

Amherst Wines & Spirits

April 2011

LAST CALL TO STAY ON MAILING LIST

Every few years we need to make sure you're all still there and so we ask you to let us know if you want to continue receiving this monthly newsletter. If so, please let us know by emailing to steve@amherstwines.com, by phone (549-0900), or let us know when you're in the shop. If you've already done this, thanks. No need to repeat.

SATURDAY IN-STORE TASTINGS

Please join us on Saturday as we set out tasting sheets, slice fresh baked baguettes, and open a selection of wines to taste. All compliments of the house. It's informal, fun, and you'll definitely learn some stuff.

April 2: Argentina's Malbecs

The past few years have seen this market take off. Malbecs are now practically mainstream. Come taste a bunch with us and see why.

April 9: Sauvignon Blanc Around the World

One of the most important fine wine grapes is planted in many of the world's top wine producing regions. We'll compare California, New Zealand, Chile, & France.

April 16: U.S. Merlot

Merlot had been overpriced and the adverse publicity in the movie "Sideways" caused a crash in prices. The quality now is better than ever and the prices are lower. A good combination.

April 23: Cabernet Sauvignon from Chile

Cab freaks – you owe it to yourself to check these out. The quality of what we're tasting from Chile is exciting and the prices make them exceptional values.

April 30: Whites from Northern Italy

It started with Pinot Grigio, but now includes Moscato, Trebbiano, Tocai, Pinot Bianco, and others. This is a whole new world for many, one worth knowing about.

MIDMONTH NEWSLETTER

We understand a few of you experience withdrawal and, in some cases, mild depression due to the long four week hiatus between these newsletters, and so we have some good news to report. We have a midmonth newsletter. It is delivered electronically. It is a shorter, snappy update on what's happening, in many cases stuff you don't get here. Sometimes special sales pop up there. If you'd like to take a look, you can subscribe on our website (www.amherstwines.com) or send us an email, steve@amherstwines.com. If it's not for you or doesn't help with your midmonth blues, you can always unsubscribe. Just trying to be helpful.

A MOST WONDERFUL RUM

In the late 18th century Don Juancho Nieto Melendez became passionate about rum and began exploring the artisanal production methods and their effects on the final product. He studied the way rum was being made in Jamaica, at that time considered the finest rums in the world – the sugar cane, the aging barrels. Fast forward 200+ years and we come to his legacy – **Ron Diplomatico**. The Reserva Exclusiva (\$31.99) is their finest, oldest blend spending 12 years in small, charred, white oak barrels. After extraction from the sugar cane, fermentation takes place and this sugar cane honey is then distilled using pot stills, the same type as in Cognac. It's a laborious process which brings out the complexity and balance in the final product. This is an extraordinary sipping rum. Its flavors are quite concentrated and display a potpourri of fruitcake, clove, banana, and cacao. Try this after dinner or anytime you want a very special treat.

EASTER TREATS

It might be salmon. Possibly ham, lamb, or some yummy veggie thing. Such a wide variety of flavors, folks looking to the Easter meal as an opportunity to do something special. Rather than try and guess what direction your food will take, we thought we'd suggest a few things we like and group them according to style. You take it from there. If you want more precise direction, come into the shop. Seder people – if it doesn't need to be kosher, these could work beautifully for you.

WHITE

CRISP & QUITE DRY

Muscadet, Chateau de la Chesnaie 2009 (FR) . . \$10.99

France's quintessential bistro white from the Loire Valley. Clean, dry, unoaked

Vernaccia di San Gimignano, Fontaleone 2009 (IT) . . \$11.99

Tuscany's famous white, quite dry with a mineral slant to the flavors

FULL, WITH SOME OAK

Chardonnay, Chateau St. Jean 2009 (CA) . . \$12.99

Richly flavored, apple & stone fruits, with a creamy, supple texture and a generous dollop of toasty oak

Pinot Blanc, Four Graces 2008 (OR) . . \$19.99

Deeply flavored with notes of almond and toast. Lush, velvety texture.

NOT TOO DRY

Fiano, Mandra Rossa 2008 (IT) . . \$8.99

Fiano, an indigenous grape from Sicily, yields a lightly sweet white, fresh and clean, with a ripe lemon slant.

Wehlener Sonnenuhr Kabinett, Kerpen 2009 (GERM) . . \$16.99

Gorgeous Mosel Riesling showing ripe flavors of citrus & melon with mineral underpinning, finishes fairly dry.

RED

LIGHTER

Tormaresca "Neprica" 2008 (IT) . . \$10.99

Blend of Negroamaro, Primitivo, & Cabernet Sauvignon from southern Italy. Lovely red fruits with a hint of spice.

Pinot Noir, Acacia "A" 2009 (CA) . . \$16.99

California Pinot as it should be. Elegant style, earth &, raspberry . . without the candied flavors we find in others.

