



RED & WHITE WINE CLUB



Kasuari Sauvignon Blanc

Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma 2008 \$19.99

I first met Michael Peters when he worked for Barrel Makers, a Cooperage just down the street from the store in Calistoga. I had no idea that Michael was also a winemaker, and in fact he also has extensive experience in the vineyard as well since he comes from four previous generations of grape farmers. This dude is a self proclaimed "Terroir Junkie", since he only makes single vineyard designated wines with very little human interaction and influences. For instance, he only uses native yeast fermentation and never fines or filters his wines prior to bottling. Thus, he produces wines that have the truest expression of the vineyard. He believes that lab yeasts cover up the natural beauty of the vineyard and that they hide the terroir. He uses whole berry clusters during fermentation and feels that the whole berries really capture the fruit intensities. Michael learned how to make wine from some of the elite winemakers such as Philippe Melka (Hundred Acre, Bryant Family), Thomas Brown (Schrader Cellars), and Pax Mahle (Pax, Wind Gap). These dudes are perhaps three of the top winemakers on the planet. This is a very unique Sauvignon Blanc. Unlike 97% of all Sauvignon Blanc that I have tasted that are fermented in stainless steel and are prevented from undergoing malolactic fermentation, this wine is 100% barrel fermented in 40% new French oak and partially allowed to pass through malolactic fermentation. This wine is made with only natural yeast, is unfiltered, and sits on the yeast (sur lie) for five months. This produces a Sauv Blanc that is rich and chewy yet still has a crispness and stunning minerality on the finish. Think of key lime pie, lemon meringue, peach chutney, and a slightly under ripe nectarine. Michael affectionately calls this wine, The Dirty Blonde since it is slightly cloudy in the glass since it wasn't filtered prior to bottling. Serve this wine with cracked crab, grilled shrimp, or pasta with a rich cream sauce. You won't be disappointed.

Soleau Viognier

Sierra Foothills 2008 \$9.99

I first met Robert Morse while on a buying trip in Amador County the first year we were in business. This is the second label of Robert's Il Gioello winery. Robert is an executive in the semiconductor industry in Silicon Valley and bought 80 acres of land in Amador County, 20 acres of which are planted to vineyard. The land sits at 2300 feet elevation, and it produces some of the best Rhone varietals in the Sierra foothills. David French is the winemaker and vineyard manager. This wine is a staff favorite at the Wine Garage and is the least expensive wine currently on the shelf. Viognier is the backbone of Rhône white varietals and is characteristically very aromatic on the nose and rich on the palate. This wine is extremely aromatic with stone fruit aromas such as peach, nectarine, and apricot. I also get a hint of blooming jasmine flowers. On the palate, peaches and apricot dominate the flavors.

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Very rich mouth feel coupled with a hint of tropical fruit make this a truly delicious wine. Bright mineral acidity leads to a crisp and clean finish. I love this wine as an Aperitif served with cheese, in particular in pairs divinely with Morbier served with chopped hazelnuts sprinkled on top with a drizzle of honey. This varietal is also my number one choice to serve with sushi, in particular, yellowtail tuna.

Carreon Pinot Grigio

Mendocino 2009 \$14.99

They call it Pinot Grigio in Italy and Pinot Gris in France, both are same grape. This wine would be better served to be called Pinot Gris because in France the best wine made from this varietal is done in the cooler regions, particularly in Alsace. This wine comes from Mendocino County, the most northern wine growing region in California, and one of the coolest. Italian Pinot Grigio, to me at least, tastes rather watery with very little flavor. However, when this varietal is grown in the cooler regions it has similar characteristics to Riesling. This wine has a very similar nose to Riesling, some wine writers call the aroma "Diesel". It doesn't sound appetizing, I realize, but we wine people have to put some sort of name on a distinctive characteristic. This wine is made by Nancy Walker, a pillar in the Mendocino County wine scene since 1984 when she worked as an assistant winemaker at Clos Du Bois. Nancy was appointed as the founding winemaker of Brutocao Cellars in 1991. In 1998 she joined winemaking staff at Fetzer Vineyards until 2005 then started the winemaking duties at Winery Exchange, a huge beverage company that made wines from California, Oregon, and Washington states. Her own brand, Stephen and Walker, is based in Healdsburg where she makes some pretty amazing (and pricey) offerings from Zinfandel to Pinot Noir. Nancy spends most of her time consulting with smaller brands such as Ancient Block and Carreon. This wine definitely has the Riesling nose with hints of papaya, lemon peel, and dried flowers. I get more tropical fruits on the palate with a hint of sweetness like a very ripe nectarine. It's rich yet still crisp on the finish with nice acidity. This would be a great wine to serve with your Thanksgiving dinner.

Black Kite Cellars Pinot Noir

Anderson Valley 2008 \$24.99

This is a very special offering to our wine club members. Black Kite has been the talk of the Pinot Noir world since their very first release and has quickly been classified as the new "Cult" Pinot Noir to collect. They've been getting amazing scores in the wine press since day one including being chosen as one of the top 100 wines from the San Francisco Chronicle. Made by Jeff Gaffner, who also makes Saxon-Brown wines and got his start Château St. Jean Winery in Sonoma County.

