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Hello K&L Wine Club Members,

It's finally Spring, and we are brimming with excellent values for the new season. Whether you're planning a picnic or simply looking to enjoy your patio space again, now's the time to stock up on good wine to help you relax in the sunshine.

The Club Français has gone red this month, with two stunning buys. We have a beautiful Right Bank Bordeaux from the lauded 2016 vintage. It's a big wine, and will stand up to a special dinner. Our second red by contrast is light and playful. We haven't yet highlighted Beaujolais, and the charming Moulin-a-Vent that we're featuring is a great introduction. It may well change your mind about this oft-overlooked region.

It's a tale of contrast in the Signature Club. At K&L we love celebrating both the classics and the exciting new wineries that we come across. This month we've decided to set up a comparison. One of our selections is a classic Napa Cabernet from a longtime great in the Valley. The other is a quirky and fun Malbec/Cabernet Franc blend from a brand new producer who's making waves in the Argentinean winemaking scene. Both wines are drinking beautifully now.

In the Premium Club we are focusing on the Sonoma region with a classic Russian River Chardonnay and a stunning Bordeaux blend from one of the oldest wineries to plant vines in the county. In fact both of these wineries are well-established names in Sonoma. Over the years the quality of Sonoma wines has only increased and the two wines we feature this month give a great snapshot.

The Best Buy selections include a Central Coast Chardonnay from two of the best brothers in the business. We've been a fan of Jim and Bob Varner's wines for a long time, and we're excited to feature one of their wines for the club. Our second selection is a charming Rhône-style blend from the Roussillon in Southwest France. Grown close to the Spanish border, this little wine is bold and elegant, a great house red.

Greg St. Clair, our Italian wine buyer, is running a double feature on one of the Piedmont area's greatest producers. Earlier this year Greg highlighted G.D. Vajra's Nebbiolo in the Club Italiano, and this month we return to this excellent producer with both their Dolcetto and their Barbera.

And to cap it all off, it's a Champagne month! Gary has landed another selection of top-notch wines for the club with a Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs, and a vintage bottling from the grower-producer Jean-Jacques Lamoureux. If you're in need of bubbles, this month's wines are a great buy.

Cheers to Springtime! Cheers,  
Heather Gowen, K&L's Wine Club director  
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# Le Club Français

Before the hot weather settles in, we've decided to do a double red wine feature in the Club Français. Both wines we've chosen this month are from historic estates in their respective regions. First up is another great Bordeaux, this time from the Right Bank. Thanks to our owner and Bordeaux buyer Clyde Beffa, the Bordeaux values just keep on coming. Our second red is another value, from a rather overlooked region. In the two years since Le Club Français launched, we haven't as yet ventured into Beaujolais. This little area is brimming with talent, and an elegant cru Beaujolais is exactly the right wine to bridge the seasons.

I want to begin with this month's Bordeaux. Château Fombrauge's lineage can be traced back to the Canolle family of the 1500s, and the first recorded vintage was harvested in 1599. It's likely, though, that vineyards existed on the estate well before then. The current owner, Bernard Magrez, acquired the estate in 1999. M. Magrez is an entrepreneur like few others, with wine estates all over the world, yet it is here in Bordeaux, his birthplace, that he most indulges his passion for wine, sparing no expense in the production of his world-class wines.

Unusually for St. Emilion, Château Fombrauge encompasses an entire 58.6 hectares of vineyard land. This large array of vineyards truly allows M. Magrez's winemaking team to highlight the best of the Saint-Emilion appellation. They use the very best parcels to make the Grand Vin. This month's **2016 Fombrauge, Saint-Emilion (\$31.99)** is intense and elegant, with a sleek, modern profile full of luscious black fruits and bold tannin with hints of anise and mocha. Full-bodied and rich, this is absolutely a pairing for steak. I would recommend laying a few bottles down to age. The tannin will continue to integrate into the fruit, and the wine will evolve beautifully over the next decade.

Our second red is a Cru Beaujolais—a category that is too often skipped over. Beaujolais Nouveau and other simple, fruity styles from the region tend to dominate the image of Beaujolais, but if you take the time to taste through some of the better wineries from the various Crus, you find a different story. Moulin-à-Vent is one of the oldest appellations, and the Château du Moulin-à-Vent has 37 hectares of the appellation's finest vineyards. The soil here is one of the most important factors of the wines' elegance and ageing potential. Granite, rich in iron oxide, copper and manganese, adds significant complexity to the Gamay fruit grown on these sites, and the resultant wines are stunning, with a power and depth that surprises. The **2018 Château du Moulin-a-Vent "Les Terrasses du Château" Moulin-a-Vent (\$27.99)** strikes a beautiful balance of opposites. It's dark fruited, yet reminiscent of red cherries, powerful yet light on its feet, refreshing and light, yet structured and poised for aging. Drink it at cellar temperature or with a slight chill, and pair it with poultry.



