

# *Amherst Wines & Spirits*

**August 2009**

## **WINE DINNER: FLAVORS OF THE SOUTHWEST**

When Mark Miller opened his iconic restaurant, Coyote Café, in Albuquerque in the 1980's, the culinary ground in the U.S. shifted. Mr. Miller brought the unique flavors of the southwest to the consciousness of serious foodies from all over. Since then there has been an explosion of restaurants around the country intent on capturing the special flavors and techniques from the land of Kit Carson and Georgia O'Keefe. We will pair these with wines from California, Washington, perhaps even New Mexico. Here's an advance peek at what the food will look like:

- Salmon caribe with avocado salsa and home made fried tortilla chips (finger food to start)*
- Relleno pepper stuffed with shrimp and corn with golden tomato sauce sautéed and served with with a shallot, red onion, & fresh herb coulis*
- Grilled trout served on a bed of pinto beans (black and tiny white "rice" beans) and sweet peppers*
- Lamb "barbacoa", slow roasted on a bed of fresh vegetables, served with pasilla chile salsa and warm flour tortillas*

We will keep the specific wines under wraps for now. We think you will approve. As in the past, you can reserve your place by phone (549-0900), email ([steve@amherstwines.com](mailto:steve@amherstwines.com)) or when next in the shop. All reservations must be paid in advance of the dinner. Details below. Hope to see you there for a fabulous evening of food and wine.

- DATE: September 23 (Wednesday)
- TIME: 6:30
- PLACE: Bistro 63 at The Monkey Bar, 63 North Pleasant Street, Amherst
- PRICE: \$75 (includes tax and tip)

## **SATURDAY IN-STORE TASTINGS**

We love to celebrate the season in wine and so we are choosing "seasonally correct" wines to show in August. We hold forth each Saturday from 2:00 – 5:00 by popping corks, slicing fresh baked baguettes, and printing up tasting sheets with information about the wines we're tasting. It's a great way to become familiar with lots of things which might not otherwise have crossed your path. All this - compliments of the house.

### **August 1: Not-Too-Dry Whites**

*Where is it written that white wines must be tooth-rattling dry? We find slightly off-dry whites to be just wonderful in the warmer weather. Come taste a sampling from Washington, Sicily, and Spain.*

### **August 8: Beaujolais**

*With their flowery, fruity bouquet, crisp acidity, and fresh style Beaujolais are wonderful reds for the season. Served with a light chill they light up any summer table, indoor or out. We'll taste both Beaujolais-Villages and some Grand Crûs.*

### **August 15: Spain's Unknown Whites**

*Justly admired for its reds, Spain has undergone a quiet revolution in its white wines. We're finding fabulous wines from grapes you never heard of. Not too pricey. These will surprise you.*

### **August 22: Chardonnay Around the World**

*What happens when we take the world's #1 fine wine grape and move it around the world? Come see as we taste Chards from the U.S., Italy, South Africa, and France.*

### **August 29: Reds from South Africa**

*We've been impressed by the value we're finding recently in these reds. Lots of interesting, well-made wines in the \$10 - \$15 range featuring grapes such as Pinotage, Mourvèdre, Syrah, and others.*

## WHITES FROM FRANCE'S LOIRE VALLEY

The Loire River wine growing area meanders east for about 120 miles from the Atlantic port city of Nantes. It is home to the 18<sup>th</sup> century hunting lodges (read "castles") of the kings of France, hillside caves growing mushrooms and endives, fabulous goat cheese and . . . picture perfect whites. Styles range from tooth-numbing dry to rich and sweet. The dry wines show lots of refreshing acidity, precision, and elegance – *nervosité* is the French word to describe these hauntingly beautiful dry whites. We stock a good range of Loire whites and they are among our favorite whites from anywhere, especially wonderful in the warmer weather. Here are some of our faves.

