

WINE

SPARKLING

- Gruet Méthode Champenoise Rosé Brut NV (New Mexico) 30
Drusian Prosecco Extra Dry NV (Valdobbiandene) 32

WHITE

- Hilltop Craftsman 2009 (Hungary) 20
Concilio Feudo d'Elimi Grillo 2008 (Sicily) 22
*Thomas Fogarty Gewürztraminer 2008 (Monterey) 24
*Makia Estate Torrontes 2009 (Argentina) 24
Birichino Malvasia Bianca 2009 (California) 28
Tiefenbrunner Chardonnay 2008 (Alto Adige) 28
*Urban Legend Sauvignon Blanc 2009 (Lake Co.) 28
*Giol Pinot Grigio 2008 (Veneto) 30 **og v**
*Voss Sauvignon Blanc 2008 (Napa) 30
David Noyes Tocai Friulano 2009 (Sonoma) 40
*Poet's Leap Riesling (Columbia Valley) 2009 42
*Valle Isarco Kerner 2008 (Alto Adige) 44
*Endrizzi Gewürztraminer 2007 (Alto Adige) 55
*Donkey and Goat Brosseau Vineyard Chardonnay 2008 (Chalone) 60

ROSÉ

- Dom. Raffault Chinon Rosé AOC 2009 (Loire) 28
Donkey and Goat *Isabel's Cuvée* Grenache Rosé 2009 (Mendocino) 32

corkage 15

og = made with organic grapes

v = vegan

RED

- Anselmi *Zellina* Refosco dal Peduncolo Friuli Latisana DOC 2007 (Friuli) 20
Tenuta Currezza *PriNe* 2008 (Puglia) 24
Badia di Morrona *I Sodi del Paretaio* Chianti DOCG 2008 (Tuscany) 28
*Ricci Bonarda *El Matt* 2007 (Piemonte) 7 (6 oz. glass)
Urban Legend *Ironworks* (Lake County) 2008 28
Giol Merlot 2008 (Veneto) 30 **og v**
Venturini Valpolicella Classico DOC 2008 (Veneto) 30
Ferraris Grignolino D'Asti DOC *Vigna del Casot* 2008 (Piemonte) 36
Textbook Cabernet Sauvignon 2007 (Napa) 40
*Vita *Più' Su* Susumaniello 2007 (Puglia) 44
La Cappuccina *Campo Buri* 2004 (Veneto) 46
Donkey and Goat *The Recluse* Syrah 2007 (Anderson Valley) 48
*Pey-Lucia Frisquet Pinot Noir 2007 (Santa Lucia Highlands) 48
Valle dell'Acate Cerasuolo di Vittoria Classico DOCG 2006 (Sicily) 48
*Venturini Valpolicella *Semonte Alto* 2006 (Veneto) 50
Yorkville Cellars Cabernet Franc 2007 (Mendocino) 50
*TreMonti *Petrignone* Sangiovese di Romagna 2005 (Romagna) 55
Zlatan Zinfandel 2007 (Croatia) 60
Prunotto Costamiole Barbera d'Asti DOC 2004 (Piemonte) 75
Villa le Prata Brunello di Montalcino DOCG 2003 (Tuscany) 75

DESSERT

- Monchiero Carbone Birbèt NV 7.50 (5 oz. flute)
Moscato d'Asti DOCG 2008 9 (5 oz. flute)
Vergano Nebbiolo Chinato 12.50 (2 oz.)

* while available, limited supply

It's eccentric to write a wine list in the first person, but this is a very personal list. I've been more or less obsessed with wine for over 30 years, and have been lucky enough to taste a lot of little-known wines that are not generally available. Consequently, a lot of my favorite wines are pretty obscure, and I'm excited to be able to share some of them with you.

The English wine writer Harry Waugh said, "The first duty of wine is to be red ... the second is to be a Burgundy." Presumably he was joking: in truth, the first duty of wine is to be delicious, and the second is to go well with food.

If you taste a wine and aren't sure you like it, the wine is failing in its first duty. My intent is that all of the wines on this list have so much flavor and such distinctive character that you know what they're about from the first sip. There are no bland or boring wines here: I'm not selling anything I wouldn't drink myself, and there are too many great, reasonably-priced wines out there for me to waste time and money drinking anything else. Which reminds me: please don't avoid the cheap wines because you expect them to fall short.

