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Hello K&L Wine Club Members,

Over the next few months I'll be weaving a theme through the three core clubs: the sourcing of grapes as it pertains to California vineyards. In the last three years, I've steadily steered customers in search of a bargain away from the wines of my home state and more towards inexpensive options from France, Spain, and the Southern Hemisphere because of the value proposition. Grapes from California are expensive and the prices for top parcels of Chardonnay, Cabernet, and Pinot Noir have risen right alongside Bay Area real estate values and local rents. It seems crazy, but in many cases it's become less expensive to buy a wine of a similar quality from halfway around the world, put it on a boat and ship it to our stores in California, than to buy the product locally. After years of simply circumventing California price increases by sourcing from other markets, I decided to do some extra digging and see if we could find under-the-radar alternatives that still provided serious bang for your buck. I'm from California, after all, and I've lived here my entire life. If I can seek out values from thousands of miles away, I should be able to do the same in my own backyard, right?

Sourcing affordable, high-quality fruit in California today is no easy task, especially with the single vineyard craze at an all-time high. Virtuoso performances from the world's best vineyards still dominate much of today's terroir-driven fascination in aficionado circles. More and more drinkers are being taught that absolute purity goes hand in hand with quality, and they look for these more specific designations as they shop through labels. Yet, as ambitious producers scramble to collect parcels from the most coveted vineyard zip codes, the producers who are focused on the quality-to-value ratio are keeping their fruit sources secret. That's not to say these winemakers aren't interested in the individuality of California's top vineyards. On the contrary! It's to say that if they purchase fruit from a lesser-known site and the wine made from that vineyard gets a great review, it can motivate the grower to raise his price the next time around. It turns out that big scores and glowing critical reviews can lead to higher-priced grapes as well as bottles. So if a winemaker has a cherry source of well-priced fruit, they're not necessarily in a hurry to post that source on the label, despite the current single-vineyard fashion.

What does all this have to do with your wine clubs? Everything! I've spent the last month driving around the state, meeting new winemakers and getting to know more of the ins and outs of this secretive process. My only waking thought has been, finding wine club selections from California that get you excited while saving you money! Five of the six core club selections this month bear the fruit of that labor. The Best Buy Club features a dual selection from local winemaker Bob Shepard, who has used his vineyard connections to create a new label called No Curfew, focusing on clean, fresh, and vibrant California expressions for incredible costs. I was so impressed with the quality, I used another of Bob's wines, the Amici Chardonnay, in the Premium Club. I tag-teamed that hot deal with a Pinot Noir from the Loring family. It's another showstopper and its fruit is sourced from six different vineyards across the state. For the Signature Red Club, I worked out a jawdropping deal with Kathryn Kennedy winery to feature the last vintage ever of their now-defunct Merlot, a wine made with fruit sourced from a secret vineyard in the Santa Cruz Mountains. There's a lot to talk about, but we'll get to that inside.

David Driscoll, K&L Wine Club Director
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Signature Red Collection Wine Club

Of all the great wines that I've sought out and selected from California this month, all the values and exclusives from the small winemakers I visited (you should read the stories on the other clubs as well), I'm most excited about the opportunity that presented itself from Marty Mathis, the owner and winemaker of legendary local producer Kathryn Kennedy in the Santa Cruz Mountains. For those of you unfamiliar with the wines, Kathryn Kennedy was one of the original pioneers of California winemaking. She earned her degree from Stanford at the age of nineteen, and was inspired to plant a vineyard after moving to Saratoga and tasting a bottle of Martin Ray Cabernet and having seen similar vineyards near her home. Marty, Kathryn's son, continues to specialize in Bordeaux varieties much as his mother did. After spending some time with him recently, I discovered he was planning on discontinuing one of the best wines in the Kathryn Kennedy portfolio: the Serious Merlot. "In my thirty-year career," Marty told me, "I've probably crushed more Merlot than Cab – over thirty different vineyards from around California. Merlot is a fantastic variety, world class, but there's not a lot of Merlot in the Santa Cruz Mountains, even though it's better suited to the cooler climate."



Marty Mathis, Kathryn Kennedy's son, is the winery's owner and winemaker.

So why discontinue one of the "better suited" wines of the Kathryn Kennedy line-up? Because no matter how hard those of us who love Merlot try to fight it, the *Sideways* effect continues to affect the Merlot market, fourteen years after the release of the film. "I called it 'Serious' Merlot because I hoped the *Sideways* effect had faded away a bit," Marty continued. "I wanted something that could be considered alongside Pomerol and move away from the over-cropped California Merlot wines of the eighties. In our workings with small vineyards around Santa Cruz, we came across a few plots that we had used in our Small Lot Cabernet that we thought could stand on their own." Those sites included two medium-sized vineyards around Lexington Reservoir, a residential vineyard in Saratoga, and another near Los Altos. Marty spared no expense in this wine's creation, using all new French oak barrels for the nine-month maturation. The result is immaculate; it's a Bordeaux-like, Right Bank style of hearty red wine with dark, concentrated fruit, a full-bodied core of texture, and ample tannic structure for the long haul. The **2014 Kathryn Kennedy "Serious" Santa Cruz Mountains Merlot (\$25.99)** is one of the most perfect \$50 bottles of California red wine I've had this year, yet we worked out a deal with Marty to get it down to half of that price for you club members. More importantly, this will be the last ever vintage of this wine, meaning these bottles will end up as historical testaments to real California winemaking, something that continues to be threatened by the perils of modern pop culture. I hope you all love it as much as I do!