*Château Fombrauge, in addition to producing excellent wines, boasts guest rooms. It makes an idyllic base for exploring Bordeaux's Right Bank.*



*Brice Laffond, winemaker at Château du Moulin-a-Vent, has worked at both Domaine Faiveley and Spring Mountain Vineyards in Napa.*

# Signature Red Club

Our two selections this month could not be more different in origin and background, yet both are compelling wines. We have a well-known Napa superstar, Inglenook Estate, and a brand new project, Michelini i Mufatto, a small family venture in Argentina's Tupungato region founded in 2018. A rare deal brought the Inglenook within reach for the club, and we're thrilled to present it to you this month. Likewise, the Michelini i Mufatto wine is something special, just making its debut in the U.S.. As you know, we love hunting out new producers and also have great respect for historic wineries such as Inglenook, and when we find a star from each category, it makes for a great side-by-side feature.

Inglenook is a lauded name in Napa. The history of the great estate stretches back to the 1870s, and its first vintage was 1882. This month's **2015 Inglenook Estate "1882" Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$24.99)** is an ode to that first vintage. Inglenook introduced the bottling "1882" in 2012, as a tribute to the foresight of founder Captain Gustave Neibaum, who chose to build a winery that could rival the great châteaux of Europe. It isn't often that we can make a such a hallowed name available with club pricing, but thanks to our excellent Domestic buying team, we've managed to land this lovely 2015 vintage Cabernet. 2015 was a near perfect vintage in Napa, and the wine is drinking beautifully with just a hint of savory development coloring the dense, concentrated core of vibrant cassis fruit, olive, eucalyptus, and sweet oak spice. The tannin is still making itself known, and indeed the wine can age for another decade at least. If you're interested in laying down some wine, you won't have a better opportunity at this price to invest in a Napa classic.

Our second wine may come from a bit more off the beaten path, but it too is a work of art. It's an exciting indication of the new wave of Argentinean winemakers. Gerardo Michelini and his four brothers are known in Argentina for their adventurous and revolutionary wineries. Gerardo married Andrea Mufatto, a renowned winemaker in her own right, and their son Manuel (called Manu) has now joined the picture. In 2018 the family launched a new label with exciting wines made by Andrea and Manuel. Having followed the Michelini brothers for the last several years, I was excited to hear of the new label, and sure enough I fell in love with the **2018 Michelini i Mufatto "GY" Malbec/Cabernet Franc Tupungato (\$24.99)** as soon as I tasted it. Choosing to work with fruit from the high elevation Tupungato region, Andrea and Manuel have devised a seamless blend of Malbec and Cabernet Franc, which highlights the strengths of the two varieties as well as the elegance of the region. The wine has gorgeous aromatics with cool blueberry fruit and a velvety mid palate, complemented by classic Cabernet Franc tannin structure and a slightly peppery finish. I could easily sip this wine all on its own, but it is extremely food friendly. It pairs particularly well with savory dishes that have a bit of umami presence such as wild mushroom or gamey meats.



*One of the great achievements of Francis Coppola, who purchased Inglenook in the 1970s, was to slowly buy back the entire original estate vineyards. In 1995, the original vineyards were all officially reunited.*



*Manu Michelini (right) inherited the family passion for winemaking and is learning from the best how to make expressive wines from the highly distinctive terroir of the Tupungato region.*

# Premium Club

For this month's Premium Club, the theme is Classic Sonoma. We have a wealth of history and winemaking legends here in our own backyard. The two wineries that we're highlighting have both been around for decades, and have familiar names. It's great to revisit these classic wineries and see the world-class wines they are producing today.

Sebastiani Vineyards was founded in 1904 by Samuele Sebastiani, a native of Tuscany. He had quick success, given the idyllic climate of Sonoma, and even weathered the difficult periods of Prohibition and the Great Depression, maintaining a small wine production for religious and medicinal purposes. Eventually Samuele's son August took over the winery, and production grew.

In the 1980s the family's holdings expanded hugely and they ventured into mass production winemaking in the Central Valley. In 2001, the family sold the big production labels and refocused on the family winery in Sonoma. The investment in quality paid off, and in 2008 Sebastiani Vineyards caught the eye of Bill Foley, the current owner. Bill has reworked every inch of the property, implementing sustainable farming, replanting some blocks to varieties better suited to the terroir, and reducing yields dramatically. Today, Sebastiani is producing the best wines in its history, and I was duly impressed with the **2016 Sebastiani "Gravel Bed Red" Sonoma County Bordeaux Blend (\$16.99)**. Cherry and red plum jump out of the glass, followed by subtle anise and black pepper notes. The tannins are still vibrant, and begging for a steak pairing. The finish has a pleasant mocha kiss which lingers delightfully on the palate. Silky and smooth, this wine is drinking beautifully right now, but you can also age it for another five years if you want to see how it develops further complexity. It's a great match for any red meats, and grilled chicken or pork dishes too.

