

# Amherst Wines & Spirits

## July-August 2011

### SATURDAY IN-STORE TASTINGS

Don't give up your rental in Nice to do it, but if you're in town some Saturday afternoons in July, you just might enjoy stopping by to taste some wines. We hold forth each Saturday from 2:00 – 5:00, slicing fresh baked baguettes to accompany the wines we taste, all compliments of the house. Casual and fun. Drop by and check it out.

#### July 2: Portuguese Reds

*We love these reds in the summer – they are full of flavor and yet never too “heavy.” No one knows much about these underpriced reds. Come and make some discoveries.*

#### July 9: Whites from France's Loire Valley

*The Loire River meanders for about 120 miles east from the Atlantic port city of Nantes. Much of this is planted to white grapes which range in style from very dry to medium sweet. These are just perfect warm weather whites.*

#### July 16: Australia's Unknown Whites

*The Aussies are justly known for their reds, but it's the whites which have made the most dramatic improvement in recent years. We'll taste a range of grapes and styles, from powerful to ultra-dry.*

#### July 23: South Africa's Wonderful Reds

*They have been at it since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and there are some really terrific values in these big league wines. We'll be tasting Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinotage (unique to S. Africa) and some great blends.*

#### July 30: Germany's Classic Rieslings

*The steep slopes along Germany's Rhine & Mosel rivers are covered with vines. The Riesling from these vineyards are lightly sweet with a natural acidity which makes them lively and refreshing summer quaffs. Also, quite low in alcohol. Fab summer whites.*

**August:** 7<sup>th</sup> – NZ Sauvignon Blanc; 14<sup>th</sup> – French Loire reds; 21<sup>st</sup> – whites from southern Italy; 28<sup>th</sup> – South Africa whites

### WINE DINNER: TUSCANY

You will not want to miss our final wine dinner of 2011. We will explore the wines and foods of Tuscany, a tall order for one dinner, but we feel up to the task. The menu is still in the planning stage, but this event is sure to sell out and we want to offer our loyal readers an early “heads up.” Mauro Aniello, owner/chef of Bistro 63 at the Monkey Bar and Italian born, 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. We urge you to consider an early sign up if interested. Food and wine details to follow soon.

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](mailto: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.

## THE DIRECTION OF THINGS??

Francis Ford Coppola, renowned film director, bought Napa's old Inglenook estate in 1975 with profits from *The Godfather*, but only now has acquired the rights to the Inglenook name. Believing the brand has been trashed over the years by a series of large corporate owners, Coppola vows to change things and has hired none other than the winemaker from Bordeaux' famed Chateau Margaux to do it. "I will go for the (old) Inglenook style: lower alcohol, more freshness, balance, restrained tannins, and less oak," says Coppola. Stay tuned.

## LEMONCELLO

About six or so years ago we began to get many requests for something called "lemoncello", a liqueur made from the skins of lemons. We do not stock liqueurs or cordials but we were intrigued. We asked for samples from the various purveyors (one of the really good parts of the job) and chose what we thought was the best – "Sogno di Sorrento" (\$31.99) – in order to satisfy customer requests, especially during the summer. There are a few which are a bit less expensive but none which come close in quality, in our opinion. The lemons from this producer grow only on Italy's Amalfi Coast. Compared to other varieties of lemon they have thicker skins and more oil, the essential flavoring ingredient in lemoncello. Great over ice cream, fresh fruit, or just by itself. Serve very cold (freezer is good). Dangerously delicious.

## 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, Domaine de la Chesnaie 2010 . . \$10.99**

**Muscadet, Domaine de la Louvetrie 2010 . . \$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. There's also some excellent lower priced Sauvignon Blanc produced here.

**Sauvignon Blanc, Celestin-Blondeau 2008 . . \$10.99**

**Le P'tit Loire 2010 . . \$12.99**

**Cheverny, Domaine du Salvard 2009 . . \$14.99**

**Vouvray, Château de Montfort 2009 (demi-sec) . . \$16.99**

### THE EAST END – SANCERRE, POUILLY-FUME, 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, minerally flavors. The only grape permitted in these appellations is Sauvignon Blanc and the distinctive aromas of dried herbs and smoke are simply gorgeous. The efforts of winemakers to preserve the delicate flavors argues against the aggressive use of oak.

