

# WINE, SPIRITS & FINER FOODS SPEC'S Update!



Mon-Sat February 22,  
to February 27, 2010

DEFINING VALUE

CALL TOLL-FREE AT 1-888-526-8787

[www.specsonline.com](http://www.specsonline.com)

Houston family owned since 1962!



**The Great Grapes Class**  
Five Mondays, April 19-May 17, 2010,  
7:00 p.m.- 9:00 p.m.

for more details go to:  
[www.specsonline.com](http://www.specsonline.com)

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Specs Annual **Cheese Fest**,  
always a hugely popular event,  
is **April 8-10**  
this year at  
Spec's Smith Street



Spec's Radio  
has an  
Application on iTunes  
for your iPhone!  
go to:  
[www.specsonline.com](http://www.specsonline.com)

## COMING SOON

**CORPUS CHRISTI**  
5625 South Padre Island Drive

**TEMPLE**  
3550 S. General Bruce Dr.

*SPEC'S UPDATE is a publication of Spec's Wines, Spirits & Finer Foods. All prices listed are subject to change without notice. ALL PRICES LISTED ARE FOR SPEC'S SMITH STREET SUPERSTORE AND INCLUDE A FIVE PERCENT DISCOUNT FOR CASH. (Many items are available at Spec's Neighborhood Stores at different prices.) All items are offered "first come, first served" and are subject to availability; some quantities may be limited. Spec's reserves the right to restrict quantities. Spec's is not responsible for errors in printing. Typographical errors will not be honored. "Spec's" and the rabbit logo are service marks of Spec's Family Partners and are registered with the State of Texas.*

## WINE OF THE MONTH!



**El Bon Hombre DO Valencia, 2008 \$14.24 cash**  
50% Monastrell/50% Cabernet Sauvignon  
Big strawberry and red fruit on the nose followed by light mocha notes. The palate displays generous acidity and highlights flavors of strawberry candy with an underlying truffle nuance. Easy finish with medium tannins.

If you enjoyed this selection try some more of the new Spanish selections:

**Real de Aragon Garnacha 2007 (Calatayud)**  
88pts Wine Advocate - \$9.98 cash

**Milcampos Tempranillo 2006 (Ribera del Duero)**  
90pts Wine Advocate - \$12.72 cash

## Bits & Pieces

by Charles M. Bear Dalton



Like the stuff that accumulates in garages or drawers, some stuff accumulates on computer hard drives. As I take tasting notes, I sort of mentally slot them into articles or winery profiles but some notes don't really fit into a particular article or profile. This is all stuff that I as a wine lover want to know, despite the fact that it is a bit of a hodge-podge. Critical mass has been achieved. It is time to release the bits and pieces.

### Second Verse, Same as the First ...

Like the song "Henry the Eighth", the second verse - or in this case, second vintage - is the same as the

first ... which is to say really fine. If you liked the 2008 Kono Sauvignon Blanc - and a lot of you obviously did as we sold out in record time - check out the just arrived 2009.

### KONO Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, 2009

12x750ml \$9.99 \$112.58

Tech: 13% Alcohol. 100% Sauvignon Blanc tank fermented using no ML and no oak. Green straw in color with good legs; dry, medium light-bodied with crisp acidity. Fresh and alive with citrus and pomegranate fruit. Lovely, sweet fruit and plenty of minerality. **Crisp, vibrant, and alive. Really Fine.** BS: 90VHR.

Continues on page 3

Inside This Issue: *Deli Specials, Delicious Mischief, Wine and Cheese of the Week & more!*

*Bits & Pieces* continued from page 1

### Could Have Fooled Me

I don't like white Rhone wines and I don't like the grapes they are made from. Usually. At least that's what I keep telling myself. I also know that they don't sell well in Spec's stores. These kinds of wines only sell well in winery tasting rooms. So when each of these wines was first pitched to Spec's, I didn't even want to taste them. Move on. Next. Only for some reason I did taste them and somewhat to my chagrin found out they were quite good. And even exotic. With extraordinary quality. Who'd-a-thunk it?

