



Tasting Notes
February 2018 Pick-up
“Wines From Unexpected Places”

Welcome to your February 2018 Smart Wine Club pickup. We have a fun topic for this month’s pickup – wines from unexpected places!

As I explore and taste new wines, I often come across a really fun and tasty bottle, but it’s from a place where I wouldn’t be able to find five other equally delicious and affordable wines to offer you. So, I decided to put six of these “stragglers” together in our February pickup. Some of these wines come from lesser-known regions or regions that produce smaller amounts. Some are from regions that produce a lot of wine, but don’t import much to the U.S. I hope you’ll enjoy the experience of trying something new!

Don’t forget to share your Smart Wine Club wines with your local-area friends and let them know about our club. We are small but growing, and I’d love to welcome new people you enjoy spending time with, so I can offer more tasting events for all of you.

Finally, if you’re getting overwhelmed by wine club bags, just remember you can always return them to us here, and we will re-use them for the next pickup.

- **2016 Mantlerhof Grüner Veltliner, Niederösterreich (Lower Austria), AU** – Grüner Veltliner is always a fun white wine to try! It often comes in a 1L bottle (and this one does), so you get 33% more wine, which is great for a party. The Mantlerhof is made from 100% organic grapes. It is crisp and refreshing, offering notes of pear and citrus with hints of spice and minerality, plus nice bracing acidity. Reg retail: \$12 Smart price: \$11

Pronunciation: Here’s a new thing I’m adding to the notes – tell me what you think! This grape is pronounced GROO-ner FELT-lih-ner

Pairing: It will work well with things that are often difficult to pair. Due to its high acidity, it can pair with salads containing bitter greens or with a vinaigrette dressing. GV is also famous for being the only wine that pairs well with asparagus.

- **2014 Seven of Hearts Viognier-Roussanne, Columbia Valley AVA, OR** – Yes, I know, Oregon is not an unexpected place to get wine. However, an Oregon wine from the Columbia Valley AVA is quite unexpected, as the vast majority of this AVA is located in Washington. Plus, this wine has hearts on the label, so how could I not include it in our Valentine’s Day pickup? This is a classic white Rhône blend, with beautiful tropical and floral notes, good structure, and a distinct and unexpected hint of fresh ginger.
Reg retail: \$18 Smart price: \$16

Pronunciation: Vee-yaw-N’YAY Roo-SAHN

Pairing: Try it with creamy sauces like Alfredo or get yourself some local Dungeness crab now that it's finally available this year, dunk in butter, and sip this wine!

- **Locations Wines Texas, High Plains AVA, TX** – The Locations label is a pet project of famed winemaker Dave Phinney of Orin Swift. He partners with growers from various regions to make excellent value wines highlighting each region. Have you ever tried a wine from Texas? The High Plains region near Lubbock is known for growing quality red Rhône varieties. This bottle is rich and elegant, with lovely aromas of plum, raspberry, rose and cedar. You'll enjoy flavors of cranberry and cherry with a lingering finish.
Reg retail: \$23 Smart price: \$20

Pairing: I think this would be fabulous one of my favorite winter dishes that my mother-in-law Jan Irene makes – brown up some nice Italian sausages, peppers and onions, simmer with some canned tomato, then serve over soft polenta.

- **2013 Felsner Zweigelt, Kremstal, AU** – One of the reasons we don't see as much wine from Austria in this country is that they had a big adulteration scandal back in the 1980s, and the majority of imports stopped. Austrian wine is fantastic now, and I'm glad we're seeing more and more of it coming back in. Zweigelt is a red grape developed by Austrian viticulturists in 1922 specifically for the region. It has a lovely nose, with a big burst of blackberries and violets. Rich and full-bodied, with balanced tannins and a velvety texture. Reg retail: \$15 Smart price: \$13

Pronunciation: TSVYE-gelt

Pairing: Zweigelt pairs exceptionally well with grilled foods and fatty foods. I'd try it with one of my favorites, the classic juicy cheeseburger!

- **Ixsir Altitudes Red Blend, Lebanon** – I had never seen or heard of a wine from Lebanon before I tried this wine. Boy, was I pleasantly surprised – and the white blend from this same label is yummy too! Made from 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Syrah, 26% Caladoc and 17% Tempranillo, it is aged in French oak. The unusual blend provides warm, mature black fruit notes with hints of herbs and a smoky complexity.
Reg retail: \$20 Smart price: \$17

Pairing: This is calling out to me to be enjoyed with some olives. Enjoy it next time you're having folks over for some tapas-style snacks, with olives, aged cheeses, salami and bread with hummus.

- **2011 La Motte Syrah, Cape Winelands, South Africa** – Perhaps you've enjoyed some bottles from South Africa, but we still don't see a lot of it here in Oregon, although they make quite a lot of wine. This Syrah is mature and elegant, with great complexity. It was finished in French oak (30% new) and aged 14 months before blending with 5% Grenache. On the nose, you'll experience mulberries and nutmeg followed by dark peppery spiciness once you take a sip. Ready to drink now.
Reg retail: \$15 Smart price: \$13

Pronunciation: sir-RAH

Pairing: Try it with Texas-style BBQ beef brisket or perhaps a North African-flavored braised chicken with harissa spices over couscous.