In continuing my quest for global curation, I'm including one of the best red wines from Australia that exists: the **2013 John Duval "Plexus" Barossa Valley SGM Blend (\$23.99)**. This wine annually receives rave reviews from every critic on the planet, as well as each and every one of our Aussie-wine-loving staff. It's normally a \$35 bottle. I snagged this deal for the



Winemaker John Duval at the John Duval winery in the Barossa Valley.

Signature Red Club when I had the chance this past January, and I've been sitting on it for a few months now, waiting for the right time to plug it in as a selection. John Duval was the winemaker at Penfolds for almost thirty years before starting his own label in 2003. He's the guy who made the now-legendary 1990 Penfolds Grange, named *Wine Spectator* "Wine of the Year" in 1995. The guy has a winemaking pedigree that's on par with any superstar in this business and his Barossa reds over the last decade have risen to superstar status as a result.

The 2013 Plexus is a blend of 54% Shiraz, 32% Grenache, and 14% Mourvèdre, making it the Aussie version of a Rhône blend. With layer upon layer of fruit, woody spice, and plenty of texture, it's one of the most elegant wines that comes out of Barossa every vintage. I'm well aware of the clichés that consumers hold against "jammy" Australian Shiraz, and I go out of my way to confront and break those stereotypes whenever possible. As if diving right into that stereotype boiler room with a California Merlot wasn't enough, I've decided to double down with this old fashioned Shiraz. In both cases, I think you're going to be seriously wowed by what's in the bottle. The term "serious" should also apply to this Plexus. These are two seriously serious reds.

Premium Wine Club

If you're skipping right to the Premium Club section, please do me a huge favor and read the Best Buy summary and then come back to here. Much of the background for what I'm about to tell you here starts with the Best Buy selections, because without those wines I never would have found the two Premium Club selections. Once you get the background for Amici's No Curfew project, I think you'll better appreciate the work that went into their Chardonnay, which we're featuring in this month's Premium selections, and also the work the Brian Loring put into the Cooper Jaxon Pinot Noir.

I mentioned in the Best Buy section that Amici's winemakers, Tony Biagi and Jesse Fox, pooled their statewide industry connections to help create the stable of No Curfew blends. In creating the recent vintage of **2015 Amici Sonoma Coast Chardonnay (\$14.99)**, they had to rely on relationships solely from Sonoma County. They put together this picturesque expression by pulling from vineyards in the Petaluma Gap, to the Russian River, and beyond. I use the word "picturesque" here because Amici boss Bob Shepard described the wine to me in such terms when we met recently to taste through his portfolio. "What we wanted to do was focus on the fruit," he said to me, pouring the golden liquid into my glass. "When you go to the Louvre and stare at the Mona Lisa, you're not there to look at the frame. The fruit in this case is the picture or the painting. The frame is the oak that provides structure, but ultimately you want to focus on the painting itself."

With the 2015 Amici Chardonnay, 80% of the fruit comes from the Russian River Valley and the remainder from various sites around Sonoma County. The wine has richness and weight, but as Bob said the fruit is the star of the show with an almost tropical character that moves between apple on the entry to lemon on the finish. 2015 was also a stellar vintage for Sonoma with a cool spring start that led to smaller, more concentrated clusters on the vine, and plenty of ripeness from the warm summer that



Bob Shepard from Amici, decanting some of his wines for a K&L staff dinner event.

followed. For a wine that typically sells for \$25 a bottle, you're probably asking, where did we find the margin to offer you that same bottle for \$15 as a wine club member? That's where the skill of fruit sourcing comes into play and why winemakers like Bob, Tony, and Jesse aren't necessarily in a hurry to reveal their secrets. Finding high quality fruit for a great price is becoming a necessary talent in today's California market, and it's all about knowing where to look (no different than when I go to Scotland and France in search of whiskey and brandy casks). Brian and Kimberly Loring also possess that skill and understand its importance. The brother and sister duo own and operate their family-run winery in Lompoc near Santa Barbara and use their own network of connections to make top-notch Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.



Loring's Clos Pepe Vineyard at harvest time.

While Loring has long been renowned for its top-shelf, single-vineyard Pinots, the **2016 Cooper Jaxon California Pinot Noir (\$14.99)** caught my attention at our recent meeting, especially seeing that it used fruit from all their standard sources. "Just like our AVA wines, Cooper Jaxon is a blend of selected barrels from our regular vineyards," Kimberly told me. "It's not purchased bulk wine or fruit from 'lesser vineyards.' We wanted to make a wine that was big, bold, and super tasty—and I think we nailed it!" Much as in the case of the No Curfew Red Blend in the Best Buy Club this month, Kimberly and Brian chose to focus on making a great-tasting red rather than something regionally specific. Blending fruit from vineyards like Rancho La Viña, Kessler-Haak, Clos Pepe, John Sebastiano, Aubaine, Rosella's, and Sierra Mar, the result was about 1700 cases of pure "California" Pinot Noir that captures the fleshy and fruit-forward style of the Golden State's best locales, while keeping the price tag more than reasonable.