### THE WEST END - MUSCADET

Located southeast of the port of Nantes this region supplies much of France's bistro white, perfect for washing down *fruits de mer*, platters heaped high with fresh Atlantic shellfish. Bone dry, crisp, unoaked, and refreshing. The grape is Melon de Bourgogne. Some producers, in order to give the wines a bit more intensity, leave the fermented juice in contact with the lees (spent yeast cells). These are labeled "sur lie". These whites are versatile and charming.

**Muscadet "St. Vincent", Domaine Delhommeau 2008 . . \$11.99**

**Muscadet, Domaine de la Quilla 2006 . . \$12.99**

### THE CENTER – VOUVRAY MOSTLY

Both ends of the Loire are known for their dry whites, while the central area, near the city of Tours, is the opposite. Here is the well-known appellation of Vouvray where Chenin Blanc is the only permitted grape. It can be fermented as a dry wine, but more often ranges from medium to quite sweet. The secret to good Vouvray is the purity of the fruit, so barrel aging is practically non-existent. Well made Vouvray shows flavors of pear, almond candy, sweet lemon. Cheverny, a little-known appellation producing drier whites, allows a small amount of Chardonnay (10% in this case) to be combined with Sauvignon Blanc. A little-known gem worth checking out. Savennières, a small appellation near Angers, is a classic example of really dry Chenin Blanc. Connoisseur stuff.

**Savignon Blanc, Celestin-Blondeau 2007 . . \$10.99**

**Vouvray, Domaine le Peu de la Moriette 2007 (demi-sec) . . \$15.99**

**Cheverny, Domaine du Salvard 2007 . . \$15.99**

**Vouvray "La Bourdonnerie", Bourillon Dorleans 2007 (2 bottlings, demi-sec & sec) . . \$19.99**

**Savennières, Chateau d'Epiré 2004 . . \$17.99**

### THE EAST END – SANCERRE, POUILLY-FUMÉ, AND OTHERS

As the river meanders eastward past Orleans, it dips to the south and we find the eastern end of this fabulous and varied wine scene. There are several appellations here, Sancerre being the most well-known. Just across the river is Pouilly-Fumé. Menetou Salon and Quincy lie just a bit downstream, their relative anonymity reflected in somewhat lower prices (and good value). The soils of limestone, clay and flint in this area are gravelly and yield whites with piercing acidity and crisp, mineral flavors. The only grape in these appellations is Sauvignon Blanc and the distinctive aromas of dried herbs, smoke, and grapefruit are simply gorgeous. The efforts of winemakers to preserve the delicate flavors argues against the aggressive use of oak.

**Menetou-Salon, Domaine du Chatenoy 2007 . . \$16.99**

**Quincy, Portier 2006 . . \$17.99**

**Sancerre, Celestin-Blondeau 2007 . . \$21.99**

**Sancerre "Les Bonnes Bouches", Bourgeois 2007 . . \$24.99**

**Pouilly-Fumé, Chatelain 2007 . . \$26.99**

**Sancerre, Crochet 2007 . . \$26.99**

## SOUTH AFRICA'S UNKNOWN REDS

We think these are some of the best kept secrets and we aim to bring them out of the closet. There are high end bottlings but today we will focus on the more moderate end. Some very good stuff here.

**Pinotage, Hill & Dale 2006 . . \$8.99**

*South Africa is the only place the Pinotage grape is grown. Here's a "starter" which shows the pretty black fruits flavor profile in a soft, easy style.*

**Cabernet Sauvignon, Excelsior 2006 . . \$8.99**

*Surprising weight to this Cab, especially for the \$. Fully extracted flavors, lush and ripe.*

**Pinotage "Pinno", Graham Beck 2007 . . \$9.99**

*The blackberry/earthy flavors here are ripe and nicely supported by a touch of natural acidity.*

**Syrah, Porcupine Ridge 2008 . . \$10.99**

*The flavors of black plum & blackberry are ripe but not overdone. A hint of smoke, a peek of licorice, and some discreet minerality in the finish. Medium weight. Heavy value vibes here.*

