

The TWELVE

for JUNE 2008

Spec'ssm

YOU LOVE GREAT WINE ... but you also want some "everyday value wines" that taste really good. So do I. I love great wine, but \$15 is about my limit for my *everyday drinking wines*. To me, *value* mean a wine tastes like it costs more than it does and *everyday drinking* means wines that go well with my life and the sorts of food I eat on a daily basis. Here are my twelve everyday value picks for March 2008, all priced under \$15. - Bear Dalton, Spec's Fine Wine Buyer

Cuvée de PENA, Vin de Pays de Pyrenées Orientales, 2005

12x750ml \$6.12 bottle \$68.27

A ripe, juicy-textured, un-oaked blend of 57% Grenache, 38% Carignan, and 5% Syrah, this Cuvee offers grapey, dark Grenache fruit accented with dusty Carignan notes and the fruit, spice and pepper of the Syrah. There is a welcome note of classic south of France Grenache garrigue (a mix of earth and herbal notes peculiar to Grenache). At this price, this is an extraordinary everyday drinker perfectly suited to backyard barbeques, take-out pizzas, or take-home roast chicken. Really Very Good. BS: 87VHR.

VENTA MAZZARON, Zamora, 2004

12x750ml \$13.49 \$150.48

This 100% Tempranillo old vine red grown in sandy vineyards just outside the Toro DO on the Duero river offers juicy sweet red fruit with notes of leather and black pepper and dusty terroir. It has a fat texture and rich feel in the mouth. Be sure to swirl it thoroughly once it is in the glass as it needs a little air to show its best. Great with lamb or beef. Excellent. BS: 91HR.

Ch. BRONDEAU Bordeaux Superieur, 2005

12x750ml \$14.99 \$168.50

Who says there are no good values left in Bordeaux? This blend of 75% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon from Dominique Meneret's chateau overlooking the Dordogne River near Libourne offers dark berry and cherry fruit accented with notes of dust, spice, gravel, and seasoned oak. It is medium weight and balanced in the mouth with a lingering fruit and terroir finish; all in all a classic, elegant Bordeaux for regular drinking. Better than initially expected and much better than it has to be. Fine. BS: 88+HR.

HAYMAN & HILL Meritage, Monterey County, 2005

12x750ml \$9.70 \$106.83

A blend of 39% Cabernet Sauvignon, 42% Merlot, 5% Petite Verdot, 9% Cabernet Franc, and 11% Malbec, this medium-weight, juicy, well focused, Claret-style blend offers dark cherry and dark red berry fruit with notes of dust, spice, cedar and tobacco and hints of chocolate and earth. Long and clean. Fine. BS: 89HR.

DELAUNAY Bourgogne Chardonnay, 2005

12x750ML \$10.76 \$120.07

Made mainly from Cote Chalonnaise grapes with some from Macon and the Cote d'Or, this 100% Chardonnay is aged in oak barrels (15% new) for 11 months. Pale straw in color with green highlights, it offers clean lemon with hints of tropical and tree fruits and a core of limestone minerality. The subtle oak adds a touch of richness but does not mask the fruit. Really Very Good. BS: 87VHR

NINET de PENA Rose Cuvee, VdP d'Oc, 2006

12x750ml \$7.94 \$88.55

A blend of 60% Syrah and 40% Grenache, this darker-style rosé is light-bodied, refreshing, and juicy with crisp citrus and red berry fruit, accented with hints of pepper, earth, and garigue. The palate is filled with fruit but

is not at all sweet. Perfect for a picnic or pacific rim takeout, or to drink with gumbo or grilled salmon. Very Good. BS: 86VHR.

GEMTREE Tadpole Chardonnay-Viognier, McLaren Vale, 2007

12x750ml \$10.99 \$124.44

20% of this co-fermented blend of 90% Chardonnay and 10% Viognier is fermented, undergoes malolactic fermentation (ML), and is aged one month in new oak barrels; the balance is fermented and aged in temperature-controlled stainless steel tanks and does not undergo ML. The result is a fresh refreshing, crisply balanced fruit-dominated Chardonnay offering citrus and tree fruit with hints of honeysuckle and apricot and a touch of limestone minerality. It has just enough richness for balance but the oak and ML components are integrated compliments that stay in the background. Delicious. Fine. BS: 89+HR.

SELBACH "Fish Label" Riesling Kabinett 2006

12x750ml \$14.85 \$167.19

This super refreshing Riesling weighs in at only 10% alcohol but packs lots of green apple and peach nectar fruit layered over notes of slate and mineral with hints of mountain meadow wildflowers and lime blossom. The texture is juicy but the wine is in thrilling tension with the sweetness perfectly balanced by its bracingly fresh acidity. Finishes long and clean with no remaining sweetness. Really Fine. BS: 90VHR.

VERGET du SUD Syrah des Endes, Vin de Pays du Vaucluse, 2006

12x750ml \$11.82 \$130.14

Another winner from Belgian bad-boy JM Guffens (of Verget fame), this 100% small berry "Serine d'Ampuis" clone of Syrah (originally of Cote Rotie) from his Endes estate vineyard offers ripe black fruit with black and white pepper, exotic spice, and dusty terroir. Medium-plus weight with a fine dusty feel. Perfect with a mixed grill. Fine. BS: 89HR.

OYSTER BAY Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, 2007

12x750ml \$12.35 \$139.80

This is an utterly delightful, fresh, juicy, lively all stainless steel, no malolactic Sauvignon Blanc offering fine citrus, peach, and subtle pear fruit with hints of mineral very well integrated grassiness. Classic for Marlborough with a subtle "gooseberry" note. Really Fine. BS: 90HR.

VILLA MARIA Riesling, Marlborough, 2007

12x750ml \$11.57 \$128.77

Ripe lime and spicy-essense of peach and apple fruit with fine purity and focus is balanced by a beam of minerals that combines with vivid acidity to give a crisp fresh, refreshing feel to this racy, almost rich but well balanced Riesling. The long finish resolves completely clean and dry. Delightful and delicious. Fine. BS: 89VHR.

BELLA SERA "Il Rosato" Pinot Grigio, IGT della Venezia, 2006?

12x750ml \$7.26 \$79.92

What is this? It is NOT a white wine with a little red wine added to make a "blushing rosé." Rather, it is what real Pinot Grigio is really all about. This temperature-controlled stainless steel fermented and aged (no oak) 100% Pinot Gris "Rosato" gets its copper color naturally from the grape skins which do have some reddish pink (vin gris is French for rosé) color. Tasting of pears and limes with a hint of mineral, it is light and refreshing (and lower in alcohol than your typical Chardonnay) and perfect for quaffing on a hot evening while taming the heat of the grill. Delicious. Very Good. BS: 86+VHR.

Special for SPEC's KEY holders:

Buy a mixed case consisting of one 750ml bottle of each of The TWELVE for JUNE 2008 selections for only \$122.75, a savings of \$9.09 over SPEC's already low cash bottle price. This special price is good through 07/02/08. UPC: 00000656306

