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OREGON DINER GUIDE

Your guide to restaurants:



Sicilian vintners return to their roots with heritage grapes

by Matt Kramer, special to The Oregonian
 Sunday June 28, 2009, 12:00 AM

Of all the challenges in wine buying --the foreign names, the new-to-you varieties, the sheer bewilderment of producers --the greatest challenge is simply taking a chance at all. Most of us seek and return to the familiar. And why not? Trying a new wine is a blind bet and not necessarily a cheap one, either.

The wines recommended this week are just such blind bets. These wines are worth your attention and your money.

Carjanti 2006, Gulfi: The spelling of this remarkable dry white wine from Sicily is not a typo. Rather, it's the Sicilian dialect spelling for the local white grape variety known in Italian as carricante.

Vito Catania, the owner of Gulfi winery, is one of the island's leaders in celebrating Sicily's heritage of ancient grape varieties. Carjanti is composed of two such indigenous white grapes: the namesake carricante and another variety called albanello.

Carjanti 2006 is one of those dry white wines that, after just one sniff and a sip you'll say, "Why haven't I heard about this wine before?" It's brisk with a bright, natural acidity, and you'll discover tastes and scents of citrus, pineapple and lemon curd with a savor of unmistakable minerality.

As you might expect, this is just the sort of dry white wine you want to pair with almost any imaginable fish, to say nothing of many cheeses. The price is a bargain for the quality: \$15.95 a bottle. Worth noting is that not much of this wine arrives in the States, so it's something of a rarity. (Distributor is Casa Bruno.)

Vino Nobile di Montepulciano 2004, Godiolo: I'm hard-pressed to recall the last time I commended this Tuscan red (with a mouthful of a name, pronounced vee-noh NOH-bee-leh dee mohn-teh-pool-CHAH-noh).

Centuries ago the district was aristocratic in every sense, hence the designation "nobile." Its red wine was once deemed among Tuscany's finest, in part because of the local clone of sangiovese grown there, called prugnolo gentile.

For its part, a good Vino Nobile di Montepulciano should have some of the power, structure and longevity of Brunello di Montalcino but with a greater finesse and a violet-scented elegance. It can be --and should be --an unusually refined wine.

Godiolo is a small and largely unknown producer with just 13.6 acres of vines, roughly half of which are 40 years old. This wine is composed mostly of prugnolo gentile (94 percent) with tiny additions of two indigenous red grapes, canaiolo nero /cq(4 percent) and colorino (2 percent).

This is an exceptional red wine from a great vintage that's only just now beginning to unfurl. It will only benefit from additional aging in a cool cellar. It's best served in your largest wineglasses, paired with, say, a rack of lamb or a pasta dish with a creamy sauce.

One rarely comes across a Vino Nobile di Montepulciano this authentic at a price this reasonable: \$19.95. A small-production, artisanal wine, it falls into the get-it-while-you-can category. (Distributor is Zancanella Importing Co.)

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Extra Helpings
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Matt Kramer is a Portland wine critic and author. Reach him at 1320 S.W. Broadway, Portland, OR 97201

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06/13/2009 10:01 p.m. PT
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06/25/2009 12:46 p.m. PT

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Of... by [JuneW](#)

06/14/2009

10:23 a.m. PT

- [Food Don't Lie](#) by [oregonlive](#) 06/10/2009 12:10 p.m. PT

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The latest from the Associated Press

- [Thailand reports fifth swine flu-related death](#) 7/1/2009, 2:08 a.m. PDT
- [Pinal and state officials report swine flu death](#) 6/30/2009, 6:14 p.m. PDT

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