Our second wine is another Sonoma classic. DeLoach Vineyards was founded in Sonoma's famous

Russian River Valley in 1975 by Cecil DeLoach, and was one of the first vineyards to establish the region. DeLoach has produced elegant wines over the decades, but the quality skyrocketed when the Boisset family of Burgundy purchased the property in 2003. Converting the entire vineyard land to organic and biodynamic farming (by 2008 and 2009) was no small feat, but with such a premium location in the sought-after Russian River Valley, it has been the right choice. Tasting the **2016 DeLoach Russian River Valley Chardonnay (\$12.99)**, I was impressed by its classic Russian River character. Pure, unassuming orchard fruits of pear and Honeycrisp apple play on the palate, with a creamy and buttery profile from the time spent in oak. Classic in every respect, the wine is a great buy at this price, and is as iconic a picture of Russian River Chardonnay as you could ask for. Sip it on its own, or pair with a simple roast chicken.



*As one of the oldest wineries in the Sonoma Valley, Sebastiani sports some impressive architecture, including entrances to its vineyards. This is the arch at the Cherryblock Vineyard.*



*One of the reasons DeLoach Vineyards is producing such quality wines is the conversion of the vineyards to organic and biodynamic farming.*

# Best Buy Wine Club

This month's Best Buy selections come from two of our all-time favorites. You couldn't ask to meet kinder people in the wine world than Jim and Bob Varner. The two brothers have been making wine since 1991, and their Varner and Foxglove labels have become synonymous with top quality from California's Central Coast. Another American is behind our second wine this month, but the wine itself is French. Dan Kravitz was an importer for many years. He fell in love with France's Roussillon region, and now makes incredible wines from his holdings in the Maury AOC. Both wines are perfectly in their drinking window, and are easy to enjoy on their own, cocktail style.

It's hard to find a perfectly balanced Chardonnay. The variety is a bit of a blank canvas; how it looks depends on how it's handled. I love a good Chardonnay, but it's not easy to find one that highlights the grape's inherent and often quite subtle strengths. Jim and Bob Varner have achieved that goal with their Chardonnays. Both their Varner and Foxglove labels are among my favorite examples of perfectly balanced Chardonnay from the Central Coast. Foxglove is their second label of sorts, but the wines are still all made by Bob Varner, in the same fastidious fashion as their higher end Varner wines. I think you'll love the **2018 Foxglove Central Coast Chardonnay (\$9.99)**. Creamy without being cloying, the wine presents ripe yellow pear and Honeycrisp apple notes, accompanied by a rounded and smooth texture on the palate. It finishes with the right pop of acidity, to keep the wine light on its feet and keep you coming back for more. You won't find a more pleasant Chardonnay for under \$20, let alone the club price of \$9.99!

Our second wine is French, a beautiful Rhône-style blend. After importing and selling other people's wine for decades, Dan Kravitz decided to follow his dream and buy an old vineyard in the Roussillon's Maury appellation. Formerly famous for its dessert wines, Maury is a small area 20 miles from Spain. This beautiful landscape is the perfect climate for Grenache, with a long, hot growing season and steep hillside vineyards of schist soils. Dan's **2015 Domain Cabirau Côtes de Roussillon (\$9.99)** is about 70% Grenache, with Syrah and Carignan composing the balance. At just over five years from vintage date, the wine is absolutely singing in the glass. The Grenache fruit is still vibrant and full with nice red berry notes, and the Syrah and Carignan add a beautiful depth of earthy, gamey flavors and a nice peppery profile. The tannins have mellowed with age and the wine is just starting to show some beautiful savory development. I'm thoroughly impressed with how the wine drinks on its own, but of course there's always a good food pairing for a good wine. I would match this one with grilled pork ribs.