**Quincy, Portier 2008 . . \$17.99**

**Menetou-Salon, Domaine du Chatenoy 2007 . . \$19.99**

**Pouilly-Fumé, Blanchet 2009 . . \$19.99**

**Sancerre, Celestin-Blondeau 2008 . . \$22.99**

**Sancerre "Les Bonnes Bouches", Bourgeois 2009 . . \$23.99**

**Sancerre, Lucien Crochet 2008 . . \$26.99**

## TUSCANY'S "OTHER" REDS

Chianti is Tuscany's most famous red, but this iconic wine region is home to a variety of reds which are not Chianti. Most are based on the Sangiovese grape, the principal grape of Chianti, but are from different vineyard sites and include the addition of other grapes to an extent not permitted by the Chianti regulations. We have found some really terrific wines here and need to share some of these less familiar names with you. Serious wine adventures await.

### **Villa Pillo "Borgoforte" 2008 . . \$11.99**

*From a small estate in the hills between Florence and Pisa. A blend of 60% Sangiovese, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, & 10% Merlot, picked and vinified separately, and aged 1 year in French oak. The Cab and Merlot add some fullness to the more austere Sangiovese, rounding out the blend while enhancing the earthy Tuscan style. High value vibes.*

### **Rosso di Montepulciano, Gracciano 2009 . . \$13.99**

*The grapes that didn't make it into the Vino Nobile (see below). From the town of Montepulciano, 75 miles from Florence. Somewhat more rustic than Chianti, this is classic Tuscan - red cherry, earth, and spice. Good stuff.*

### **Serego Alighieri, Masi 2007 . . \$13.99**

*Made by descendants of Dante Alighieri, 14<sup>th</sup> century Italian poet. This blend of 80% Sangiovese, 15% Canaiolo, & 5% Cilieggiolo shows a delicate side with a lovely balance of red fruits and natural acidity. One year aging in French oak has imparted an elegance and complexity we find compelling.*

### **Barco Reale, Capezzana 2008 . . \$14.99**

*Carmignano is a small wine region almost surrounded by Chianti. This vineyard of clay and limestone soils is part of the ancient Medici estate and the blend is 70% Sangiovese, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, & 10% Canaiolo. We love the forward ripe flavors with that typical Tuscan earth. Medium full, softer than most Chiantis.*

### **Morellino di Scansano, Geppetti 2007 . . \$17.99**

*The small town of Scansano, for which this winemaking region is known, sits on the Mediterranean coast in southern Tuscany. Made by Elisabetta Geppetti, one of Tuscany's first woman winemakers, this lovely red shows a plump style with flavors of black berries and a lovely mineral underpinning with a suggestion of chocolate. A beauty.*

### **Mongrana, Querciabella 2008 . . \$19.99**

*Querciabella is a top Chianti Classico producer. The grapes for their Mongrana label – Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon, & Merlot) – are grown in the Maremma region along the Mediterranean coast. The Cab & Merlot soften the acidity of the Sangiovese to yield a red built for summer – sleek, delicate, showing flavors of red fruits and fine grained tannins.*

### **Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, Gracciano 2007 . . \$19.99**

*One of Tuscany's oldest winemaking regions, Vino Nobile comes from a small region about 75 miles south of Florence. By law the wine must contain at least 70% Sangiovese (this has a bit more). One of Tuscany's most majestic, full-bodied reds, chewy and earthy. Bring on the osso bucco!*

### **Le Serre Nuove 2007 . . \$59.99**

*Ornellaia, a "super Tuscan" from the Bolgheri region of Tuscany, has established its reputation as one of the world's most exciting reds. A blend of the Bordeaux grapes – Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, & Petit Verdot – this property has set the wine world buzzing with its elegance, complexity, and just plain astonishing quality. Pricey? Absolutely! Le Serre Nuove is the "second" label of Ornellaia and it is a real beauty, showing licorice, mocha, and spice in its bouquet and a seamless, well-structured, silky texture with a long finish. You'll remember this one for a while.*

## INEXPENSIVE (AND GOOD) SUMMER WHITES

A staple of the summer for us. We spend lots of time searching for good, inexpensive whites. To be honest, we think it's more difficult to find well made whites than reds once we get under \$9. The list below represents some terrific values in well made, easy drinking whites we have found. We urge you to check 'em out. You can assort any 12 for -10%.

