

Amherst Wines & Spirits

May 2010

SATURDAY IN-STORE TASTINGS

Please try to drop in some Saturdays to taste a bunch of wonderful wines compliments of the house. It's also a great opportunity to increase your wine smarts in an informal, casual environment. We provide a tasting sheet for you to write notes, fresh baked baguettes and, of course, the wines. From 2:00 to 5:00 here's what you can expect in May.

May 1: Chile's Merlot and Carmenère Grapes

When the demand for Merlot surpassed supply, Chile blended in Carmenère to meet the need. A grape widely grown there, Carmenère displays similarities with Merlot but it has its own style. A head-to-head comparison.

May 8: Spain's Fabulous Rioja

Rioja is Spain's iconic fine wine region. After a period in the doldrums a new generation of winemakers has taken over and Rioja is back with a vengeance. The quality is better than ever.

May 15: Southern Italy's Surprising Whites

Southern Italy is best known for its reds, but recently we've been finding some whites to really cheer about. Not so well known and much of it good value. Prepare to be surprised and impressed.

May 22: Reds from Portugal

We can't think of any region whose wines have surprised and impressed us more than Portugal. Produced from largely unknown local grapes, they represent unusual value and food compatibility. Don't miss this one.

May 29: Dry Riesling

Most think of Riesling as producing only sweet wines. Wrong! Prepare to be won over as we taste crisp, dry Rieslings from Australia, France, New York, and, yes, Germany.

WINE DINNER: FOOD & WINE OF SOUTHERN FRANCE

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 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. Here's what we're planning:

First course: *Terrine du Champignon* – chilled mousse of poached Atlantic salmon with three kinds of mushrooms

Second course: *Crevette* – poached shrimp with brandy-laced scallop mousseline served with matchstick zucchini and pepper aioli.

Third course: *Cassoulet* – traditional southwestern (France) stew of cured meats, beans, and fresh vegetables

Fourth course: *Tournedos* – Cognac-infused, slow roasted beef rubbed with crushed peppercorn

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.

SMOKED SALMON FOR THE SUMMER

We emailed our friend and ex-Amherst resident, T.R. Durham, a few weeks ago to ask if he would consider shipping us some of his wonderful smoked salmon this summer. We were big time pleased when he agreed. T.R., as many of you know, makes the best smoked salmon most of us have ever tasted. He's a hands-on perfectionist when it comes to smoking salmon, and so, after several write-ups in The N.Y. Times, the demand for his salmon outstrips his ability to supply it. Except for Christmas, this is the first time in many years we are able to offer his "Tracklements" salmon.

T.R. gets his salmon from fish farms in northern Maine which use no algaecides or antibiotics, but depend instead on the strong tides from the Bay of Fundy to refresh the ocean pens. He is a quality nut. Everything is hand done. The result is smoked salmon the likes of which most have never experienced. We will be getting his **Highland Salmon**, akin to fine Scottish salmon – center cut pieces hand-rubbed with a dry cure of sea salt, brown sugar, and spices known only to T.R. and then gently cold smoked over a blend of oak, apple, and alder.

HERE'S THE DEAL

- Reserve your salmon now by phone (413-549-0900) or email (steve@amherstwinest.com).
- The salmon will be cut into ½ pound and 1 pound pieces. These are approximate, and you will be charged for the actual weight. Be sure to specify size when ordering.
- All salmon is shipped unsliced to preserve freshness and flavor.
- Orders must be received by May 22. The smoked salmon will arrive early/mid-June. We will advise when in.
- Price is \$30/pound, pay when you pick up.
- Tracklements salmon freezes well. It's a long time till we'll see it again at Christmas.

AND WINES TO ACCOMPANY . . .

Good smoked salmon pairs beautifully with crisp whites and sparkling wines. Wines with a good dollop of acidity play off against the flavors of salmon enhancing the experience of both. No need to take a second mortgage either. Listed below are some of the wines we think you might want to try with your Tracklements Highland smoked salmon.

Domaine du Tariquet 2008 . . . \$8.99

Crisp, delicate blend of Ugni Blanc and Colombard from southwestern France.

Sangre de Toro, Torres 2008 . . . \$9.99

From northern Spain, this very dry, delicate white shows a bouquet of white flowers. Very pretty.

Varichon & Clerc Brut . . . \$11.99

Bubbly from France's Loire Valley and one of the very best buys in a dry sparkler we've seen in ages.

Friulano, Bastianich 2007 . . . \$17.99

The Tocai grape from northeastern Italy. Impressive depth to the stoney, mineral flavors. Quite dry, crisp, serious stuff.

REDS UNDER \$7⁰⁰ ???

We spend a good deal of time this searching for inexpensive reds. It is sometimes painful, but we persist and are proud to be able to offer an interesting mix of reds from hither and yon. Our criteria were simple: the wine must taste like what's on the label and it must be well made, i.e., show a good balance between ripe fruit and acidity. With barbeque/outdoor dining season upon us, it's good to have reds like this on hand.

