

# COLLIN'S COLUMN



## Wine, Dine, and Unique Finds: Red Wines You Should Drink for the Holidays (Part 2) by Collin Williams



food pairing, and the Unique Finds revolve around this notion of indulgent sensibility through sumptuous flavors.

This episode is dedicated to the hearty flavors we see during the Holidays. Many people revel in the comfort food mentality at this time and get that warm fuzzy feeling after eating a great meal with great friends and excellent wine. So, you find that the theme for the wine selection, the accompanying

### Wine

**Casajus Vendimia Seleccion 2005**  
(Ribera del Duero, Spain)  
\$19.99 cash  
CW – “3.9 of 5”; WW – Very nice!

I had the privilege of visiting this winery while traveling in Spain this past summer. Bodegas Casajus is truly one of those “flying under the radar” wineries that over delivers. This is one of those unique Bodegas that is content with their very limited production and wish for people to love the wine for its brilliance - rather than how much press they receive. In fact, Jose Casajus, owner/winemaker/baker, was even so nonchalant about being the biggest and the best that we began discussing his passion for bread-making and its relation to wine making over the actual wines being tasted.

The 2005 Vendimia Seleccion is the Bodega's entry line, but don't let that fool you. This wine is hugely expressive on the nose with notes of mocha, oak, and underlying ripe black and blue fruit. Full bodied on the palate with plenty of silky tannin, the 2005 shows lovely juicy berry fruit with spot – on acidity to match its bold flavors. Very nice!

“The 2005 Vendimia Seleccionada spent 6 months in French and American oak. Opaque purple-colored, it offers an expressive nose of cedar, espresso, blueberry, and blackberry. Dense and packed, this wine conceals ample ripe tannin under a blanket of fruit. It will evolve for 3-5 years and drink well through 2025. It is an excellent value in age-worthy Tempranillo”. 92pts – Wine Advocate



### Dine

**Chianti Marinated Beef Stew**  
Recipe courtesy Giada De Laurentis, 2008

#### Ingredients

- 2 ½ to 3 pound beef brisket
- 1 (750 ml) bottle Chianti wine
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 (4-ounce) piece pancetta, cut into ¼-inch pieces
- 3 medium carrots, peeled and cut into ½-inch pieces
- 1 stalk celery, chopped into ½-inch pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- ¼ cup (1 ½ ounces) kalamata olives, halved
- 6 ounces green beans, halved
- 4 medium red potatoes, quartered
- 2 sprigs rosemary
- 2 sage leaves
- 1 (15-ounce) can diced tomatoes
- 4 cups beef broth

#### Directions

Place the beef in a 13 by 9-inch glass baking dish. Pour the wine over the meat and marinate in the refrigerator for 1 ½ hours. Turn the meat over and marinate for another 1 ½ hours.



Remove the meat from the wine and pat dry with paper towels. Reserve the wine.

In a large Dutch oven, heat 3 tablespoons of the oil over medium-high heat. Season the meat on all sides with salt and pepper. Using tongs, place the meat in the pan and brown on all sides, about 2 minutes each side. Remove the meat and add the remaining oil. Add the pancetta and cook, stirring frequently for 2 minutes. Add the carrots, celery, garlic, olives, green beans, potatoes, rosemary, and sage. Cook for 3 minutes. Pour the reserved wine, tomatoes, and beef broth into the pan, scraping up the brown bits that cling to the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon. Return the meat to the pan and bring the liquid to a boil. Cover the pan and simmer for 3 to 3 ½ hours or until the meat is very tender. Remove the meat and the rosemary sprigs from the stew. Place the meat on a cutting board and cut into quarters. Using 2 forks, shred the meat into bite-size pieces. Add the shredded meat to the stew and cook until warmed through, about 5 minutes.

continues on page 6

Red Wines you should drink for the Holidays continued from page 5

# Unique Finds

“Wine tasting is like playing guitar, you can never improve your skills by practicing alone.” I developed this mantra a couple of years ago that I say to all of the “newbies” in the industry when asking for advice about improving their palate. By sampling a wine with other people, you can learn about flavors that you never thought about, ideas about how the wine is perceived, and even learn in-depth knowledge about the wine itself or the region of origin from personal experiences.

So, what better time to try out this theory than the season of togetherness! At Spec’s, we have the tools necessary in order to make wine tasting a very social activity.



### Blind Wine Tasting Game - \$26.59 cash

A great way to begin the evening or as a conversation starter by breaking the ice!



Please email me at [collinspecs@gmail.com](mailto:collinspecs@gmail.com) with feedback.

## Houston Superstore Just in for the Holidays

Our pastry chef has become creative and launched a few specialties out of his oven:

- Baklava, prepared Turkish Style with a tiny hint of Rose Water
- Cheesecake baked from scratch

**The Italian Cultural and Community Center presents Vini d'Italia Tuscany Part 2: The Majesty of Chianti**

Thursday, Dec 10, 2009 6:30pm  
Italian Cultural and Community Center.  
1101 Milford Houston, Texas, 77006.

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

Reservation Required—RSVP at (713) 524-4222  
\$40.00 for ICC members  
\$45.00 for non-members.

See full wine menu on [www.specsonline.com](http://www.specsonline.com)

**CHARIVARI**

The Home of European Cuisine  
2521 Bagby @ Mc Gowen  
713 521-7231  
[www.charivarirest.com](http://www.charivarirest.com)

### Specialty Dinner at Charivari Restaurant

“ American Gourmet Chocolate Extravaganza”, a menu to please everyone, from the chocoholic to the finest gourmet, with all 4 courses made with US-produced Patric Chocolates.

Wednesday, November 18th, 7pm at 2521 Bagby.

Pairing Wines included, \$75 per person, gratuities and taxes not included.

To see full menu go to [www.specsonline.com](http://www.specsonline.com)