

Herb's Half Case Wine Club May 2010
Decatur Package Store ~ 1220 Clairmont Rd ~ Decatur GA 30030 ~ 404-633-5250
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My non-Wine Club selection for the month is the **2008 Alexandria Nicole Shepherds Mark White**. I love well made Rhone-styled whites. They're perfect in the warmer months because they're unoaked, flavorful, and aren't Chardonnay. This example is a blend of Roussanne, Marsanne, and Viognier with floral aromas and clean citrus and melon flavors on the palate. Simply delicious!

2009 Alamos Torrontes (Salta, Argentina)

Tasting Notes: Torrontes is the national white of Argentina and it's gaining in popularity because of one trait: balance. Torrontes is inherently floral. The key to good Torrontes is boosting the fruit, so the floral component fades into the background. This example does just that, and I think it's because it comes from the cooler climate, Salta region. It starts with fresh citrus and floral aromas that lead to smooth apple and lemon flavors on the palate. There's subtly perfumed notes, as well as nicely balanced brightness. The finish is dry with more citrus notes. Great warm weather offering and a great example of the varietal.

Food Pairing: Torrontes is great by itself – crisp, clean, and refreshing – or as a starter wine with light hors d'oeuvres.

2008 Olos Grillo (Sicily, Italy)

Tasting Notes: Obscure, Italian, white varietal? Yes, please! Italy has so many different whites to offer other than Pinot Grigio, it's a shame NOT to try them. This Grillo from Sicily has a lovely aroma of ripe lemon and almond. It is VERY smooth and elegant on the palate with ripe lemon fruit, coupled with a solid, slightly dry backbone. This white has good body, surprising richness, and a nice mouthfeel. The finish shows gobs of ripe, lemon curd and good length. Perfect alternative white.

Food Pairing: This is a good whitefish or shellfish wine. It can also be paired with poultry dishes.

2008 Berger Zweigelt (Austria)

Tasting Notes: In good vintages (read: warmer and sunnier years) Austrian reds can be quite interesting. Zweigelt is the most widely planted red in Austria. It was developed in 1922 by Dr. Fritz Zweigelt as a crossing of Blaufränkisch and St. Laurent. This example has red fruit aromas with mineral and graphite notes. It's quite Pinot Noir-ish on the palate with medium-ripe, softer red berry fruit flavors and good acid balance. There's a subtle graphite component throughout, which I quite enjoy especially when there's enough ripe fruit for balance. The finish is bright and juicy with dried berry fruit and good length. FYI – like Beaujolais, this one tastes best with a slight chill, so put it in the fridge for 15 minutes before serving.

Food Pairing: This is a good summer wine for the red wine drinker. Pair with picnic foods like fried chicken or even light grilled foods, such as sausage or burgers.

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2008 Pietra Majello Montepulciano D'Abruzzo (Italy)

Tasting Notes: My opinion of Montepulciano has risen significantly. It's always been a generic, Italian red to serve with pasta that's usually a bit too dry, but not offensive. What I'm tasting now has better balance and flavor. This example shows medium-bright black fruit flavors with subtle earth notes. It has good concentration of flavor and balanced dryness. It's a cleaner wine with better flavor. The finish has bright, dark berry fruit with good length.

Food Pairing: Montepulciano is a good food wine given its inherent dryness. Pair with hard, pungent cheeses or meat dishes such as pork or sausage.

2008 Ca N'Estruc Negre (Catalunya, Spain)

Tasting Notes: Here's another killer red from Spain. This is a blend of mostly Cabernet and Syrah with dollops of Merlot and Grenache. It has a big aroma of juicy, berry fruit. This wine is VERY thick and rich on the palate with dark berry fruit and hints of coffee, cocoa, and spice. There's enough acidity, so the fruit isn't cloying. The finish is lovely, with pretty berry and violet notes and great length. It's a terrific wine and a perfect selection for the Wine Club.

Food Pairing: This wine screams everyday red. Pair with your favorite weekday "meat and three."

2006 Dynamite Vineyards Cabernet Red Hills (Lake County, California)

Tasting Notes: The Red Hills district in Lake County (east of Napa) is an up-and-coming area for Cabernet. I really liked this Cabernet, because it has European structure with California fruit. It begins with a Spanish-styled aroma of dried, dark berry fruit and spices. On the palate, the California fruit shines with concentrated berry/cherry fruit, pleasant vanilla notes, and light spice. Europe takes over again with a dry backbone and solid grip of tannins. The finish shows gobs of berry fruit and vanilla with good length and big, but integrated, tannins.

Food Pairing: Here's the beef wine for the month. This wine can stand up to just about any heavier meat given its dry backbone, bigger tannins, and full-flavor.

Cheers, Herb