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WINE OF THE MONTH!



Elyssia Gran Cuvée Brut Cava NV - \$19.99 cash

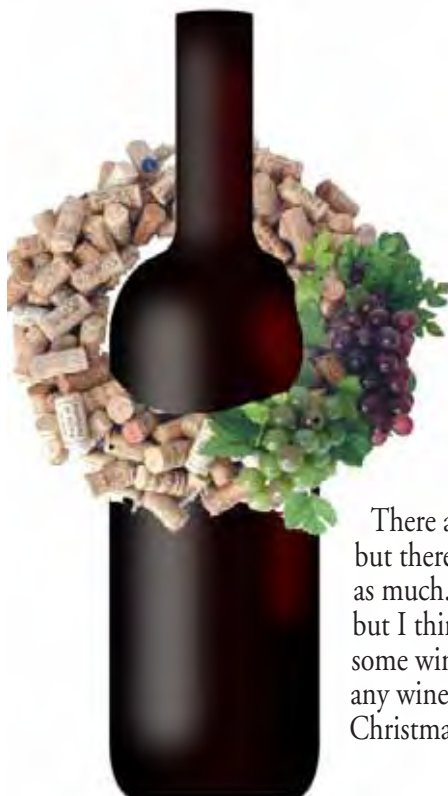
Elyssia Gran Cuvée Brut brings the idea of symmetry to life with the combination of traditional Macabeo and Parellada Cava grapes blended with international favorites Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. This wine offers a sophisticated bouquet of roasted nuts, citrus fruit and honey with layers of complexity through the palate. Flavors of lemon and melon are followed by a spicy finish.

If you enjoyed this selection, try others of the same style:

- Elyssia Pinot Noir Brut Cava NV - \$19.99
- Castellblanch Brut Zero NV - \$9.99
- Castellblanch Cristal Semi Seco NV - \$7.94
- Castellblanch Sparkling Rosado - \$8.51
- Castellblanch Extra Brut NV - \$7.94

Twelve Wines (and More) I'd Want for Christmas

by Charles M. Bear Dalton



This time of year we all get phone calls and emails asking "What would you like for Christmas?" In addition to wanting some new feed buckets, fencing supplies, and other horse-y stuff (all available at Tractor Supply), I of course love wine. And being the fine wine buyer at Spec's and fairly well known from over 20 years of teaching wine classes for the Rice University School of Continuing Studies and at The Wine School at l'Alliance Française, I get a lot of calls and notes asking for recommendations for gifts to wine loving friends.

There are two ways to go. Wine is always appreciated but there are other things that please the wine lover just as much. Some might call these things wine accessories but I think of them as wine necessities. We'll start with some wines that should bring a merry look to the face of any wine lover. Here are twelve (one for each day of Christmastide) that tickle my fancy.

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Inside This Issue: *Collin's Column, Deli Specials, The 12, Beer Buzz, Delicious Mischief, Wine and Cheese of the Week & more!*

Twelve Wines (and More) I'd Want for Christmas *from page 1*

PATZ & HALL "Hyde Vineyard" Pinot Noir, Carneros, 2006
12x750ml \$59.80 \$673.44

Tech Note: 14.8% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir fermented in open tops using "punch-overs" and aged 9 months in three-year-air-dried French oak barrels (45% new). Medium-red-medium-purple in color, and with well-formed legs; dry, medium-bodied with balanced acidity and medium phenolics. Offers developed, dusty, rich, ripe, spicy, focused red cherry and red berry fruit with subtle earthy, mushroomy terroir with a hint of coffee grounds and accents of exotic Asian spice, cocoa, cola, & a hint of coffee and a really long finish. Exotic, focused, ethereal, and elegant; subtle but quite delicious. Aromatically stunning and absolutely compelling. *WOW. Outstanding. BS: 98+.*

OAKVILLE EAST EXPOSURE Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, 2006
12x750ml \$57.86 \$651.63

