

# Amherst Wines & Spirits

March 2010

## WINE DINNER: GAME (final call)

We kick off our 2010 dinner series with an exciting food/wine event featuring game and wines from the U.S., France, and Italy chosen to match the rich flavors of the foods. Three courses followed by a light dessert. This should be an especially wonderful event held in the private room in Bistro 63 at the Monkey Bar in downtown Amherst. Reserve your places by phoning (549-0900) or emailing ([steve@amherstwines.com](mailto:steve@amherstwines.com)). All reservations must be prepaid. Special discounts will apply to all wines served at the dinner. Hope to see you there.

**First course:** Duck confit served over fresh, handcut pasta drizzled with truffle oil

**Wine:** Pinot Gris, Montinore 2008 (Oregon)

**Second course:** Quail wrapped with smoked Vermont bacon and stuffed with fennel sausage

**Wine:** Côtes-du-Rhône, Domaine Beaurenard 2007 (France)

**Third course:** Roast venison loin in a Chianti reduction served with apple/cranberry sauce

**Wine:** Erta e China, Masi 2007 (Italy)

**Dessert:** Mango sorbet

**To Finish:** Armagnac, Domaine du Tariquet (France)

DATE: March 24

TIME: 6:30

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

COST: \$75. Inclusive of tips, tax extra

## FUTURE DINNERS

### June 23: The Food & Wines of Southern France

Provence, Marseilles, the Pyrenées – the foods from the south of France, like the wines, offer great diversity. Heavy foods are not common here. Same with the wines, and you'll see the magic happen as we pair some sleek reds, lively whites, and vivacious rosés with the foods they are made for.

### September 22: Locally Grown

We live in the midst of a wonderful food-raising region and want to celebrate local producers, both meat and plant. It's a perfect time of year to do this. We will feature foods raised organically by small producers within 50 miles of Amherst. The wines will be U.S. produced, mainly from the West Coast.

### WINE DINNER SPECIAL OFFER

Sign up for all three dinners and save 10%. This must be done before the first dinner.

## SAINT PATRICK'S DAY

You don't need to be Irish to love Irish whiskey. Apart from the ho-hum commercial stuff you see everywhere there are some truly great whiskeys which match up with the world's greatest distilled spirits. May we propose – **Jameson 12yr** (\$44.99), **Knappogue Castle 1992** (\$49.99), **Connemara** (\$49.99), and **Redbreast 12yr** (\$53.99)

## IN-STORE WINE TASTINGS

The beat goes on each Saturday from 2:00 – 5:00 as we pop corks, slice fresh baked baguettes, set out tasting sheets you can take home, and generally have a good time. We have an interesting group of tastings on tap this month and hope you can join us, compliments of the house.

### March 6: Reds from South Africa

We're increasingly impressed with the reds from South Africa. Pinotage, Cabernet, Syrah, & blends – many very well made and offering strong value. Come check 'em out.

### March 13: Southern France's Little Known Reds

Corbières, Minervois, Languedoc – wine regions hugging France's Mediterranean coast. This is the red wine pumping station of France. The quality has never been better. Value galore.

### March 20: Sauvignon Blanc Around the World

One of the greatest of white wine grapes. Grown in many of the world's prime wine regions. We'll see how things change as we move across U.S., France, South Africa, and Australia.

### March 27: Vino – Reds from Southern Italy

The strong value in Italy these days is from the south, a land of no-nonsense, easy drinking reds. Grapes such as Negroamaro, Primitivo, Aglianico, and other unpronounceables. Prepare to be impressed.

## IS IT SPRING YET?

Skiers that we are, you won't hear complaints about winter here. By March, however, things start to feel different and we notice ourselves looking ahead. All of which leads us to think of rosé wines. Not the sweet stuff, but the dry wines which have long been a staple in southern France and elsewhere and have, in a few short years, caught fire in the U.S. In an effort to achieve a spring-like mindset we are offering special pricing on some rosés now. P.S. – they are delicious any time of year. Most of these are no longer available to us, so we urge you not to delay as we cannot replace them.

### Rosés on Sale

	<u>Reg Price</u>	<u>Sale (-15%)</u>	<u>6b assorted (-20%)*</u>
Ménage à Trois 2008 (CA)	\$12.99	\$11.04	\$10.39
Mjère 2008 (IT)	\$18.99	\$16.14	\$15.19
Mas Cal Demoura 2008 (FR)	\$19.99	\$16.99	\$15.99

\*The 6 bottles must include at least two types.

