



The Wine and Cheese Cask

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March 15, 2018 – April 14, 2018

French Singles

Of course, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are the most famous French single-varietal wines, but other regions have their tried and true wine grapes that are spectacular and fabulous values as well.

Muscadet

2016 Muscadet Sèvre et Maine (La Pépie)

Sale Price \$12.99 – \$132.50 case of twelve

Due to difficult climactic conditions that reduced yields significantly, Marc Ollivier and his team at Domaine de la Pépière made only three Muscadets in the 2016 vintage. There's a little bit of Clos des Briords and Gras Moutons from his own vineyards, but he used his best old vines in Clisson and blended with purchased grapes from his neighbors so he could release this good-value 'La Pépie.' The strict selection and skillful blending has resulted in a wine that deserves the Pépière label, but because Marc is such a fanatic he labeled it La Pépie so that all will know he used some purchased grapes.



Romo à la Cazin

2015 Cour-Cheverny (Francois Cazin)

Sale Price \$15.99 – \$163.10 case of twelve

Romorantin is planted on such a small scale that the ten or so producers of Cour-Cheverny should have their own club. Our longtime favorite comes from Francois Cazin, whose wines always seem to take a year or two after bottling to come into focus. The 2015 is there right now in laser-like fashion. This formidable dry white paints a picture in your mouth of hay lying in the fields and fleshy ripe apricots. The finish is piquant and dry.



Pico and Valleys

Vin de France 'Chardonnay' (Thomas Pico)

Sale Price \$11.99 – \$122.30 case of twelve

Thomas Pico is a young, up-and-coming Chablis producer who had an even more disastrous harvest in 2016. In order to stay in business he looked to friends in the Languedoc to supply him with delicious and even organic grapes so that he would have some wine to sell. Because the grapes came from outside the Chablis region though the wine was bottled within, it is only allowed a Vin de France designation. Still, the wine is quite lovely.



Pinot Noir

2015 Bourgogne Épineuil 'Les Beaumonts' (Damp Frères)

Sale Price \$19.99 – \$203.90 case of twelve

In the 1980s Bernard Damp, whose family had been growing grapes in Chablis for generations, started buying land with his three sons in mind. Les Beaumonts is one of the vineyards he purchased. With its south- and southwest-facing exposure in the nearby appellation of Épineuil and the same Kimmeridgian soils found in Chablis, Les Beaumonts provides the ideal conditions to grow Pinot Noir. In 1998 the Damp brothers took over operations of the family estate. They've now had over 20 years to perfect their vineyard management and vinification, and it shows in their 2015 Les Beaumonts. It's lively with black cherry and pomegranate fruit and the mineral-laden finish one expects from chalky soils. An elegant partner for a roast bird or a mac and cheese.



Saint Nicolas

2016 Saint Nicolas de Bourgueil (Joël Taluau)

Sale Price \$12.99 - \$132.50 case of twelve

What newsletter featuring French single varietal wines would be complete that didn't include the perennial Cask favorite, Loire Valley Cabernet Franc? It's been some time since we were able to offer a Saint-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil, as the small appellation has scant presence in our market. So we're thrilled to welcome back an old friend whose wines have not been seen our shelves in over a decade. Joël Taluau is often credited for being the first to estate bottle in the appellation. His 2016 is vibrant, with lovely tannins, raspberries, and crushed leaves. At its sale price, this is an amazing value for a wine full of personality and versatility with all sorts of fare.



Syrah

2015 Northern Rhone/Ardèche Syrah (Louis Cheze)

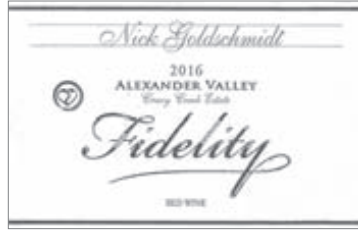
Sale Price \$14.99 – \$152.90 case of twelve

The vineyards in the northern Rhone area of Seyssuel were famous in Roman times, having been mentioned by Pliny the Elder as producing superior wine. When the root-eating louse phylloxera struck in the late 19th century, the ravaged vineyards were not replanted, as the steep hillsides were deemed too difficult to work profitably. Louis Cheze is among a handful of producers helping to revitalize the area, and the generous 2015 vintage has provided a Syrah of deep color, with scents of violet and blackberry, and gentle tannins. Perfect with some vinegary BBQ pork ribs.

Crazy Creek

2016 Alexander Valley Red ‘Fidelity’ (Nick Goldschmidt)
Sale Price \$12.99 – \$132.50 case of twelve

Around this time of year the slowly warming weather usually calls for a lighter weight of red. But spring this year has refused to play along. This Bordeaux blend warmed us up from the inside during the recent snowstorms. Merlot provides the lushness, with notes of plum and chocolate, while Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot provide the focus and balance. Over a year of aging in French oak gives the wine a silken texture so that this rich red can be enjoyed on its own while binge-watching during a snow day. Or have it with grilled steak fajitas outside when it's finally warm enough.