If you liked the wine by itself but it clashes with your food, then the wine is failing in its second duty. To minimize that problem, we offer a wide variety of wines by the glass, and have many wines that go well with a wide variety of foods.

What makes a wine food-friendly? Above all, balance. The fruit, minerals, acids, tannins, and oak (if any) should comprise a harmonious whole, with no one element dominating. Well-balanced wines are generally lower in alcohol than the contemporary average: most of our wines are between 12% and 13% alcohol, and none are much over 14%. Wine should also be balanced over time, or to put it another way, should have a plot: a beginning (aroma), middle (flavor), and end (finish). The main reason to spend more than the minimum on a glass or bottle of wine is to enjoy a longer and more complex plot.

To encourage you to try more wines, we price our wines by the glass to match the bottle price. That is, four six-ounce glasses of still wine or five five-ounce glasses of sparkling wine will cost you the same as one 25-ounce bottle. See the menu for the current selection of wines by the glass, and check the bar's chalkboard or ask your server for until-the-bottle's-gone specials that may come and go during the evening.

SPARKLING

Gruet Méthode Champenoise Rosé Brut NV

\$30

origin: New Mexico

grapes: 100% Pinot Noir

12% alcohol

<http://www.gruetwinery.com>

If you tasted this blind along with some non-vintage rosé Champagnes, you might not guess that it comes from New Mexico. Gilbert Gruet, the founder, ran a Champagne house for 30 years before relocating to the US and imported his equipment from France. Among domestic non-vintage sparkling wines, this full-bodied, fruity, delicious rosé is to my taste second only to the Roederer Estate Rosé, which is almost twice the price.

Drusian Prosecco Valdobbiadene Extra Dry NV

\$32

origin: Valdobbiadene, Treviso, Veneto, Italy

grapes: 100% Prosecco

11% alcohol

In regard to Prosecco, "extra dry" normally means fairly sweet, but this is drier than most. It's also fizzier, more tart, and has a relatively bitter finish, making it extra food-friendly.

WHITE

Hilltop Craftsman 2009

\$20

origin: Ászár-Neszmély, Hungary

grapes: 100% Cserszegi Fűszeres

11% alcohol

<http://www.bluedanubewine.com/wine/88>

http://www.hilltop.hu/product.php?id_product=47

Everyday white wines in most of Italy tend to be young, light, fresh, fruity, simple, and inexpensive. It's hard to find such wines in California: they don't travel well, and by the time you factor in the shipping cost they wouldn't be cheap. This Cserszegi Fűszeres (sold as Woodcutter's White in Europe) comes closer to that style than any Italian white I've had in recent years. Luckily we don't have to pronounce the name of the grape to enjoy the wine.

Concilio Feudo d'Elimi Grillo 2008

\$22

origin: Valle del Belice, Sicily

grapes: 100% Grillo

13% alcohol

[http://www.concilio.it/interne/](http://www.concilio.it/interne/prodotti.aspx?ID=3259&IDP=5022)

[prodotti.aspx?ID=3259&IDP=5022](http://www.concilio.it/interne/prodotti.aspx?ID=3259&IDP=5022)

I was talking with the distributor's representative for this wine about how hard it is to describe the differences between the various indigenous Southern Italian whites that have become popular in recent years. For example, I could say that Grillo tastes more like apricots and Falanghina more like peaches, but there are actually wider differences in flavor between the various apricots we get in the course of a season than between those two grapes. So I'll just say this Grillo is fresh, fruity, and if you like Falanghina, you'll probably like it. It should also appeal to people who like unoaked Chardonnay.

Thomas Fogarty Gewürztraminer Monterey 2008

\$24

origin: Viento Vineyard, Salinas Valley, Monterey County, California

grapes: 100% Gewürztraminer

12.9% alcohol, residual sugar 0.3% (very dry)

[http://www.fogartywinery.com/](http://www.fogartywinery.com/wines/whites/08gvd.htm)

[wines/whites/08gvd.htm](http://www.fogartywinery.com/wines/whites/08gvd.htm)

Gewürztraminer is thought to be an Alsatian mutation of the Traminer grape, which originally

came from the Italian village of Tramin or Termeno in the Alto Adige province, where it has been used to make wine for at least a thousand years. Fogarty is one of only three or four wineries in California that have made properly dry and aromatic Gewürztraminer that could compare with Italy's, and this is their best vintage yet. In addition to the usual tropical fruit, spice, and roses, it has a surprising touch of gooseberry aroma, like Sauvignon Blanc.

