



# RED & WHITE WINE CLUB



## **A Cote Chardonnay**

Santa Barbara Co. 2008 \$24.99

## **A Cote Syrah**

Santa Barbara Co. 2007 \$24.99

This summer, while I was avoiding the thousands of phone calls from all the starving wine sales folk trying to get placements in the Garage Wine Club, I did have to take a phone call from Lara, the rep from a winery that I had to unfortunately cancel an order at the last minute for a past club. I felt badly to have to that to her and told her so, but she had already moved on to another distributor and would I like to meet the winemaker from an amazing producer from Santa Barbara. "How much are his wines?" (they were all well over \$25/btl) "Then, no. I'm busy". I really don't waste time tasting wines that I can't buy for the store these days. "No, you should meet with us, I think he will deal". So Joshua Klapper and Lara waltzed on in the store with 8 wines in tow and we popped some corks. Josh got his wine knowledge, first from waiting tables in 4 star restaurants like Daniel Boulud in New York, then from developing wine lists for Sona restaurant in L.A. which soon landed the Wine Spectator Grand Award for his work as the Wine Director. He was hooked by vino. He slaved away working harvest in Santa Maria for 3 years at Qupe and Au Bon Climat, then later worked in the cellar and was mentored by Jim Clendenen and Bob Linquist, two amazing winemakers. So it was inevitable that he started his own label, and thus, I present these wines to you. The Chardonnay is truly made in the French style with an emphasis on minerality and bright acidity, not oak and butter. Central Coast Chards usually have a lemon-lime characteristic and this wine does so as well, but is much more complex due to the fact that Josh used 3 different vineyard sources for the fruit to produce this regional cuvee including the famous Bien Nacido Vineyard. You won't believe this after tasting this wine but it actually was fermented entirely in 100% neutral oak barrels and forced through secondary malolactic fermentation. Was a surprise to me, for sure. Slight meyer lemon aroma on the nose coupled with crème brulee – almost a lemon-curd crème brulee, if there is such a thing. Very bright and lively on the palate, with delicious mineral and vibrant acidity. Honeysuckle, acacia flowers, and roasted cashews finish off the mid-palate leading to an intense mineral and crisp, clean ending. I would pair this wine with rich seafood dishes or gooey triple cream cheeses.

The Syrah is made from mountain fruit from the Santa Barbara Highlands Vineyard. Very dark in color and extremely extracted and concentrated. This is a very masculine wine with aromas of roasted meat encapsulated in dried herbs and crushed black peppercorn. Wet stone, black pepper, bacon fat, and lavender explode on the palate then a finish of espresso bean and tar with nice acidity to bring all the components together. I would serve this wine with a leg of lamb roasted with an herb crust.

## **Phoenix Ranch Viognier**

Napa Valley 2007 \$21.99

I met Richard Phoenix at Ehren Jordan's 40th birthday party a few years back. Richard and Ehren go way back to when they first arrived in the Valley, Ehren working at the Joseph Phelps tasting room and Richard selling wine for a distributor. Ehren (winemaker for Turley and his own label Failla) started buying Syrah and Viognier from the Phoenix family in 2001 and has taken all the fruit ever since. They first planted the Viognier to co-ferment a little with the Syrah as they do in the northern Rhone region of France to stabilize the color and add aromatics. By 2006 the measly acre of vines was in full production and they had enough fruit to produce it as a single varietal. This wine was hand harvested and whole cluster pressed then fermented in stainless tanks on its lees for ten months. Very pretty nose of jasmine and apricots, with white peach, nectarine, kiwi, and tropical fruit in the mouth. Weighty, on the palate but with a distinct raciness of acidity on the finish. This is the perfect wine with a California Roll or other sushi dishes - especially Hamachi sashimi.

## **Banyan Gewurztraminer**

Monterey County 2009 \$12.99

Banyan Wines was started by father/son team of Somchai and Kenny Likitprakong producing appellation specific white wines that are made from organic or sustainable grapes that pair well with Asian cuisine. This wine was selected by me to present to you as the perfect white wine that will pair well with your Thanksgiving meal of turkey and all the trimmings. The grapes come from a region in Monterey County that has very cool micro-climates where wind, fog, and cool temperatures predominate year round. It hardly ever gets above 80 degrees in the summer there – an ideal spot for this intensely aromatic wine. There was a very long growing season in 2009 and the yield was down to 2 tons an acre due to a bad flower set in the spring. This made particularly flavorful grapes that year and this is a very flavorful wine. Gewurtz in German means "spicy" and the spicy aromas of herbs and baking spice really shine from the glass. Lychee, rose petal, and passion fruit waft up from the glass and on the palate as well. Sometimes made in a very sweet style, this wine has just a hint of sugar (1.1%) – just enough to blend all the exotic flavors together. This wine is perfect with roasted turkey and herbed dressing, spicy Thai, Indian, or other Asian cuisines.



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## **The Guardian Cabernet Sauvignon**

Sonoma County 2008 \$19.99

his wine is also made by Kenny Likitprakong under his Hobo Wine Company umbrella of labels. You folks enjoyed the Guardian Chardonnay last Spring, this is the first Guardian red wine made that made the club. Amazing quality at an even more amazing price. The Cab fruit was sourced from Alexander Valley and made up 93% of the blend – the remaining 7% is Merlot from the Russian River Valley AVA. This wine was made to be approachable at a young age, but still very full bodied, concentrated, and with firm tannins. The nose is of freshly picked blackberries, plums, leather, and a hint of smoke. This dark wine tastes very full bodied with tobacco, blackberry, cedar, and black pepper. The tannins are evident on the long rich finish that reminds me of chocolate covered espresso bean. This wine need a hearty pork roast or grilled rib eye steak.

## **JS Hofherr Pinot Noir**

Napa Valley 2005 \$14.99

This is one of the greatest deals EVER secured for a wine club wine. Being a wine merchant in Calistoga has advantages – I see deals that sometimes don't even leave the town, let alone the Valley, let alone California. Jim Hofherr is a second generation winemaker and worked with August Briggs making Pinot. A few years ago he started up a mobile bottling line business in Napa Valley that took off in a big way. I say this from experience.... It is expensive for us small vintners, and when mistakes are made when you are paying big bucks bottling your juice, you learn to appreciate the dudes who don't (or rarely) make mistakes. Jim doesn't make mistakes. After a while Jim was making more money running his line then making wine and he gave up on the label. Look at this bottle: gold leaf, etched glass. Napa Valley (Carneros) Pinot Noir, 5 years old – about to peak – that tastes delicious for FIFTEEN BUCKS? Unbelievable deal. This wine is delicious with a very unique nose of hickory smoked bacon, molasses, and strawberry rhubarb pie. More smokiness on the palate with saddle leather, cigar box, strawberries, currants, and pomegranate. The finish is of sweet oak and berry pie. This is another great wine to serve at Thanksgiving, perfect with a glazed ham or roasted turkey.