### NADIA Santa Barbara Highlands White, Santa Barbara County, 2007

6x750ml \$19.89 \$112.00

Tech: 14.1% Alcohol. A blend of 58% Viognier, 33% Grenache Blanc, and 9% Roussanne tank fermented with full ML and then aged 9 months in French oak barrels (25% new). Pale yellow straw in color, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with fresh acidity. Dry, focused, lively citrus and stone fruit with notes of lime and quince, a minerally almost salty terroir, subtle spicy oak, and accents of subtle floral, spice, and a hint of butter. Very long, clean, refreshing finish. Elegant, exciting, exotic, lively, and precise. Subtle and exotic (I know I wrote exotic twice. Trust me). **Excellent. BS: 92+VHR.**

### COPAIN Viognier, Mendocino, 2008

12x750ml \$20.15 \$226.92

Tech: 13.7% Alcohol. 100% Viognier whole cluster pressed and fermented in 100% stainless tanks. Straw in color, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity; very light phenolics. Exotic, fresh, lively, spicy, lemon drop candied fruit with minerally terroir; very long finish; completely delicious and even somehow elegant. **Excellent. BS: 91VHR.**

### Chardonnay? Is He Recommending a Cheap Chardonnay?

Yes. He is. Recommending a cheap Chardonnay that is. And one that un-wooded with no ML and is quite ready to drink.

### INDEPENDENT PRODUCERS Chardonnay, Columbia Valley, 2008

12x750ml \$9.92 \$111.70

Tech: 12.8% Alcohol. 100% Sagemoor Vineyard Chardonnay fermented-and-aged in tanks using no ML and no oak. Yellow straw in color, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry, medium-bodied with balanced acidity and a very light phenolic impression. Juicy, lively, rich, focused, tropical fruit-stone fruit-and-citrus with subtle mushroomy earth and accents of floral; very long finish; elegant refreshing alive-in-the-mouth. **Really Fine. BS: 90VHR.**

### Reference Standard Oregon Pinot Gris

Here it is. This is what I think Oregon Pinot Gris is supposed to taste like, even though it often doesn't. Ripe clean fruit, no oak, and no ML. Delicious.

### KING ESTATE Signature Pinot Gris, Eugene-Oregon, 2008

12x750ml \$11.76 \$130.74

Tech: 13% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Gris (41% of which is estate grown-certified organic) 100% fermented in stainless steel tanks and aged sur lie for five months (no oak and no ML). Pale-copper-straw in color, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry, medium light-bodied with balanced acidity. Pineapple-lime-pear-and-peach fruit with mineral earth and a floral accent. Really very long, clean, refreshing finish. Delicious, vibrant, refreshing; alive-in-the-mouth. **Really Fine. BS: 90+VHR.**



### Everything Old Is New Again

Ok, its not 100% Pinot Noir but it was just too good to pass up. And it's not like the blend is unheard of. Before France AOC laws were introduced beginning in the 1930s, lots of red Burgundy (Pinot Noir) had more than a bit of Syrah blended into it to add color and structure. Others are doing this. At least Castle Rock admits it. Everything old is new again. And value never goes out of style.

### CASTLE ROCK Pinot Noir, Sonoma County, 2007

12x750ml \$11.21 \$126.20

Tech: 13.8% Alcohol. A blend of 80% Pinot Noir, 20% Syrah. Medium purple-red in color with well formed legs; dry, medium-bodied with balanced acidity and light-to-medium phenolics. Developed, rich red & black cherry-berry fruit with subtle mushroomy rich earth and a hint of coffee grounds along with accents of black pepper and subtle cola. Long, clean finish. This is a focused but satisfying red with some real Pinot character buttressed by a bit of Syrah. There is lots of precedence for this sort of blend in 19th and early 20th century wines from Burgundy. **Very easy drinking. Fine. BS: 88+VHR.**

### B-G-O, B-G-O ...

No, not that Biggio – although they might be distantly related. Nevertheless, this are two excellent Oregon pinots I'd bet you haven't heard of from a husband and wife team who started from scratch. Come on by and check 'em out.

### BIGGIO HAMINA Cellars Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon, 2008

12x750ml \$27.30 \$307.44

Tech: 13% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir blended from the Ana, Deux Vert, Hawk's View and Zenith Vineyards fermented with 25% whole clusters in open top tanks with hand punchdowns and aged 12 months in French oak barrels (10% new). Medium red in color with well formed legs; dry, medium-full-bodied with fresh acidity and lightly chewy phenolics. Earthy, rich, almost meaty. Offers lovely dark juicy ripe but lively soft red and some black fruit. Complete and integrated. **Delicious. Excellent. BS: 92VHR.**