Makia Estate Torrontes 2009

\$24

origin: La Rioja, Argentina

grapes: 100% Torrontes

13% alcohol

<http://www.makiaestate.com>

In style, this wine could pass for Italian, which isn't surprising given that the winery is owned and operated by Italians and exports much of its production to Italy. This outstanding example of what can be done with the Torrontes grape has an aroma of flowers and sweet spices, rich and complex fruit, and a long finish.

Birichino Malvasia Bianca 2009

\$28

origin: Monterey County, California

grapes: 100% Malvasia Bianca

13.15% alcohol

<http://birichino.com>

Malvasia is one of the most popular white grape varieties in Italy, particularly in Tuscany, Umbria, and Lazio, where it's used to add character to the cheaper but bland Trebbiano that dominates central Italy's everyday carafe whites. On its own, however, the grape is capable of great things. One of the best proofs of that was a spectacular Malvasia that Bonny Doon used to sell under its Ca' del Solo label. After Randall Grahm sold off many of the winery's assets, that wine was discontinued, and I thought maybe I'd never taste anything like it again. Not to worry: former Ca' del Solo winemaker John Locke has resurrected it under his new Birichino label. This is one of the best, perhaps *the* best, dry Malvasias in the world.

Tiefenbrunner Chardonnay 2008

\$28

origin: Kurtatsch / Cortaccia and Margreid / Magrè,
Südtirol / Alto Adige, Italy

grapes: 100% Chardonnay

13% alcohol

<http://www.tiefenbrunner.com/chardonnay2.0.html>

This is a classic northern Italian take on Chardonnay: ripe but not overripe fruit, cool fermentation in steel, and aging on the lees in concrete tanks result in a fresh, vibrant wine that straightforwardly expresses the varietal character. This is pretty much the polar opposite of a big, fat, oaky California Chardonnay.

Urban Legend Sauvignon Blanc 2009

\$28

origin: Kelseyville, Lake County, California

grapes: 100% organic Sauvignon Blanc

14.4% alcohol

<http://www.urbanlegendwine.com/09sauvblanc.html>

Despite the slightly high (by our standards) level of alcohol, this is a classic, fruity, nicely balanced Sauvignon Blanc. This should go well with just about anything on our menu.

Giol Pinot Grigio 2008

\$30

certified organic, vegan

origin: Veneto, Italy

grapes: 100% organic Pinot Grigio

12% alcohol

<http://www.vinigiol.com>

This wine could be Piave DOC, but for whatever reason the winery labels it Veneto IGT. Regardless, this is a classic Veneto Pinot Grigio: delicate, clean, bright. It should pair particularly well with fish.

Voss Sauvignon Blanc 2008

\$30

origin: Voss Vineyards, Rutherford, Napa Valley,
California

grapes: 100% estate-grown Sauvignon Blanc

11.5% alcohol

<http://www.vossvineyards.com/product.asp?p=229&l=240&v=3656>

This lovely local Sauvignon Blanc is very close in style to those of the Veneto. This is a classic example of how great wine is made in the vineyard: the vines were pruned to reduce yields, the fruit was harvested in mid-August, relatively early by California

standards, and picked before dawn to preserve the freshness of the fruit. Enjoy.

David Noyes Tocai Friulano 2009

\$40

origin: Pagani Vineyard, Sonoma Valley, California

grapes: 100% Tocai Friulano

13.9% alcohol

<http://www.davidnoyeswines.com>

This is a rare creature indeed: a California wine that could pass for Italian in a blind tasting. The winemaker preserves the character of the 80-year-old vines' fruit with minimalist techniques: barrel fermentation in neutral oak, no malolactic fermentation, light fining and filtration. As I was enjoying my first bottle of this delicious stuff, I kept thinking (as I often do when enjoying Friuli whites) why can't we make wine like this in California? D'oh! This is a California wine! This would go particularly well with salumi, seafood, and cheesy dishes, but I'd try it with anything.

