mendocino. Know, though, that both stands of vines are very, very old – and that’s desirable for quality. And now we must address Morgan’s nickname for his elegant dry rosé. Who the heck is “Lulu”??

JIM’S WHIMS: Lulu Peyraud is 102 years old and (last I heard) still cooks up a storm and (apparently) still braves the backyard swing. For most of her incredibly long life she’s reigned as matriarch of the Peyraud Family, proprietors of Domaine Tempier in Bandol (Provence), France. Kermit Lynch, longtime importer of Domaine Tempier to the U.S., is a virtual family member. In her early years, Alice Waters drew much inspiration from Lulu and experiences in her kitchen. Domaine Tempier still figures mightily in the wine cellar of Chez Panisse. It appears Morgan Twain-Peterson is another fan, considering the label’s homage. But why Lulu of Tempier? Because Bandol, achieving greater notoriety during her family’s sojourn, is the world’s most important Mourvèdre region and rosés from there will always emphasize that variety. So this is more than Morgan’s homage; it’s his emulation. This Mataro / Mourvèdre-based dry pink references the (now \$50!!) one from Domaine Tempier.

It’s fragrant with nectarine and orange zest. Mellow, ripe strawberries fill the mouth. The texture, perhaps most importantly, is one of satin. Quality rosé’s greatest impression is not scent or flavor; it’s the feel of the wine. This feels terrific!

23.99 / 21.59 for all wine club members



The Wine Steward's

Tuesday Night

WINE CLUB

June 2020

WINE: 2016 Farmstrong Field Red

GRAPES: 60% Carignan, 20% Syrah,
20% Zinfandel

SOURCE: Mendocino, Contra Costa,
and Solano Counties

ATTITUDE: "Corbières comes to California"

FOOD: Grilled chicken with Sofrito sauce

FACTUAL TIDBITS: Most of you have an idea of how two of Farmstrong's three grape ingredients should behave. You know Syrah contributes power of color, smoke, meat, and dark fruit. Zinfandel adds vivacity, pepper, berries, and bramble. However, this wine's main ingredient of Carignan is probably more of a mystery to you. That's actually appropriate. If and when you ever do get a grasp of this important grape's tendencies you'll probably call them, generally, "mysterious." Carignan is an important variety in Eastern Spain, the South of France, and Sardinia, Italy – but rarely sings a solo in the wines from there. The rare Carignan-based Priorat or Sardegnan red reveal some clues: Mild yet tangy red fruits (grilled strawberries?) tinged with citrus (blood orange? pomegranate?), dusky dry earth, unsweetened cocoa. This mild-mannered red agrees.

JIM'S WHIMS: Some of you will be surprised to learn this is meant to be a \$25 red, and remains so on several different wine retail websites. Your objection might be, "But this isn't a dark wine, a big wine, a strong-in-one-particular-direction wine!!" Your identification of style is correct, but your appraisal remains subjective. The point of this wine is suaveness, not strength. This is no "Founder's Red" from the May club or Malbec from April's. This is elegant, spicy, fragrant, musky, mellow, deceptively flavorful and ultimately pleasing wine that takes its time to impress you. Leave the "wham-bam" to the others. Take your time with this one, and cook for it.

"By the way, what's with the 'Corbières' reference?" Ah, that's a particular Carignan-favoring wine region in the south of France, which Farmstrong somewhat recalls!

12.99/ 11.69 for all wine club members



WINE: 2018 Castelluccio 'Le More'

SOURCE: Romagna, Italy

GRAPES: 100% Sangiovese

ATTITUDE: Slurpylicious

FOOD: Pasta!

PLEASE: Use a smaller glass for bigger effect!

FACTUAL TIDBITS: Until the 1930's, Emilia Romagna was part of Tuscany. This large east-west swath above Tuscany is now its own state, and famous for the likes of Parmesan cheese, Prosciutto di Parma, balsamic vinegar, pasta, and olive oil. This wine is a delicious indication that Tuscany doesn't have exclusive rights to good Sangiovese. In fact, I'd have a hard time finding a Chianti from Tuscany competing with this one at the nice low price point.

JIM'S WHIMS: A good wine label designer knows: We taste first with our eyes. Check out the gorgeous packaging happening here and tell me you're NOT affected! If you're not instantly set up for flowers and berries in your wine, I'll call you a liar! Now do this Castelluccio the favor of not using your biggest red glass. Rather, remember that the smaller, skinnier one we usually employ for bright whites is called the "Sangiovese / Riesling / Zinfandel" stem by its maker Riedel. This less-grandiose setting is better for brighter, higher-acid wines – whether red or white. I'm proving this at my desk right now, with two different glass shapes in play. This wine is actually "bigger" in effect in the smaller bowl.

There's a little more "oomph" of color and body happening here, compared to the effect of bargain Chianti, due to the heavy clay soil of its source. That said, this is still Sangiovese; known for its middleweight size, brightness of cherry fruit, and sassy acidity. Its theme of liveliness works wonders alongside the ponderousness of food, so make sure to "MANGIA"!!

12.99 / 11.69 for all wine club members