### BIGGIO HAMINA Cellars "Ana Vineyard" Pinot Noir, Dundee Hills (Willamette), 2007

12x750ml \$39.22 \$448.42

Tech: 12.5% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir fermented with 25% whole clusters in open top tanks with hand punchdowns and aged 11.5 months in French oak barrels (30% new). The winemaker says "No enzymes or trickery". Medium red in color with well formed legs; dry, medium-light bodied with fresh acidity; medium plus phenolics. Bright red cherry and raspberry with lots of spice and a touch of VA. Alive with fruit and perfume. Focused and delicious with well integrated oak and subtle mineral. **Yum. Excellent. BS: 93+VHR.**

### Turn Out the Lights ...

From the highest planting of Pinot Noir in Santa Barbara County's prestigious Bien Nacido vineyard, the wine's name "La Bauge Au-dessus" means "the decadent party up above". This is made by Jim Clendenen, one of the bad boys of Pinot Noir who emerged in the 1980s determined to combine Burgundian technique with the notion of terroir in California. Without Jim and his ilk, there would be no Pinot boom of today.

### AU BON CLIMAT Pinot Noir 'La Bauge Au-Dessus', Santa Maria Valley, CA, 2006

12x750ml \$28.86 \$162.50

Tech: 13.5% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir (75% Bien Nacido Block 2 [clones 113, 114 and 115] and 25% Le Bon Climat [clone 667]) aged 12 months in French oak barrels (15% new). Purple in color with well formed legs; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity and medium plus phenolics. Juicy, lively, black & red cherry fruit with minerally terroir, subtle oak, and accents of cola, black pepper, and cocoa. Very long finish. Delicious, focused, satisfying; quite lively. **Excellent. BS: 93HR.**

continues on page 4

Bits & Pieces continued from *page 3*

### Cab Country

Cabernet never goes out of style. Here are three increasingly good ones in three desirable price ranges: something for everyday, something for the weekend, and something a bit more special occasion. All Delicious. And as they are all 2005s, they are all at or fast approaching optimum drinkability.

#### QUAIL RIDGE Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, 2005

12x750ml \$13.65 \$13.65

Tech: 12.5% Alcohol. 92% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Cabernet Franc, 3% Merlot, 2% Petit Verdot aged 12 months in French oak barrels. Purple in color with well formed legs; dry, medium light-bodied with balanced acidity and lightly chewy phenolics. Juicy, lively, black berry and cherry fruit with nice notes of dust and tobacco and a bit of pencil shavings. This is a super Claret-style Cabernet. *Excellent. BS: 91VHR.*

#### CALISTOGA CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, 2005

12x750ml \$23.80 \$263.52

Tech: 14.9% Alcohol, and 98% Cabernet Sauvignon, 2% Petite Sirah. Aged 18 months in all French oak barrels. Inky purple in color that stains the glass with well formed legs; dry, full-bodied with softly balanced acidity and moderately chewy phenolics. Rich, black, ripe Cabernet offering grapey blackberry and black cherry fruit with notes of black pepper and cedar along with subtle tobacco and dust notes. Rich and rounded in the mouth with a soft, easy drinking feel. Picks up some mure perfume in the mouth. *Lovely and satisfying. Excellent. BS: 92+ VHR.*

#### SUMMERS Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Napa Valley, 2005

12x750ml \$39.77 \$447.84

Tech: 14.1% Alcohol. 100% Cabernet Sauvignon fermented using pump-overs and aged 21 months in all French oak barrels (60% new). Inky purple in color with well formed leg; stains the glass; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity and moderately chewy phenolics. Big, juicy, ripe, dense black fruit with rich black berry and mixed black cherry-berry fruit accented with earth and oak. *Very rich and quite satisfying. Excellent. BS: 93+ VHR.*

### Aussie Shiraz You Still Need to Taste

While sales of some higher end Aussie shiraz is in a free fall there are still some excellent wines out there and the values now a better than ever. Here are two you need to try from Australia's two best traditional growing areas for Shiraz: Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale.

