



# RED & WHITE WINE CLUB

## **Alysa Red Rhone Blend**

California \$13.99

Ok, this wine may well be the best \$14 wine we have ever sold (actually as members you are paying \$12.60). Made by Kenny Likitprakong, who sports a whole host of labels under his brand – Hobo, Banyan, Guardian, and Folk Machine. This wine was a joint project between Kenny and some of his Mid-West wine distributors. They put up the dough, Kenny made the juice. I practically begged him to let me buy enough for the Club. The wine is a blend of Syrah, Grenache, Carignane, and a splash of Viognier. One of the reasons this wine is so darn good are the vineyards where Kenny sourced the fruit. The Syrah and Viognier is from the Central Valley and grown organically by Paul Wulf, making up 51% of the blend. The Grenache (37%) is from Billy Crawford in Mendocino, the owner of the oldest Grenache plantings in California. This block is over 40 years old and expensive, I know since I tried to buy fruit from Billy personally. Also, there is Grenache from Eaglepoint Ranch up the road and one of the most famous Mendocino vineyards growing Rhone varietals. The Carignane is also from old vines in Mendocino grown by Greg Lolonis in the Redwood Valley in Mendocino County. Wow, what a line up. Wow, what a bottle of wine. A sweet perfume of freshly picked strawberries, black cherry, and dried flowers on the nose. Cola, thyme, roasted meat, and tobacco lead into gushes of bright fruit. A smooth rich finish ends with strawberry, earth, and candied plums. Delicious dealio. Serve with cheese, Grilled Salmon or roasted Chicken.

## **Wine Garage Cabernet Sauvignon**

Napa Valley 2007 \$19.99

Having a retail store has its advantages in the winemaking business. I have a lot of contacts after nearly 5 years in the retail business – and some of those contacts grow grapes. Julie Nord runs her family's vineyard management business and they also make and sell wine, Nord Family Estate. I casually mentioned to her that I was looking for some Cabernet grapes and she pointed me to a vineyard in Yountville that they farmed. She warned me that the vineyard had "leaf roll" – a disease in the vines that prevents the fruit from ripening. I told her that Massimo and I would check it out. The day we were to walk the vineyard, Marcello Monticelli, Massimo's dad and Director of Winemaking Operations at Gallo (the largest winery in the world) was over for a visit and came with us. Not too shabby of a consultant, no? For free, too. So we walked and walked and damn if we didn't see ANY leaves rolling. The vineyard looked beautiful. Marcello and Massimo said: BUY! This was clone 877 on St. George rootstock – one of my favorite Cab clones. I spoke to Julie and said we didn't really see much leaf roll. She told me they were very proactive on the issue and were pulling out anything that looked suspicious and re-planting immediately. Well, she wasn't kidding. The fruit turned out gorgeous and we picked at 24 ½ brix the day before a storm was to arrive.

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We crushed on September 21 (the autumnal equinox – how cool is that!). The wine has great color; Dark ruby, with a floral nose of dried flowers. The fruit practically explodes on the palate with blackberry, black currant, blueberry and plum jam. Highly structured with well developed tannins, we used 50% new French oak that provides a rich, creamy mouth feel and a toasty and smoky vanilla oak component. The finish gives you a tobacco-like earthiness followed by saddle leather, incense cedar, black pepper, and chocolate dusted truffle (a hint of what is called "Rutherford Dust" - the vineyard sits practically on the border of Rutherford and Yountville). Serve with a big juicy hamburger.

## **Jus Soli Sauvignon Blanc**

Dry Creek Valley 2008 \$12.99

Tom Garret makes the wine. He used to have one of the best jobs in the wine industry as the tasting coordinator for The Wine Spectator. I just can't imagine how many wines he had tasted doing that job, it must have numbered in the thousands. What a great way to develop a palate as a winemaker, no? Tom then went to work at Turley in the cellar under Ehren Jordan, started his family's wine label, Detert Family Vineyards, which sells for \$85 per bottle. His day job is the assistant to Heidi Peterson Barrett at Revana Estate. Heidi was the winemaker who put Screaming Eagle on the map and is one of probably the top three cult winemakers in the Valley. She is consulting winemaker at Revana (as well as many other "cult" wines), and Revana just was named in the top 5 of the "100 Best Wines of the World" by the Wine Spectator. So, I would say he has got a rather decent pedigree as a winemaker, no? This Sauv Blanc scored Double Gold at the San Francisco International Wine Competition last year, sold for \$20, and is super yummy. Of course, you got a screaming deal as members of the best Wine Club in the World. This is a very solid, well structured SB. Beautiful straw color in glass, aromas of lemongrass, grapefruit, and kiwi. Bright mineral, meyer lemon, pomelo, and quince on the palate. Lush mouthfeel, with a crisp and clean, zingy finish. Have with oysters on the half shell, crab, or sushi.

