

Amherst Wines & Spirits

September 2011

WINE DINNER: TUSCANY (*final call*)

You will not want to miss our final wine dinner of 2011 as we explore the wines and foods of Tuscany. Mauro Aniello, owner/chef of Bistro 63 at the Monkey Bar, has just returned from Tuscany and is planning to pull out all the stops to make this last wine dinner something to remember. For our part, we will offer one white and three reds which illustrate the diversity and excitement of Tuscan winemaking.

Bruschetta Toscana: Fillet of fresh tomato over grilled Tuscan bread topped with fresh basil and drizzled with truffle oil from Lucca, served with a slice of salame Toscano and bresaola.

Fagiolo al Fiasco: Tuscan white beans, slow cooked and served with pancetta sausage, porcini, and finished with fresh Italian basil.

Pappardelle with Wild Boar Ragù: Filet of wild boar, marinated in a robust Tuscan red wine and simmered to a rich velvet sauce served over pappardelle pasta.

Stracotto a Chianti: Tender beef slow cooked in Chianti with bay leaves, black peppercorn, carrots, celery, & onions, seasoned with fresh herbs and finished with the reduction au jus.

Biscotti & coffee

DATE: October 5 (Wednesday)

TIME: 6:30

PLACE: Bistro 63 at The Monkey Bar, 63 North Pleasant Street, Amherst
(parking in town lot just behind)

PRICE: \$80, includes tax & gratuities

The Fine Print

- Reserve your place(s) by phoning (549-0900) or emailing (steve@amherstwines.com). All reservations must be pre-paid, we cannot accept \$ at the event.
- Seating by place card, so if you're coming with friends, let us know and we'll seat you together.
- Cancellations within 48 hours of the dinner will receive store credit for 50% of dinner price.
- All wines served will be offered at special discounts to dinner guests.

DIDN'T I ORDER SOME WINE?

Occasionally, we offer "advanced purchase" sales – reserve now and get the wines when they arrive. Some of the more in demand wines introduce new vintages this way to the trade. The reasons for doing this are . . . 1) there isn't much of the wine produced and this is how we lock in supply, and 2) the introductory price is lower than it will be after arrival. We pass on these savings and availability options to you through these sales. There is a time gap between the sales hoopla and the actual arrival of the wines, and it's easy to forget when they are coming in. Just now there are two major offers out there which many of you have taken advantage of and we want to anticipate your questions by reporting on the status of them. If you need to be refreshed before the wines arrive, please phone or email and we will tell you what to expect.

Bordeaux 2009: These will begin to trickle in this Fall and all should have arrived by early next year. As soon as your order is complete, we will notify you. A 50% deposit was required when you reserved these in the Spring of 2010.

Burgundy 2009: First offered in March of this year, they have begun to arrive. All are scheduled to be here by early November. Same as above, as soon as all the wines you reserved are here, we will let you know. There was no deposit on these so the full balance will be due on pick-up.

BIG WHITES

Some whites are crisp and delicate, others pack loads of flavor. This is about the latter. These can often match well with foods which traditionally take red wines, and you get a different slant on the whole experience. It's a big world.

Pinot Blanc, Schleret 2005 (FR) . . \$18.99

Pinot Blanc is the household table wine grape of Alsace, but most have never experienced one at this level. An opulent, borderline decadent white, starting with a bouquet of tropical fruits and lime and offering up a dazzling array of citrus fruits, notably tangerine, with a mineral underpinning. Lush and soft in the mouth, not super dry. Insanely drinkable.

Chardonnay, Catena 2009 (ARG) . . \$19.99

Powerfully built Chard from high altitude vineyards in Argentina. 12 months aging in French oak add notes of toasty vanilla bean. The flavors of melon and tropical fruits are ripe and nicely balanced by acidity.

Sauvignon Blanc, Hall 2009 (CA) . . \$21.99

We don't often find Sauvignon Blancs from Napa with this much balance and focus. It's really a beauty, showing ripe melon and bosc pear flavors. A pretty touch of spice colors the background. Clean, long finish. One to try, for sure.

Gewurztraminer, Domaine Zind-Humbrecht 2009 (FR) . . \$27.99

Alsace is home base for this, one of the world's most dramatic wine grapes. Mostly (but not completely) dry with bold flavors of lychee, spice, and apple. A crisp acidity at the finish ties it together and leads to a long finish with hints of smoke. Not for sissies. Zind-Humbrecht is considered one of Alsace's finest producers.

IN-STORE WINE TASTINGS

Each Saturday from 2:00 – 5:00 come taste some new wines & munch fresh baked baguettes, compliments of the house.

September 3: Working Class Reds

Our annual Labor Day tasting, a good one not to miss. We roll out a selection of inexpensive, great value reds from hither and yon.