*Apart from being two of the nicest people you will meet in the wine business, Jim and Bob Varner are both extremely talented.*



*Domaine Cabirau, in Maury, is one of the most stunning of places you will find vines growing.*

# Club Italiano

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

Last month we gave you a Nebbiolo from Vajra, one of my favorite producers, and this month we have two more wines from Vajra. As I muse over Piedmont and specifically the Langhe hills, where I have had so many fantastic meals and wines. I wonder, truly, what it would like to be from there and then travel to other parts of the world. The food everywhere else must seem second-rate, from their perspective. The quality of the Langhe wines has been on a remarkable upward surge since a boom that began in the late 1970s—and it is still going up. When I first started in the business in 1982, the effervescent Marc de Grazia and his “Barolo Boys,” Domenico Clerico, Elio Altare, Enrico Scavino and Luciano Sandrone, shocked the establishment by making Barolo in barriques, the standard barrel for the rest of the wine world. Suddenly, the previously indecipherable Nebbiolo wine had an international translator. The wines entered onto the world stage with power, quality and intrigue. Some might balk at my assertion. The great producers who were using traditional methods are among my favorites, but that stylistic move made a region understandable to all, not just to impassioned purists. Much has happened to the Barolo world since then. The initial boom and many would say bust of the barrique mania caused a region steeped in—locked in?—tradition, to reassess everything they did. Nowadays, with the door to experimentation open, the variety of barrel sizes and winemaking styles seems endless.

I have grown to distrust “winemaking.” I think wine is not about the barrel, amphora, or tank, not about the fermentation process, punch-down or pump-over, the seemingly endless techniques. It is thinking of wine as a season rather than the harvest period and production. That early 1980s winemaking revolution I mentioned created quite the stir; wines that used never to sell began to go for higher and higher prices. I remember selling the 1982 Luciano Sandrone Barolo for \$14.99. The 2016 Sandrones average about \$175 a bottle. The money went back into the wineries: new buildings, new temperature-controlled tanks and more. The biggest beneficiary of all of this money has been the vineyards. Vineyard work takes manpower, lots of it. The more eyes you have on the grapes the more you can help, guide or understand your vineyard's needs. The move to organic or bio-dynamic or some form in between has been one of the greatest steps forward. Spraying poisons is no longer an option for almost any winery of quality. Yet one of the reasons for the great leap forward has been global warming, and in my opinion no other wine region has benefited mores. Not to downplay the issues at all, but the ability to ripen has been increased tremendously since the 1960s and 1970s where two or maybe three vintages a decade were quality. Now one can make quality in almost every vintage since 1996, with the exception of 2002.

So why the Barolo monologue? Well it's actually a Langhe monologue. The grapes that have really



*Two views of the Langhe hills, facing west. They are surprisingly close to the Alps. The photo above is taken from the backside of La Morra. For much of the winter the Langhe vines are under a blanket of snow, and the slow snow melt in spring allows the vineyard to absorb water without erosion issues.*



benefited are what the producers themselves actually drink every day: Barbera and Dolcetto. The **2018 G.D. Vajra “Coste & Fossati” Dolcetto d’Alba (\$22.99)** and the **2018 G.D. Vajra Barbera d’Alba (\$16.99)** are both extraordinary examples of the varietals and I think you’ll enjoy them very much!

## Champagne Club *Notes by Gary Westby, K&L’s Champagne buyer*

Spring is a great time to visit Champagne—I wish that we could all be there right now. This would have been my 20th consecutive year of spring visits to taste the *vin clair* (the wine before it is bottled and becomes sparkling) but sadly it is not to be. One day we will all be able to travel again, but for now we’ll have to be content with the bottles coming to us. This month in the Champagne Club we go to two of the most famous villages in all of the region, for two very special wines. Champagne Lamoureux is located just on the southern border, only five miles from Burgundy. We have their incredible 2014 vintage for you. Our other wine is from the village of Mesnil, which needs little introduction. Located at the southern end of the Côte des Blancs, it is the most expensive vineyard land, and the most prized and expensive wine in all of Champagne. I think these are both fantastic wines. They make staying at home a bit easier.

The **2014 Jean-Jacques Lamoureux “Florine” Brut (\$34.99)** comes from old vines on Vivien Lamoureux’s estate in Les Riceys. It is composed of half Pinot Noir from fifty-year-old vines and half Chardonnay from forty-year-old vines. The Pinot is an old massal selection, while the Chardonnay is a clone from Chablis that does well in the Kimmeridgian soil that Les Riceys shares with Chablis. I love the 2014s—I advise anyone who will listen that this is a vintage to collect. The style is what they used to call “classic Champagne.” A long, cool, even growing season produced wines that are long, light, and rather cool themselves. Sadly, due to climate change, this “classic” style hadn’t happened since 2004, and before that, 1988. The wine has an understated, warm baguette nose and great savory black cherry Pinot flavor in the mouth. The best things about this wine are its easy, balanced, perfect texture and its great length. I love this on its own, and it comes alive with simply prepared trout.