Tech: 14.5% Alcohol. 85% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Cabernet Franc, and 3% Petite Verdot fermented using open tops with punch-downs and aged 20 months in French oak barrels (80% new). Black-red-purple in color, bright and medium clear with well formed legs; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity and chewy phenolics. Offers ripe black and red fruit with gravelly earth, supple dusty oak, and accents of tobacco, cedar, savory spice, black pepper, and a hint of leather; very long finish; quite delicious, ripe and rich, satisfyingly complete, even though it is very young and still a bit tight. *Really Excellent. BS: 95.*

DEMOISELLE Brut "Premier Cru" Champagne, 1996
12x750ml \$89.99 \$1013.38

Tech: 12% Alcohol. A blend of 80% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot Noir grown exclusively in premier cru vineyards fermented using Methode Champenoise and aged 60 months on the lees before disgorgement. Straw in color with a hint of gold, bright and clear and sparkling; dry, medium-bodied with fresh acidity and very light phenolics. Offers developed yellow and red fruit and yeast flavors, lots of richness and a hint of smoke with a very long finish. It is satisfying, integrated, complete, and frankly delicious; lovely-in-the-mouth with great purity. *Really Excellent. BS: 95.*

J. WILKES Bien Nacido Pinot Noir, Santa Maria Valley, 2007
12x750ml \$28.60 \$322.08

Tech: 13.9% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir fermented in open top tanks with punchdowns, and aged 11 months in French oak barrels (30% new). Deep red in color, bright and medium clear with good legs; dry, medium-bodied with balanced acidity and medium phenolics. Mostly red cherry and subtle berry fruit (with some black fruit nuance) accented with perfume, subtle mineral earth, and well-integrated oak. Really long, rich finish. Elegant, pure, precise, and delicious. Complete and beautifully integrated with an ethereal feel. *Wow. Really Excellent. BS: 95+.*

YANGARRA Estate Grenache High Sands, McLaren Vale, 2005
6x750ml \$69.21 \$389.72

Tech Note: 15.5% Alcohol. 100% Grenache estate-grown on 62-year-old vines planted in deep sand. Aged 24 months – first 2 months in all new Taransaud barrels and then into used Taransaud barrels (very tight grain) for the duration. This is the overnight un-pressed draining from the tanks with no press wine. Medium red-purple in color, bright and medium clear with well formed legs. Dry and medium full-bodied with balanced acidity; lightly chewy phenolics. Fresh, juicy, lively, dusty, and focused red and black cherry and red berry fruit with sandy terroir; spicy, very long, lively finish. Integrated, satisfying, and complete. Delicious, elegant, focused; alive-in-the-mouth. Subtle and sneaky good with incredible depth and length. This is a pure classic sands wine at a very high level. *Really Excellent. BS: 95+VHR.*

TAYLOR FLADGATE Vintage, Port, 2007

6x750ml \$92.61 \$521.48
3x1.5L \$189.99 \$535.24
12x375ml \$47.76 \$537.87

Tech: 18% Alcohol. A blend of Touriga Nacional, Tinta Cao, Tinta Roriz, Touriga Franchesca, Tinta Amarello from the Vargellas, Terra Feita, and Junco Quintas, foot tread in stone lagars, and aged 20 months. After a couple of more "modern" efforts, this is a throwback to the old style. Nevertheless, it is fortified with young spirit from Cognac rather than the traditional commercial spirit produced in Portugal. Aged in 20,000 liter casks, the final residual sugar is 9.93%. Deep inky purple in color, somehow both bright and opaque as it paints the glass with very well formed legs; sweet, full-bodied with balanced acidity and very chewy phenolics. Dark and developing with spicy-sweet-ripe-rich-dusty-chewy-black fruit offering grapey blackberry, blueberry and black currant notes with mure perfume. Dense with slate and dark dusty earth. Offers accents of black pepper, sweet dark spice, tea, subtle cocoa. Very long finish. Also shockingly drinkable and amazingly well integrated. *Outstanding. BS: 96 now (and potentially much higher).*