Poet's Leap Riesling 2009

\$42

origin: Columbia Valley, Washington

grapes: 100% Riesling

12.9% alcohol, 1.4% residual sugar (off-dry)

http://www.longshadows.com/Poets_Leap

Italy's Alto Adige region, which has a heavy German influence, makes some lovely Rieslings. I'm still looking for Riesling of similar quality here in California; in the meantime, here's a fine one from Washington. This is more in the German style (no surprise, since the winemaker is German), with a touch of residual sugar balanced by good acidity.

Valle Isarco Kerner 2008

\$44

origin: Alto Adige, Italy

grapes: 100% Kerner

14% alcohol, 0.4% residual sugar (dry)

<http://www.cantinavalleisarco.it/en/the-wines/white-wines/25470-kerner.html>

Alto Adige whites are all about aroma, and this is one of the most aromatic I've encountered. Kerner, a cross between Riesling and Schiava, is reminiscent of both Riesling and Muscat. Valle Isarco is one of the best producers in the region, and this wine is one of their best values. This is nice as an apéritif and goes well with vegetables, fish, or any delicate savory dish.

Endrizzi Gewürztraminer 2007

\$55

origin: Alto Adige, Italy

grapes: 100% Gewürztraminer

13.5% alcohol

<http://www.endrizzi.it/interne/>

[Gew%C3%BCrztraminer_vini.ashx?](http://www.endrizzi.it/interne/Gew%C3%BCrztraminer_vini.ashx?ID=936&IDV=3494)

[ID=936&IDV=3494](http://www.endrizzi.it/interne/Gew%C3%BCrztraminer_vini.ashx?ID=936&IDV=3494)

This exceptionally refined Gewürz has a huge and beautiful nose, is delicate on the palate, and has a long finish. If you like ethereally aromatic wines, give it a try. Here's some additional information from the distributor:

The village of San Michele, where the Endrizzi winery is located, was founded in 1100 AD. The current population is only about 2,000 people. It boasts Italy's best research institute for wine, employing 450 people.

Endrizzi is a 125-year-old winery whose trademark is freshness, purity of the air, cleanliness, and just a little acidity because that's what the Alps are all about. Their goal is to make wines that are as clean as possible. They use pipes to pull oxygen out of the tanks and add nitrogen to stop oxidation of wine, which then requires less added sulfites. Since they keep the winery super-clean, they require a super-low level of sulfites to kill bacteria. They ferment at the lowest possible temperatures, which makes impurities settle to the bottom of the tank.

Donkey and Goat Brosseau Vineyard Chardonnay 2008

\$60

origin: Chalona, California

grapes: 100% Chardonnay

13.2% alcohol

[http://www.adonkeyandgoat.com/](http://www.adonkeyandgoat.com/wines_brosseau_chard_2008.html)

[wines_brosseau_chard_2008.html](http://www.adonkeyandgoat.com/wines_brosseau_chard_2008.html)

One of the reasons I don't like most California Chardonnay is that to my taste the grapes are picked too ripe, resulting in wine that's too low in acid and thus unbalanced. In this wine, Tracey and Jared Brandt of Berkeley's Donkey and Goat winery take a dual approach to solving that problem: they pick their grapes earlier, and they adjust the acidity by blending in some verjuice made from green grapes off the same vines a couple of months before harvest. The result is closer to a good Chablis than to any other California wine.

ROSÉ**Dom. Raffault Chinon Rosé AOC 2009**

\$28

origin: Loire, France

grapes: 100% Cabernet Franc

12.5% alcohol

[http://www.adventuresinwine.com/](http://www.adventuresinwine.com/wines/domaine-raffault)

[wines/domaine-raffault](http://www.adventuresinwine.com/wines/domaine-raffault)

Raffault harvests its grapes late for maximum flavor and ferments the wine for up to a month with daily pump-overs for maximum extraction. In California, that would typically result in a flabby, unbalanced wine, but in the relatively cool wine country around Tours it produces a food-friendly rosé with a beautiful color, an appetizing aroma, and great flavor.

Donkey and Goat Isabel's Cuvée Grenache Rosé 2009

\$32

origin: McDowell Valley, Mendocino County, California

grapes: 100% Grenache Gris

13.5% alcohol

[http://www.adonkeyandgoat.com/](http://www.adonkeyandgoat.com/wines_isabelscuvee_2009.html)

[wines_isabelscuvee_2009.html](http://www.adonkeyandgoat.com/wines_isabelscuvee_2009.html)

From Berkeley's own Donkey and Goat comes one of the nicest pink wines made in California. It's made from Grenache Gris, a rare grape variety here, from 95-year-old vines, the oldest in the state. In style it's more French than than Italian, but that's a good thing: Italy has a ways to go before its rosati catch up with its neighbor's rosé. This wine is a de facto Locanda exclusive: I liked it so much I bought all they had left.