Pierre Gonet sells the **Pierre Mineral Mesnil “Vieillie En Fût” Grand Cru Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne (\$34.99)** under his family label as Phillippe Gonet “Roy Soleil” Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs, for \$80—and it is worth it. This 100% Mesnil Grand Cru



*Above: Vivien Lamoureux conducting a tasting for me in his cellars in Les Riceys.*



*Pierre Gonet, the Pierre of Pierre Mineral, pours Champagne for us and Chardonnay grape juice for the kids in Mesnil.*

Chardonnay Champagne is 50% 2014 from stainless steel, and 50% 2013 that was aged in 600-liter oak casks for a year. With six years of ageing on the lees, this wine has lovely brioche character, fresh Meyer lemon, and just a hint of vanilla from the large casks. The finish is as chalky, long and clean as they come. This is a wine worthy of a lobster tail, with which it pairs fabulously, but it can also be served on its own.

A toast to you! —*Gary Westby*

## Re-order Offers

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 special club prices for each wine. You can make re-order purchases via phone, email or your online account. Our order desk is open 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. seven days a week. If you have any wine club-related issues, or wish to place an order, please call us at 800-247-5987. In addition, you can email us at [theclubs@klwines.com](mailto: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](http://www.klwines.com).**

## Le Club Français Previous Offerings

2017 La Source du Ruault “La Coulée d’Aunis” Saumur-Champigny Blanc @ \$19.99 per bottle

100% Chenin Blanc, this wine is very complex and enchanting. It is made in a fresh, crisp and dry style and yet embraces the fuller-bodied, rich-textured side of the variety. Aged twelve months in barriques, the wine displays subtle hints of vanilla alongside honeyed stone-fruit aromas. A bright minerality and fresh acidity reflect the cool climate and add nice balance to the rich weight of the palate.

2016 Gilles Troullier “Boreal” Côtes Catalanes @ \$39.99 per bottle

Deeply colored, rich and almost dense on the palate, this is a powerful wine, yet it comes across with an effortless balance. Winemaker Gilles named this wine “Boreal” after the north wind that buffets the small plot continually. The grapes grown here are small and intense. The vineyard is head pruned and must be harvested and tended entirely by hand. Gilles uses native yeasts for fermentation in concrete vats, and ages the wine in neutral oak barrels. The result is a stunning, powerful yet layered Syrah that is stylistically reminiscent of the Northern Rhône, yet has more intensity.

2010 Grand Pontet, St-Emilion @ \$39.99 per bottle

2010 is widely recognized as a powerhouse vintage—one for the long haul. As we turn the corner into their second decade of life, some of the wines are starting to hit their stride, while others are still reticent and need further aging. The Grand Pontet is just beginning to drink well, and it does still have a long life ahead of it. Full-bodied and luscious, it’s laden with ripe blackberry fruits, savory tobacco and licorice notes and ripe, softened tannin. It’s seamless and bold, not shy. It’s going to require something decadent to pair with, such as filet mignon or some other black-tie dish with plenty of flavor and rich umami presence.

2019 Domaine Tabordet “Le Champs de Vignes” Pouilly-Fumé @ \$19.99 per bottle

What I love about the best examples of Pouilly-Fumé is the combination of a pleasantly round palate weight, lean minerality and exuberant aromatics. That profile is seen in spades here, and the wine leaves nothing lacking. Shellfish makes a natural pairing, but it will also show beautifully with a whole array of dishes from risotto to paella to salad, or a simple charcuterie board.

2018 Guy Farge “Passion d’une Terrasse” St. Joseph @ \$34.99 per bottle

A restrained and elegant interpretation of northern Rhône Syrah, this wine features aromas of muted olive and vibrant cassis with sage, blueberry and boysenberry making an appearance on the palate. The weight on the tongue is surprisingly full, yet the wine is far from jammy. Because this is 100% Syrah, there is a classic black pepper note throughout, and tangible tannin presence. It has all the bones to age properly, and with a good decant it is drinking beautifully, even for such a young wine.

2018 Guy Farge “Grain de Silex” Saint-Péray Blanc @ \$24.99 per bottle

Traditionally these blends are aged in oak and produce a very full-bodied, rich wine that sits heavily on the palate. Guy Farge’s interpretation is lighter, albeit with great texture and depth of fruit. This cuvée, 90% Roussane and 10% Marsanne, is fermented with native yeasts and aged almost entirely in stainless steel. The use of stainless steel with the minerality derived from the clay and limestone soils of Saint-Péray lightens and elevates the blend.

Philippe Gonet TER Noir Brut Champagne @ \$29.99 per bottle

TER Noir is a classic Champagne in that it is roughly one third Chardonnay, one third Pinot Noir, and one third Pinot Meunier—the traditional Champagne grapes are all represented. Pierre, the winemaker, ages it in large-format, neutral oak barrels. The result is a Champagne that is bright and poignant. Without the influence of malolactic fermentation, the wine is without that rich creamy character of many Champagnes. It’s focused purely on the fruit and above all on the minerality.