September 10: Chardonnay Around the World

The world's #1 premium wine grape is grown in almost all major wine producing country. But there are differences. Come see how styles change with location and local preferences.

September 17: Chianti

Tuscany's iconic red, and just in time to get the palate in shape for our October 5th Tuscan Dinner. Honestly, these wines keep getting better each year as winemakers fine tune their craft.

September 24: Not-Too-Dry Whites

Who says they have to be tooth-rattling dry? Wines showing just a bit of sweetness can match beautifully with foods or be a wonderful pre-meal aperitif. Check out some really delicious ones on the 24th.

October 1: Rioja's Great Reds

Spain's great red wine region is turning out eye-popping reds and we plan to taste a bunch. Elegant, food-friendly, complex, and not budget busters. Have we left anything out?

IS IT PORT YET??

Before too long the crisp air will be with us and our thoughts turn once again to Portugal's gift to the world – Port. We have received several offers of Ports due to arrive in the Fall and have bought two we think are especially interesting. We are offering these at pre-arrival discounts, expected arrival by the end of October.

	<u>Pre-Arrival</u>	<u>After Arrival</u>
Graham's "Malvedos" 2009 . . .	\$57.99	\$62.99

Malvedos is the name of a single vineyard in the Duoro. It is the principal component in Graham's vintage Ports. 2009 is considered a very good year but just a bit short of what is necessary for a "true" vintage Port, so Graham's has bottled a single "quinta" (vineyard) wine from their premier property. We have tasted their Malvedos bottlings in the past and believe this will be an exceptional wine, requiring a few years (3-5) of cellaring before it hits its prime.



Dow's 1994 . . .	\$89.99	\$99.99
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Now 17 years along and from an excellent year this is nearing its optimum drinking time and should hold well for another ten years. The Dow's style is a click drier than others, but still sweet. It is a majestic Port - voluptuous, concentrated with layers of flavors, deeply colored, and with a very long finish. All that a great vintage Port should be.



Please phone (413-549-0900) or email (steve@amherstwines.com) for reservation. No pre-pay required.

A NEW APERITIVO

There's no avoiding (not that you'd want to) the aperitif tradition in Europe. This is the drink before the meal, usually a lower proof beverage of some kind – sherry, vermouth, etc. On the home front a steadily increasing number of customer requests has led us to **Aperol**, an aperitif created in Padua, Italy, in 1919. This bright orange/red nectar is made from oranges, gentian, rhubarb, cinchona (a small tree native to South America), and various herbs and roots. Aperol's bittersweet flavors recall Campari. It is considerably lower in alcohol (11%) than Campari and is usually drunk as a spritz with prosecco and/or club soda. A delicious and refreshing aperitif (\$21.99). Worth seeking out, we think.

GLASSWARE SALE

Here's an opportunity to snag some serious savings on glassware. All glassware will be on sale – **20% off regular price** - throughout the month of September. Sale prices will apply to all existing inventory. All are on display in the shop for your viewing and (gentle) fondling. You may phone to reserve. A good glass really does make a difference.

<u>STEMS</u>	<u>Regular</u>	<u>Sale</u>
Tuscan	\$5.95	\$4.76
Riedel red & white	\$5.95	\$4.76
Wine Enthusiast white	4/\$29.95	4/\$23.96
Fusion* Pinot Noir	4/\$47.95	4/\$38.36
Riedel "Vinum"*** Chardonnay	\$23.95	\$19.16
Riedel "Vinum" Bordeaux	\$26.95	\$21.56
Riedel "Vinum" Burgundy	\$26.95	\$21.56
<u>CHAMPAGNE FLUTES</u>		
Wine Enthusiast	\$7.95	\$6.36
Riedel Vinum	\$25.95	\$20.76
<u>SPIRITS</u>		
Riedel Cognac	\$11.95	\$9.56
Riedel "Vinum" Single Malt	\$24.95	\$19.96
<u>DECANTERS</u>		
"Traditional"	\$24.99	\$19.99
"Tabletop"	\$24.99	\$19.99

*Fusion is a difficult to break lightweight glass, resists accidental breakage and chipping

**Riedel's Vinum stemware features a hand-blown crystal bowl attached to machine-made stem and base.

TUSCAN REDS

With our October 5 Tuscan Wine Dinner looming (see pg. 1) we are feeling it. Tuscany's reds are wines which really want food as the natural acidity of the Sangiovese grape, the basis of most of these wines, makes the food flavors come alive. Here are a few of our current faves which should get your palate in shape for the dinner.

Sangiovese, Masi 2009 . . \$8.99

Sangiovese is the principal grape of Tuscany. Renzo Masi, a small Chianti producer, ships us a pure (non-Chianti) Sangiovese from Tuscany. Terrific "everyday" red for you hard core Tuscan-o-philes.