Raymond at 40

2014 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon ‘40th Anniversary’ (Raymond)

Sale Price \$29.99 – \$305.90 case of twelve

We hate to say it, but it's easy to forget about Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon when the prices are often over rather than under triple digits. Luckily Raymond's new ownership has lavished more attention, details, and dollars on their wines, and produced a powerful yet balanced Cabernet Sauvignon. A rich oaky presence leads to blackberry fruit, smooth ripe tannins, and a deep, long finish. So when it comes to Napa Cabernet, there is really only one food option: hamburgers.



Three Horsepower

2015 Côtes du Rhône Villages ‘Cuvée 3 Cépages’ (Domaine Les Aphillanthes)

Sale Price \$19.99 – \$203.90 case of twelve



There's a plow horse on the label and inside the bottle the three organically grown grapes Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvèdre are blended in equal measure, so you can rightly believe

that this is a bold, strident red with real Rhone intensity. Without any vineyard holdings in the major appellations of the Southern Rhone, Domaine les Aphillanthes puts full concentration into its Côtes du Rhône Villages. According to their importer, the 'Cuvée 3 Cépages' is dearest to the winemakers' hearts. Achieving the perfect ripeness of the three grapes at the same harvest time and co-fermenting them is difficult, but in the 2015 vintage they succeeded admirably. This is a very full-bodied yet wonderfully balanced, generous red with dark plummy fruit, peppery spice, and gorgeously burly tannins.

Rhône Blanc

2016 Côtes du Rhône Blanc (Domaine de la Janasse)
Sale Price \$19.99 – \$203.90 case of twelve

There is a seemingly endless supply of good red Rhone wines, but the whites tend to be a rare but delicious treat. Domaine de la Janasse's 2016 Blanc is a truly fine version. The mix of grapes (Grenache Blanc, Clairette, Bourboulenc, Viognier, and Roussanne) creates a rich mélange of floral aromas, peachy fruit, and steely dryness. There is nothing lacking and nothing overdone, the balance is impeccable. A crime not to have this with exquisitely fresh fish.



Haut-Medoc with ‘Finesse’

2014 Haut-Medoc (Château Larrivaux)

Sale Price \$19.99 – \$203.90 case of twelve

For centuries this domaine has been exclusively directed and owned by the women of the same family. We don't often get into the masculine/feminine language of wine that exists in France, but because we adore the wine, Château Larrivaux's own back label in French and English is worth noting. En Anglais: "Since 1580, Château Larrivaux has been transmitted only through the hands of women, this gives much 'finesse' and gracefulness." In French: "Depuis 1580, le Château Larrivaux s'est toujours transmis par les femmes d'où son élégance et sa finesse." Our experience is that this wine is powerfully dry and wonderfully balanced with many fine years ahead.



Rosés of the Month

2017 Rosé of Malbec (Crios)

Sale Price \$9.99 – \$101.90 case of twelve

The Crios wines from Susanna Balbo always delight, and the Malbec Rosé just gets better and better. The 2017 is a savory, earthy delight, with just enough fruit to keep it fresh.



2017 Côtes de Provence Rosé (Houchart)

Sale Price \$13.99 – \$142.70 case of twelve
Last year, we reported that Houchart's harvest was reduced by an 'unruly pack of wild boars.' The 2017 vintage was reduced by drought, but it didn't affect the quality of the wine. In fact, it seems more concentrated than usual, with ripe peach fruit and fine minerality.



Madrileno Garnacha

2016 Vinos de Madrid (Granito del Cadalso)

Sale Price \$14.99 – \$152.90 case of twelve

The jagged Sierra de Gredos mountains lie to the west of Madrid. As the city has sprawled in every direction, traditional farmland has given way to suburbs, and vines have been ripped up in favor of mountainside retreats. Located in the village of Cadalso de los



Vidrios, the Cooperativa Cristo del Humilladero is showing why those vines are worth saving. With the help of local winemakers Dani Landi and Fernando Garcia, the 120 humble farmers providing the grapes for the cooperative deliver a wildly aromatic, energetic Garnacha. Aromas of lavender and allspice blend into cherry and pomegranate seamlessly. This medium-bodied red pairs perfectly

with a hearty chickpea and chorizo stew.

A Little Castle in Chianti

2015 Chianti Classico (Castello La Leccia)

Sale Price \$17.99 – \$183.50 case of twelve

Situated on one of the most beautiful hill-tops in the Chianti Classico zone, Castello La Leccia is a luxury hotel disguised as a winery. Or is it a luxury winery disguised as a hotel? Either way the 2015 vintage of their Chianti Normale arrives with a generous, rich, spicy, dry flavor at a very reasonable price given the upscale neighborhood. This has the hallmark Sangiovese cherry fruit with a lashing of cedar and mildly biting tannins. The perfect wine for pappardelle with wild boar ragu or a variation thereof.