#### HEWITSON Ned & Henrys Shiraz, Barossa Valley, 2006

12x750ml \$21.67 \$244.05

Tech: 14% Alcohol. 100% Shiraz from terra rossa vineyards (red soil over limestone) aged in all French oak barrels. Inky purple in color that stains the glass with well formed legs; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity and chewy phenolics. Dusty black & red fruit with dusty gravelly earthy terroir, obvious oak, and a very long finish; chunky, complete, satisfying. *Excellent. BS: 91+HR.*

#### GEMTREE "Uncut" Shiraz, McLaren Vale, 2008

12x750ml \$19.83 \$223.26

Tech: 14.5% Alcohol. 100% Syrah (average vine age is 40 years) fermented using open tops tanks and punch-downs, aged 16 months in French oak barrels (all new), and bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. Inky purple-black color that paints the glass with well formed legs; dry, very full-bodied with balanced acidity and very chewy phenolics. Extracted, juicy, and chewy with black fruit, dusty subtle gravelly terroir, and accents of black flowers, black & white pepper, and subtle coffee notes. Very long finish. Delicious, robust, rustic. *Excellent. BS: 93+ VHR.*

### Sometimes You Feel Like a Great Value Bordeaux

Yes, I agree that Bordeaux is all about great red wines but it is so much more than just that. Bordeaux also makes fabulous dry roses and everyday whites and yes, even value-priced everyday drinking reds. Here are two from the pretty if unheralded 2007 vintage that fit the bill as daily drinkers. What is the difference between the two? Tour Seguy sees a little oak, Haut Sociando (to paraphrase the old Almond Joy jingle) don't.

#### Ch. HAUT SOCIANDO, 1er Cotes de Blaye, 2007

12x750ml \$9.88 \$111.26

Tech: 12.5% Alcohol. A blend of 80% Merlot and 20% Cabernet Franc made with standard Bordeaux wine making and no oak barrel aging. Medium red-purple in color with well formed legs; dry, medium-full-bodied with balanced acidity and moderately chewy tannins. Balanced, even elegant basic Bordeaux with red fruit accented with notes of cedar, earth, and spice. In balance and focused and a touch of richness. *Very Good. BS: 86VHR.*

#### Ch. Le TOURS SEGUY, Cotes de Bourg, 2007

12x750ml \$10.99 \$123.71

Tech: 13% Alcohol. A blend of 90% Merlot and 10% Cabernet Franc fermented with pump-overs and aged 80% in tank and 20% in seasoned oak barrels. Red-purple in color with well formed legs; medium-full-bodied with balanced acidity. Clean and focused and a nice bit of richness and weight. Mixed black and red fruit with a supple feel. *Quite tasty. Very Good. BS: 86+ VHR.*

### ... Sometimes You Don't.

I like this big boy bordeaux a lot now. I don't say this often but I think I will like this better in six months and much better in two years. The problem is that there won't be any of this left in two years. However you slice it, this is excellent Margaux.

#### CHATEAU LASCOMBES, Margaux, 2006

12x750ml \$59.80 \$673.44

Tech: 13% Alcohol. A blend of 50% Merlot, 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Petit Verdot aged 18 months in French oak barrels (90% new). Deep purple-red-black in color with well formed legs; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity and chewy phenolics. Dark, dusty, juicy, ripe, spicy black & red fruit (black cherry, black currant, and black raspberry with kirsh & framboise perfume), dusty gravelly earth terroir, dusty spicy oak, and accents of pencil shavings, tobacco, savory spice, and hints of coffee grounds and black pepper. Very long finish. Delicious, elegant, lovely-in-the-mouth. Rounded, ripe, and complete. *Excellent. BS: 91+HR.*

### Not Just Any Port ...

Quinta do Noval is the - what is the right word? Trustee? Curator? Gardener? - of the world's most famous Port vineyard "Nacional" where the pre-phylloxera vines continue to grow ungrafted and continue to produce the most extraordinary Port. Nevertheless, like the rest of the Port producers, Noval has had to redefine both itself and its range in recent years. Some producers have tried lightening some of their wines to appeal to a new generation. Some are making less port and more table wine. Noval has gone the other way in introducing a dark strapping dense sort of reserve (think very high end Ruby) Port to be its entry-level icon.

#### Quinta do NOVAL Black, Porto, NV

12x750ml

Tech: 19.5% Alcohol. A blend of 40% Touriga Nacional, 30% Touriga Franca, 18% Tinta Cao, 12% Tinta Roriz all crushed by foot in lagares, then fermented and fortified in tank. Wines are aged an average of 5 years in second-use barrels at the



estate before blending and bottling unfiltered and unfiltered. Inky purple in color (hence the name "Black") with well formed legs that stain the glass with color; sweet, full-bodied with balanced acidity; moderately chewy phenolics. Juicy, dense, ripe, extracted but knitting together nicely with sweet black fruit, lots of richness and plenty of fire. Long, spicy finish. Fresh and alive. Really Fine. This a fine bottle for keeping for that occasional warming sip before bedtime or for a bit of conversation next to the fire. *BS: 90+ VHR.*

continues on page 5

Bits & Pieces continued from *page 4*

### Chocolate Exotic

I don't like gimmick wines. I do like Chocolate and I love wine. Sometimes I even enjoy them together. A glass of ripe Napa valley floor Cabernet and a handful of M&Ms will bring a smile to my face just about every time. The deal is, I have never liked chocolate-flavored wine – until now. This takes that game to a whole new level.

