



Tasting Notes

May 2017 Pick-up

“Summer Holiday in the South of France”

Welcome to your May 2017 Smart Wine Club pickup. We'll be exploring wines from the South of France, including Provence, the Rhône Valley and Languedoc-Roussillon. One thing you'll notice immediately is that wines from this region tend to be blends of two to three, or even up to six or seven grapes. It's a fun way to learn more about new grapes, but at the same time, you're never sure what each specific grape tastes like, since they're all mixed up. I find wines from this region to be approachable and highly drinkable. They pair well with food and are perfect for summer. Enjoy the dry rosés for outdoor picnics, the Rhône whites with seafood dinners, and the lean flavorful reds for BBQ cookouts. Now if summer will only hurry up and get here!

- **2015 Famille Perrin Côtes du Rhône Réserve Blanc, Rhône** – From the fabulous 2015 vintage, this white is a blend of Viognier, Grenache Blanc, Roussanne and Marsanne. The wine showcases a bright freshness and great depth – enjoy the floral nose typical of Viognier, plus hints of apple, white peach and stone. Perrin prides themselves on a worldwide reputation as the leading producer of organic wines from this region – they own the best land and their wines show it.

Pairing: Try it with grilled rockfish topped with a Mediterranean “salsa” of tomato, shallot, capers or olives and mixed herbs.

Reg retail: \$12 Smart price: \$10

- **2015 Château Saint Roch Côtes du Rhône Blanc, Rhône** – Since Côtes du Rhône Blanc is one of my favorite whites to drink in general, and since 2015 was such a good vintage, I thought I'd give you one more to compare. The blend of Grenache Blanc, Roussanne, Clairette, Viognier and Bourboulene provides delicate floral notes with citrus and lemon verbena. A rich mouthfeel leads to a balanced finish.

Pairing: This would be lovely paired with a light shrimp pasta in white wine sauce.

Reg retail: \$15 Smart price: \$13

- **2016 Domaine de la Chapelle “Saint Victor” Rosé, Aix-en-Provence** – Provence is rightly well-known for dry rosé, and this bottle is a lovely example. It is the prettiest cotton-candy pink color – looks like

something fairies would drink! The blend of Grenache, Cinsault and Syrah grapes displays bright strawberry and red currant notes. Dry but not too lean, it is well-rounded and aromatic. A pleasure to enjoy on a sunny afternoon.

Pairing: Get yourself some pâté or salami, a hunk of cheese, a baguette and go have a picnic with this one.

Reg retail: \$13 Smart price: \$11

- **2016 Domaine de Fontsaïnte Corbières Gris de Gris Rosé, Languedoc-Roussillon** – The ancient vineyards here were first planted by the Romans – even just the current owners' family have been making wine on this land since the 1700s! That tradition of excellence can be found in this delicious rosé, consistently thought of as one of the best and best-priced rosés on the market. Enjoy flavors of berries, cherries and even a touch of tropical fruits. Cool sea breezes that flow over the vineyard from the Mediterranean provide balance between acidity and richness. The name “Gris de Gris” signifies this is made with Grenache Gris, a less-common grape.

Pairing: Try it with a garlicky and spicy Asian stir-fry or even Indian food.

Reg retail: \$16 Smart price: \$14

- **2013 Jerome Calmes Minervois “Les Vialas”, Languedoc-Roussillon** – Minervois is a cool-climate appellation within the greater Languedoc. The “Les Vialas” is a blend of 60% Syrah and 40% Carignan and is a textbook example of this region’s rustic and hearty reds. Deep opaque purple-black in the glass. You’ll discover aromas of black cherries and plums, bitter chocolate, black peppercorns, juniper and sage.

Pairing: Delicious with grilled rack of lamb and a summer ratatouille.

Reg retail: \$14 Smart price: \$12

- **2014 Emmanuel Darnaud Crozes-Hermitage “Les Trois Chênes”, Rhône** – The great values I was able to find in the other wines in this shipment allowed me to sneak this special bottle into the mix. We’ll venture a little bit north into the Crozes-Hermitage region of the Rhône for this enchanting old-world style 100% Syrah whose name means “The Three Oaks.” The nose hits you with black currant and pepper, while on the palate it's taut and lean with well-balanced tannins. This wine will age well for about 5 years.

Pairing: Enjoy with richly flavored dishes – the classic pairing would be grilled or roasted meats, but I think it would be low-key decadent paired with a “fancy” homemade burger and a slab of triple crème melting over the top.

Reg retail: \$28 Smart price: \$25