Brian Loring is a bona fide Pinot Noir nut, taking his initial inspiration from Burgundy before finding his way forward on California's Central Coast. He makes juicy and lively wines with depth and restraint, and the delicate varietal is his specialty. I've long been a fan of his work and I've consumed my fair share of Loring Pinot Noir over the years. Getting the chance to put something that would normally go into the Signature Red Club into the Premium Club was too good to pass up. Since the theme of this newsletter is selective sourcing, I definitely did some sourcing of my own for this month's selections. Not only did I want to prove that top-notch value could still be found in California despite the challenges, I wanted to bring attention to some of the state's under-the-radar producers and introduce them our club members. This will be a theme moving forward as well, so watch for future club selections that expand upon this motif.

Best Buy Wine Club

Of my very limited experience thus far with the three core clubs, I can tell you that finding great values for the Best Buy Club is the hardest job of them all, and it's a task that I don't take lightly. When I think of a great \$10 to \$15 bottle of wine and the regions that seem to provide the best possible quality expressions for the best possible price, my mind goes to the Southern Rhône, to Rioja, to Sicily, and even to Beaujolais where a string of great harvests have given bargain hunters a vast booty of treasures. That being said, one of my most important objectives as your new wine club director is be a curator of different styles and selections. As I mentioned in the newsletter introduction, where I have had extreme

difficulty finding value in the \$10 to \$15 price point is right here in California. That's not to say that great wines don't exist within this spectrum, it's just that they're getting harder and harder to find. You really have to do some digging to seek them out both as a consumer and a retailer. As I learned on my recent tour through California, a California winemaker has to do the exact same thing when searching for fruit.

The first man I called on my quest for California value was an old friend of the store, Bob Shepard of Amici Cellars. Bob has always been available to help when I've had questions over the years. I wanted to ask him about the challenges and the potential for reasonably priced wines in the state moving forward, and what top producers like him were doing about the rising cost of quality fruit. As it turned out, my timing couldn't have been better. Bob was putting together a new vintage of No Curfew with winemakers Tony Biagi and Jesse Fox—two guys who have a lot of friends in the California wine industry. As with any industry, networking is important in the wine biz, especially when you're on the hunt for grapes. Tony, the head winemaker, has worked at Duckhorn and Cade in the past, and he was the man who put Plumpjack on the map between 2003 and 2012. Jesse, the associate winemaker, used to be a chef at the French Laundry before taking the jump to winemaking at Robert Sinskey, Harlan, and eventually Ram's Gate.

Bob and his two winemakers pooled together their resources and decided to create the perfect everyday California Red Blend. The goal was to make a great red blend that would never be restricted by the conditions of the vintage in one specific area—it could change from year to year. Bob told me in a recent conversation: "I told them: let's make a great bottle of wine that tastes great. Let's not get caught up on where it came from, or from which

vineyard. Let's go out and source the best grapes we can find for the price and not be constrained by location, not be limited by the AVA, but to discover new locations and embrace the diversity that is California." Tony has more than twenty-five years of experience in the industry and knows growers from all over: Mendocino, Paso Robles, Lodi, Sonoma, Napa, you name it. He knew vineyard managers from top sites that had extra fruit after the initial harvests, and he knew they didn't want to leave it hanging. All of these connections came into play when putting together the **2015 No Curfew California Red**

Wine (\$9.99), a blend of several classic red varietals including Zinfandel, Syrah, Petit Syrah, and Malbec. We popped a bottle and it was everything Bob said it would be: robust,

balanced, typically California, and a smoking hot deal for the price.

While No Curfew began originally with the Red Blend, Bob and the team quickly decided to expand into single varietals that would encompass blends of various vineyards as well. I was completely taken aback by the **2015 No Curfew California Chardonnay (\$9.99)**, a wine that offered plenty of round fruit and freshness in a classically California style. It had texture and weight, but without all the oak and butter that many bargain-label brands use to mask a lack of character in inexpensive grapes. As any good winemaker knows, a wine is only as good as the fruit that it comes from. In California today, it turns out that knowing how to source that fruit is just as important as knowing what to do with it.



Chardonnay vineyards used by No Curfew outside of Sonoma.

Club Italiano

Notes by Greg St. Clair, K&L's Italian wine buyer.

The Ricasoli (*ree-KA-zolee*) family is one of Italy's most famous. They have owned the Castello di Brolio since 1141. That's quite a family tree, and the family's glorious history is well documented. The "Iron Baron" Bettino Ricasoli was twice Prime Minister of Italy after its 1861 unification (*Risorgimento*). It was after he retired to Brolio that Baron Bettino's importance to Tuscany's wine future evolved and he became the most farsighted wine producer of his age. Baron Bettino did many agricultural studies for all of the products on his almost 3000-acre estate, which is about 20 miles northeast of Siena. His writings on Chianti shaped the future. The Baron came up with three different ideas for the wine on his property, and the one that has had the most impact was the #1 formula, what Italians call *da*



The Castello di Brolio is the Ricasoli family's home base in Chianti.

pronta bere. It means ready to drink—generally, ready from one vintage to when the next vintage is ready. The wine was more or less 70% to 80% Sangiovese that was blended with local white grapes which softened and lightened the Sangiovese structure. That's the blend that was originally adopted for Chianti Classico's entrance into the DOC in the early 1960s. The blend remained so until 1984 when they reduced the percentage of white grapes to a maximum of 5%. In 1995 they changed the rules again. Now, no white grapes can be used, and Chianti Classico must be a minimum of 80% Sangiovese or up to 100% Sangiovese (which was never allowed before) and a maximum 20% of other red grapes. This month's selection, the **2015 Barone Ricasoli Chianti Classico (\$17.99)**, is a blend of 80% Sangiovese with 15% Merlot and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. As I'm sure most of you know, 2015 was an exceptional vintage across Italy. Here in this bottle you have a wonderful example!