**The Wolftrap 2008 . . \$10.99**

*A blend of 68% Syrah, 30% Mourvèdre, and 2% Viognier showing good concentration, dark fruits, and soft edges. A hint of vanilla bean adds interest. Just lovely and another strong value.*

## SUMMER REDS: BEAUJOLAIS

It seems like Beaujolais has been around forever. And yet, for all its familiarity as a term, how many have ever considered it as a serious wine category to be considered on its own? The past 25 years or so has seen the rise and decline of Beaujolais Nouveau - a cash cow for producers, to be sure, but with the unintended consequence of practically destroying the Beaujolais industry. While it's a fun seasonal marker, nouveau is a simple tutti-fruity version of the real thing, an unfinished wine really. For many, this came to be understood as Beaujolais and so many folks have never experienced the real thing. We'd like to change that.

The Beaujolais region stretches south for about 34 miles from the city of Macon in eastern France. The sandy topsoil gives way to granite. Here (and nowhere else) the Gamay grape finds its reason for being. The only grape permitted in Beaujolais, Gamay delivers a richly aromatic experience with red fruit flavors, crisp acidity, and a somewhat lighter style which makes them especially well suited to summer fare. In France it is common to serve Beaujolais with a light chill. So grab a baguette, a hunk of goat cheese (or whatever), and see for yourself how wonderful Beaujolais can be.

### Beaujolais-Villages, Duboeuf 2007 . . \$9.99

*George Duboeuf put Beaujolais on the map in the U.S. A solid example of the basic quaff.*

### Beaujolais, Chateau de Pizay 2007 . . \$10.99

*Small producer making exceptional wine at this price.*

### Beaujolais-Villages, Jadot 2007 . . \$11.99

*Puts to rest the notion that a larger producer cannot make terrific wines. Drier style..*

### The Crûs

10 small villages in the heart of Beaujolais are, due to superior vineyard sites, allowed to name the wines produced there by the name of the town. These are the "grand crûs" of Beaujolais.

### Julienas, Domaine Pascal Granger 2007 . . \$19.99

*Only about 1500 acres of vineyards in this northerly village. A beauty. Can age another year or so.*

### Morgon, Domaine Lapierre 2006 . . \$23.99

*Still smaller (1100 acres). A good Morgon can age beautifully. One of the most densely flavored.*

**A Beaujolais  
Bribe  
Take 10% off any**

## JUST FOR FUN

We love to sell wines which are complex and profound, wines about which we can wax poetic. But sometimes we just like to kick back and enjoy wines which are not too serious but are lots of fun. These represent the nooks & crannies of winedom which, if you've been paying attention for a while, you know we love. They are all totally authentic bottlings, not the "cute" labels designed for the American market - things you could expect to find in their place of origin. We urge you to venture outside your comfort zone with us and give some of these a try. It's a big world. Have some fun.

### Aria Pinot Noir Brut (SP) . . \$11.99

*Sparkling Pinot Noir? You bet, and it is really good. We were amazed to see the true Pinot Noir flavors come through, but you can definitely taste the grape. Chill as you would any bubbly and watch how fast it disappears.*

### Labrusca Lini 910 (IT) . . \$15.99

*White Lambrusco, don't ya' know. Before you think we've sold out, you've gotta try it. Not the sweet plonk most of us think of, but a dry white with a "frizzante" (light sparkle) style showing full, yeasty flavors. From Italy's Emilia Romagna region. Refreshing and lower alcohol than most.*

### Lambrusco Grasparossa di Castelvetro 2008 (IT) . . \$16.99

*Red Lambrusco but, again, not the sweet stuff. The flavors are fresh, grapey, and dry (but not too). Bottled in a "frizzante" style. Best served with a light chill. If there's a better hangin' out red, we haven't found it. Terrific with grilled food. This is the stuff you get over there but hardly ever see here. Surprise your friends.*

## SUCH A DEAL!!

We have written about some of the inventory reduction sales in the industry as a result of the worldwide recession. Much of these are plonk, but we've tasted and bought some real beauties. Get while the gettin's good.