2016 Ferraton Père et Fils “Les Murailles” Gigondas @ \$29.99 per bottle

Mostly Grenache, this wine also has small amounts of Syrah and Mourvèdre, which bring color, weight and tannin to the blend. At four years since the vintage date, the wine is hitting its stride nicely. It can still use a half-hour decant, but once it opens up it is beautifully layered, rich and complex. The nose shows full, heady aromas of luscious black cherry and cassis, and hints of cedar and leather. The palate is a nicely weighted array of red fruits, licorice, ripe tannin and fresh, bright acidity. All of the elements come into play nicely here, and the wine offers a number of pairing options such as braised lamb and stew.

2019 Aurore Dezat Sancerre @ \$19.99 per bottle

Aurore Dezat’s small estate in Sury-en-Vau is home to three soil types: limestone, flint (or silex) and clay. The combination of these soils produces wines that have a real depth of character. The 2019 is another delightful vintage, and as soon as it hit our shores, we decided it needed to make an appearance in the Club Français. The aromas jump out of the glass, with wet stone, grapefruit, gooseberry and Meyer lemon. On the palate the fruit is clean and soft with bright acidity and layers of mineral depth.

## **Signature Red Club Previous Offerings**

2013 Humanitas “Rio Vista Vineyard” Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir @ \$24.99 per bottle

The fruit for this wine comes from the well-respected Rio Vista Vineyard, on the eastern side of the Santa Rita Hills AVA. With almost eight years of age since the vintage date, this wine is absolutely singing in the glass. The fruit is still lush and full on the palate, but it is tempered by stunning savory notes of mushroom and forest floor. The acidity is still fresh and bright, making this a great food wine. I love the way this Pinot is drinking now, and it’s a great example of how a fuller bodied Pinot can age gracefully and retain a beautiful balance if made well.

2015 Ram’s Gate “Hyde Vineyard” Carneros Syrah @ \$24.99 per bottle

Ideally situated on the gentle slopes above San Pablo Bay, Hyde Vineyard is one of the best regarded sites in Carneros. The Syrah grown here is cool climate, influenced by the breezes off the bay. The fruit for the Ram’s Gate expression comes from the northeastern side of the vineyard, where the sunlight is strong and the Syrah grapes enjoy a long growing season, making for dark fruit with classic peppercorn and smoked meat notes. The wine is just hitting its stride—the tannins are still present, and are now adding a pleasant texture rather

than anything too aggressive. The fruit has begun to lean more toward the savory side, with gamey notes showing through and complementing the intense blueberry and blackberry fruit.

2017 Domaine de Bosquets Gigondas @ \$24.99 per bottle

This wine combines classic Gigondas earthiness with a clean, modern feel. Structured and poised with bright acidity and well-articulated tannin, it strikes a balance with full palate weight and dark blackberry fruit, accented by savory herbal notes. Already open and showing great integration, this will undoubtedly evolve and develop beautifully over the next decade. Julien, the winemaker, recommends having it with filet mignon, and has a secondary recommendation of roasted leg of lamb.

2016 Buehler “Estate” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon @ \$24.99 per bottle

A quality Napa Cabernet under \$40 is a bargain in my book, and this wine far outperforms its price, especially at the discounted club rate. Buehler wines stick to a classic style that is more difficult to come by in today’s Napa Cab scene. More reminiscent of Dunn or Heitz Vineyard, the Buehler wines achieve a great balance between powerful dark fruit and classic Napa eucalyptus and menthol notes, and the 2016 is no exception. This is old-school Napa Cabernet and has the right bones to age like a Bordeaux. That said, it is fairly structured now and I’d highly recommend decanting it for an hour before enjoying, as it will benefit from some air and open up nicely.

2016 Tongue in Groove “Cabal Vineyard” Pinot Noir @ \$21.99 per bottle

This single-vineyard Pinot from the Waipara Valley in North Canterbury is grown in gravelly soils along the Waipara riverbank, and is influenced by the long sunlight hours and cool nights of this South Island wine region. Cabal has always been my favorite Pinot Noir made by Tongue in Groove. It’s a perfect balance of dark fruit, minerality, delicate aromas and smooth, fine-boned tannin. It’s effortless to drink, and so elegant that it will pair best with delicate dishes such as salmon or mildly seasoned roast chicken.

2018 Prospect 772 “Black Tie Charlie” Sierra Foothills Red Blend @ \$22.99 per bottle

This blend is composed of 50% Petit Syrah and 50% Syrah. True to its name, this wine is dressed to the nines, decadent and almost flamboyant in its rich, luscious profile. It’s a bold choice of varieties—a Petit Syrah and Syrah blend could easily go off the rails and be far too tannic and dense—but it’s carried off with a seamless elegance that I can only attribute to the quality of the fruit and winemaking. Not only is the tannin restrained and nicely integrated with the fruit, the wine itself is already open and ready to drink.