### LONDON Winery Chocolate Finale, American, NV

12x375ml \$27.29 \$307.29

Tech: 15.9% Alcohol. The wine is a dessert sweet 100% Zinfandel that has been fortified with brandy in which cocoa beans have been macerated.

Deep purple in color, bright and medium clear with good legs; In reality, this is more liqueur than wine. Whatever the case, it is delicious, elegant, and utterly exotic. Alive-in-the-mouth. Satisfying with beautifully integrated juicy dark chocolate flavor over black and red fruit. It is extraordinarily well knit. *Quite Excellent. BS: 92+ VHR (CW).* ■

## UNIVERSITY OF WINE

Kevin Simon is a college professor – and he doesn't just like to drink wine, he likes to teach it. As part of the highly respected restaurant management program at the University of Houston, Kevin teaches the next generation of culinary entrepreneurs about the joys and challenges of serving (and selling) wine. He settles in at our KTRH microphones to explain how his programs work – and about a very special wine room at U of H that all the most public people are using for private events.

## ABOUT YOUR HOST

A native of New Orleans, John DeMers ate his way through 128 foreign countries before settling in Houston—which is approximately the same thing. The former food editor of United Press International and the Houston Chronicle, John has also covered Mafia trials and plane crashes, Super Bowls and championship fights in his 30-plus years in journalism. He currently serves as editor in chief of Arts Houston magazine. John is the author of 31 published books, most recently "Big Easy Cocktails" published by Ten Speed Press.

## This Week on

# DELICIOUS MISCHIEF



John DeMers

So, friends, you have to join us for Delicious Mischief, Houston's own food, wine and arts radio program, this Saturday from 11 a.m.-Noon on KTRH 740.

## BLOG WITH US

To get involved in some Delicious Mischief of your own, check out the [www.deliciousmischief.blogspot.com](http://www.deliciousmischief.blogspot.com). Delicious Mischief can be heard on the 50,000-watt NewsRadio 740 KTRH.

*Check out [www.deliciousmischief.com](http://www.deliciousmischief.com)!*

## MADE IN THE SHADE

Houston restaurateur Claire Smith has been up to her old tricks again. Just a few years after giving the Heights arguably its first fancy restaurant, Shade (the first of now many, we note with hindsight), she is bringing a fresh, bright, new offering to the ever-lively Montrose area. She has just opened Canopy in the space we remember as the wonderful Tony Ruppe's. Thanks to Claire, Russell Murrell and executive chef David Luna, the space's most wonderful years might still be ahead.

## MEET CARMEN OF JULIA'S BISTRO

From humble beginnings alongside her grandmother Julia in a small kitchen in Mexico, Carmen Vasquez began to hone her craft of bringing authentic, rustic cuisine to life while melding South American and Spanish fare. The product of this labor of love has flourished into what is now Julia's Bistro in Houston's hip Midtown, a place where tradition keeps colliding with surprise. This Carmen is no opera, although of course life in the restaurant business often is.

### This Week's

# Delicious Mischief

Recipe

## THAI BASIL CHICKEN

- 1 pound skinless boneless chicken breast
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup matchstick-cut carrots
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- Vietnamese chile-garlic paste to taste
- 1/4 cup chicken broth
- 2 teaspoons Asian fish sauce (naam pla)
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 ½ cups sliced fresh basil leaves
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice or to taste

Freeze chicken wrapped in plastic wrap for 30 minutes to make slicing easier. Cut chicken into thin slices. Heat a wok or heavy skillet over high heat until hot. Add oil and heat until hot but not smoking. Add onion and stir for 2 minutes, then add garlic and stir-fry 1 minute more. Add chicken and cook, stirring constantly to prevent sticking, 3 to 4 minutes. Add chile-garlic paste, broth, fish sauce, sugar, soy sauce, and black pepper and stir-fry until combined. Add basil and stir-fry 30 seconds. Stir in lime juice. Serve chicken with steamed jasmine rice. Serves 6. 🍴