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He was the winemaker who made the famous 1996 “Cinq Cepage” wine that was named “Wine of the Year” by the Wine Spectator. I remember when that issue came out and Safeway supermarket actually had the wine on its shelf for like 25 bucks. It quickly disappeared and they were limiting the wine to only one bottle per person at the winery. This project got its start when Donald and Maureen Green purchased the property in 1995. Donald was one of the people that created the so-called “Telecom Valley” in Santa Rosa back in the early 1990s. It was a high-tech boom town back then - now it’s a ghost town. Black Kite are single vineyard designate Pinot Noirs in Anderson Valley in Mendocino County. The label is named after the Black Shouldered Kite that finds its home in Anderson Valley, and is actually a white bird with splashes of black on its wings. The vineyard is situated close to the ocean and receives very cool breezes and lots of fog but this vineyard sits above the fog layer and gets access to brilliant sunshine. It’s the perfect place to grow Pinot Noir which does particularly well and cool climate vineyards. This wine usually cost much more than \$25, unless of course you are a member of the Wine Garage wine club. Made from several different blocks from this amazing vineyard, this Pinot Noir was hand-picked in the very early morning and only the best clusters were used. The grapes were cold soaked for three days, then inoculated with Burgundian yeast strains and fermented in small open top stainless steel tanks then, after 14 days they were transferred to 100% new French oak barrels. The wine was aged in barrel for 11 months. This yummy Pinot is very masculine, full-bodied, and deeply flavored. A rich silky mouth feel on the palate yields baking spice, mocha, tobacco, and toasty oak. Very dark in the glass, the nose provides leather, smoke, and blueberry jam. The finish is very extended with flavors of chocolate covered blackberries and black tea. Serve this wine with boldly flavored roasted lamb or barbecued baby back spareribs.

Treasure Hunter Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2005 \$19.99

The winemaker is none other than the famous Michael Loykasek, who was named in 2007 as the “Winemaker of the Year” by the Sonoma County Harvest Fair, when he won the prestigious “Best of Show” for his 2005 Zinfandel. Michael and I go way back to the early days of the Garage when he used to stop by and we would throw back a glass or two of wine and shoot the breeze. Mike has this cowboy thing going on and I’ve never seen him do not wear cowboy boots or drive a truck. A graduate of UC Davis in 1983, he spent the first five years of his winemaking career down in Paso Robles way, then he moseyed on yonder up to Sonoma County where he was the head winemaker of Meeker Vineyards in Dry Creek Valley. Seven years later he moved on over to Armida Winery where he became famous for his “PoiZin” bottlings. It was when he was making wine at Armida he decided to start his own label, Dark Horse. Mike also makes wine for De La Montanya winery and Hauck Cellars.

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The Treasure Hunter label is a new project that was spawned during this current economic crisis in the wine industry, where he seeks out quality bulk wine that was surrendered by wineries in crisis, and he only purchases the treasures that are out on the bulk market. One day when Mike was driving past a store he stopped in and over a glass or two of wine I convinced him that some of my very favorite wines in the store were these crazy blends. We started pulling corks on several different varietals and started making our own blends at the tasting bar. The result of that fateful Sunday afternoon of wine drinking is his very popular “Gun Fighter” label which is a blend of Zinfandel and Syrah. This Cabernet is from a very exclusive winery in Napa whose name must remain silent due to confidentiality agreements signed between both parties. I know where it came from, but I’m sworn to secrecy. I will tell you that this wine was earmarked to sell in excess of \$60 per bottle. You get to pay only \$20. This is from a vineyard high on the ridge top’s looking down at Napa Valley. The finest French barrels were utilized during fermentation. This Cabernet has the classic Napa Valley characteristics of Blackberry, leather, cedar, and vanilla on the nose. On the palate I get more Blackberry, currants, black olive, mocha, and earth. This is a very full-bodied Cabernet with a long lush finish. As Mike says on his website this should be served with MEAT.

Hill Family “Barrel Blend” Napa Valley 2006 \$21.99

Doug Hill is a fourth-generation farmer at California. He studied viticulture at Fresno State University in the 70s then moved to Napa where he started to acquire sites for high-quality vineyards. The Hill Estate vineyards are near Eller’s Lane here in St. Helena. Doug has been selling grapes to some of the most exclusive wineries in Napa Valley including the first hillside fruit sold to Silver Oak winery in 1991, Merlot to Duckhorn Vineyards, and Cabernet to Quintessa. The Hill Family Barrel Blend is a combination of mountain Cabernet from Soda Canyon and valley floor Merlot and Cabernet from their estate Vineyard. This wine was put together with the help of Kyle Knox, a great surfer from Southern California who was also an expert wine drinker. He loved the idea of “being in the barrel” as both a wine term and a surfing term. This wine is blended to appeal to surfers, and surfers in spirit, who are always looking for that next great wave, but might want to have a glass of wine during their wait. This is a big, gnarly glass of juice, topping out at 15.6% alcohol. Aged for two years in 30% new French oak this wine is a blend of 63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Merlot, and 5% Syrah. Big and chewy on the palate yet with unmistakable Napa Valley elegance. Super dark in the glass with the lush mouth feel, this wine has an aroma of ripe blackberries and toasty oak. Vanilla spice, earthy blackberry, Desert Sage, and black peppercorn are detected in the first few sips, then the wine opens up to black cherry compote drizzled over the vanilla ice cream. The finish has a hint of chocolate and melting tannins that seem to last forever. This is a great wine to serve with grilled rib eye steak.