Baron d'Arignac 2007 (FR) . . . \$6.99

Walk into any bistro in Paris, order a carafe of the house red This is it. Firm, dry, food-friendly. How do they do it?

Charamba 2007 (P'TGL) . . . \$6.99

Portuguese reds seem to show a hint of dried herbs underlining the dark fruits flavors. This one is a bit softer than some.

Monte das Oliveiras 2006 (P'TGL) . . . \$6.99

Similar to the above but with a more firm backbone. A tick drier also.

Nero d'Avola, Palazzo 2007 (IT) . . . \$6.99

The Nero d'Avola grape is widely planted in Sicily. There's a simple rusticity here we find compelling.

Sangiovese, Monte Degli Angelli 2008 (IT) . . . \$6.99

Sangiovese is the principal grape of Tuscany (Chianti, etc.) but this one from the "heel" of the "boot" is a bit earthier.

Mesta 2008 (SP) . . . \$6.99

Spain's Tempranillo grape – plump & ripe, with a lovely red cherry slant. Not one to overthink – just enjoy.

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

Another Tempranillo, this one showing the earthy side of the grape. A bit more delicate. Grilled fish, anyone?

SPECIAL OFFER: Buy one bottle each of any six of the above and take them home in our new, reusable, sturdy Amherst Wines tote bags. Compliments of the house.

WINES ON SALE

We're in the midst of the Spring round of trade tastings. These are great opportunities for us to find new, interesting offerings for the shop. We need to clear out some wines in order to accommodate our discoveries. The wines listed below are no longer available to us and so we offer them to you at a special price – **20% off!** They are all in prime condition. You won't see these prices again on these wines. Sale prices are net – no further discounts apply.

WHITE

Chenin Blanc, Kiona 2007 (WA) . . . reg. \$13.99, **sale \$11.19**

The Chenin Blanc grape does beautifully in Washington's cooler climate. Full, just a bit off-dry, flavors of white peach

Côtes-du-Rhône, Ch. du Trignon 2007 (FR) . . . reg. \$14.99, **sale \$11.99**

This is 100% Viognier grape, full - showing the intensity of the excellent '07 vintage and quality of grapes. Fragrant.

Chardonnay, Santé 2007 (CA) . . . reg. \$19.99, **sale \$15.99**

Francis Ford Coppola has crafted a beauty, ripe apple and just a kiss of oak, from prime vineyards on Sonoma.

Sauvignon Blanc, Hall 2008 (CA) . . . reg. \$19.99, **sale \$15.99**

This juicy Napa Sauvignon Blanc offers ripe flavors of tangerine and mandarin, great aromatics.

Macon-Pierreclos, Thevenin 2006 (FR) . . . reg. \$19.99, **sale \$15.99**

Classic white Burgundy, ultra-dry and crisp with a clean, unoaked, mineral style. Flavors show a laser-like focus.

RED

Negroamaro, Conti Zecca 2006 (IT) . . . reg. \$11.99, **sale \$9.59**

The Negroamaro grape is native to southern Italy. This firm, deeply flavored red shows an earthy, rustic style . . . vino!!

Dolcetto, San Fereolo 2006 (IT) . . . reg. \$14.99, **sale \$11.99**

From northeastern Italy's Piedmont region. Plum, black cherry, firm style with plenty of backbone supporting the fruit.

Morellino di Scansano 2006 (IT) . . . reg. \$17.99, **sale \$14.39**

This region in western Tuscany is really happening. Flavors of strawberry, dusty tannins, earth & leather in the bouquet.

Teatown "Right Bank" 2005 (CA) . . . reg. \$19.99, **sale \$15.99**

Blended from Napa Merlot and Cabernet Franc, modeled after Bordeaux' St. Emilion region. Elegant, complex, really fine.

Crozes-Hermitage, Yann-Chave 2006 (FR) . . . reg. \$29.99, **sale \$23.99**

Small producer from the Rhône Valley – deeply colored, concentrated, silky texture, notes of cassis & wild herbs. Big league.

WEBBIES

Last year we re-did our web site. It's still evolving, more new stuff planned. The Saturday tasting schedule is posted there well before you receive this newsletter, so if a Saturday in the next month comes up (such as May) before you've received your newsletter, you can log on to www.amherstwinest.com and be up to date.

WONDERFUL WHITES FROM SOUTHERN ITALY

Time was, this region was known as the source of cheap white and red plonk, the stuff sold in most Italian supermarkets. It's a wonder anyone who grew up on these drinks wine anymore. During the past 25 years the change has been dramatic, especially so for the whites. While these are largely unknown in the U.S., we feel they offer solid value and a diversity of styles which begs to be better known. Here are some of our current faves.

Grillo, Arancio 2008 . . . **\$8.99**

Your basic trattoria white from Sicily. Dry, fresh, unoaked, with a hint of anise in the flavors and aromas.

Fiano, Mandra Rossa 2007 . . . **\$8.99**

The Fiano grape, native to Campania, is now common in western Sicily. A bit off-dry, full-flavored, peach & pear.