### A Few Words About The Wines

**Ménage à Trois** blends two red grapes, Merlot & Syrah, with a white, Gewurztraminer. It shows bigger fruit than the European rosés, typical for most California wines. **Mjère** is from southern Italy, the "heel" of the "boot" and is mostly the local Negroamaro grape. Full flavored with a marvelous earthy slant to the strawberry & mineral flavors. Finally, **Mas Cal Demoura**, is our "go to" rosé when we want something really special. It's from southern France and blends Grenache, Syrah, and other local grapes into a dry, elegant wine with wild strawberry flavors and a long finish.

## PASSOVER WINES

After searching the ancient texts we can find no divine commandment to drink crummy wine at the seder. We therefore propose the following:

### RED

Cabernet Sauvignon, Alfasi 2006 (CH)	\$8.99
Cabernet Sauvignon, Barkan 2007 (IS)	\$12.99
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
Manischewitz Concord (the one & only)	\$4.99

### WHITE

Chenin Blanc, Baron Herzog 2007 (CA)	\$11.99
Chardonnay, Barkan 2007 (IS)	\$12.99
Chardonnay, Baron Herzog 2007 (CA)	\$14.99
Sauvignon Blanc, Baron Herzog 2007 (CA)	\$13.99
Moscato d'Asti, Bartenura 2008 (IT)	\$15.99

## EASTER WINES

We field many requests about wine/food matchups in the week leading to Easter. While there's a wide variety of foods served, many folks enjoy serving ham, salmon, and lamb. We'll focus on recommending things which might work for these, understanding how very subjective this is. Another way to sort this out is by price, and we've taken a good stab at that. We're happy to chat with you and help you find the right wines to suit your needs. Come on by.

SCENARIO #1: *Big crowd coming over this year, no wine experts among them. Julia's tuition bill due before long. Still, it's Easter and it's gotta be tasty.*

### White

**Pinot Grigio, Stella 2008 (IT)** . . . **\$7.99** (1.5L @ \$13.99)

*Crisp, delicate, dry. The natural acidity would pair well with salmon, an oilier fish. The best we've tasted at this price.*

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

*Just slightly off-dry with flavors of peach and mandarine. Who says it's gotta be tooth-rattling dry?*

**Chardonnay, Five Rivers 2007 (CA)** . . . **\$10.99**

*Notes of toasted vanilla bean in this oh-so-pretty Chard from vineyards in California's Central Coast growing area.*

### Red

**Notro 2008 (ARG)** . . . **\$6.99**

*Two grapes of Italian origin, Sangiovese & Bonarda, blended in a more delicate but very tasty style. Strong value.*

**Mesta 2008 (SP)** . . . **\$6.99**

*Spain's Tempranillo grape. Plump, ripe, red cherry, medium-full yet with enough structure to pull it off.*

**Cabernet Sauvignon, Viu Manent 2008 (CH)** . . . **\$8.99**

*Medium-full bodied Cab showing precise flavors of blackberry, cassis, & plum. A customer favorite for years.*

SCENARIO #2: *Not too big a group, but mostly wine geeks. Hey, Easter comes only once a year and the food will be great. Let's go for it.*

### White

**Sauvignon Blanc, Saint Clair 2008 (NZ)** . . . **\$17.99**

*The vivid flavors of tropical fruits, citrus, & green apple are etched by crisp mineral notes. A real beauty.*

**Solosole 2007 (IT)** . . . **\$21.99**

*Here's the Vermentino grape from Tuscany. Apple, lime, creamy texture and loads of flavor. Different . . . and striking.*

**Chardonnay, Stuhlmuller 2007 (CA)** . . . **\$24.99**

*Ripe, full-bodied, elegant with gorgeous flavors of green apple, melon & citrus. Long finish. Big league Stuff.*

### Red

**Chateau de By 2005 (FR)** . . . **\$16.99**

*If there's a better red with lamb than Bordeaux, we haven't found it. From the great 2005 vintage. A no-brainer.*

**Pinot Noir, Pellegrini "Olivet Lane" 2007 (CA)** . . . **\$19.99**

*Elegant, supple, complex showing toasty oak, raspberry, Asian spice in a velvety texture. Who needs food?*

**Cabernet Sauvignon, Haras 2005 (CH)** . . . **\$22.99**

*Gorgeous Cab from small Chilean producer, balances power with elegance. Mocha, black fruits, boysenberry jam.*

