



Tasting Notes
August 2017 Pick-up
“Summery Wines of Spain”

Welcome to your August 2017 Smart Wine Club pickup. We'll be exploring refreshing wines from various regions of Spain, all on the lighter side, for our remaining warm days of August and September. I've lived in Oregon nearly my whole life, and this year is feeling like an Indian summer to me, so we'll see if I'm right.

One thing you may notice in this shipment is that I've chosen a number of wines made from grapes you may have never heard of. I had never heard or seen some of them myself! There are a lot of lesser-known grapes grown in Spain, and it's always fun to explore new flavors. This also helps me to get better deals for you, because there is less demand for these lesser-known wines.

I lived in Spain for a semester in college, and visited again a couple years back, so Spanish food and wine is very near and dear to me. While tasting wines for this shipment, I definitely traveled back in my mind to all the great times I've had in that special country. I was only 19 when I first went to Spain, so I wasn't a big wine drinker at that point. However, one of my fondest memories of that time was visiting a local bodega in the Valencia region with a couple of my friends. We discovered that we could purchase 2 liter plastic jugs and fill them with white or red wine straight from huge barrels that were taller than we were. If memory serves me correctly, these jugs of wine cost us the equivalent of around \$3 each. As students with a lot more thirst than money, obviously, we were thrilled!

Hopefully, you will enjoy these Spanish wines just as much as I enjoyed that fun experience. ¡Salud!

- **2016 Zudugarai Txakoli Getariako Txakolina, Basque region** – The 100% Hondarrabi Zuri grapes used to make this wine are unique to the Basque region. The winery produces only estate-grown wines from their small four-acre vineyard. The label includes a photo of a sailing vessel in tribute to the whaling history of the region. This wine is pale straw in color with spicy citrus aromas. Sharp green apple acidity and hints of salty minerality are followed by a floral finish. Reg retail: \$18 Smart price: \$16

Pairing: The slight fizziness and high acidity of this wine makes it an excellent choice for any number of rich finger foods and appetizers – it's a great one to serve at a cocktail party! Also pairs wonderfully with oysters on the half shell.

- **2016 Parés Baltà “Calcari”, Penedés** – Parés Baltà is a family-owned winery since 1790, located only 10 km from the Mediterranean Sea. It is certified organic and biodynamic and has two female winemakers. The Blanc de Pacs is 100% Xarel-lo (pronounced shah-REL-lo in Catalan), one of the typical grapes of cava. The name Calcari comes from the chalk soils where the vines are planted, giving it great minerality. Well-balanced, with hints of pear and banana on the nose and vibrant freshness in the mouth. Reg retail: \$16 Smart price: \$14

Pairing: This would be delicious over brunch paired with something a bit rich, like a brie omelet.

- **2016 Pago Casa Gran Casa Benasal Malvasia, Valencia** – This is a new varietal for Pago Casa Gran. The cuttings came from a vineyard in Italy because the winemaker believes the Italian clones are superior to the Spanish. If you haven't tried Malvasia, it is often compared to Muscat. This one is dry with gorgeous floral aromas that hit you immediately. Great acidity and texture on the tongue.
Reg retail: \$13.50 Smart price: \$12

Pairing: This is my “picnic in a bottle” choice for this shipment. Your choice of good bread, cheese, charcuterie and this wine will be a match made in heaven.

- **2015 Bodegas Ángel Rodríguez Vidal Verdejo “Martínsancho”, Rueda** – The Verdejo grape went nearly extinct by the early 1970s, as it's difficult to grow, with thick skins and low yields. Ángel Rodríguez was officially honored by the King of Spain for his refusal to uproot his 17th century one-acre gnarled vineyard named Martínsancho. Due in no small part to his efforts, Verdejo and the Rueda region rose to prominence once again. Aromas of tart citrus and grass, with flavors of honeydew and nectarines.
Reg retail: \$18 Smart price: \$16

Pairing: Try this one with sheep's milk cheeses like the classic Spanish Manchego or even Feta or Pecorino. Verdejo can stand up to sharp flavors which can typically be difficult to pair, like vinaigrette or briny olives.

- **2013 Pago Casa Gran Casa Benasal Tinto “Elegant”, Valencia** – I really love this light blend of 40% Monastrel, 30% Garnacha and 30% Syrah, aptly nicknamed “Elegant.” Aromas and flavors of bold, ripe red raspberries, olives and herbes de Provence. Light tannins make this wonderfully fresh and drinkable. Reg retail: \$16 Smart price: \$14

Pairing: Great with a flavorful braised dish like an Indian curry or Moroccan tagine.

- **2015 Vega Tolosa Bobal “11 Pinos”, Manchuela** – Although Bobal is the third most-planted grape in Spain, only recently has it started being bottled as a single-varietal rather than used as a blending wine. Lovely aromas of cherries, plums, smoke and herbs. The taste is dark, meaty and spicy yet the tannins are quite smooth.
Reg retail: \$11 Smart price: \$10

Pairing: Enjoy this with grilled chicken with barbeque sauce. Seriously, it's perfect!