

Boise Co-op Uncorked!

BOISE CO-OP WINE SHOP
NEWSLETTER

CORNER OF 8TH & FORT
BOISE, ID 83702

DECEMBER CLUB PICKS

Bobby Rowett on Champagne

Luxury is viewed as elitist, so prices must be kept high

Champagne is more than just one product. It includes the mass-produced "industrial version," made in factories by the big champagne houses, and "grower champagne," which is made by small family producers. The grower champagne offers character, individuality, and the influence of *terroir* that the big boys' blended wines have lost to consistency and image. Allow me to explain...

The big champagne houses are selling you a BRAND, designed for specific, target markets.

What you get in the bottle is much less important than their brand positioning. Big house wines are, therefore, developed according to a model that expects our buying decisions to be motivated by image perception rather than natural qualities such as elegance, varietal character, and the expression of *terroir*. It's no coincidence that two of the largest champagne houses, *Moët & Chandon* and *Veuve Clicquot*, are owned by LVMH—the world's largest luxury goods conglomerate.

An unfortunate consequence of "designer" champagne is that the flavors are also born from market research. Grapes purchased from growers all across the Champagne region are blended together to make a still wine that is as neutral in flavor as possible. The champagne designer then adds a house dosage (a sort-of wine-based liquor) to induce secondary fermentation and give the champagne the desired flavor



and mousse. As a result, the wines taste the same from year-to-year.

When you consider the fact that you can expect to pay a minimum of \$30 for non-vintage and at more than \$100 for premium vintage bottles, it is really no surprise that champagne has become almost exclusively a wine for celebration. Actually, the luxury conglomerates depend on it. Much like money, the worth of big house champagne is based on the *perception* of value, not on the real value.

First we make wine, and then we make it sparkle—Francis Egly

Enter the grower champagne houses. These are wines that are made by the grape growers using their own grapes in their own cellars. That producer selects the best fruit and makes a wine with real personality and distinction. Often, people comment that grower champagne "tastes like wine." This may seem redundant, but it speaks to how much more distinct and flavorful grower champagnes are compared to most of the big house champagne producers. Since nearly 70% of all champagne is produced by four large houses, the small producers offer a chance to see what can be done when only select vineyards are used to create a truly distinct sparkling wine with individuality and elegance in mind.

NOTE: Most of the grower champagne producers put a disgorgement date on the back of the bottle so that you can determine when the bottle was finally corked. This helps you hone your preference to wines that are recently disgorged versus wines with a few years of bottle age. Many of these champagnes improve and gain complexity in the bottle.

The bottom line is that it is easy for growers to beat out big houses on both price and quality. It's quite possible to get a grower champagne, elegant and distinctive, for much less than the more expensive champagne produced by the big houses.

L'ecole "Walla Voila"
Chenin Blanc 2007

Tollo Valle d'Oro Montepulciano
d'Abruzzo 2005

Domaine Thomas-Labaille
Sancerre 2006

Planeta Cerasuolo di Vittoria 2006

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Not Cabernet for Christmas?

by Leil Cardoza

Most of us think of Christmas as Cabernet time. Cabernet's weight and structure make it a great cool weather red, and it pairs well with many winter foods, however there are a number of Bordeaux and other



reds out there that, while they don't bear the words "Cabernet Sauvignon" on the label, work just as well, and are often a fantastic deal.

For starters, there's Washington. Most Idaho wine drinkers have been aware of Washington wines for some time, but for the most part they still don't enjoy the notoriety of California, which can translate into some great values. The

Tamarack Cellars Firehouse Red has been one of my favorite all-around red wines for years. It's a blend of Cab, Syrah, and Merlot, with a bit of Malbec, Cab Franc, Sangiovese, and Carmenere. The actual percentages change from vintage to vintage, depending on what the best grapes the winemaker can get his hands on are, but the quality is always there. The current 2006 is my favorite vintage since the 2003, showing great balance and elegance. The fruit is lush and approachable, and the oaky vanilla-mocha character is well-integrated and not at all overpowering.

In contrast to the Firehouse's very rich, extracted, new-world style, the Delille Cellars D2 and the Nicholas Cole Cellars Camille are both traditionally-styled Bordeaux blends. The Camille is 47% Cab, 38% Merlot, and 15% Cab Franc. We currently have 3 vintages of the D2 available, the varietal breakdown varies from year to year, but is always Merlot-dominant, and always awesome.

Tamarack Firehouse Red 2006 \$18.99

Delille D2 2001, 2003, 2005 \$36 each

Nicholas Cole Camille 2003 \$27

If you don't know what I mean by old-world style, or if you're just looking for a great deal on Bordeaux, try the 2005 Chateau Saint Sulpice or Chateau des Graves. 2005 is one of the most impressive vintages in several decades for Bordeaux, which means two things: the collectible wines from this vintage are going to be particularly valuable and long-lived, and the less expensive wines are going to be outstanding values. This is because, while the prices of high-end Bor-

deaux will rise and fall with the quality of the vintage, the prices of entry-level wines remain fairly constant, so in a vintage like 2005 you can find some really amazing wines for pretty cheap.