Chardonnay, Tormaresca 2007 . . . **\$10.99**

From the "heel" of the "boot", this combines the fuller style common to U.S. Chards with the dry minerality which is distinctly European. A good find.

Malvasia, Vinosia 2007 . . . **\$10.99**

The Malvasia grape is grown in several regions of Italy. As with the above Chardonnay, this is from the Salento peninsula. The warmer climate here yields a softer, riper style of white. The flavors of vanilla bean are so pretty.

Argiolas "Costamolino" 2008 . . . **\$13.99**

Again the Vermentino grape, but this time from Sardinia. Quite different in style, this shows a voluptuous perfume of spice and lemon. The ripe lemon continues into the flavors lifted by the natural acidity. A beauty.

Falaghina, Feudi San Gregorio 2008 . . . **\$18.99**

Falaghina is an ancient grape. This is from the region of Campania. It offers a perfume of sweet fruit in a delicate frame. There's a note of mineral in the flavors, perhaps due to the volcanic soil of this area.

Greco di Tufo, Vinosia 2007 . . . **\$21.99**

Another ancient grape, this one thought to be of Greek origin. There's a sleek, laser-like precision to the dry, steely flavors – reminds of us good Chablis. Mineral, lemon peel, crisp. Understated yet complex.

NEW ARRIVALS

WHITE

Les Rials 2009 (FR) . . \$8.99

Each Spring we get our shipment of this lovely white from southwestern France. By June it's gone and we wait another 10 months, bracing ourselves for the customer disappointment which inevitably follows. Made from an ancient grape, Loin de l'Oeil, the wine is shows a fresh style just bursting with flavor – lemon grass, citrus, dried herbs – dry and full, with a crisp finish.

Gruner Veltliner, Aichenberg 2008 (AUS) . . \$8.99

Austria's Gruner Veltliner, #1 white wine grape of this emerging white wine country. Full-bodied with a distinct mineral caste to the flavors. A bit lower acidity and more supple style than other Gruners.

Montmélian, Domaine Jean Vullien 2009 (FR) . . \$12.99

From high altitude vineyards in the foothills of the French Alps comes this charming white made from the local Jacquere grape. Crisp and quite dry, yet richly flavored. Bouquet shows a yeasty, toasty sense. This is just lovely.

Château le Thibault 2005 (FR) . . \$12.99, 375ml

The region of Monbazillac in southwestern France is known for its sweet whites. With the price of Sauternes as high as it is, here's a terrific alternative – rich and sweet, a perfect dessert white.

RED

Bonarda, Colonia 2008 (ARG) . . \$8.99

The Bonarda grape is of northern Italian origin, but Italian influence in Argentine wine affairs is huge, so no surprise that this grape should turn up there. We have tasted Bonardas from Italy at twice the price which were not as interesting as this with its aromas of crushed herb and, flattering ripe fruit underlined by a core of minerals.

Val de l'Ours Cabernet Sauvignon/Syrah 2008 (FR) . . \$10.99

The Rothschild family of Bordeaux fame has made a significant investment in the Languedoc region in southern France. Here's a fine example blending 75% Cabernet with 25% Syrah with impressive results. This silky smooth red delivers a stunning bouquet of licorice, black fruits, and smoke along with flavors of dark chocolate and cassis. It's a beauty.

Barbera "Briccotondo", Fontanafredda 2008 (IT) . . \$11.99

From northwestern Italy's Piedmont region, this Barbera really hits the bulls-eye with its ripe fruit flavors accented with toasted vanilla bean. The bouquet of raspberry jumps from the glass. This just wants to be drunk.

Pinot Noir, Underwood 2009 (OR) . . \$13.99

Nothing fancy here (including the price), but we love this wine. It totally respects the character of the grape, which so many Pinots do not. There's a delicate red cherry sense to the fresh, clean flavors - a lovely, simple Pinot which would go beautifully with seafood, chicken, or just for hangin'.

Felsina Chianti Classico, Rancia Reserva 2006 (IT) . . \$46.99

Rancia is a high altitude vineyard (420 meters) which is well known for its superior grapes. Felsina, one of our favorite Classico producers, has fashioned a spectacular wine in 2006. This reserva spent 16 months in French oak, helping to integrate the ripe tannins into the firm, ripe fruit. The flavors display focus and concentration while showing dark cherry, plum, and minerals. Long and complex, this should continue to improve for five years. It's a classic.

Barbaresco "Rio Sordo" Reserva, Produttori 2005 (IT) . . \$64.99

Barbaresco, neighbor to Barolo and produced from 100% Nebbiolo grapes, can be a life altering experience. The tiny production from the Rio Sordo vineyard is always kept for four years and released as a reserva. Explosive bouquet of fresh spring flowers, roses, and spice with a dollop of chocolate. Full-bodied, concentrated with exceptional depth, silky tannins. Still a bit young, but even now an omigod glass of wine. Limited quantity.

AMHERST WINES & SPIRITS 233 North Pleasant Street Amherst

Tel: (413) 549-0900 www.amherstwines.com Email: steve@amherstwines.com