2015 Domaine de Fontbonau, Côtes du Rhône @ \$24.99 per bottle

A joint project between Frédéric Engerer of Château Latour and Jérôme Malet, a grower from the Roussillon, Domaine de Fontbonau produces one of the best Côtes du Rhône on the market. Full-fruited and rich, with elegant structure and bright acidity, this Côtes du Rhône drinks like an elegant Châteauneuf-du-Pape, but with more approachability. At five years past vintage date, it’s completely integrated and the tannin structure has mellowed into a pleasant textural element as the fruit begins to show some depth and development.

## **Premium Wine Club Previous Offerings**

2015 Renwood Fiddletown Zinfandel @ \$14.99 per bottle

For me, Zinfandel goes one of two ways: Either it’s overdone, cloying and too boisterous, or it’s charming and intriguing with pretty red fruits and a nice touch of pepper. Needless to say, this Zinfandel falls in the latter category. I tasted it among several other Zins, and it stopped me in my tracks. This does what good Zinfandel should do. It’s at once friendly and complex, pretty and bold, full and delicate. It’s a treat to pair this with barbecue or pizza, or simply enjoy it on its own. For me, this is the ideal red to have on hand.

2019 Domaine Zafeirakis “Microcosmos” Malagousia Tirnavos Greece @ \$14.99 per bottle

This stunning wine has become an almost weekly buy for me. Malagousia has a beautiful aromatic quality, yet it’s entirely dry here. Grassy and citrus-tinged, the wine shows ripe lychee and white peach, honeydew melon and a pop of lemongrass. Light bodied and dry to the bone, it’s as refreshing a cocktail-style wine as you could ask for.

2016 Iris Vineyards “Chalice Vineyard” Willamette Valley Chardonnay @ \$14.99 per bottle

I love a Chardonnay with a little well-balanced oak and a creamy palate. It's a perfect comfort wine and goes so well with many classic dishes. Iris Vineyard's expression of this variety is perfectly poised. It's creamy and weighty on the palate without being too heavy or overly buttery. Lovely orchard fruits of baked apple, pear and peach show through brilliantly on the palate, complementing the light toast and vanilla notes from the oak. Enjoy this charming Chardonnay alongside a roast chicken and potatoes, a pot pie.

2009 Château Sainte-Marguerite, Médoc @ \$14.99 per bottle

Predominately Cabernet with some Merlot in the mix as well, this Left-Bank Bordeaux is restrained in style with plenty of red berry fruit, forest floor and savory tobacco notes. After a decade-plus of aging, this wine is mellowed beautifully with pleasantly softened tannin, integrated acidity and fruit that still shows a surprising freshness. Clyde recommends having this with pork roast.

2020 Te Whare Ra “Toru” White Field Blend Marlborough @ \$15.99 per bottle

This wine is a blend of Gewürztraminer, Riesling and Pinot Gris. These three Alsatian varieties are co-fermented and vinified as one, in the tradition of the field blend. Wildly aromatic, the wine has a nice palate weight and a deep-seated spice that nicely complements the heady fruit flavors. If you've been waiting for the perfect wine to serve with spicy food, this is it. It's a lovely accompaniment to spicier Thai and Indian dishes.

## Best Buy Wine Club Previous Offerings

2018 Lacaussade Saint-Martin, Côtes de Bordeaux @ \$9.99 per bottle

This Right Bank Bordeaux far outperforms its modest price point. The wine is at once powerful, dense and harmonious. It displays huckleberry and sweet baking spices on the nose with a classic tannin structure and full weight on the palate. It will doubtless age gracefully, so if you enjoy it now (with a good decant!) you may want to stash a few bottles away to age for another five to ten years. Winemaker Jacques Chardat recommends pairing this with duck breast and porcini mushrooms.

2019 Verdeal “Ayre” Verdejo Rueda @ \$9.99 per bottle

Originally from North Africa, Verdejo has been cultivated in Rueda since the 11th century. For many years it was the basis of a sherry-like wine, but it makes an excellent dry white in its own right. Odegas Verdeal's expression of the grape is clean and modern in style with bright gooseberry and lemongrass aromas. On the palate it is lighter bodied with citrus notes and stone fruit. This is a great weeknight sipper, and I hope it will become a favorite for you as it has for me

2018 Hahn “Founder's” California Cabernet Sauvignon @ \$9.99 per bottle

This is one of the best values in California Cabernet that I can think of. The nose is brimming with rich red fruit and sweet baking spice. On the palate it shows blackberry and red plum with a full body and ripe tannins. If you're on the hunt for a familiar, easy-drinking everyday Cabernet, this is the wine for you.