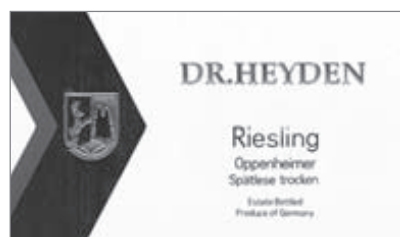


Frank Heyden Master of Dry Riesling

2015 Oppenheimer Riesling Spätlese Trocken (Dr. Heyden)

Sale Price \$11.99 – \$122.30 case of twelve

We see Frank Heyden once a year for approximately five minutes, but they are some of the best five minutes of the year. His presence at an industry tasting is joyous because he is as passionate about his wines as he is honest. In such a short time we get an understanding of how much work it takes his team to make fine wine, in sometimes difficult vintages, and we come away



amazed at how delicious and inexpensive the Dr. Heyden wines truly are. As much as we like his sweeter offerings, (which always sell out) it is his dry wines that we most admire. This 2015 Riesling was harvested at Spätlese

level and fermented dry. Frank hilariously described this wine as a 'Fighter jet taking off in your mouth.' The comparison is apt. This is an amazingly aromatic white with great lift of flavors and such crisp twists and turns. Fantastic with spicy fish and rice.

Specialty Foods

Onetik Ossau-Iraty Affiné \$17.99 per lb

(Regular Price \$19.99)



Granted AOP status in 1980, Ossau-Iraty is a traditional sheep's milk cheese from the Basque region of France. Though AOP regulations govern key facets of production (such as specifying that milk must come only from Manech and Basco-Béarnaise breeds of sheep), there are slight variations depending on the region and producer. Onetik is a smaller

producer of traditional Basque cheeses, located in the town of Macaye at the foot of the Pyrenees. Theirs is aged 6 months and is an exemplary Ossau-Iraty, balanced and complex. Flavors of sweet cream, caramel, and hazelnuts mingle in the alluringly smooth and creamy paste of this semi-firm cheese.

Caseificio Taddei Tomabigia \$14.99 per lb

(Regular Price \$15.99)

Caseificio Taddei is a family-run dairy in the Italian town of Fornovo San Giovanni, just south of Bergamo. Though they produce a number of DOP cheeses such as Taleggio and Salva Cremasco, they also make a few original cheeses that are inspired and informed by the traditional cheesemaking practices of the region. Tomabigia is one of their newer products, a small semi-firm 'toma' whose natural rind is studded with white and yellow molds. This simple cow's milk cheese is rich and tangy, with a perfect balance of salt and cream.

Nettle Meadow Farm Kunik \$27.99 per lb

(Regular Price \$30.99)

Located in Warrensburg, NY, Nettle Meadow Farm makes an impressive array of cow's, sheep's, and goat's milk cheeses. All of their offerings reflect their dedication to humane animal husbandry and artisan cheesemaking, and the joy and passion with which they pursue both of these goals is apparent in their products.



Kunik is one of their flagship cheeses, and is essentially a mixed-milk triple crème made with 75% goat's milk and 25% cow's milk cream. The dense center becomes slightly more supple underneath the bloomy rind. Bright and tart, it pairs wonderfully with fruit as part of a cheese plate.

Vermont Creamery St. Albans \$5.99 each

(Regular Price \$6.99)

Inspired by the French St. Marcellin, St. Albans is Vermont Creamery's first 100% cow's milk cheese. Named for the nearby town and dairy cooperative where they source their cows' milk, this creamy and delicate soft cheese is aged for 11 days before being packaged in an oven-safe ceramic crock. As the cheese ages, the flavor becomes more complex, earthy, and yeasty, and the thin rind will develop a wrinkled appearance. Heat in the oven until warm and gooey, and then spoon it straight onto a baguette!

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Wines of the Month — March 15, 2018 through April 14, 2018

2016 Nero d'Avola (Tenuta Ibidini)

Sale Price \$8.99 – \$97.09 case of twelve

Sicilian wine is a real force and often great value. Tenuta Ibidini's Nero d'Avola is both. The 2016 is rich and robust, earthy and dry. Great with eggplant and pasta.

2015 Bordeaux Rouge (Grand Rousseau)

Sale Price \$7.99 – \$86.29 case of twelve

This is a fantastic value in dry red Bordeaux. Somehow it became better and cheaper since the last time we featured it.

2016 Aragon Garnacha (Fuego)

Sale Price \$8.99 – \$97.09 case of twelve

This Spanish Garnacha is so packed and loaded with fruit that it requires hearty long-braised foods laced with garlic. Its fruity intensity is balanced with ripe tannins and a cool dry finish.

2016 Verdicchio di Matelica (Fontezoppa)

Sale Price \$8.99 – \$97.09 case of twelve

Verdicchio has charmed us in recent vintages. This specialty of Le Marche is forcefully dry, with crisp herbal flavors and pear fruit.

