

Amherst Wines & Spirits

June 2010

LAST CALL – SOUTHERN FRANCE WINE DINNER

If the images of richly flavored cassoulet or fragrant seafood terrines make you put aside your diet for just a day, who could find fault? And if you paired these with some of the savory reds and whites from this beautiful region, who wouldn't wouldn't want to be in your shoes? Your opportunity to experience these pleasures is fast approaching. On June 23 we will celebrate the varied and wonderful gastronomy of southern France and pair each dish with a local wine. Four courses in all. It will be a wonderful dinner. We will offer unadvertised discounts for our dinner guests on all wines served. Here's what we're planning:

First course: **Terrine de Mousse de Saumon aux Champignon** – chilled mousse of poached Atlantic salmon with three kinds of mushrooms; **wine** – Marsanne-Viognier, Verget

Second course: **Crevettes** – poached shrimp with brandy-laced scallop mousseline served with matchstick zucchini and pepper aioli; **wine** – Domaine du Bargemone rosé

Third course: **Cassoulet** – traditional southwestern (France) stew of cured meats and haricots blancs (white beans); **wine** – Côtes-du-Rhône, Chateau Courac

Fourth course: **Tournedos** – Cognac-infused, slow roasted beef tenderloin rubbed with crushed peppercorn; **wine** – Château Saint-Roch "Chimères"

Dessert: **Chocolate truffle**

DATE: June 23 (Wednesday)

TIME: 6:30

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

COST: \$75, includes gratuities, sales tax extra

WHAT TO DO NEXT:

Phone (549-0900) or email (steve@amherstwines.com) to reserve your spots. Reservations must be paid before the event. Invite friends to join you – seating by place card and we can put you together. We look forward to seeing you.

SATURDAY IN-STORE WINE TASTINGS

We plan to have some seasonally appropriate tastings as we segue into summer. Each Saturday from 2:00 – 5:00 we slice fresh baked baguettes, pop corks (or twist off caps), and taste a variety of wines. There's a tasting sheet you can take home with information about the wines. It's a good way to taste things you otherwise wouldn't in a relaxed, friendly space. Hope to see you.

June 5: Zinfandel, California Style

The barbecue season is in full swing and this is one of our favorite bbq reds. The current crop of Zins is really good and we're certain you'll enjoy this tasting.

June 12: Rosés

We're more than a little excited for this one. The 2009 rosés may be the best group we've had. You won't want to miss this as we taste from France, Italy, Spain, & U.S.

June 19: Whites from South Africa

With its heritage firmly rooted in Europe these whites tend to a more elegant style. The more we taste from this place, the more we become real believers. Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier, & blends.

June 26: Reds from Central Italy

If you find yourself looking for value in Italian reds, go no further. The wines from Umbria, Abruzzi, the Marche are where you want to be.

BORDEAUX 2009: ADVANCED PURCHASE OFFER

Once every so often the wine gods smile on Bordeaux, the world's largest fine wine region, and the wine world rejoices. 2009 was such a year. The formidable Bordeaux press machine typically over-hypes each year's offerings but this time they have helped. All of the responsible wine press seems to agree that this is a magical year, yielding wines which show ripe flavors, big tannins for good aging, and a perfect balance of fruit and acidity. The less expensive wines should be drinking well 2 – 4 years after bottling, but they also appear to have the capacity for longer term development. We subscribe to wine press on both sides of the ocean and can tell you we have never seen such agreement on this flagship region.

In such a year the most famous labels will carry heart-palpitating prices. We have, instead, chosen to focus on chateaux which do not attract the trophy collectors, wines we have known from prior vintages and which have received excellent ratings from at least two reputable wine writers who tasted the wines in March/April. This strategy will max out the value while still making available excellent wines.

What the Critics are Saying

" . . . the overall style of the 2009's combines creamy, voluptuous textures and sensational fruit-driven opulence with remarkable finesse, precision, purity, and vibrancy . . . a magical vintage . . . 2009 may turn out to be the finest vintage I have tasted in 32 years of covering Bordeaux."

Robert Parker, *The Wine Advocate*

Potentially classic quality by Wine Spectator's rating system .

. . . opulent fruit backed by powerful tannins . . . I believe the vintage is a great one.

James Suckling, *The Wine Spectator*

The best vintage the region has ever experienced.

