

Sunday, May 26, 2002

FOCUS ON WINE



RAY & ELEANOR HEALD

Spanish wines continue meteoric rise

Except for California, no other wine-producing area in the world has accelerated as a fine wine source as rapidly as Spain. Like Italy, wine has been made in Spain since Roman times. Until the last decade, much of it was mediocre at best.

Times have changed! Spanish wines are hotter than ever. Another piece of good news is that Spain has had a hot string of very good vintages, beginning with 1990 and extending through the excellent 2001. While that's good news, the flip side is not. Success has brought more Spanish wine brands into the market. Some are not the highest quality and are dulling the image.

This is especially true for albarino, the perfect-for-summer, dry white wine from Rias Baixas, near Gallecia in northwest Spain. One of the best available is 2000 Luco Albarino \$22. Another favorite white of ours, that's great with shellfish, is 2000 Bodegas Angel Rodriguez "Martinsancho" Verdejo \$14 from the Rueda region. This pre-phyllloxera, retained in isolation vineyard is responsible for preserving the verdejo variety.

Fruity reds

"Spain as a wine category is maturing," said Steve Metzler, owner of his import company Classical Wines, focused on high quality, family-owned vineyards. "Spain, today, can't be beat for good, globally competitive wines in the \$10 to \$30 range."

Although it's the blockbuster reds (we'll get to those in a minute), that have brought instant fame to Spain, there's a fruity red, that's perfect with spicy foods, you should try. It's also delightful chilled.

2000 Bodegas

Agapito Rico Carchelo from Jumilla \$9 is a blend of monastrell (also known as mourvedre), syrah, tempranillo, cabernet sauvignon and merlot. The fresh berry aromas and flavors of Carchelo are mouthwatering. Although not as fruity as Carchelo, 2000 Bodegas Guelbenzu "Azul" \$15 from the Navarra region is an incredible value that pleases with layered complexity, mid-weight richness and a long, supple finish.

If you're looking for new and different. Choose the El Bierzo region of northwestern Spain. There, red grapes, grown at high altitude, offer depthful black fruit character. An example is Dominio de Tares Mencia \$17 with a three-month aging in new French oak. The indigenous mencia grape is considered to be a direct ancestor of cabernet franc, a wine that's getting significant play as a solo varietal in California.

Blockbuster reds

The Catalan Priorato region in the mountains southwest of Barcelona is the source of the "killer" wines of Spain. Although hyped by a number of high-profile wine press, there are only a few wines available in the U.S. If you can find them, they run \$200 per bottle. Toro in Castilla y Leon is another red region on the rise.

We prefer to look where some high-profile producers in the Ribera del Duero have recently sunk roots for red wines at more reasonable prices. The most prominent among them is Alejandro Fernandez, acknowledged

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WINE PICKS

Spain does not produce zinfandel. That's a California specialty. The 2000 Zibaco Dancing Bull Zinfandel \$8 is an outstanding value. Spain doesn't produce sauvignon blanc. It's becoming a New Zealand specialty. Try: 2001 Villa Maria Reserve Clifford Bay \$29 (gooseberry, and grassy style); 2001 Villa Maria Cellar Selection \$22 (lemony and bright); 2001 Villa Maria Private Bin \$35 (refreshing); or 2001 Glazebrook, Hawkes Bay \$12 (good deal).
BEST BUY FROM CALIFORNIA: 2001 Bogle Sauvignon Blanc \$8.

The longer I live in Michigan, the more I realize that spring weather is something to celebrate. Most of the year is gray and dismal, but, the spring and summer is absolutely wonderful and something to indulge in. My family's idea of welcoming spring is with our annual pig roast barbecue. The history of barbecue itself is interesting. The pig became an omnipresent food staple in the south for several reasons. In the pre-Civil War period, southerners ate, on average, 6 pounds of pork for every one



DEAN JONES

pound of beef. Pigs were a low-maintenance and convenient food source for southerners.

Pigs could be put out to root in the forest and caught when food supplies became low. These semi-wild pigs were tougher and less juicy than modern hogs, but were still a popular food source.