RED

Anselmi Zellina Refosco dal Peduncolo Friuli Latisana DOC 2007

\$20

origin: Friuli, Italy

grapes: 100% Refosco dal Peduncolo Rosso

12.5% alcohol

<http://www.italiawineimports.com/Italian-Wine-Producers/Anselmi%202009.pdf>

Refosco dal Peduncolo is generally regarded as the finest member of the Refosco family of grapes. The wine has a unique and memorable flavor, vaguely reminiscent of Cabernet Franc. The Zellina is a relatively simple and straightforward version, with a classic nose, restrained fruit, and a somewhat short finish, but for the price it's a great value.

Tenuta Curezza PriNe 2008

\$24

origin: Salento, Puglia, Italy

grapes: 50% Primitivo, 50% Negroamaro

14% alcohol

<http://www.conexport.com/feudo-di-san-nicola~24/salento-rosso-igt-pri-ne~42.html>

To preserve the freshness of the fruit, the grapes for this unusual proprietary blend from Feudo di San Nicola are harvested at night and the juice is fermented at controlled temperatures in stainless steel tanks. The wine is lighter and fresher than you might expect given the grapes and origin, though it's still a big, robust red that will pair well with pasta, pizza (especially our kale pizza), and meat dishes.

Badia di Morrona I Sodi del Paretaio Chianti DOCG 2008

\$28

origin: Pisa, Tuscany, Italy

grapes: 85% Sangiovese, 15% Colorino and Canaiolo Nero

13.5% alcohol

<http://www.vinitywinecompany.com/Producers/Wines/Badia%20di%20Morrona%20Chianti.htm>

http://www.badiadimorrona.it/gb_vini.htm

In the early 1980s, when I first got seriously into Italian wines, there was a lot of nice, inexpensive, Chianti around. The DOC regulations at the time required that the red Sangiovese grape that defines the wine's character be cut with at least 10% white grapes, which didn't make much sense. (The law was eventually changed, and white grapes are now prohibited.) Frustrated winemakers, notably Piero

Antinori, started experimenting with 100% Sangiovese wines and with blends of Sangiovese and Bordeaux grapes. After Antinori's Tignanello started commanding unprecedented prices in the international market, everybody else jumped on the "super-Tuscan" bandwagon. With the best grapes being siphoned off for these new wines, the quality of traditional Chianti went downhill, and has never recovered. This wine, made specially for our importer Vinity Wine Company, tastes like I remember from the old days. Cin cin!

Ricci Bonarda El Matt 2007

\$7 by the glass only

origin: Piemonte, Italy

grapes: 100% Bonarda

14.3% alcohol

<http://aziendaagricolaricci.com> (Italian only)

The vast majority of Italian wines labeled "Bonarda" are made from Croatina or Uva Rara grapes, and Argentine "Bonarda" is actually Charbono. This is the first wine I've tasted made from the true Bonarda (aka Bonarda Piemontese). This nicely structured wine is unfiltered, unfinned, and saw no oak. It's a great accompaniment for salumi or any meat or cheesy dish.

Urban Legend Ironworks 2008

\$24

origin: Lake County, California

grapes: 80% organically grown Nebbiolo, 20% Sangiovese

12.6% alcohol

<http://ulcellars.com/08ironworks.html>

Here's one you won't find in Italy: a blend of Piemonte's great grape, Nebbiolo, and Tuscany's great grape, Sangiovese. It's also something you won't often find in California: a light-bodied red (the wine is as pale as some rosés.) I find the result reminiscent of Grignolino. Kudos to winemakers Marilee and Steve Shaffer for having the nerve to experiment.

