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Armagnac

Renaissance for an Ancient Spirit



2010
Sommelier's Choice

Colchagua
Tradition and Experimentation

Vino-Tech

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SOMMELIER'S CHOICE

derneath, ripe blueberry peeks out. There is no oak on this wine, but it doesn't need it. I love having it on the list because it pairs perfectly with CUT's steakhouse menu, but also because it provides an affordable opportunity for me to show my staff and our guests what an amazing grape Syrah can be, pure and unadorned. Importer: Weygandt-Metzler Importing, Ltd., www.weygandtmetzler.com.

Dana Farner
Sommelier/Beverage Director, CUT and sidebar
Beverly Hills, Calif.

Jiménez-Landi Sotorrodero,
Méntrida, Spain 2007 \$15

This is my favorite way to discover a wine: tasting a producer I've never heard of, making wine from a region I've never heard of. The grapes I knew—Syrah and Grenache—so I was expecting a well-made yet simple wine. I was wrong. Jiménez-Landi has produced a blend with depth and complexity, full of savory herbs, grilled meats, and blueberries. It continues to stump my guests and wine-geek friends. Importer: Eric Solomon Selections, www.european-cellars.com.

Matthew Gundlach
General Manager/Wine Director, Moto
Chicago

Other Reds

Arnot-Roberts Trousseau Luchsinger Vineyard,
Lake County, California 2008 \$30

Last fall, I had the good fortune of stumbling across Arnot-Roberts, a garage operation run by two childhood friends, Nathan Roberts and Duncan Arnot Meyers, in central Sonoma County. Their wines are completely natural, expressing a freshness and wildness that are truly exciting. This luscious red—a variety from the Jura region of France, making a cameo appearance in California—is translucent, but so flavorful and delicious that I jumped for joy. Tasting like a cross between cru Beaujolais, Chinon, and Gigondas, it made me dream of mushrooms and gnocchi. www.arnotroberts.com.

Gina Hopkins
Sommelier/Wine Director
Restaurant Eugene, Holeman and Finch Public
House, H&F Bottle Shop
Atlanta

Bressan Schioppettino, Friuli, Italy 2004 \$37

This red grabbed me by the nose and simply

would not let go. A well-aged beauty, it radiates aromas of cedar, dried roses, and tea leaves. The barely medium-bodied texture, bright acidity, and lean tannins are warmed up with Christmas spice, black pepper, and sweet cherry fruit on the finish; a hint of forest floor adds dimension, but doesn't cross into overly herbaceous territory. There is an autumnal savor that cries out for the foods of fall in the countryside—roasted game, rustic terrines, and wild mushrooms. The Bressans are 10 generations into winegrowing, and their staunchly minimalist, meticulous regime in both vineyard and cellar is clearly working beautifully, if this layered, long, elegant (but assuredly not slick) Schioppettino is any indication. Importer: Sherbrooke Cellars, www.sherbrookecellars.com.

Juliette Pope
Beverage Director, Gramercy Tavern
New York

Castello di Verduno Basadone,
Piedmont, Italy 2008 \$28

Pelaverga is a relatively unknown grape hailing from Verduno, a town in northern Piedmont. This example makes me think of a hypothetical Barbaresco-Volnay-Morgon blend. Its limpid, pale-ruby color is matched in delicacy by a light-bodied palate. The Basadone's ethereal fruit and tertiary notes open with *fraises des bois*, Craisins, and dried roses; with aeration, the palate moves on to Chinese five spice, black truffle, and roasted cinnamon stick. The incredible acid-tannin balance just begs for food. Probably the most interesting wine I've had all year, and definitely one of the most delicious, it's simply gorgeous, gossamer perfection. Importer: Oliver McCrum Wines, www.omwines.com.

Christopher Miller
Beverage Director, Spago Beverly Hills
Beverly Hills, Calif.

Fuligni Brunello di Montalcino Riserva,
Italy 2004 \$146

A great Brunello performs a high-wire act, balancing impressive palate weight with a sleek texture and seamless finish. This producer, long known for its adherence to tradition, ages its Brunello solely in large casks, allowing the wine to display lovely varietal purity in its perfumes of red cherry, currant, strawberry, and dried flowers, along with attractive cedar notes. The persistence is excellent, the oak influence is subtle, and the acidity is perfectly tuned. In short, it's a textbook Brunello di Montalcino that com-