MEDIUM WEIGHT

Malbec, Punto Final 2009 (ARG) . . \$11.99

Red cherry, a hint of spice, and a purity which we find irresistible.

Chateau l'Escadre 2009 (FR) . . \$13.99

Red Bordeaux matches so well with a variety of foods, especially lamb. From the great 2009 vintage.

FULL BODIED

Côtes-du-Rhône, Andezon 2009 (FR) . . \$13.99

This CDR is 100% Syrah, unusual for this region. Full, earthy, smokey flavors. A staff fave.

Zinfandel, Cline "Ancient Age" 2009 (CA) . . \$14.99

A juicy Zin from older vines. The flavors are ripe, full & jammy, with a blackberry & mocha slant.

BUBBLES

Varichon & Clerc Blanc de Blancs (FR) . . \$11.88

Made in the traditional Champagne method in France's Loire Valley. Dry but not tooth-rattling. Super value.

Gruet Brut (NM) . . \$14.99

A French family from Champagne set up shop in northern New Mexico. Perfect bubbly climate + French experience.

PASSOVER WINES

It's time again to consult the ancient scriptures regarding Passover wine. Our close reading of the Hebrew text has turned up the following quote (rough translation): *Drinketh no crummy wine*. With this in mind we offer you some good kosher options. And yes, we do have Manischewitz (Steve's fave).

RED

Cabernet Sauvignon, Alfasi 2006 (CH) . . \$8.99
Cabernet Sauvignon, Barkan 2007 (IS) . . \$13.99
Cabernet Sauvignon, Baron Herzog (CA) . \$13.99
Cabernet Sauvignon, Golan 2007 (IS) . . \$18.99
Merlot, Alfasi 2008 (CH) \$8.99
Merlot, Kinneret 2007 (IS) \$16.99
Merlot, Galil 2007 (IS) \$19.99

WHITE

Chenin Blanc, Baron Herzog 2007 (CA) . . . \$11.99
Chardonnay, Barken 2007 (IS) \$13.99
Chardonnay, Baron Herzog 2007 (CA) . . . \$14.99
Sauvignon Blanc, Baron Herzog 2007 (CA) . \$13.99
Moscato d'Asti, Bartenura 2008 (IT) \$16.99

MERLOT – U.S. STYLE

More and more we're liking what we're tasting of this grape from California & Washington. Prices have come down a bit and there are some stellar wines out there. It is considered by many the most successful red grape grown in Washington. In general, the Washington Merlots show a bit more structure, a firmer style, and just a click drier. We're seeing more concentration from California, greater complexity, and that ripe fruit which Merlot lovers expect. These wines all show the dark plum flavors, soft edges, and cacao-scented fruit which make the grape so wonderful. Take a shot – these are good. Here is a sampling of our current stock. Many more to see in the shop.

Cypress 2008 (CA) . . . \$9.99

The "starter" Merlot from J.Lohr Vineyards. The flavors are soft, full, and unoaked. From California's Central Coast.

Red Diamond 2008 (WA) . . . \$10.99

A customer turned us on to this a few years ago. One of our largest sellers today. Deeply flavored, firm & concentrated

Columbia Crest "Grand Estates" 2007 (WA) . . . \$12.99

Anise, dark berry, a touch of chocolate, and supple texture. Good size to the flavors.

Parcel 41 2007 (CA) . . . \$17.99

Small Napa property bottling some really terrific Merlot. The bouquet of ripe fruit and wild herbs leads into saturated flavors of black plum with hints of anise and cacao. Dusty tannins suggest further aging potential, but pretty solid now.

Gordon Brothers 2007 (WA) . . . \$21.99

Tremendous depth and concentration, long, focused flavors of black olive and cherry with a hint of spice. Very long finish.

This is a more powerful Merlot, very well done.

Chateau St. Jean 2007 (CA) . . . \$23.99

A great example of California Merlot as it should be – full of ripe fruit, lush and supple. We find flavors of cherry, a hint of spice, and toasty vanilla bean all wrapped in a silky texture.

BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO

According to Italian regulations Brunello di Montalcino, Tuscany's crown jewel cannot be released for sale until five years after the vintage. We have been waiting anxiously for this moment since 2006 was a very, very good year in Tuscany. The early, pre-release reviews on these wines have been off the charts and so we grabbed some at their lower opening prices. The wines should arrive over the next 60 days. Quantities are limited at these pre-release prices, so don't delay if you'd like to reserve some.

Pre-Arrival Offer: Brunello di Montalcino 2006

	<u>Pre-Arrival</u>	<u>After Arrival</u>
<i>Casanova di Neri</i>	\$47⁹⁹	\$52 ⁹⁹
<i>Casanova di Neri, Tenuta Nova</i>	\$89⁹⁹	\$99 ⁹⁹
<i>Poggio Antico</i>	\$69⁹⁹	\$74 ⁹⁹
<i>Poggio Antico Rosso di Montalcino '09*</i>	\$34⁹⁹	\$38 ⁹⁹



* Rosso di Montalcino is the 2nd wine of Brunello. This allows a producer to use only his/her finest grapes in the top appellation. In good years (2009 was one) these can represent excellent value.