### **Opa Opa Chardonnay 2009 (SP) . . \$6.99**

*Don't be scared by the price! This Spanish Chard is dry, well balanced, and works well with seafood, chicken or pre-meal.*

### **Pinot Grigio 2009, Stella (IT) . . \$7.99 (\$13.99/1.5L)**

*From Italy's Umbria region. Quite dry with a wonderfully crisp finish. Refreshing, clean, perfect for casual get-togethers.*

### **Fiano, Mandra Rossa 2009 (IT) . . \$8.99**

*Who says it's gotta be bone dry? Some folks like just a hint of sweetness. Here it is, the Fiano grape from Sicily.*

### **La Chappelle de la Bastide 2010 (FR) . . \$8.99**

*Our largest-selling white from anywhere. Dry, unoaked, charming. The Picpoul grape from southwestern France.*

### **Pinot Gris, Lurton 2010 (ARG) . . \$8.99**

*The Pinot Gris grape shows a soft, white peach style while remaining dry. French producers in Argentina. Really good.*

### **La Vieille Ferme 2010 (FR) . . \$8.99 (\$16.99/1.5L)**

*Blend of 3 grapes from the southern Rhône Valley. Full flavors, dry but not puckery, with a mineral style, unoaked.*

### **Sauvignon Blanc, Santa Ema 2010 (CH) . . \$8.99**

*Refreshing, clean, with flavors of lemon peel and zippy acidity. One of our real summer faves.*

## NEW ARRIVALS

### WHITE

#### **Sauvignon Blanc, Pellegrini 2010 (CA) . . \$9.99**

*Most Sauvignon Blancs from California show big fruit. Some are very well done. This is a more European take on the grape – crisp, fresh, delicate, quite dry. Hints of lemon grass in the bouquet and flavors.*

#### **Chardonnay, Piazzo 2010 (IT) . . \$9.99**

*From the heart of red wine country in northwestern Italy's Piedmont region comes this crisp, flowery, very dry Chard. A practically perfect summer white.*

#### **Sauvignon Blanc, Ranga.Ranga 2010 (NZ) . . \$10.99**

*Classic Kiwi white with delicate aromas of tropical fruits. The wine is quite dry with a fresh gooseberry sense to the flavors (if you can relate to that). A very strong value in New Zealand's trophy grape.*

#### **Torrontes, Rodolfo 2010 (ARG) . . \$11.99**

*Torrontes is Argentina's most planted white wine grape and we think it's worth knowing about. We have found huge variations among the several we tried. Some were awful. This one is stellar, and not shy about announcing itself. The aromatics of orange peel are just lovely. Medium full flavors with the orange theme carrying through and accented by minerals and a touch of earth. Good acidity lifts the full flavors and provides a crisp finish. Something new, perhaps?*

#### **Montinore "Borealis" 2010 (OR) . . \$12.99**

*A blend of four grapes from Oregon's Willamette Valley. This is made for summer with its bouquet of fresh picked apple, not-too-dry flavors of citrus, and dry finish. It has a freshness and vivacity which we found charming. Only 11.5% alcohol. At a recent party it was the first wine to disappear, always a good sign.*

#### **Viognier "The Innocent", Shinas Estate 2008 (AUS) . . \$20.99**

*Only 1500cs of this wine were made (not much for the world). A beauty, we say, showing aromas of honeysuckle and peach jam. The flavors display both elegance and subtlety. Dry, with flavors of stone fruits and a creamy texture. Unoaked, and with the natural acidity to elevate both flavor and bouquet. It's an adventure worth having.*

### RED

#### **Xiloca 2009 (SP) . . \$10.99**

*"Taste this", said the importer guy with a certain look in his eye. One sip and we understood. Here is an almost perfect old vines Garnacha from the Basque country in northern Spain. What gets us is not just the concentration of red fruits flavors, but the precision and overall balance. Hard to describe, but you'll know it when you taste it.*

#### **Chateau Michelet 2009 (FR) . . ~~\$40.99~~, \$9.99 sale (while supply lasts)**

*The "little" wines from the great 2009 Bordeaux vintage are pouring in now and they are wonderful. They show the balance, ripeness, and "je ne sais quoi" which makes this piece of the wine world so special. Here's a fine example – nothing fancy, just a wonderful everyday red you could drink forever.*

#### **Scurati 2009 (IT) . . \$15.99**

*100% Nero d'Avola grape from Sicily. We think this captures the essence of the island's reds – medium-full bodied with flavors of red fruits with hints of wild herbs and an earthy slant. The wine shows both concentration and balance and would be a perfect companion to grilled meats.*

#### **Pinot Noir, Pellegrini 2009 (CA) . . \$19.99**

*Small winery with a special touch for this most difficult grape. The cooler Russian River section of Sonoma is considered one of the state's prime growing areas for the grape. This beauty shows the typical Pinot spice and earth aromas. What sets it apart from many is its delicacy of style. The spice and earth continue on the palate and the flavors are rendered with an elegant touch and a long finish. If you're looking for hi-octane red, this is not for you. If you prize finesse, try it.*

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