2019 Domaine Begude Sauvignon Blanc Pay d'Oc @ \$9.99 per bottle

This stunning wine from the South of France is vinified in stainless steel to preserve a fresh, bright profile. Snappy and vibrant, this it shows notes of gooseberry, lemongrass and citrus zest on the palate, and is a great match to vegetable dishes. One of my favorite pairings for the wine is a fresh herbed goat cheese salad.

2017 Xanadu “Paradise” Cabernet Sauvignon Margaret River @ \$10.99 per bottle

This Cabernet is a great balance of luscious dark berry fruit with hints of eucalyptus, cedar and tobacco and classic structure. It has enough tannin and acidity to stand up to steak, but enough fruit and silky texture to enjoy right now, without having to lay it down for years. It's a perfect winter-night Cabernet in my book.

2019 Domaine du Vieil Orme Sauvignon Blanc Touraine @ \$9.99 per bottle

Snappy sweet pea and gooseberry aromas give way to a softer palate with pear, white peach and grapefruit zest

all making an appearance. The acidity is of course vibrant and fresh, and there's a pleasing tinge of lemongrass on the finish. It's a perfect accompaniment to seafood, and mussels make a particularly good match.

2017 Sisters Ridge Pinot Noir North Canterbury @ \$9.99 per bottle

This great value in Pinot comes from the folks at Mt. Beautiful winery in New Zealand's North Canterbury region. Lighter bodied, with bright, crunchy red fruits, it has an elegant nose of strawberry, golden cherries and clove. On the palate the fruit is balanced against crisp acidity and a nice clean finish. It's a perfect pairing for turkey dinner, and also may be a good option to stock your wine fridge with if you're a Pinot fan like me.

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

2018 G.D. Vajra Langhe Nebbiolo @ \$22.99 per bottle

This wine is, in Giuseppe Vaira's words, their "quest for the innocence of Nebbiolo, its purest expression". The grapes for this 2018 were harvested in the first three weeks of October, and this vintage is being compared to 2016 or even 2004, two spectacular years. The Vajra vineyards are at one of the highest portions of Barolo, a location that gives their wines more finesse, balance, and a lightness (not to be taken as thin) with great lift in the finish. The wine is fermented and aged in stainless steel vats and then sees a brief passage in neutral wood. This is a wine that cries out for food—I like to say you need a fork to drink it. Try it with a wild-mushroom risotto.

2019 Silvano Follador Prosecco Superiore Extra Brut @ \$16.99 per bottle

Containing less than 2 grams per liter of residual sugar, this Prosecco is bone-dry! Silvano and Alberta Follador inherited four hectares of vineyards, about 9.6 acres (including 3.6 acres of the Caritzze vineyard) and they have farmed it bio-dynamically ever since. They also make a Champagne Method Prosecco, and if you like this one you should give that one a try as well.

2019 Quaresima "Diamante" Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico Superiore @ \$17.99 per bottle

Quaresima is a tiny producer in Ancona, and this wine has never gotten out of the Marche until now. The winery is run by two brothers, Donatello and Ivo, who took over for their father Aurelio. They have been producing this, their top wine, from a vineyard 25 miles to the west of Ancona, at more than 1400 feet, planted more than 80 years ago. The brothers describe their wine as having the typical flavors of times gone by: full-bodied, layered flavors with a touch of almond in the finish. This is perfect to drink by itself or with a piece of grilled halibut.

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

Forget-Brimont Brut Rosé Champagne @ 34.99 per bottle

This rosé is composed of 40% Pinot Noir and 20% Chardonnay from the Grand Cru vineyards of Verzenay and Mailly, the northernmost of all the top-tier vineyards in Champagne, and 40% Meunier from the Premier Cru of Villers-Allerand. This wine is aged for three years on the lees. It benefits from 40% reserves, and it gets its color from just 5% of intense Verzenay rouge. The Champagne has a nice light salmon color and a creamy, sourdough character with just the right amount of subtle strawberry fruit. This Champagne is wonderful on its own and will also go well with smoked fish or charcuterie.

2012 Lété-Vautrain Brut Champagne @ 34.99 per bottle

The small 2012 vintage is thought of as a miracle in the Champagne region. Everything had gone wrong in the spring and early summer, but a golden autumn gave concentrated, complex and powerful wines in the end. This wine is composed of 40% Chardonnay, 40% Meunier and 20% Pinot Noir and aged for seven years on the lees. It has the brioche and cream richness that top vintage Champagne should, with top-class texture and a very long, detailed finish. I couldn't believe it when they made me the deal to get this one in the club! Try it on its own or with a white fish dish.