Steven Spurrier, *Decanter*

THE GREAT 2009 BORDEAUX

Ch. du Bouscat, Bordeaux Supérieur

Ch. Brondeaux, Bordeaux Supérieur

Ch. Tour St. Bonnet, Médoc

Ch. Senejac, Haut Médoc

Ch. Pindéfleur, St. Emilion

Ch. Villars, Fronsac

Ch. Pipeau, St. Emilion

Ch. La Tour de Bessan, Margaux

Ch. Bernadotte, Haut Médoc

Ch. La Tour de Mons, Margaux

Ch. du Glana, St. Julien

Ch. Potensac, Médoc

Ch. Larrivet Haut Brion, Pessac-Léognan

Ch. Haut Bergey, Pessac-Léognan

Ch. Faugères, St. Emilion

Bottle

\$11.99

\$13.99

\$16.99

\$23.99

\$20.99

\$21.99

\$25.99

\$26.99

\$29.99

\$29.99

\$31.99

\$35.99

\$44.99

\$45.99

\$49.99

THE FINE PRINT

**** This offer is for reservations only. A 50% deposit is required when placing your order.**

**** Most wines will arrive in the Fall of 2011 and we will contact you for pick-up. The balance is due at that time.**

**** You may assort any 12 bottles for our standard 10% case discount.**

**** You may phone (413-549-0900) or email (steve@amherstwines.com) to place orders.**

A final note. The last futures offer we made was for the 2005 Bordeaux. Between the time of our offer and the arrival of the wines prices increased an average of 40%!! We have purchased these wines at their opening prices and with a favorable dollar/euro exchange. No one can know how these prices will behave in the future, but history suggests that buying now will result in your owning some truly wonderful Bordeaux at prices which will look like bargains when they are ready to drink.

OUR FAVORITE SUMMER SIPPER

We're talking "kir", sometimes called *vin blanc cassis*. A teaspoon, more or less depending on the sweetness you want, of crème de cassis in a glass of cold, very dry white and you're all set. No ice cubes, please, as it will dilute the flavors. The classic kir mix, created and named in honor of the mayor of Dijon, Canon Kir, calls for the white wine to be the super dry Aligoté grape from Burgundy. We have a beauty from Marc Morey (\$15.99). We have found that inexpensive, very dry whites also work well, such as Hill & Dale Sauvignon Blanc from South Africa (\$7.99) or our new Italian Trebbiano from Addesso (\$6.99). Don't cheap out on the cassis - use the real stuff from Burgundy. A little goes a long way. We recommend the Crème de Cassis from the Burgundian producer, Domaine Sathenay (\$13.99/375ml). A wrinkle we enjoy is to substitute a good dry vermouth for the white wine. It adds pretty herbal notes which seem to work beautifully with the cassis. We recommend Martini & Rossi @ \$7.99. Drop in a zest of fresh lemon for fun if you like. Surprisingly, this is a drink many haven't tried and if good ingredients are used, we find most folks love it.

ROSÉ MADNESS

It's that time of year when we sing the praises of rosés from around the world and here's our take on the current crop: the best, as a group, we've ever seen! In both Europe, the primary source of great rosés, and the U.S. 2009 provided a bounty of fresh, clean, dry wines with vivid flavors. Here's peek at our current stock. More are arriving each week. Served with a light chill these wines can be enjoyed as you would whites. They offer the fresh, clean style we associate with whites while adding another level of flavor interest.

Casal Garcia (P'TGL) . . . \$6.99

Portugal's Vinho Verde has become a warm weather favorite white. Now in rosé. Crisp, fresh, brilliant color.

Le Mazet 2009 (FR) . . . \$7.99

From one of southern France's most prestigious red wine estates. Dry, hints of dark fruits, crisp finish. A no-brainer.

Domaine Houchart 2009 (FR) . . . \$9.99

In Provence rosé is practically a religion. Try this and see why. Perhaps the driest and most delicate of the bunch.

Mas Donis, Capcanes 2009 (SP) . . . \$10.99

The dark ruby color of this Spanish beauty is riveting, as are the full, crisp, dark cherry flavors. Impressive depth here.

Villa Wolf 2009 (GERM) . . . \$10.99

A rosé of Pinot Noir from Germany? Affirmative. A striking pale pink and just off-dry flavors of ripe wild strawberry.

A to Z 2009 (OR) . . . \$11.99

Tuscany's Sangiovese grape as an Oregon rosé. Full flavored and showing the telltale spice and earth of the grape.

Charles & Charles 2009 (WA) . . . \$11.99

Washington is becoming known for its majestic red Syrah. Here it is in rosé form – full, lightly earthy, very crisp finish.

Cerasuolo, La Valentina 2009 (IT) . . . \$12.99

Central Italy's Montepulciano d'Abbruzzo in pink form. Showing spice, fresh raspberry, opulent bouquet.

Saint André de Figuiere 2009 (FR) . . . \$13.99

Another rosé from Provence in southern France. Pale salmon color with a lovely mandarine slant to the flavors.