Domaine du PEGAU Cuvée Reservee, Chateaneau-du-Pape, 2006
12x750ml \$93.60 \$1054.08

Tech: 14% Alcohol. 70% Grenache, 20% Syrah, and 10% Mourvedre (average age of vines 50-60 years) fermented for 15 days in concrete tanks and raised on the lees for two years in large old oak barrels. Purple-deep red in color, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity and moderately chewy phenolics. Juicy with ripe black & red fruit notes of cherry and mixed dark dusty berries, stony-minerally-dusty earth, and accents of black pepper with subtle integrated garrigue and sweet spice. Very long, lively finish. Complete, satisfying, quite integrated, delicious; lovely-in-the-mouth. *Really Excellent. BS: 95+.*

MICHEL MANGNIEN, Clos St. Denis Grand Cru, 2007
12x750ml \$171.29 \$1928.97

Tech: 13% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir fermented using all whole clusters in open top tanks with punch-downs. *WOW!* Deep red in color, bright and clear with well formed legs. Dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity and medium plus phenolics. Developed spicy, sweet, dark, juicy, ripe, red and black fruit with dark earth that is rich with limestone minerality, dusty French oak, and accents of cola, violet, dark sweet spice with notes of cocoa, exotic wood, and subtle pencil shavings. Really long finish. Vibrant, elegant, complete, delicious; quite satisfying. Lovely in the mouth. *Outstanding. BS: 96+.*

JOSEPH SWAN Trenton Estate Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, 2005
12x750ml \$51.68 \$581.94

Tech: 14.3% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir fermented in open top tanks with punch-down, aged 11 months in French oak barrels (75% new). Claret-red in color, slightly dull and medium clear with good legs. Dry, medium-bodied with balanced acidity and medium phenolics. Lively, juicy, fresh, rich, delicious red cherry fruit with earthy terroir, a dusty note of French oak, and accents of cola, cocoa, black pepper, and tea. Very long finish. Ethereal, alive-in-the-mouth, quite delicious. *Outstanding. BS: 96.*



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Twelve Wines (and More) I'd Want for Christmas *from page 3*

RAMEY "Hyde Vineyard" Chardonnay, Carneros, 2006

12x750ml \$59.14 \$665.97

Tech: 14.5% Alcohol. 100% Chardonnay (cuttings selected from the Old Wente, Robert Young and Long vineyards) all barrel fermented with full malolactic, and aged 12 months in oak barrels (66% French, 34% Eastern European; 30% new). Yellow straw in color with well formed legs; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity and very light phenolics. Elegant, exotic, juicy, spicy, ripe citrus and tree fruit offering notes of lemon, pear, peach, apple and a hint of banana all accented with mineral-mushroomy earth, spicy-dusty French oak, and notes of butter, vanilla, sweet, and spice in subtle harmony. Extra long finish. Delicious, elegant, pure, rich and ripe. Quite lively with great flavor and feel in the mouth. Really Excellent. BS: 95+.

AMPELOS "Gamma" Syrah, Santa Maria, 2006

12x750ml \$29.99 \$337.74

Tech: 14.3% Alcohol. 100% Syrah gets a 4 day cold soak before inoculation with yeast and a small bin punch down fermentation and 18 months aging in a mix of French and American oak barrels (33% new). Full bodied with balanced acidity and medium plus phenolics, it is a rich and ripe but elegant red fruit and spice Syrah accented with notes of black and white pepper, coffee, and chocolate. Complete and integrated. Lovely texture and feel. Really lasts. Really Excellent. BS: 95.