### Insolia, Zabu 2007 . . was \$9.99, now \$6.99

*Crisp, very dry white from Sicily. Perfect aperitif white or with seafood.*

### Chateau Bonnet 2007 . . was \$12.99, now \$10.99

*White Bordeaux, blend of Sauvignon Blanc & Semillon. Fragrant, quite dry w/hints of lemon peel, minerals, lime.*

### Shiraz "Barking Mad", Reilly's 2006 . . was \$19.99, now \$14.99

*Serious Aussie Shiraz. This is a big boy - meaty, densely flavored. Licorice, pepper, & smoke notes.*

## NEW ARRIVALS

### WHITE

**Muscadet “Cuvée St. Vincent”, Domaine Delhommeau 2008 (FR) . . \$11.99**

*France’s favorite bistro white from the Loire Valley. These mineral laden soils yield grapes which translate into crisp, fresh, very dry whites. This one is from the favored Sèvre et Maine area within Muscadet and was bottled “sur lie” (wine aged on the spent yeast cells), which gives the flavors extra length and definition. Classic stuff.*

**Chardonnay, Michelotti 2007 (IT) . . \$14.99**

*From northwest Italy’s Piedmonte region, best known for its majestic reds - Barolo, Barbaresco, Dolcetto, & Barbera. The grapes on this small estate are hand harvested and the cool hillside climate nurtures grapes with intense flavors and balancing acidity. This is a more European style, drier than most CA Chards with a mineral/stoney sense to the flavors.*

**Sauvignon Blanc, Turtle Creek 2008 (MA) . . \$20.99**

*No typo – this winery is in Lincoln, MA. Founded by a passionate wine guy, Kip Kumler, Turtle Creek is committed to small scale, hands-on production of the highest order. This white, with its grapefruit and kiwi notes, straddles France and New Zealand stylistically. Dry, crisp, charming. About 75 cases produced.*

**Sauvignon Blanc, Matanzas Creek 2007 (CA) . . \$22.99**

*Classic California SB, showing rich fruit flavors of melon with a light herbal touch, gorgeous silky texture, and enough acidity to support the ripe flavors. Just a touch of oak adds complexity. Finish goes on for a while. Big league.*

**Sancerre, Domaine Lucien Crochet 2007 (FR) . . \$26.99**

*Fortunately, we bought this before the NY Times went gaga over it. We’ve long been fans of Crochet’s classic Sancerre – crisp, very dry, with deep mineral/grapefruit/gooseberry flavors and pungent bouquet of smoke and wild herbs.*

### RED

**Chateau Haut Sociando 2006 (FR) . . \$9.99**

*We’re always on the lookout for good “everyday” Bordeaux. This one fits the bill. No hard tannins to block the fruit. Soft, medium-full, flavors of black fruits and bell pepper. Tasty Bordeaux at this price is worth knowing about.*

**Cabernet Sauvignon, Montes 2007 (CH) . . \$10.99**

*Aurelio Montes is, in our book, one of Chile’s finest winemakers. His wines showcase full, ripe fruit which Chile can provide but not at the expense of complexity and balance. This Cab, with its ripe, forward blackberry flavors makes the point. A bit of oak aging adds a toast and spice component. Serious Cab for the \$.*

**Domaine Lafage “Cuvée Nicolas” 2007 (FR) . . \$12.99**

*This 100% Grenache wine from southwestern France was made by Jean Marc Lafage, one of France’s most exciting young winemakers. The wine spent 6 months in oak on its lees. It will improve with another year or so, but even now the ripe fruit is showing a gorgeous raspberry slant with spice notes.*

**Cabernet Franc, Turtle Creek 2007 (MA) . . \$25.99**

*As with the Sauvignon Blanc above, we found this wine astonishing considering its source – Lincoln, MA. This is a key grape in Bordeaux and Kip has succeeded in capturing the deep, herbal-tinged, black fruits character of the grape while maintaining the acidity, which gives the flavors lift and a small bite. 13 months aging in French oak adds complexity. 20 cases produced.*

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