



Merry Monks

Wine Club of Cantiga Wineworks



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Spring Wines and Eating Seasonally (Part 3)

The benefits of eating seasonally have long been known. As we know, vegetables and fruits picked locally when they are ripe have more nutrients and flavor than those transported from distant locations. Additionally, buying produce that doesn't need to be trucked in from afar is generally less expensive, easier on the environment, and supportive of smaller, local farmers.

Spring is abundant with fresh, tender crops in most areas. In California, we are somewhat spoiled in that we are able to grow such an abundance of vegetables during most months; but more locally, May brings the excitement of fresh picked strawberries as sweet as candy, tender asparagus and spring greens, forest-foraged morel mushrooms, and the first tender and sweet summer squash, to name a few. We belong to a local CSA, and when spring rolls around, it feels a little like Christmas each time we pick up our weekly box!

Incorporating seasonal treats into our menus adds a rich dimension to our wine pairings. With some basic rules of thumb, it is fairly easy to find ingredient combinations that complement a specific wine. The wines we have chosen for this shipment work very well with spring menus, and we offer some seasonal pairing suggestions, below. Let's celebrate all that is good in life!

2015 Grenache, Estate (Club pre-release)

Harvest Brix: 25.7 pH: 3.9 TA: 5.29 Alc: 15.1% RS: 0.0% ML: 0%
Cases produced: 179 Barrel age: 15 months in mostly neutral European oak

Our Grenache is a dry, Spanish-style red wine with abundant strawberry characteristics. Its relatively light body and fresh fruit quality makes it a perfect warm weather wine, and it is great with lighter fare such as Spanish tapas (small plates) and Mexican dishes. Are strawberries in season near you? Play off the strawberry characteristics in Grenache by accompanying it with a tapa of crostini or sliced baguette topped with thinly sliced strips of jamón Serrano (prosciutto works too), thinly sliced strawberries and fresh thyme. When tomato season rolls around, you can use fresh ripe tomato slices instead of strawberries. Additionally, consider adding sliced strawberries lightly marinated in olive oil, balsamic and paprika to your green salads. Add some crumbled goat's cheese to offset the sweetness.

2013 Syrah, El Dorado (Club pre-release)

Harvest Brix: 25.2 pH: 3.9 TA: 5.52 Alc: 14.6% RS: 0% ML: 0%
Cases produced: 205 Barrel age: 3 years in mostly neutral European oak

In our long history of making Syrah, this is one of the most unique vintages we have seen. Rather than the intense tannins and concentrated fruit of our typical Syrah wines, this one is delicate, subtle and lighter, more reminiscent of a French wine. It was made with grapes from two Fair Play vineyards, Saluti & Sierra Oaks, and exhibits some Australian-clone Shiraz characteristics. Jim Brown, former owner of Sierra Oaks, suspected that some of his Syrah might actually come from Australia, which would explain it! This wine is very smooth and approachable, making it a great warm-weather wine to sip on your patio and pair with lighter fare. As summer squash come into season, consider kabobs with this wine. On small skewers, alternate cubes of pork, lamb or chicken with rounds of zucchini and/or crookneck squash. Before

skewering, toss both meat and veggies in olive oil, garlic, oregano, salt and pepper. For added zest, insert layers of onion in between the other skewered items.

2011 "Reserve" Petite Sirah, Estate (Club-only release for our Cellar Groupie 3-bottle members)

Harvest Brix: 25.5 pH: 3.58 TA: 7.0 Alc: 14.9% RS: 0% ML: 0%
Cases produced: 261 Barrel age: 3 years in mostly neutral European oak

We are pleased to offer our Cellar Groupie (3-bottle) club members a very special vintage of our Estate Petite Sirah. A favorite vintage of many, we thought it was sold out and "librared" until we discovered a secret stash that we had previously overlooked. It has entered maturity by developing into a beautifully balanced and smooth wine with much more subtlety and complexity than its younger self. Although we don't often treat ourselves to venison, it is our favorite meat with Petite Sirah. If you forage, you might consider a morel mushroom sauce to accompany pan-seared venison tenderloin medallions. Blackberry season also offers the potential for a blackberry glaze or reduction sauce for your game meat. If game meats aren't readily available, filet mignon is a great substitute. Vegetarian? Try a wild mushroom risotto or portabellas grilled or sautéed with fresh herbs!

2006 "Library" Barbera (Club-only release for our Professional Wino and Ambassador of Oenos members)

Harvest Brix: 25.4 pH: 3.2 TA: 9.0 Alc: 14.5% RS: 0% ML: 0%
Cases produced: 92 Barrel age: 3 years in mostly neutral European oak

We are very excited to be able to offer this rare Library vintage to our upper tier clubs! Our Professional Wino (6-bottle) members will receive one bottle, while our Ambassador (12-bottle) members will receive two. Originally released in 2010, this was the second Barbera we made. Now 12 years old, this wine is an example of how patience and time can transform a wine. We recommend decanting before serving, and taking time to note the interplay of quintessential pomegranate, raspberry and rose nuances with the characteristics of age, such as dried currants and sherry.

For those of you who attended our Barbera and pizza pairing seminar last year, you might recall how amazingly Barbera paired with zucchini, roasted chard, roasted tomatoes and fennel. With the 2006 vintage, consider flatbreads using some of these toppings. Although it is still early for tomatoes, these other ingredients are coming into season near us. For an extra treat, add slices of duck breast and crumbled goat's cheese!

2005 "Library" Syrah, Baby Rattlesnake Vineyard (Club-only release for our Professional Wino and Ambassador of Oenos members)

Harvest Brix: 25.5 pH: 3.7 TA: 6.5 Alc: 14.9% RS: 0% ML: Partial
Cases produced: 121 Barrel age: 3 years in mostly neutral European oak

Complementing the Barbera offering, we are also pleased to offer our upper tier members a rare vintage of Library Syrah! Once again, our Professional Wino (6-bottle) members will receive one bottle, while our Ambassador (12-bottle) members will receive two. This Syrah comes from a neighboring vineyard, Baby Rattlesnake, located across from Herbert Vineyard. Baby Rattlesnake Vineyard produces consistently wonderful Syrah. The 2005 vintage has demonstrated outstanding aging potential. It has refined into a most elegant wine, with excellent balance and subtle plum and spice. Back when it was a current release, it was a big, bold wine. Now, it is still full-bodied, but it possesses the sophistication and subtlety of a Pinot Noir. For this reason, we recommend that you enjoy this wine with duck or pork tenderloin. To add seasonality to your menu, consider grilled zucchini and eggplant, as well as morels or other seasonal wild mushrooms.

We hope you enjoy, and we thank you for your patronage!

Rich & Christine