Chateau Saint Sulpice 2005 \$13.99

Chateau des Graves 2005 \$15.99

South America is another great place to find outstanding wine values. Between the relatively low cost of labor, land, and other resources, and the relatively unknown status of the wines, most South American wines don't draw the same price tag that wines of equivalent quality from Europe or the U.S. do.

The Amancaya, the Bodegas Norton Privada, and the Montes Alpha "M" have distinguished themselves among their peers, and have set new standards for quality in their respective countries.

Amancaya 2007 \$18.59

Bodegas Norton Privada 2005 \$21.50

Montes Alpha "M" 2004/2005 \$77/\$80

Last but not least, here are two wines with no Cabernet in them at all, but which I'd happily pair with my holiday meals. The Arnaldo Caprai Montefalco Rosso is 70% Sangiovese, 15% Merlot, and 15% Sagrantino. Sagrantino is a grape unique to the Montefalco region of Umbria, which adds delicious earthiness, dark fruit, and complexity to the structured backbone of Sangiovese.

The Pierre Gaillard Saint-Joseph is included because I've been really blown away with this guy's wines lately. The 2005 vintage in the Rhône, like in most of the rest of France, was an exceptional year. This wine, while rich and fairly approachable right now, is an excellent cellar candidate, and will continue to improve for at least 10 years.

Arnaldo-Caprai Montefalco Rosso 2003 \$22.49

***Pierre Gaillard Saint-Joseph
Cote Belley 2005 \$36.50***



Pierre Gaillard in his cellars

Wine Club Selections

R & R Club

2007 L'Ecole "Walla Voila" Chenin Blanc

Vouvray has often been referred to as the "chameleon wine" because it can be dry, off-dry or sweet. Made from 100% Chenin Blanc grapes, this wonderful offering from L'Ecole No. 41 is made in the just off-dry style with a nose of fresh melons and flowers, good acidity and great balance.

As you might already know, L'Ecole is a family-owned Walla-Walla winery that began in 1983. The name L'Ecole is French for schoolhouse, which is what the building that now contains the winery used to be. Any visit to Walla-Walla should include this charming establishment, not only for their premium wines, but for the gracious hospitality and beautiful surroundings. Along with his dedication to high quality and attentive vineyard management, winemaker/owner Marty Clubb has a hands-on wine making approach. These practices include whole cluster pressing for his white wines and small bin fermentation for the reds, resulting in expressive and extremely aromatic wines.

One of the things that I liked most about this Chenin Blanc was the layers and layers of aromas and flavors, along with the prominent hints of stone and mineral. I recently served this wine with crab cakes with lime and cilantro aioli, but it would also work beautifully with seafood or chicken salad, smoked salmon and roast pork. **Leslie*

2005 Tollo Valle d'Oro

Montepulciano d'Abruzzo

Abruzzo is a region that is rediscovering its roots, pushing for quality over quantity. All the elements are there: a dry climate that benefits from the presence of both the mountains and the sea, well-placed clay and limestone vineyards, and winemakers that take pride in hand crafted wines that express the strong Abruzzese personality. The Cantine Tollo cooperative winery is at the core of this appellation, boasting over 40 years of experience. Their Valle d'Oro or "Valley of Gold" is 100 percent Montepulciano from 20-year-old vines aged for 12 months in large Slavonian oak. It offers dusty aromas of raspberry, leather and Bing cherry along with blackberry fruit flavors backed by creamy notes of spice, anise, white pepper and earth. The finish is marked by smooth ripe tannins and a cleansing hit of acidity. Begs to be paired with food. Try savory stews, roast meat or poultry, tomato based pasta, grilled pork or polenta. Any dish centered around mushrooms would also make a great match. **David*

Passport Club

2006 Domaine Thomas-Labaille Sancerre

The import team of Denyse Louis and Joe Dressner have sought out some of the best and most unique wines in Europe. Years ago they happened on Claude Thomas, a Loire vigneron who they met in the field where he was busy pruning his vines. He invited the pair into his cellar, stripping off mud-caked boots to offer them several vintages of his Sancerre. They were impressed with what they tasted, and though Thomas planned to retire soon, he hoped his son-in-law Jean-Paul Labaille, a civil servant who spent his long vacations as assistant winemaker, might take over the reigns. That hope was fulfilled, and under Labaille's management some changes have taken place. The steep slopes of their Monts Damnés plot are still harvested by hand, but the cellar has been tidied up a bit. One thing that has not changed—*terroir* driven wine.