La Striscia Chianti 2009 . . \$9.99

A simple Chianti which we think perfectly captures the charm and rusticity of the region. Plump, ripe, with the earthy style that marks it as true Chianti. Well done at this price.

Serego Alighieri, Masi 2007 . . \$13.99

A real sleeper, blending Sangiovese with two other local grapes - Canaiolo & Cilegiolo. The wine spent 12 months in French oak and offers up notes of licorice and spice in the bouquet and flavors of dark cherry and plum. A beauty.

Rosso di Montepulciano, Gracciano 2009 . . \$13.99

The wines from Montepulciano are distinguished by their generous fruit and firm tannins. This full-sized red shows a generous core of ripe fruit, perfumed and earthy.

Chianti "Respiro", Le Sorgenti 2008 . . \$18.99

Loads of ripe cherry & boysenberry fruit, soft and full. The earthy, spicy style is evident under the full fruit. Lower acidity here than most, finishing dry and long. From the sub-region of Colli Fiorentini (hills around Florence).

Rosso di Montalcino, Poggio Antico 2009 . . \$38.99

Poggio Antico is one of the best producers of Brunello di Montalcino, one of Tuscany's crown jewels. The "rosso" label is for their Brunello which didn't quite make the cut for their top label. The great 2009 vintage here resulted in an elegantly styled red bursting with ripe flavors and wrapped in silky tannins. Still a bit young, this baby Brunello should be at its best by 2012/2013 and drink well for five years after.

NEW ARRIVALS

WHITE

I Versi 2009 (IT) . . . \$8.99

This Sicilian white blends three local grapes – Grecanico, Inzolia, & Grillo. We love the local expression of these wines. Rather full-bodied with upfront flavors of wild herbs dusted with crushed vanilla bean. Dry but not at all puckery.

Montagne Blanche 2009 (FR) . . . \$9.99

From a small village just north of Tours in the Loire Valley. The grape is Chenin Blanc. The style is fairly dry, delicate, and soft with a pretty bouquet of bread dough and lightly yeasty flavors. A small gem, limited quantity.

Verdicchio “Serra del Conte”, Garofoli 2010 (IT) . . . \$11.99

Crisp, delicate, dry, unoaked, refreshing, totally delicious white from Italy’s Marche region. Hints of lemon zest and vanilla are beautifully balanced by the Verdicchio grape’s natural acidity. Fresh, clean, pretty white.

Chablis, Simonet-Febvre 2009 (FR) . . . \$19.99

Dry, crisp, steely, and flinty . . . this is real Chablis from the small commune of the same name. Grown on mineral-rich soils which the flavors carry forward. Taut, precise, very dry style.

Puligny-Montrachet, Alain Chavy 2008 (FR) . . . \$49.99

One of Burgundy’s elite sites and definitely worth a try if the math works for you. The upfront flavors of stone fruits and melon are balanced by a racy acidity which lifts both flavors and bouquet. Long finish, complex and lingering.

RED

Shiraz, Madison Ridge 2009 (AUS) . . . ~~\$10.99~~, sale \$9.99

Ripe, full, exuberant. Forget complexity and just enjoy. Loads of lush fruit with enough structure to hold it together.

Barbera, Casalone 2008 (IT) . . . \$12.99

Barbera is the most planted red in Italy’s Piedmont region. A recent NY Times wine article paid tribute to this, the most common table wine of the area. Medium full, with ripe dark fruits supported by the grape’s natural acidity. Wonderfully versatile food companion. That’s when this wine really comes alive.

Nero d’Avola, Fondo Antico 2009 (IT) . . . \$13.99

Nero is, perhaps, Sicily’s best red wine grape. The bouquet of ripe red fruits is just lovely. The red fruits theme carries over, with a light dusting of earth, to the flavors which are ripe and pure without being overdone. Bring on the lasagna!

Cabernet Sauvignon, Lockhart 2009 (CA) . . . \$11.99

Classic California Cab at the right price. We love the upfront blast of red & black fruits, full and ripe, but not over-the-top. The best Cab in this price range we’ve found. Drinking well now.

Cabernet Sauvignon, Helix 2008 (WA) . . . \$22.99

Fewer than 600 cases were made of Helix Cab, the second label of Washington’s pricey Reininger Vineyards. Typical of Washington Cabs this shows a firm texture and deep color. Impressive concentration of fruit – plum and black currant with notes of dark chocolate. Long finish. A real beauty just at the beginning of its best drinking years.

Pinot Noir, Eileen’s Vyd, Cristom 2008 (OR) . . . \$49.99

Cristom is one of our favorite Oregon Pinot Noir producers. In addition to their normal bottling they produce a small quantity of wine from individual vineyards with superior growing sites. Eileen’s is one of these. It’s still young, best drinking years 2013 – 18, but even now is showing voluptuous perfume of spice, black fruits and earth. Impressive concentration with layers of flavors still to unfold.

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