This offer is reservations only. When the wines arrive, we will notify you. You can reserve by email (steve@amherstwin.com), phone (549-0900), or tell us when next in the shop. Standard discounts apply – you can assort these with each other or any other wine for our 10% case discount.

WONDERFUL WHITES < \$9

Fontezoppa Marche Bianco 2009 (IT) . . . \$8.99

Over 2000 different varieties of grapes grow in Italy. Here are 3: Pecorino, Incrocio Bruni, and Maceratino (85% of this). Not familiar with these? Try this delicious white and you will be. Dry, but not tooth-rattling, full-bodied, minerals, unoaked.

Chappelle de la Bastide 2009 (FR) . . . \$8.99

It's the Picpoul grape from southwestern France. Fragrant, dry, fresh – a near perfect all around daily white.

Gruner Veltliner "Aichenberg" 2009 (AUS) . . . \$8.99

Gruner Veltliner is Austria's #1 wine grape. Most are much more expensive but this will give you an idea of what's cooking with Gruner. Dry, medium-full, perfume. This wine has some stuffing, white pepper & minerals.

Sauvignon Blanc, Touton 2009 (FR) . . . \$8.99

Crisp, fresh, quite dry, showing delicate flavors of vanilla & grapefruit with a light touch of lemon. From Bordeaux..

NEW ARRIVALS

WHITE

Viognier "Y series", Yalumba 2009 (AUS) . . . \$10.99

The Viognier grape is coming into its own in Australia. Many are pricey but here's a fine example which shouldn't break the budget. Satiny texture, medium-full, showing almond, pear and vanilla notes. Dry, but not too.

Fume Blanc, Chateau St. Jean 2009 (CA) . . . \$12.99

Wow, a really stellar effort from this Sonoma veteran. Some barrel aging/fermentation is evident in the pretty oak nuance in both bouquet and flavors. Supple and silky, showing melon and herbs. Just lovely.

Vouvray, Chateau Montfort 2009 (FR) . . . \$16.99

A demi-sec, or lightly sweet, white from vineyards around Tours in France's Loire Valley. The flavors of bosc pear are underlined with minerals which adds heft and balances the sweetness. 100% Chenin Blanc. Really delicious!!

Chardonnay, Errazuriz 2009 (CH) . . . \$17.99

From Chile's cool Casablanca Valley, and one of the most profound whites from Chile we've tasted. Fermented using only wild yeasts on the skin of the grapes, fermented and aged for 10 months in French oak. This white shows dry, stony flavors with a sense of dried pineapple wrapped in rocks, if you can get your mind around that. The overall impression is drier than California, more akin to a French white Burgundy. Elegant, complex, beautiful wine.

RED

Chateau de Calce 2008 (FR) . . . \$8.99

Here's a strong entry in the value category. A blend of Syrah, Mourvèdre, Grenache, & Carignan from southwestern France. Flavors of black fruits and earth, a touch of anise. There's a real sense of place here. Great find.

Dolcetto d'Alba, Piasco 2009 (IT) . . . \$9.99

We can't remember the last time we tasted such a good Dolcetto at this price. The flavors of red cherry and currant seem almost alive in the mouth. Great interplay of ripe fruit and natural acidity.

Villa Pillo 2008 (IT) . . . \$11.99

Here's a terrific value from Tuscany, a blend of 60% Sangiovese, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, & 10% Merlot. The wine aged for 12 months in French oak which rounds out the acids of the Sangiovese. Plump, earthy, great fruit.

La Playa "Claret" 2006 (CH) . . . \$12.99

Claret is British winespeak for red Bordeaux. The blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Carmenère, 15% Petit Verdot aged 10 months in French oak results in a nuanced wine which relies more on complexity than weight. Just lovely.

Guardian Peak "Frontier" 2009 (S.AF) . . . \$12.99

This blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, & Grenache comes blasting out of the glass with a bouquet of just-picked, ripe fruit. The ripe fruit carries into the flavors which are supported by a backbone of fine tannins.

Zinfandel Giarusso 2008 (CA) . . . \$19.99

From Sonoma's Dry Creek region, one of the very best for Zin. We love the purity of fruit here – loaded with wild berry and spice, full and ripe, but all seems in balance. Zin fans – give this a try.

Cabernet Sauvignon, Starmont 2007 (CA) . . . \$27.99

The bouquet offers up notes of spice entwined with crushed blackberry. This beautifully made Napa Cab balances ripe black fruit with a backbone of firm tannins. Impressive concentration and depth. A beauty.

AMHERST WINES & SPIRITS 233 North Pleasant Street Amherst
Tel: (413) 549-0900 www.amherstwinest.com Email: steve@amherstwinest.com