## **Monticello Vineyards "Presidential"**

### **Chardonnay**

Napa 2009 \$21.99

Established by Jay Corley in 1969, this is truly a small family winery. The three sons all run the show now; Chris is the winemaker, Kevin is vineyard manager, and Stephen is the sales dude. The estate is situated in the Oak knoll district just north of the town of Napa on Big Ranch Road. They farm vineyards in Rutherford, St Helena, and Oak Knoll. The name comes from the original Monticello – Thomas Jefferson's crib in Virginia –

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due to the fact that Jay wanted to honor the most famous Virginian since he was a wine lover, amazing farmer, and the Corley family set down roots in the same state even before Jefferson ever arrived in Virginia – 1640, to be exact. The Corley family has been in the farming business continually for 360 years here in the United States – err, actually, even when it was still part of Great Britain. My family, the famous Miller Clan of Eastern Pennsylvania, were British subjects too, arriving here in 1703. Although, they spent most of their time underground – in coal mines – whacking out coal to keep the homes warm for the likes of Jefferson and such. I actually had relatives that fought on both sides of the Civil War, being so close to the Mason-Dixon Line and all, but I doubt seriously that my family ever owned slaves (thank god). They just liked to fight.

Spanish-American War, Mexican-American War, World War I, World War II (my father, purple heart, Marines – in hospital for over a year in San Francisco, two blocks from where I lived much later in SF), Vietnam (my cousin, purple heart, Navy Cross, Marines). We must have taken vacation during the Korean War. My daughter was the first ever Miller to be born outside of Pennsylvania for almost three hundred years (San Francisco, 9-11-2001, and what a day THAT was). There could have been other relatives of mine that served in Foreign Wars that I don't know about yet. I recently discovered that my paternal Grandmother died in child birth (my father's birth) and that fact was hidden from the family since she was not married to my grandfather (I am the son of a bastard, how cool. That is why I am so ornery). His second wife, my father's step mother, was always thought of as his mother – my Grandma.

I decided to track down that side of the family last fall as a fun project with my daughter, Emma. We searched the internet and found my grandmother's brother was a principal of a high school – went to that high school website, talked to the superintendent, he researched past principals and had a teacher do a project with his class to find our lost family.... and bingo, my grandmother's brother's son is still alive in Harrisburg, PA. (I guess my second cousin). And we are soon to see a photo of my actual grandmother, Ellsie Rudisill (d.1926).

Ok, sorry. Back to wine. This Chardonnay is really yummy. 100% Chard from the estate in Oak Knoll. Partial malolactic barrel fermented. Aromas of Asian pear, honeysuckle, and caramel. Green apple, butterscotch, and macadamia nut on the palate. Crisp and clean finish. Serve with a President, or other War Hero...

## **Murphy Vineyards Late Harvest Sauvignon Blanc**

Sierra Foothills 2008 \$20.99

This wine was from a vineyard near Auburn, in the foothills of the Sierra Mountains. Peter Murphy, an old friend and bocce rival, selected special portions of this vineyard to create a late harvest wine in the "beerenauslaiser" style of the Rhine in Germany. The harvest of 2008 had little rain late in the season which allowed this magical wine to be born. A small specialized crew descended on the vineyard to select only clusters that had no bunch rot or sunburn. The grapes were almost raisins, concentrating all the sugars. True raisins, rot, and shot berries were removed - by hand - from the clusters, sometimes only partial bunches made it to the crusher. Only three tons were picked that very long day – 75 cases worth. A long fermentation ensued, keeping the temperature at only 40 degrees (Cab ferments at 80 degrees in 2-3 weeks) for months and months. The result is unbelievable... honey, jasmine, elderberry, vanilla on the nose of this richly honey-colored nectar. Rich velvet liquid slides down your palate revealing hints of honeycomb, crème Brule, toasted hazelnut, lemon curd, and caramel. Long rich finish has nice acid to close the door - so you can ask for another glass. Serve with cheese and walnuts after dinner, or foie gras as a starter, or nothing. Enjoy.

## **Murphy Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon**

Napa 2005 \$24.99

Peter Murphy was introduced to me by my Mother – of all people. She used to buy her yarn from Peter's wife, who had a yarn shop on Main Street in St. Helena. My Mom is a knitter (more like "knitting addict") – in fact I am wearing a pair of hand-made socks knit by Mom this very second (I have close to 30 pairs). Peter is mainly a vineyard manager, farming many different vineyards from Napa to Sonoma to Amador. This Cab was hand selected by Peter from one of his clients' vineyards off of James Creek Road in the Aetna Springs area of Pope Valley. He blended in 14% Merlot and 6% Cab Franc from some other client's vineyards to make this delicious Cab. Medium in body, but extremely flavorful, I get cassis, black olive, almond, and licorice on the nose with a bump of cherry cordial, blackberry, chocolate covered almond, and earth on the palate. Cigar box, peppercorn, and leather lead into the finish with medium tannin. Perfect with Prime Rib or Crown Roast of Pork.