Giol Merlot Veneto IGT 2008

\$30

certified organic, vegan

origin: Veneto, Italy

grapes: 100% organic Merlot

12% alcohol

<http://www.vinigiol.com>

At wine bars in the Veneto region, the menu is often just a chalkboard with a list of grape varieties: Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Cabernet, Merlot, etc. No

winery names, no vintages, no labels (the wine comes out of kegs). This makes sense: the everyday wines in the area are straightforward expressions of the grape varieties they're made from, and there's not much variation in style from one winery to another. A sip of this Merlot takes me right back to those bars. Note that if you're used to California-style Merlot, this may come as a shock, since the tannins and acid, while by no means extreme, are not blunted by oak or residual sugar. This is a great wine to pair with salumi, poultry, meat, or cheese.

Venturini Valpolicella Classico DOC 2008

\$30

origin: Veneto, Italy

grapes: 70% Corvina Veronese, 20-25% Rondinella, 5-10% Molinara

12.5% alcohol

This Valpolicella has an unusual but pleasant herbal aroma strongly reminiscent of Garland chrysanthemum (tong hao) or geranium. Other than that, it's classic Valpolicella: medium-bodied, fruity, dry, and food-friendly.

Ferraris Grignolino D'Asti DOC Vigna del Casot 2008

\$36

origin: Piemonte, Italy

grapes: 100% Grignolino

12.5% alcohol

<http://www.lucaferraris.it/eng/seconda.htm>

When I lived in Italy, Grignolino was one of my favorite wines, particularly in the summer—this light, aromatic red might be the best picnic wine in the world. Since I moved back to California, I've rarely found it, and when I have, I've often been disappointed. That's not the case with the Vigna del Casot: this is what Grignolino should taste like. The winemaker's charming English description is worth repeating in full: *The Grignolino of Asti is considered one of the best Italian wines. Many years ago its production was very intense; in the last years it has been reduced, near through the vanishing. Fortunately this wine has been discovered against by the experts and the young people who have avoided the extinction of this characteristic vine both of Piemonte and the people of this land. They tell that Grignolino has been set up, for the first time, in the Migliandolo hamlet of Portacomaro town; on the contrary, we are sure that the most suitable grounds to cultivate this vine are the ones already mentioned and the*

ones of Castagnole Monferrato, where we can find the "Casot vineyard". A good Grignolino must be of medium structure and tannic at the right point; the colour is soft ruby that, with the time, becomes orange, delicatèd, deep and heavenly bouquet with clear traces of marasca-cherry and underwood, moderately hot in the mouth, dry with a refinedly bitterish and persistent aftertaste. It is a very personal wine that can fascinate the most exigent palate. Served young and room temperature it matches with every kind of hors d'oeuvre and specially with light and not fat cuisine; it goes with the whole meal. Excellent with fish!

Textbook Napa Cabernet Sauvignon 2007

\$40

origin: Oak Knoll, Yountville, and Spring Mountain, Napa Valley, California

grapes: 89% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Cabernet Franc, 3% Merlot, 2% Petit Verdot

14% alcohol

<http://www.marinwines.com/>

textbook-napa-valley-cabernet-sauvignon.html

This balanced, delicious, food-friendly, Bordeaux-styled wine is indeed a textbook example of what Napa Valley Cabernet should be—and often was before the craze for superripe grapes and high alcohol took hold. Despite the different brand name, this is from the same winery as the Pey-Lucia Pinot Noir.

Vita Più' Su Susumaniello 2007

\$44

origin: Torre Guaceto, Puglia, Italy

grapes: 100% Susumaniello

13% alcohol

<http://villaitaliawines.com/index.php?pag=wine&w=67>

This obscure grape variety indigenous to the Brindisi area fell so far out of favor that a few years ago there were only 30 rows in a Benedictine monastery, but in recent years it has become popular again. To me, this exciting wine combines both fresh and dried fruit flavors with an aroma of straw. The donkey on the label refers to the grape's name, which supposedly means "loaded like a donkey" in the local dialect, referring to the vine's unusual productivity.

La Cappuccina Campo Buri 2004

\$46

origin: Soave, Veneto, Italy

grapes: 90% Carmenere, 10% Oseleta
13% alcohol<http://www.lacappuccina.it/Inglese/buri.htm>

This fully mature red wine from a Soave producer blends Carmenere, originally common in Bordeaux blends but now known mostly as a Chilean grape, with the indigenous Oseleta. A few years in bottle has given the wine some elegance. I think it will appeal to people who like Kermit Lynch's wines, particularly his Bordeaux.