SAINT COSME, Cote Rotie, 2007

12x750ml \$60.99 \$688.08

6x1.5L \$119.99 \$676.08

Tech: 13% Alcohol. 100% Syrah (mostly old wine "Sirene" selection) from several terroirs aged 15 months in all new French oak barrels. Deep purple in color, bright but slightly cloudy with good legs; dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity and chewy phenolics. Offers developed juicy dark black raspberry-cherry-and-mixed-berry fruit, limestone and dark earth terroir, and accents of dark spice, black pepper, bacon fat, and a hint of white pepper. Very long finish. Complete and integrated but focused; lovely-in-the-mouth. Really Excellent. BS: 95.

OTHER FUN STUFF any Wine Lover Would Want:

A Temperature Controlled Wine Storage Cabinet

The best way to improve the taste of the wine you drink is to store and serve it at the right temperature. The best way to do both is to keep your wine in temperature-controlled wine storage. This may be a specially cooled and insulated room or closet or it may be a "wine refrigerator" holding from 30 to over 500 bottles. I have two "wine fridges" at home. Another 30 or so bottles of temperature controlled storage would insure that I could make it through a long winter weekend - with twelve or so of my closest friends. Spec's has the Danby 35 bottle model for \$299 cash, plus get a \$100 discount when you use your Spec's Key. We also have some fancier, more expensive models that may be appropriate for very good boys and girls.



A Wine Class

One of the best ways to learn about wine or even organize what you know about wine is to take a wine class. I am offering a great class called "Wine 101" that offers a good foundation for the novice and a great review for someone who wants to learn more. It runs four consecutive Tuesdays beginning on January 5th. Please see page 9 of this Update for more information.



Riedel Wine Glasses

A lady friend once told me that you can't have too many shoes. The same is true of wine glasses. At home, I use five different wine glass shapes. For red Bordeaux, Cabernet, Merlot, most Zinfandel, etc., I use the Riedel Vinum "Bordeaux" glass (416/0, \$41.63 for two stems). For Pinot Noir, Red Burgundy (which is Pinot Noir), most oak influenced Chardonnays, and even barrel fermented white Bordeaux, I use the Riedel Vinum "Red Burgundy" glass (416/7, \$41.63 for two stems). For unwooded Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, Dry-to-Semi-Sweet Rieslings, and most other whites and rosés, I prefer the Riedel Vinum "Zinfandel/Chianti/Grand Cru Riesling" glass (416/15, \$34.93 for two stems). This also handles some lighter weight reds and old Bordeaux and is the standard tasting glass I use in all the tasting I do in my office at Spec's or at home. For sparkling wines, whether great Champagne or inexpensive Spanish Cava, I prefer the Riedel Vinum Prestige Cuvee Champagne glass (416/48, \$38.81 for two stems). For a tasting glass and for most of very sweet wines including Port, Sherry, Sauternes, and other stickies, I use the Riedel Vinum Port glass (416/60, \$34.93 for two stems). With these five glasses, I can cover any wine need. I spend a bit more on Riedel than I might have to spend on Brand-X but I make up for it in not having odd lots of glasses I can't use because I can't replace the glasses I break.



A BYOB Wine Bag or Wine Carrying Case.

Your wine lover needs a proper bag or case to carry wine into his favorite BYOB restaurant or over to your house. I have a couple of these and every one who doesn't have one says they want one. They are so useful. Spec's sells lots from neoprene or simple canvas to hard-sided aluminum cases. There is something there to fit any budget. Come check 'em out.



A Corkscrew

The Pull Tabs Corkscrew is my favorite general-purpose pocket corkscrew. It has a nice teflon worm and a practical double lever system. I've tried 'em all and this is the one. You can't have too many of these. And it's only \$8.58. The Screwpull Waiter's Model Corkscrew is my favorite for opening older bottles. And for very long corks, nothing beats a Screwpull. This \$14.99 pocket model is my favorite in both utility and elegance of design.

If you are still not sure what to get your wine lover, you might try a Spec's Gift Card. Then they can come down and see what they have to have. ■