Chinon, Raffault 2009 (FR) . . . \$14.99

100% Cabernet Franc from France's Loire Valley. Brilliant flavors of black raspberry framed by crisp acidity. A beauty.

Planeta 2009 (IT) . . . \$18.99

A beautiful rosé of Syrah from one of Sicily's hottest wineries. Full, fresh, notes of earth & strawberry, mandarine bouquet.

Tavel, Chateau de Trinquedel 2009 (FR) . . . \$18.99

The Rhône's most famous rosé, and with good reason. Packed with wild strawberry, raspberry, graphite, crisp finish.

SUMMER WHITES

For starters, what exactly do we mean by "summer whites"? A bit subjective, to be sure, but we have something in mind – not too pricey, fresh style, not boring but also nothing too complex. Wines which reflect the more casual sense of the season. Here are several of our faves which come to mind.

Chardonnay, Opera Prima 2008 (SP) . . . \$6.99

Since taking this into the shop last Fall it has been a sensation among our customers. A somewhat drier, more European style, without being at all sharp.

Sauvignon Blanc, Hill & Dale 2008 (S. AF.) . . . \$7.99

This reminds us of an SB from France's Loire Valley. Quite dry, crisp, delicate, with a mineral/ light herbal sense.

Pinot Gris, Lurton 2009 (ARG) . . . \$8.99

A hint of peach up front but then the flavors become dry. Medium full bodied with a crisp finish. Dry but not too.

Sauvignon Blanc, Santa Ema 2009 (CH) . . . \$8.99

Fresh and lively with lemon grass and citrus flavors. Very crisp finish. This 2009 has been an instant hit.

Prosecco "Tradizione", Villa Jolanda 2008 (IT) . . . \$9.99

The broad, yeasty, bread dough flavors of Prosecco, same as the sparkler which has become so well known. But this one is not a full sparkle, rather a "frizzante" style – a light crackle, sort of in between a still wine and full sparkler. Fun.

La Poule Blanche 2008 (FR) . . . \$9.99

A blend of Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, & Viognier from a growers' coop in southern France. Full bodied, dry without being austere, unoaked. This is a beautifully made white which has attracted much attention among our customers.

Con Class 2009 (SP) . . . \$10.99

Spain's Rueda region is the source of some terrific whites. Verdejo is the principal grape. Dry, full flavored, crisp with a wonderful floral & spice aroma. Light straw color, so pretty. Worth getting to know.

Snoqualmie "Naked" Riesling 2008 (WA) . . . \$11.99

Organically farmed Riesling from Washington, where Riesling does very well. There's a lovely introductory sweetness upfront, nicely balanced by racy acidity. Pear, peach, apricot flavors abound. This is really delicious.

NEW ARRIVALS

WHITE

Trebbiano d'Abruzzo, Addresso 2007 (IT) . . \$6.99

Perhaps you're not thinking about a summertime, hangin' out house white, but we are. Here it is – fresh, crisp, and dry. It's the Trebbiano grape from central Italy's Adriatic coast.

Steen, KWV 2009 (S. AF) . . \$8.99

"Steen" is one of the names for Chenin Blanc in South Africa. Just a tick off-dry with the broad, creamy style so unique to this grape. Flavors of white peach and supporting acidity to keep it all fresh.

Sauvignon Blanc "Beyond" 2009 (S. AF.) . . \$9.99

Possible the best SB we've come across at this price. You get the dry, mineral-inflected flavors of the grape with a dry kiwi/gooseberry slant. More European in style. The offsetting natural acidity keeps the whole package fresh and clean. The key here is the perfect balance between this acidity and the fruit. As good as it gets at this price.

Riesling, Weimer 2008 (NY) . . \$19.99

Hermann Weimer is a small Finger Lakes winery turning out some special whites. Riesling is his star and this elegantly styled white displays really pretty pear and apricot flavors in a fairly dry format. A softer, rounder style. A beautifully made white from a small, quality conscious producer on Seneca Lake.

RED

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

Third, and certainly the best, vintage of this Nero d'Avola (the principal grape) based red from Sicily. The flavors have a brilliant clarity, vivid fruit flavors, and lovely overall balance. Hard to think of a better red for the \$.

Chateau Saint Roch "Chimères" 2007 (FR) . . \$17.99

A simply spectacular red from southern France (you can taste it at our June 23 French wine dinner). Mostly Grenache, some Carignan & Syrah offering important support. The aromas of wild herbs common to this region are stunning, as are the saturated flavors, ripe and lush. Silky texture wraps layers of boysenberry jam with subtle herbal and meaty notes. Worth more. Wait till you taste this with the Tournedos (4th course at the dinner)!

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