Verona, the city of Romeo and Juliet, is one of Italy's real jewels as a city. If you've never been, you should definitely plan to go! The hills above Verona are home to the DOC of Valpolicella, and the top wine of Valpolicella, Amarone, is made from partially dried grapes. In October the grapes for Amarone are harvested and then placed into bins to dry indoors over the course of three to four months. The grapes lose about 15% of their weight but are still very juicy. They are then pressed and fermented on the skins, and finally the wine is racked off of the skins and into barrel to become Amarone. The next step is even more unusual. Producers take an already fermented Valpolicella wine (not made from dried grapes) and pass it over (Ripasso) the leftover skins from the Amarone fermentation. There's generally still enough sugar in those skins to start a second alcoholic fermentation, and the wine goes on to ferment for about ten days until dry. This is a really unique wine. I find it almost the best of both worlds: You get added complexity and body as with an Amarone, yet the delicacy and drinkability of everyday Valpolicella. This month's wine, the **2014 Venturini Valpolicella Classico Superiore "Semonte Alto" Ripasso (\$21.99)**, is a lovely example. The Venturini family founded their winery in 1963 in the village of San Pietro in Cariano. Their



Drying room at Venturini, San Pietro in Cariano.

vineyards are at an average elevation of 820 feet in a fossil-rich limestone soil. They use the area's traditional Pergola system, extending the vines up and out rather than just parallel to the row as you'd see in California. I love the flavors of this wine, savory and earthy with lots of spice and hints of candied fruit. I had my bottle with a sausage and cream spaghetti and it was blissful!

Champagne Club *Notes by Gary Westby, K&L's Champagne buyer.*

The Best of the Aube for April It isn't very often that we can offer two estate-grown specialties in the same shipment, but this April is a special one for the Champagne Club. For this month, we have not only a rosé, but also a truly great vintage from this southernmost part of Champagne. The Aube, which borders Burgundy, is famous for its kimmeridgian soil, the same as the soil next door in Chablis. It is an area rarely visited by US importers and it is full of producers making cutting-edge, individualistic Champagne. It's a must stop on any trip that includes both Champagne and Burgundy, as it is right on the way south from Epernay to Dijon and Beaune. If you are planning a trip, reach out to me at garywestby@klwines.com. Both of these producers would love to see you.

The Château de Bligny takes up most of the tiny village of Bligny, and it's as far out in the country as one can get in Champagne. This wine, the **Château de Bligny "Grand Reserve" Rosé Brut Champagne (\$34.99)**, is distinctive for being the only Château bottled Champagne, as all the other castle owners buy grapes rather than farming them. It is made the old fashioned hard way, on two old, manual *coquard* basket presses out of a half-and-half combination of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The wine gets its color from 10% Pinot Noir that is vinified red.

When I last visited, Export director Kalina Ivanova treated me to a great visit, which also included their Clos, one of the few walled vineyards in Champagne. The wine has a lovely fruit expression, with clean strawberry aromas balanced by pie crust. It is a very pure rosé that can be enjoyed as an apéritif, but it comes to life with savory food like charcuterie, or better yet game birds. The Château de Bligny "Grand Reserve" Rosé Brut Champagne is usually \$49.99 retail, so it will go fast at your Club price of \$34.99.

By comparison with Bligny, the little village of Gyé-sur-Seine, where the Fluteau is made, is a metropolis. They not only have a *coiffeur*, they boast two bakeries! Since we have had a good and long relationship with Jeremy Fluteau and his family, we were able to secure a lot of his excellent **2008 Fluteau "Symbiose" Brut Champagne (\$34.99)** for the club. As you may already know, the 2008 vintage is perhaps the best vintage in a generation in Champagne, with stellar ripeness and power married to uncommonly high acidity and freshness. The conditions were almost identical to 1996, but almost all of the wines turned out better, since the estates were prepared by the experience of that great vintage. Cold east winds combined with lots of sun in the fall led to some of the most loaded, complex wines in a long time. Like the Bligny, the Symbiose is half Chardonnay and half Pinot Noir, but the Symbiose is vinified white. It has enjoyed eight years of ageing on the lees, yet is still as bright and fresh as you could want. This has great texture and a fine bead from the long ageing, but it is so vivacious right now that I would recommend having it with shellfish. Try it now, and then lay down a case to drink over the next ten years! A toast to you! —*Gary Westby*



Kalina Ivanova, export manager of Château Bligny, at the Château.

Re-order Form

As a member of a K&L Wine Club, you have the opportunity to order previous offerings from any of our clubs. The following pages contain a “backlist” of each club. Please note the prices for each wine. The phone number to place orders is 800-247-5987. The order desk is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. If you have any wine club-related issues, call us at x2766 and we will help you resolve them. We have a voice-mail system, and if we can't take your call immediately we will return it as soon as possible. In addition, you can email us at theclubs@klwines.com.

All wine can be purchased by the single bottle. Prices are shown after each wine listed.

Tax (in California) and shipping will be added to each order.