Tenderness of these pigs was achieved by indirect cooking methods involving the use of long, low heat. Every part of the pig was utilized—the meat was either eaten immediately or cured for later consumption, and the ears, organs and other parts were transformed into other edible delicacies.

Pig slaughtering became a time for celebration, and the neighborhood

Memorial Day meals



Barbecue Pizza: Above, grill vegetables and then top them on a pre-baked pizza crust. Top with cheese for a quick and smoky taste. Below, tangy kabob salad can be grilled outside or broiled indoors and can be made with chicken or vegetarian "meat" found in supermarket frozen food sections. Serve over salad.

Break away from basics for a picnic with panache

BY LANA MINI
STAFF WRITER

Whether it's warm or cold on Memorial Day, a summer-inspired meal can be created indoors or out.

If chilly temperatures force the picnic indoors, keep it sizzling with advice from Troy firefighter Ted Bushofsky. He created a zesty lasagna that's included in a new book

The National Firefighters Recipe Book written by Louis A. DePasquale, a retired firefighter himself living in Arizona.

Proceeds from the book support burn survivors. It includes 175 recipes submitted by firefighters across America. Order it at www.all-hand-pubs.com or call (623) 815-2696. Bushofsky's meal, made

indoors, is appropriately titled "Screaming Fire-Alarm Lasagna." With a half-cup crushed red pepper it's spicy enough to make any day seem hot.

"Serve with (material safety data sheets) and plenty of Manox," joked Bushofsky.

For the fat-content counter or the vegetarian in your life, try grilled imitation sausage. Boca brand makes a line of soy-based meat substitutes including ground beef and sausage. Add honey Dijon mustard, chives and mayonnaise to grilled sausage. Substitute ground beef with Boca in Bushofsky's lasagna too, if desired.

A different table setting

Jim Hanson, home design and entertaining expert for Marshall Field's, suggests creating an indoor look at an outdoor picnic. Bring out an oriental rug, cushions and lots of candles for the picnic table. Fill mason jars, baskets and clay pots with annuals, cut greens, branches and fruit. Wrap old plastic pots in burlap and tie with raffia for the centerpieces.

"Set up a grill-to-order station," Hanson suggests. "It gives guests options and the host the opportunity to cook and mingle."

New grill laws

If you're filling the gas grill this year remember that as of April 1, all propane cylinders must have an over-fill prevention device. If not, they will not be refilled.

The OPD prevents cylinders from filling over the 80 percent limit making them more environmentally



Kabob salad is refreshing meal

KABOB SALAD

- 1 20-ounce can pineapple
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon Mrs. Dash Mesquite Grilling Blend
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts cut into 1-inch cubes. Or substitute chicken with vegetarian Morning Star brand imitation chicken
- 1 red bell pepper cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1/2 cup red onion cut into squares
- 1 package (10 ounces) Dole prepackaged romaine salad

Drain pineapple. Reserve cup juice. Combine reserved juice, oil and mesquite blend in a shaker jar. Four cups dressing into cup.

Set aside remaining dressing. Thread pineapple chunks, chicken or imitation chicken, bell pepper and onions onto skewers. Brush with 1/2 cup dressing.

Grill or broil 10 to 15 minutes or until chicken flesh is no longer pink. Vegetarian chicken requires less time. Turn skewer occasionally. Serve kabobs over salad greens. Serve with remaining dressing.

Recipe courtesy of Ms. Dash & Dole vegetables, EC Editorial services

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Pig roast's historical roots go whole hog

Add flavor to pig roast with barbecue sauce

This is a terrific barbecue sauce for roasting the pig. Simply add more chili powder for a spicier sauce.

FAT BOY'S BBQ SAUCE

- 1 cup ketchup
- 1 cup strong black coffee
- 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar

- 1 small onion, finely diced
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons molasses
- 2 teaspoons dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon chili powder

Combine all ingredients in saucepan and simmer for 20 minutes.

would be invited to share in the event. The traditional southern barbecue grew out of these gatherings.

At the end of the colonial period, the practice of holding smaller neighborhood barbecues was well established,

but it was in the fifty years before the Civil War that the traditions associated with large barbecues became commonplace. Plantation owners regularly held large and festive barbecues, or

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