This exquisite white wine truly strikes a balance between full-bodied Pouilly Fume and light-bodied Muscadet, all made with 100% Sauvignon Blanc and hailing from the Loire Valley. The popularity of Sancerre has grown dramatically in the last 10 years or so, and this wine is a perfect example of why. With great acidity and fruit balance, there are aromas of fresh herbs (think basil), green apple and lime. On the palate, I found honeydew melon, pink grapefruit and a touch of freshly cut grass. All in all, a delightful glass of wine! Serve with a variety of cheeses (particularly goat cheese), red snapper, shrimp or braised chicken. **Leslie*

2006 Planeta Cerasuolo di Vittoria

Planeta is not just a single winery, but a series of properties located on the island of Sicily. The original facility, Sambuca di Sicilia, sits on an estate that the Planeta family has owned since the 1600s. Today they are involved in three additional ventures with the Cerasuolo di Vittoria coming from vineyards at the southern tip of Sicily. The 40 plus acres owned by the Dorilli family are planted in Nero d'Avola and Frappato, the latter variety adding fruit and freshness to the more powerful Nero. In 2002 another 50 acres were planted near the traditional family holdings. A newly constructed, completely modern winemaking facility follow shortly thereafter. The result: Cerasuolo di Vittoria was the first, and currently only, wine to obtain DOCG status in Sicily. This red blend sees no oak, and the richly aromatic aromas don't seem to miss it. Unctuous cherry and berry blend nicely with touches of fig, anise and dark chocolate. It is oh-so-smooth and supple in the mouth with creamy berry fruit flavor that are both fresh and charming. Try it with anything Italian, but it should pair especially well with rich cheeses, hearty soups or roasted meats like a rack of lamb. **David*

Calendar of Upcoming Events

- Big Wine and Cheese Sale, *Sunday, December 7* at the Co-op Wine Shop from 12:00 to 6:00 pm
- December Champagne Tasting, *Saturday, December 13* at Café Vicino from 2:00 to 4:00 pm
- January Cabernet Sauvignon Tasting, *Saturday, January 17* at Café Vicino from 2:00 to 4:00 pm



Big Wine & Cheese Sale!!!

It's time for our annual celebration of wine and cheese, a chance for you to taste dozens of samples of both while you save big on your favorites. Here are all the details:

- **When: Sunday, December 7**
- **Wine Tasting from 12 to 6 pm at the Wine Shop**
- **Save 15% off any 6 (or more) regularly priced bottles of wine**
- **Cheese Tasting from 11 am to 3 pm at the Co-op**
- **Save 30% off selected cheeses**
- **We will be donating 3% of our sales that day to Easter Seals / Goodwill**

December 2008



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Wine Shop Hours!

10 am to 8 pm
Monday
through
Saturday

10 am to 6 pm
Sunday

... Champagne con't from page one

Top 5 reasons to drink grower champagne



1. If you've forgotten that champagne is WINE, drink grower champagne.
2. A grower champagne's cost is open and honest, based on production and distribution costs. These wines are not set to fulfill a "price point" that is determined in a corporate marketing plan.
3. It is a better value—you get a better wine for your hard-earned money.
4. It is an honest, REAL wine grown and made by a vintner—by a family just like yours. You are supporting a farmer, whose livelihood depends on his skill and dedication.
5. Being *terroir* driven, grower champagne is expressive, elegant, and pairs wonderfully with a variety of foods. It is suitable for any occasion!

Sparkling wine suggestions for any holiday budget

After several months of laborious tasting we, the Boise Co-op Wine Shop staff, are proud to offer a selection of sparkling wines at the best possible value. Here are a few of my favorites from that selection.

- **Lamberti Vino Spumante Rosé** — With its aromas of flowers and bananas, fresh and fruity flavors, and crisp finish, this Italian sparkler is wonderful paired with poultry and fish. **\$15.99**
- The **2005 L'Hereu Reserva de Raventos I Blanc** was produced by the methode champenoise, unusual for such an inexpensive bubbly. It exhibits an attractive mousse and refreshing crisp acidity on the palate. Balanced, tasty, and with good length, this is a great value in Cava. — 90 Pts. *Wine Advocate* **\$16.99**
- The incredibly complex nose of the non-vintage **Chartogne-Taillet "Sainte-Anne" Brut** shows fresh, vivacious scents of smoke, minerals, pears, almonds, and apples. An expressive, light to medium-bodied Champagne, its lengthy character reveals lemon-laced minerals and apples in a detailed, feminine format. — 90 pts. *Wine Advocate* **\$45.00**
- The **2006 Aubry Rosé Brut Premier Cru** is vibrant and fresh. Pretty floral aromatics introduce peach, raspberry, and yeast flavors on the creamy, round palate. The finish shows impressive contrast with its grapefruit-like acidity. At half the price of many rosé champagnes, this is absolutely among the best values in the shop. **\$54.00**
- **Pierre Peters' 1999 Blanc De Blanc Grand Cru** shows jasmine, nectarine and white peach aromas with a nuance of honey. Fresh pit fruit, pear and impressively delineated citrus flavors carry through the elegant finish. Plenty of deep flavor here but there's excellent clarity and cut too. —91pts. *Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar* **\$68.00**