For a complete, up-to-date inventory listing visit us online at: www.klwines.com

Signature Red Club Previous Offerings

2013 Antica Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon @ \$32.99 per bottle

I don't think it's a secret at this point that 2013 was a magical year for California reds. The best wines from Napa, including this 2013 Antica, have huge scores and great reviews. In the glowing 94-point Parker review, Robert himself describes the wine as “beautifully elegant.” I think you'll all enjoy how approachable this wine is already. The wine is rich, but balanced. Structured, yet elegant. Powerful, yet haunting and beautiful. It's a stunning bottle of classic Napa Cabernet from a now-legendary vintage.

2016 Achaval Ferrer Cabernet Sauvignon @ \$24.99 per bottle

Where can one find mountain-grown Cabernet for a great price? In Mendoza, Argentina, where Achaval Ferrer sources its fruit from mineral-rich mountain soils, resulting in nuanced and beautifully balanced flavors. Bordeaux estates have their eyes on Mendoza. The conditions and Cabernet-friendly climate have shown tremendous and cost-effective results, as evident here in this 2016 Achaval Ferrer Cab, with juicy black fruits, hints of earth and tobacco, and a full-bodied finish. We'd be hard pressed to find a Cabernet this polished and profound at this price locally. Ferrer is a widely respected red wine producer, known for its old-school approach to new-world winemaking. Their wines are textbook in style and varietally correct, as is clear from the first sip of the 2016 Cabernet.

2015 Bravium Pinot Noir Anderson Valley @ \$24.99 per bottle

The 2015 Bravium Anderson Valley Pinot Noir from vineyards in the far reaches of Mendocino Valley. The wine is 100% Pinot Noir aged for 11 months in a combination of French and Hungarian oak of which 33% was new. The resulting wine is delicious. It's loaded with bright strawberry and raspberry aromas along with mineral and a cool rush of mint on the nose. The palate is bright and lively with strawberry and raspberries cascading throughout and a crunchy mineral and spice note on the end. This delightful red should pair well with roast chicken, poached salmon or lamb chops. *Wine Enthusiast* gave it 92 points.

2013 Von Strasser Diamond Mountain District Cabernet Sauvignon @ \$29.99 per bottle

The 2013 Von Strasser Diamond Mountain District Cabernet Sauvignon is a blend of 75% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Malbec, 5% Petit Verdot and 1% Merlot aged in 100% French Oak of which 30% is new. It is blended from six vineyard sites within the Diamond Mountain District, and designed to be more approachable than your typical Diamond Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon. The wine begins with a nose of dark berry fruit, blueberry, blackberry and leather notes. The palate is a delightful mix of black licorice, coffee, pomegranate and subtle earth tones. The finish is long and lingering with supple tannins which will allow the wine to age gracefully. Pair this with a perfectly seared Filet Mignon, or put it in your cellar and allow it to sleep for 10 to 15 years and be amazed at its evolution.

2013 Domaine Fontbonau Côtes du Rhône @ \$22.99 per bottle

In 2008 this property was run down, but had 70-year-old Grenache and 30-year-old Syrah vineyards. The soils consist of sand, silt and fine clay, all ideal for growing classic Grenache. This wine drinks more like a fine Châteauneuf-du-Pape than a Côtes-du-Rhône. Thanks to the old vines and soil composition it has impressive structure and depth. It's loaded with dark berry fruit, silky tannins and complex structure. It drinks like a wine easily double the price. Enjoy this succulent red with lighter red meats and earthier fare. It's a great match for lamb or veal.

Premium Wine Club Previous Offerings

2005 Puelles Gran Reserva Rioja @ \$16.99 a bottle

The 2005 Puelles has a few years of barrel maturation in both French and American oak. After twelve years in the bottle the fruit begins to fade just a bit, allowing the secondary flavors of spice and leather to begin moving forward into the palate. I think the 2005 Gran Reserva at twenty bucks might even be better than that legendary 1999 vintage we sold case upon case of. Tasting it with Joe, our Spanish buyer, I was practically jumping up and down. The wine pours over the palate with a soft and silky core of fruit, but not the ripe and juicy red berry fruit you see in a young Rioja. I can't think of a more exciting wine to put into the Premium Club!

2017 Jax Y3 Russian River Pinot Noir Rosé @ \$12.99 a bottle

Jax's wines are made by winemaker Kirk Venge, who has become a superstar in California over the last decade after putting his stamp on wines like Hunnicutt, B Cellars, and Bacio Divino. He made less than 500 cases of this rose, and it's made with top-quality Pinot Noir from Sonoma, and almost all of it goes to their own direct club members and the patrons of the tasting bar. In no way is the Jax Rosé some overly sweet, fat and fruity, pink party wine for college kids. It's a very serious wine, on par with some of the best Provence expressions we carry in the store. It's pale in color, refreshing on the palate, and electric with acidity.