Donkey and Goat The Recluse Syrah 2007

\$48

origin: Anderson Valley, Mendocino County

grapes: Syrah with 3% Viognier
14.1% alcohol<http://www.wine.com/V6/Donkey-and-Goat-The-Recluse-Syrah-2007/wine/103481/detail.aspx>

Most California Syrah is planted in places where it gets too hot, resulting in fruity, jammy, Zinfandel-like wines that are unrecognizable as cousins of the great Syrah-based wines of the Rhône. *The Recluse*, as recently noted by Eric Asimov in the *New York Times*, is one of the notable exceptions. The grapes come from Broken Leg Vineyard, a steep, sunny slope in one of the coolest parts of Anderson Valley, a terroir reminiscent of Côte Rôtie. As is traditional in Côte Rôtie, the Syrah is blended with about 3% Viognier. The wine was fermented with wild yeasts and saw no new oak. The way this wine develops over an hour is remarkable: at first, the aroma reminds me of geraniums and the flavor is mineral and austere, but after it opens up it smells of flowers and tastes of ripe summer fruit.

Pey-Lucia Frisquet Pinot Noir 2007

\$48

origin: Santa Lucia Highlands, California

grapes: 100% Pinot Noir
14% alcohol<http://www.marinwines.com/pinot-noir-wine-pl.html>

This wine splits the difference between the traditional Burgundian approach to making Pinot Noir, with its focus on terroir, and the modern California approach, which emphasizes bright fruit. It's perhaps a bit overripe for my taste, but balanced. I think of it as a

gateway wine to introduce Robert Parker fruit-bomb fans over to the pleasures of restraint.

Valle dell'Acate Cerasuolo di Vittoria Classico DOCG 2006

\$48

origin: Acate, Ragusa, Sicily

grapes: 60% Nero d'Avola, 40% Frappato
13.5% alcohol<http://www.valledellacate.net/eng/index.php>

This wine dates back to 1600, when Vittoria Colonna founded the town of Vittoria and gave two hectares of land each to 75 homesteading families on the condition that they plant vineyards. Cerasuolo means dark cherry color. Adding Frappato makes a lighter, fresher, more aromatic wine than straight Nero d'Avola.

Venturini Valpolicella Classico Superiore DOC Ripasso Semonte Alto 2006

\$50

origin: Veneto, Italy

grapes: 70% Corvina Veronese, 20-25% Rondinella,
5-10% Molinara
13.5% alcohol<http://www.vinitywinecompany.com/Producers/Wines/Venturini%20SemonteAlto.htm>

This is essentially a reserve edition of the \$30 Venturini Valpolicella above. The difference is that this is a "ripasso": in February or March, the basic Valpolicella is refermented by pumping it over the lees of the grapes used to make Venturini's Amarone daily for two or three weeks. The result is a stronger, more tannic, more complex wine that can develop with a few years in bottle.

Yorkville Cellars Cabernet Franc 2007

\$50

origin: Yorkville Highlands, Mendocino County

grapes: 90% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet
Sauvignon, 5% Merlot (all organic)
13.4% alcoholhttp://www.yorkvillecellars.com/store_04cab_franc.php

Based on what percentage of the wine I drink is made from it, Cabernet Franc is my favorite red grape, but I don't come across much that I like from California. This is a welcome exception: it's juicy, balanced, has the classic Cab Franc nose, and goes great with food, particularly red meat.

**TreMonti Petrignone Sangiovese di Romagna DOC
Superiore Riserva 2005**

\$55

origin: Romagna, Italy

grapes: 100% Sangiovese di Romagna

13.5% alcohol

<http://www.tremonti.it/EN/>

[catalogoviniEN.aspx?IdVino=7](http://www.tremonti.it/EN/catalogoviniEN.aspx?IdVino=7)

Romagnoli often claim that the Sangiovese grape, more often associated with Tuscany, actually originated in their province. Whether this is true or not, this warm and generous wine is a lovely expression of the grape variety. The wine is aged in French oak barrels for six months, but sees no new oak, so the wood is in balance with the fruit.

