



ALL RED FEBRUARY WINE CLUB

Felta Creek Vineyard Merlot

Sonoma 2009 \$24.99

This is a second label from De La Montanya Winery outside of Healdsburg straddling the Dry Creek and Russian River Valleys. Old school California farming family that amassed a hefty chunk of vineyard in 4 different North Coast AVA's, the youngest generation, Dennis and his wife Tina launched the winemaking component in '95 and opened the winery in 2003. They hired my old buddy and raconteur Mike Loykasek as the original winemaker, but he just consults these days for them, busy with his Dark Horse and Gunslinger labels. Interestingly,

Felta Creek – the actual creek, is undergoing watershed restoration to protect the Steelhead and Coho Salmon runs in cooperation with Fish Friendly Farming, an organization that assists vineyards in proper sustainable farming and vineyard practices to protect the riparian corridors. For instance, the Felta Creek project is concerned with removing the non-native plants along the corridor, primarily the blue periwinkle and Himalayan Blackberry that essentially kill off the native trees that protect the banks from collapsing into the creek and creating silt problems as well as destroying shady holding areas for baby steelhead trout. This is all funded by the State of California and as a witness (referring to my story about seeing Salmon in Calistoga) – it is working.

This Merlot is a very full bodied wine which Cab lovers will enjoy. Dark in the glass with aromas of huckleberry, vanilla, and black pepper. The palate shows more fruit with a creamy, velvety texture. Blueberry, plum, and currant flavors lead into tobacco, earth, and black pepper. The finish is long with pronounced yet balanced tannin. Serve with a big Strip Steak cooked on the grill.

Sonoma Mission Winery Merlot

Napa Valley 2004 \$13.99

Don't be alarmed at the price of this wine, it is really, really delicious and will be, perhaps, the best \$14 Merlot you EVER drink (actually with your club discount, \$12.60). I won't tell you the REAL name of the winery that made this wine because there were mistakes made in the marketing ideas for it and I don't want to embarrass anyone. Nobody is perfect, especially not me, but there is some common sense needed when selling wine. Like, why name a wine from Napa Valley, a brand unsurpassed in California for quality Bordeaux style wine – "SONOMA" MISSION? Mission? Mission grapes were one of the first varieties planted in California and produce HORRIFIC wine. Bad label, screw cap, yada yada. The dude responsible HAD to be fired for this thing. Wine is really good though. A Cabernet lover's Merlot, big and full bodied, a monster in fact.

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This wine is nearly 10 years old and still fresh as a daisy. A bit hot on the nose at first, then it opens up to aromas of black fruits and roasted herbs. Some coffee and black pepper on the front palate, followed by blackberry, earth, baking spices, white pepper, and a hit of blueberry on the finish. Soft tannin. Come on, this wine would make ANY hamburger taste mighty good. Buy a case at 20% off, but hurry.

Kasuari Cabernet Sauvignon

Napa Valley 2006 \$24.99

Kasuari Pinot Noir

Sonoma Coast 2009 \$19.99

I have been buying wine from Michael Peters for many years now for the store and he always interesting vintages that showcase the terroirs of the vineyards he sources his fruit from. His day job is selling barrels – although he used to make them as well. He gets to know almost everyone in the wine business because every winery needs to buy barrels. So he comes up with some great fruit for his label. The Cabernet comes from the Parody Vineyard – a rocky hillside site that yields a miniscule 2 tons per acre. That means flavor, folks.

Handpicked and sorted in the vineyard, the grapes from the 06 vintage are subtle with soft tannin, yet bold fruit stands out on the palate with lush richness and deep colors. Michael used 50% new French Oak which contributes some of the creamy vanilla flavors of this rich and delicious wine. Very dark in color, a perfume of cassis liqueur rose petal, and roasted herbs lead into ripe flavors of boysenberry, plum, currants, and cherry. The mid palate contributes chocolate and coffee notes, then a lush, soft, lingering finish. Nice wine to serve with Lamb or Duck dishes.

The Pinot comes from Michael's family vineyard in Sonoma. Five generations of the Peters family have been farming in the County. Pommard Clone vines, new French oak, and a delicate hand in the vineyard all scream quality for this bottle – maybe why he HAND dips each and every bottle in wax, showcasing the quality to the last detail. This is a big and rich fruit bomb style Pinot with gobs of strawberry jam, blackberry, black cherry compote, delicate rose petal, and violets. Mid palate contributes some loamy earth and tobacco notes leading into a long rich finish with soft tannin. This wine was delicious with a cedar planked Salmon filet grilled on the Weber.

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Il Gioello Zinfandel

Amador County 2009 \$18.99

This is a first. I secured this wine for my wine club before the wine was released to the producing winery's wine club. Shows you what a good dude Robert Morse is. We met in the early days of the Garage by stumbling onto his winery in the Sierra Foothills one very cold and dreary day with the entire staff in tow. He had just opened the winery and really didn't have any wine to sell me at that point but we stayed in contact with each other over the years and we have had a good working relationship every since. I played golf once with he and his girlfriend at Blackhawk in Danville where he makes his permanent home, and his girlfriend kicked both our asses on the links (we drank more than her). Robert was an executive with Cypress Semiconductor and just made the fateful leap into the wine biz fulltime. God bless him. Way back when we first met, I was really scratching my head on why he named his winery a name that no-one could pronounce – it's a cool story though, being the name of the Villa in Tuscany where Galileo was kept in confinement by the Church when he pronounced that the Earth rotates around the Sun, not the other way around. It translates to: "The Jewel". And boy, his 80 acres up in those hills are like a diamond in the rough. What pretty country. Well, he FINALLY took my advice and now all his wines going forward will have the "Morse Wines" on the label, website too. This Zin is yummy with oodles of juicy fruit, concentrated and structured just right so it goes well with food at a fine restaurant or from the back of the golf cart in a paper cup with a hot dog at the turn. The front palate displays red fruit characteristics like cherry, raspberry, and pomegranate, while the mid brings on the dark fruit coupled with some tobacco, briar, and spicy black pepper. The finish is both round and fat, yet contained, with bright acidity and tannins. Good job Robert! This wine is perfect with the Braised Rabbit with Tagliatelle served at Tra Vigne in St. Helena... or hot dogs, or breakfast....

Eno Wines "A7" Rhone Blend

NV California

This winery was introduced to me by John Matthew Green, my right hand man at the Garage. He somehow knows Sasha Verhage, the winemaker and proprietor of Eno, and we have had his delicious Grenache in the Club last year. Sashas' day job is Design Lead at Google and he makes the wine in a warehouse in Berkeley. The "A7" refers to the Highway connecting the southern and northern portions of the Rhone Valley. This is a blend of Sarah, Grenache, and Mourvedre. John and I both looked at one another exactly at the same time while tasting this jammy fruit bomb – wow! Dark and brooding, extracted and concentrated, lush and rich. Sweet fruit aromas on the nose, with sweet fresh crushed blueberry on first sip. The second one, however, draws forth pepper, mineral, licorice, and tobacco. The finish combines both sweet fruit and structured minerals together with mild tannin. Cool wine. Can you say Cassoulet? (French casserole of beans, sausages, and other meats – very rustic and delish).