2014 Terres Secrètes, St. Veran @ \$14.99 per bottle

This wine comes from a vineyard called "Les Cras," known in French as a *lieu dit*—a vineyard plot that has a name, but no ranking or classification such as premier or grand cru. Terres Secrètes means "secret lands" and it's the name of the winemaker collective that put together this wine. It's a band of growers in Burgundy's Mâcon region that team up to work as a cooperative with their fruit. Having spent time in the Mâcon this past spring, I can tell you that the wines from this region of France are humble, high in quality, made by hand with pride. They're some of the best white wine values from anywhere in the world—Chardonnay or not. Just about all of the whites from the Mâcon are Chardonnay, and this particular wine is made from fruit that borders the more prestigious St. Veran neighbor of Pouilly-Fuissé. In this part of the Mâcon the soils are very stony and calcium-rich, helping the grapes retain their acidity and preserve their freshness. Unlike California Chardonnays, St. Veran wines see little to no oak, so the wines speak to the quality of the grapes themselves. I think you'll understand what I'm talking about when you take your first sip of this wine. A pure and clean-flavored Chardonnay, it refreshes the palate with lively acidity while tempting your taste buds with stone fruit flavors and accents of white flowers. It's Chardonnay in its truest form.

2016 Arnaldo Caprai Grechetto @ \$14.99 per bottle

The 2016 Arnaldo Caprai Grechetto comes from the Colli Martani DOC in Umbria. This 100% Grechetto-based wine is aged for just three months in stainless steel and then an additional three months in bottle, to produce a bright and zippy white that's ready for immediate consumption. An intense perfume of exotic fruits, yellow peach and floral notes greets the nose and the lively, acid-based palate displays yellow fruits and peach notes with chalky notes and mineral tones. Perfect with seafood, salads or a cheese plate, this refreshing white is incredibly versatile and pleasing. It's a perfect example of the white wine renaissance going on in Italy. These wines used to be somewhat boring but thanks to lower yields and renewed commitment to excellence they are now interesting, bold interpretations of indigenous grape varieties. James Suckling gave this 91 points.

2015 Buehler Russian River Chardonnay @ \$14.99 per bottle

This comes from the Wood Vineyard, known for adding peach and apricot flavors and aromas and giving a fleshier feel to the wine, and the River Vineyard which adds a floral quality, mineral and lime notes and a steely quality. Some French oak is used on this wine. This quintessential California Chardonnay has exotic fruit notes, stone fruit and zesty mineral notes. Citrus and peach aromas emerge with a rich palate buffered by nice acidity and graham-cracker notes. The mouth feel is creamy and rich with a long, lush finish. The perfect foil for roast chicken.

2014 Seven Hills Columbia Valley Cabernet Sauvignon @ \$14.99 per bottle

Washington State is fashioning some amazing wines. The arid climate helps control how much water the grapes see, giving the winemaker/growers a huge advantage. The 2014 Seven Hills Columbia Valley Cabernet Sauvignon has a dark red color in the glass with brimming aromas of black cherry kirsch, mocha and baker's chocolate. The palate seamlessly unfolds to reveal blackberry and milk chocolate notes with silky tannins and a long, lush finish. The perfect foil for red meats and hearty dishes, this is a fantastic Cabernet Sauvignon for the price.

2015 Stéphane Aviron “Vieilles Vignes Chenas” Cru Beaujolais @ \$14.99 per bottle

The 2015 Stéphane Aviron “Vieilles Vignes Chenas” Cru Beaujolais is a stunning example of what Beaujolais can and should be. Beautifully fruited with racy notes of wet earth, herbs and spices, this delightful red wine can be slightly chilled and enjoyed with a multitude of cuisines. It is light enough to pair with fish courses such as salmon and sea bass, and it can also pair with pork, veal and some lighter beef dishes. Fresh and fruity but in no way insipid, this complex red is incredibly versatile.

2009 Bodega Poesia “Cuvée Hélène” Argentina @ \$14.99 per bottle

This wine is one step down from their flagship wine, which is named Poesia. The “Cuvée Hélène” is a stunning wine that, like a fine Bordeaux, benefits by spending a little extra time in the bottle. Not a pop-and-pour wine, the 2009 Bodega Poesia “Cuvée Hélène” is dark and brooding, with graphite and cassis aromas. The palate is a dense collage of dark berries, baker’s chocolate, menthol, licorice and spice. It has great length, with fine tannins. This Argentinian beast should be paired with tri-tip, meat-lover’s pizza or other rich dishes that call for a bold red wine.

Best Buy Wine Club Previous Offerings

2015 Carrick Sauvignon Blanc @ \$9.99 a bottle

This wine is a direct import to K&L, meaning we purchased the wine directly from Carrick in New Zealand and brought it into the states without paying the middlemen who generally take a cut of the profits. That’s why the price is so good. Notes from Stefanie Juelsgaard, K&L team member who is a passionate advocate for the wines of the Southern Hemisphere and organic and bio-dynamic winemaking as a whole. “Carrick winemaker Francis Hutt is championing the bio-dynamic approach to winemaking of crafting wines in the vineyard versus the cellar. Sauvignon Blanc is rarer in Central Otago than its neighbor to the north, the well-known region of Marlborough, making this wine even more special. Even though the effort required is much higher, Carrick performs all vineyard maintenance projects by hand, such as leafing and harvesting, as they believe this produces the finest wine and showcases the exceptional qualities of the region. Fermentation is carried out using only wild yeast and aging takes place in neutral French oak barrels, lending some texture and richness to the palate. The climatic influence of this area results in a stunning wine showcasing tropical fruit, driving acidity, flinty minerality, and bright citrus notes.”