## "IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN" (Kermit the frog)

It would have been easy for John Williams to march to the prevailing Napa beat and produce high alcohol, fruit-driven wines from his Frog's Leap estate. After all, the Rutherford Bench is prime growing area for such grapes. But he had another vision back in 1981. Against the prevailing winds John undertook organic farming of his vineyards, eliminating pesticides and planting cover crops which added nutrients and life to the soil. Minimal intervention in the winery is the guiding principal at Frog's Leap so that the wine makes itself rather than being manipulated to achieve a certain style. Instead of producing what he calls the "pick late, sweet fruit, high alcohol" blockbuster reds he opted for a more balanced style. With **Cabernet Sauvignon** this results in expressing the grape's ripe fruit character along with its leaner, herbaceous side. It is elegant in the style of Bordeaux, a gorgeous red with lovely black fruits and an herbal nuance with hints of cedar and truffle. The **Sauvignon Blanc** is from dry-farmed vineyards – a clean, crisp, refreshing style with hints of lemon grass and grapefruit balanced against a mineral undercurrent. Classic. John's goal with the SB is "to make a wine that is so indicative of the place in which it is grown that it could come from nowhere else." To complete the picture the winery is 100% solar powered by photovoltaic panels – clean and renewable. Yes – the wines are pricey. But they are really, really good and incorporate values we hold dear.

**Frog's Leap Cabernet Sauvignon 2007** . . . **\$39.99**

**Frog's Leap Sauvignon Blanc 2008** . . . **\$23.99**



## NEW ARRIVALS

### WHITE

**Keuka Villages, Ravines 2007 (NY) . . \$11.99**

*This small Finger Lakes winery really caught our attention with its carefully crafted whites. A blend of Cayuga and Vignolles grapes, this is their "house" white, a wonderfully fresh, clean style showing apples and cream. Dry but not mouth puckering with a near perfect balance between fruit and acidity.*

**Dry Riesling, Ravines 2007 (NY) . . \$14.99**

*Riesling is the one great international varietal which does well in the harsh climate of upstate New York. Here Morten Hallgren, born and raised in southern France's Provence region, has bottled a beauty. Dry, as the name says, with a totally correct Riesling bouquet of flowers and herbs. Fresh, clean, green apple flavors with a mineral undertone. Lovely.*

**Gewurztraminer, Sparr 2008 (FR) . . \$18.99**

*France's Alsace region is ground zero for this grape but it's increasingly hard to find good ones <\$20. Sparr has managed to do it. Powerfully built, just off-dry, with flavors of lychee and spice.*

### ROSÉ

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

*From what we're tasting 2009 is shaping up as a terrific year in many of Europe's wine regions. Here's the first rosé to appear. We think it makes the point. Crisp, quite dry, pale pink color from Provence, where rosé is practically a religion.*

### RED

**Merlot, Red Diamond 2007 (WA) . . \$10.99**

*Merlot is considered Washington's best red wine grape. One taste of this makes the point. The fruit is ripe and full, yet nicely balanced by the grape's natural acidity. The best we've tasted under \$14.*

**Aglianico del Vulture, Bisceglia 2006 (IT) . . \$14.99**

*The Aglianico grape is considered by most students of Italian wine to be among the country's greatest reds. Grown in the poor southern region of Campania on volcanic soil not far from Mount Vesuvius, these wines have mostly found their market in Italy's fine restaurants (they have quite a few). This displays lovely ripe fruit upfront with the minerality common to wines grown on this type of soil. This red has a sense of place and is perfect with most meat and poultry dishes.*

**Recovery Red, Spann (CA) . . \$15.99**

*Spann is a very small Alexander Valley producer selling very pricey reds. As with many high end California wineries these days they found themselves with some excess wine. Instead of forcing it on the market at high prices, they created a blend which is simply smashing - 30% Syrah, 28% Zinfandel, 17% Merlot, 13% Malbec, 10% Mourvèdre & 2% Petite Sirah – and gave it a name which might attract some attention these days. We generally avoid these "cute" labels, but one taste and we were hooked. The flavors are deep, well-balanced, and offer layers of discovery – blackberry, dark cherry, cassis, & plum. The texture is polished, the finish long. Better than almost all of what we're tasting from CA these days at this price. This is a limited bottling and will not continue. Our advice – grab some soon.*

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