Zlatan Plenković Zinfandel 2007

\$60

origin: Makarska, Croatia

grapes: 100% Crljenak Kaštelanski (Zinfandel)

14% alcohol

<http://www.bluedanubewine.com/wine/224/>

[http://www.zlatanotok.hr/vina_21.aspx?](http://www.zlatanotok.hr/vina_21.aspx?sifra=CRLJENAK)

[sifra=CRLJENAK](http://www.zlatanotok.hr/vina_21.aspx?sifra=CRLJENAK)

For generations, how Zinfandel arrived in California remained a mystery. The local legend was that it was brought here by Buena Vista founder Agoston Haraszthy, but Charles L. Sullivan, author of *Zinfandel: A History of a Grape and Its Wine* (UC Press, Berkeley, 2003), established that it actually arrived by way of Austria and the East Coast. DNA profiling eventually traced the vine to an abandoned vineyard on the island of Kaštela in Croatia, where it is known as Crljenak Kaštelanski ("red grape of Kaštela").

The Zlatan Plenković winery recently started producing Crljenak commercially, and the 2007 is the first vintage to be distributed here. While it is definitely recognizable as Zinfandel, Zlatan has done something new with the grape. Compared with its California cousins, the wine is relatively light and highly aromatic, with its fruitiness sufficiently restrained that you can taste some minerality. This reminds me of the uniquely elegant Mendocino Zinfandels the Edmeades family made in in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Prunotto Costamiole Barbera d'Asti DOC 2004

\$75

origin: Asti, Piedmont, Italy

grapes: 100% Barbera

14% alcohol

<http://www.prunotto.it/vini/>

[vini.php?ID=479&cat=cru](http://www.prunotto.it/vini/vini.php?ID=479&cat=cru)

This is the best mature Barbera I've ever tasted. It's big, rich, aromatic, complex, and has a long finish. It pairs well with meat or any rich dish.

Villa le Prata Brunello di Montalcino DOCG 2003

\$75

origin: Montalcino, Tuscany, Italy

grapes: 100% Sangiovese Grosso

14% alcohol

[http://www.vinitywinecompany.com/Producers/](http://www.vinitywinecompany.com/Producers/Wines/Villa%20Le%20Prata%20Brunello.htm)

[Wines/Villa%20Le%20Prata%20Brunello.htm](http://www.vinitywinecompany.com/Producers/Wines/Villa%20Le%20Prata%20Brunello.htm)

Brunello is never cheap, but by the lofty standards of this famous appellation, this delicious wine is a great value.

DESSERT

Monchiero Carbone Birbèt NV

\$7.50 glass (5 oz. flute)

origin: Roero, Piemonte, Italy

grapes: 100% Brachetto

5.5% alcohol, 11% residual sugar, acidity

<http://213.254.15.194/ophera747/>

[www.monchierocarbone.it/index.php?](http://www.monchierocarbone.it/index.php?method=section&action=zoom&id=2041)

[method=section&action=zoom&id=2041](http://www.monchierocarbone.it/index.php?method=section&action=zoom&id=2041)

This pale red sparkling wine is reminiscent of Moscato d'Asti, but has a strawberryish aroma, darker fruit flavors, and a hint of bitter almonds in the finish. The winery recommends it with strawberries or plum tart, but for me a glass makes a lovely dessert in itself.

Bera Moscato d'Asti DOCG 2008

\$9 glass (5 oz. flute)

origin: Sierra Masio, Canelli, Asti, Piemonte

grapes: 100% Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains (Moscato Bianco)

5% alcohol, 13% residual sugar, 5.5% total acidity

http://www.bera.it/eng/Products/Sparkling_and_dessert_wines/Moscato_d_Asti.html

I've tasted Moscato d'Asti from many producers and many vintages. This is simply the best, even compared with its successor the 2009. The fruit is extraordinary, the delicate sweetness is balanced by firm acidity, and the wine has a long, lingering finish. Having been assured by Alesandra Bera that it can age for 50 years, I bought out the distributor's remaining supply. Enjoy it while it lasts.

Vergano Nebbiolo Chinato NV

\$12.50 (2 oz.)

origin: Piemonte, Italy

grapes: 100% Nebbiolo

16.5% alcohol

<http://www.chinativergano.it/002prodotti.htm>

Producer Mauro Vergano doesn't give out much information about this refined and delicate digestif, which is similar to an amaro such as Averna or Ramazzotti but lighter. Nebbiolo wine from Barbaresco producer Luca Roagna is fortified with a little alcohol, perhaps sweetened, and infused with a secret combination of herbs and spices including chinchona bark (*china* in Italian, hence *chinato*), which contributes the quinine that gives the drink its distinctive bitterness.