2011 Domaine de Nizas Languedoc @ \$9.99 a bottle

This blend of Syrah, Mourvèdre, and Grenache from the south of France is similar to a Côtes du Rhône in style and recipe. When you shop for everyday bistro-style French reds you’ll generally find wines from more recent vintages like 2015 and 2016 because they’re priced to drink young and relatively soon after bottling. However, just because you’re not spending \$50 on a bottle doesn’t mean you can’t lay down a few bottles in your cellar. Inexpensive wines can transform and evolve into something greater, every bit as well as pricier selections—as long as they have the necessary acid and tannic structure to promote healthy maturity. It’s just not something that’s commonly done. As a wine ages in the bottle, the tannins will integrate into the wine and the mouthfeel will soften, condensing into a more plush and silky texture. The fruit dissipates and the secondary flavors like savory herbs and spice begin to come forward. Those flavors come from the core of Domaine de Nizas’ terroir, a unique mosaic of three soil types. The limestone and clay soils make more powerful wines. When planted with Syrah, they create wines with red fruit and violet characters. The Basalt soils are volcanic based, unique within the Languedoc region, and rare throughout the world. Syrah planted on basalt soils often results in wines with spice and licorice notes alongside a good tannic structure. Maturing a wine in bottle allows those terroir-driven flavors to come forward with evolution, but it generally comes at a price. In the case of this 2011 Nizas, we managed to pack it in for ten bucks—a rare treat indeed!

2015 La Posta “Fazzio” Malbec @ \$9.99 per bottle

The 2015 La Posta Malbec is named for grower Domingo Fazzio, whose Malbec is grown at 3,500 feet elevation in the Tupungato region of Mendoza. Besides all of the calling-card flavors of cassis and soft red fruits, the wine has freshness and grace. It’s of a quality that I typically associate with \$20-\$25 Malbecs—those that display elegance and finesse as well as texture.

2014 Area Code Wine Co. Edna Valley Chardonnay @ \$9.99 per bottle

A great entry-level offering. When you’re looking for that affordable everyday drinking Chardonnay, a few things need to be present: good fruit, nice balance, a hint of oak, and harmony between alcohol and tannins. The 2014

Area Code Wine Co. Edna Valley Chardonnay has all these qualities in spades. It is a great little bargain that can pair with roast chicken, a salad or cheese plate.

Club Italiano Previous Offerings *Notes by Greg St. Clair, K&L's Italian wine buyer.*

2011 Badia di Morrona N'Antia @ \$24.99 a bottle

The Badia di Morrona is an ancient abbey (Badia is abbey in Italian). It was originally constructed in 1089 and the structure was rebuilt multiple times, so they have a little bit of history. They are about 25 miles southeast of Pisa in an area of Tuscany that seems a bit forgotten. Much of Tuscany is so well travelled it's hard not to get caught up in a wave of foreign tourists. If you want to get away from the crowd then Terricciola is the place for you. You won't even find many Italians! The Gaslini-Alberti family bought the estate in 1939. It encompasses more than 1500 acres, 280 of which are in vineyards planted to predominantly Sangiovese, plus some Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah. More than 100 acres are devoted to olive trees. The property has multiple different houses across it that the family rents out as Agriturismo. Who doesn't love lying around the pool in the Tuscan countryside in the summer! I met Filippo Gaslini-Alberti in 1998. He had come to Florence to meet me and pour some wines in my hotel lobby. He was keen to get me interested in importing them and we did for quite a few years, until his distribution need outgrew our ability. I've always liked the wines. They show a different side of Tuscany, an area where the climate is more coastal and has its own tweak. The 2011 Badia is a blend of predominantly Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot, a more Bordeaux-like blend for sure. It is aged for 15 months in barrique. In its youth this wine had a little too much evident barrique but now it has aged into a wonderful expression of the Pisan countryside. I think this is a wine you need to have with bolder food such as leg of lamb or a rich lasagna.

2015 Cascina Val del Prete Barbera @ \$14.99 a bottle

The wine is fermented in stainless steel and then aged in neutral barrels for about six months, until the wine goes through the malolactic fermentation. I love this wine. There's just a fun-loving nature about it and you can't not like it. There's so much fruit and freshness it's fabulous. Barbera's fresh and vibrant acidity always makes it a great match for dishes that have more richness. One of my favorite matches is sausage and cream pasta with red chili flakes or black pepper. The acidic zip in the Barbera is the perfect foil for the richness of the cream. Try it, you'll love it!

2016 Silvano Follador Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore @ \$16.99 per bottle

Silvano and Alberta Follador started with a tiny parcel of land that they had inherited from their paternal grandfather; a few years later they received a slightly larger plot from their maternal grandmother. In all they have four plots for a total of just over eight acres of vineyards. That is small, and for a Prosecco producer it's micro tiny. When I first met Silvano and Alberta they made an array of wines but since the 2014 vintage they have made just one, a blend from all four vineyards. They make 2275 cases a year of their Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore Brut Nature. The grapes are all indigenous: Prosecco (now called Glera), Verdiso, Perera, and Bianchetta. In this 2016 bottling the residual sugar was 0.0%, which is bone dry. You won't find many bottles of Prosecco like this! Last year Ian d'Agata, who writes for the website Vinous, wrote "Silvano Follador is in my opinion the single best producer of Prosecco today." I'd agree with him.

2010 Vigneti Massa Barbera "Monleale" @ \$22.99 per bottle

If you're really an Italian wine geek you'll know of Walter Massa, producer of this wine. There are lots of versions of Barbera that are fresh, crisp and bright and many that are aged in new barriques giving them a toasty and more tannic character; but this Barbera "Monleale" is neither. It is sourced from three old-vine vineyards in the hills around the small town of Monleale. The vineyards are mostly marine clays, which offer high-toned aromatics. The wine is aged in used barriques, and I mean used. This isn't a wine that's affected by lots of new oak. It spends just short of two years in barrel. The wine is unfiltered, and fermented using only indigenous yeasts. It is held back until Walter feels that it's right, and that's why the 2010 is just coming to us now. I find this wine extraordinary. The nose is so complex, with layers of fruit, earth, and spice intertwining in a symphonic effect of aromatics. On the palate the wine has verve. After all it is Barbera so the acidic structure dominates, but the wine has a supple richness that is mouth-filling. The flavors are complex, dynamic and stunning. Try this with a risotto or a filled pasta, it's incredible!

2016 Quartomoro Di Sardegna Orriu @ \$17.99 per bottle

The wine is classically Sardinian, without the over-ripe flavors one can find in Cannoanu. It's produced from a vineyard in granitic/sandy soil at about 2.3 tons per acre. The wine is super clean, full of fruit and with layers of

complexity that add spice and earth. Every time I think of Sardinian food the name Bottarga comes into my head, but for this wine I'm thinking grilled leg of lamb!

____ Bottle(s) 2014 Ferrero Toscana IGT @ \$13.99 per bottle

When Pablo and Claudia purchased their property just south of the Orcia River, across Montalcino's southern boundary, they planted Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Montepulciano and Alicante Bouschet. Pablo was interested in making something besides Sangiovese, which was nearly the only grape in Montalcino. Initially he decided to vinify them separately into individual wines labeled as CA, ME, MO, AL. The wines were good but monstrously difficult to sell. One day while San Francisco's Mike "Guido" Parres and I were tasting at the winery I said give me another glass and I poured amounts of the wines into one glass to see what it would be like and wow, it was better than any of the individual wines. When I looked at Pablo he said, yes, I know—we were waiting to see if you liked the idea! By the way, with the 2015 version of this wine the family changed the name from IGT to the name of their youngest daughter Pepita. It's a powerful, full-bodied wine and you should try it too!

2015 Casale della Toria Cesanese del Piglio @ \$21.99 per bottle

Casale della Ioria, owned by Paolo Perinelli and his family, is about 45 miles southeast of Rome. This is one of those talented producers who could always coax character out of this tricky grape variety. Their vineyards are about 1000 feet above sea level, in the area that starts heading into the foothills of the Apennines. The 2015 Casale della Ioria Cesanese del Piglio is an exceptional example of the varietal. It is fermented in stainless steel, then aged in French barriques. 2015 was an exceptional year for late-ripening varieties such as Cesanese. The nose is full of vibrant wild cherry and lilac, and on the palate it broadens into a plummy ripeness, never fat just more viscous.

2007 Teresa Raiz Friuli Decano Red Blend @ \$16.99 per bottle

The 2007 Teresa Raiz Decano Rosso is a blend of 60% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Cabernet Franc. The grapes were grown on Friuli's classic soils, a mix of glacial morainic and rocky flat. They were harvested in early October, fermented in stainless steel and then aged in French Allier barriques for 14 months. This wine is now ten years old. Time has allowed it to soften and its flavors have evolved into a complex blend of earth, fruit and spice. Paolo suggests you try it with braised meat.

Champagne Club Previous Offerings *Notes by Gary Westby, K&L's Champagne Buyer.*

2011 Egrot Brut Grand Cru Champagne @ \$34.99 per bottle

Many of you in the Champagne Club have visited Elisabeth Goutorbe and Jean-Marie Egrot at their home in Aÿ, and even more of you have met her at tent events. A few years ago, they changed the name of the house from Elisabeth Goutorbe to Egrot et Filles, to avoid confusion with the many other members of the Goutorbe family in Aÿ. This Champagne is composed of two thirds Pinot Noir and one third Chardonnay from some of the chalkiest soil in all of Champagne. While this vintage proved challenging for many, some of the best plots in the grand crus did exceptionally well, producing wines of both power and finesse. This is one of those wines, and has plenty of richness for drinking on its own, but also the backbone of minerality to pair with the best salmon or tuna fillets.

Charles Ellner "Qualité Extra" Brut Champagne @ \$34.99 per bottle

This Champagne is composed of 50% Pinot Noir, 30% Chardonnay and 20% Meunier. It is aged for almost five years on the lees and is treated to an addition of one-third reserve wines. This wine has great red cherry Pinot Noir fruit framed by baguette toast from the long ageing, and it also has surprising snap and length. This is an ideal aperitif, and will go fantastically well with gougères, parmesan crisps and all manner of finger foods. A toast to you!

Maxime Toubart "Pur Meunier" Brut Champagne @ 34.99 per bottle

The Maxime Toubart "Pur Meunier" Brut Champagne comes from one plot in Le Breuil, on the edge of Champagne next to Brie. This area is so cold that even Meunier has a hard time ripening fully. Luckily, this over-forty-year-old plot is well exposed, facing due south. This wine is very well aged, based on 2008 with reserves from 2007 representing half the blend. It has a golden color that promises the spicy, cakey wild aromas and flavors that follow on the nose and in the mouth. I can promise that you will be the first person on your block to have a single-vineyard Champagne from Le Breuil. It took me 28 trips to Champagne before my first visit!