



Grapevine

September 2019

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Greeting September with School Night Wines

We can look at September in two ways: shrinking daylight hours and the weight of homework or expanding menu options and crisp autumn air. With cooler temps ideal for sleeping and twilight outside the dinner table window, the season is beautiful, really; and with the return to school night to-dos and dinners, we have a lineup of delicious wines that also happen to be terrific values. Onward...

The **2018 Villa Maria Private Bin Sauvignon Blanc** from Marlborough, New Zealand is a blend of grapes from the Wairau and Awatere Valleys. The Wairau Valley is warmer with more sunshine, which encourages ripe citrus and tropical fruit flavors; the Awatere Valley's cooler climate, thanks to Alpine winds and coastal breezes, nurtures the wine's refreshing acidity. With ripe fruit and herbal flavors, it will pair well with salads and all kinds of fast and furious fish dishes. **90 Decanter** \$10.19

Rodney Strong's 2017 Chardonnay from Healdsburg in Sonoma County is an artful blend of winemaking techniques. Sixty percent of the wine is barrel-fermented and aged on the lees, also in barrels, for six months, while the rest sees cold



fermentation, preserving the fresh fruit character. The result is a complex, balanced wine more than worthy of pan seared chicken breasts or even a running-late grilled cheese. **91 WE** \$9.99

Famille Perrin's Côtes du Rhône Réserve from the Rhone Valley is one of those simple stunners, an easygoing but fantastic wine that never disappoints. The 2017 vintage is especially good, owing to the dry season and ideal harvest conditions. A blend of Grenache, Mourvèdre and Syrah grown in soils rich in clay, limestone and quartz, fermentation and aging take place in both stainless steel and oak. Masters of Chateauf-du-Pape, the Perrin Family crafts their entry level wines, too, with skill and care. Be it a roast chicken or pork chops,

you'll have an elegant dinner pairing. **\$8.99**

Super Tuscan is a designation given to wines that depart from DOC rules governing wine-making techniques and the strict use of grape varieties indigenous to the region, falling under IGT (Indicazione Geografica Tipica) status instead. The **2014 Monte Antico Rosso** from Toscana is a Sangiovese-driven blend with additions of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon (the latter two are not indigenous). Aged 12 months in seasoned and new Slavonian and French oak barrels, it begs for weeknight spaghetti or sausage and peppers. **91 JS** \$9.99

Grown in high-altitude vineyards of Cariñena, Spain, the **2017 Menguante Garnacha** is fermented and aged in

stainless steel tanks, with no oak contact whatsoever. Intensely aromatic with a palate of dark cherries and peppercorn spice, the fruitiness of Garnacha, aka, *Grenache* in France, shines. Throw some burgers on the grill or sizzle some beef for fajitas, and you'll tackle those weeknight to-dos with renewed spirit. **\$8.49**

Whether your preference is red, white or some of both, this spectrum of school night wines should pair well with a return to the season of comforting dinners and an evening chill in the air. ♦

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Did you know... Harvest season in the northern hemisphere goes from August to November, so we are in the midst of it this month. Very generally speaking, sparkling wine grapes are harvested first to capture the grapes' acidity, followed by white and red varieties for still wines. It also varies from one varietal to the next. Tempranillo tends to ripen early, while Petit Verdot is a late ripener. The last grapes to be picked are destined for dessert wines because with time, the sugars in the grapes develop and become concentrated.

Wine Tastings Fridays, 4-7 & Saturdays, 2-5

Days not mentioned will feature New Arrivals.

Fri 9/6: A mixed bag of treasures

Fri 9/13: September Staff Picks

Fri 9/20: School night wines, from page 1, with a spotlight on the Garnacha for Int'l Grenache Day

Sat 9/21: A bevy of shoulder season, transition wines to celebrate the autumnal equinox

Fri 9/27: In honor of California wine month, we'll try some Golden State treasures

Fri 10/4: Fuller bodied whites and smooth reds for autumn soups, chili and beef stew

Weeknight Pasta e Fagioli *adapted from Saveur magazine*

3 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
1 large link Italian sausage, casing removed
1 large yellow onion, finely chopped (about 1 cup)
1 cup finely diced carrot (about 2 medium carrots)
1 celery stalk, finely diced
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
5 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
1 sprig fresh thyme (optional)
1 (15-oz.) can crushed tomatoes
2 (15-oz.) cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
4 cups chicken stock
1½ cups ditalini or other short, tubular pasta
¼ cups chopped fresh basil leaves, for serving
Grated pecorino-Romano cheese, for serving



Set a small paper-towel-lined plate next to the stove. In a heavy medium-large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat, add the olive oil and sausage. Let cook, stirring frequently and crumbling with the spatula, about 6 minutes. Remove the meat using a slotted spoon and reserve on the prepared plate. To the pot with the fat, add the onions and season with salt. Turn the heat to medium-high and cook, stirring frequently, for 2 minutes. Add the carrots, celery and another small pinch of salt, and cook, stirring occasionally, until some of the vegetables are lightly browned, 6-8 minutes more. Add the

garlic and let cook for 30 seconds. Stir in the tomatoes and simmer until the ingredients are combined and the vegetables have softened slightly, about 5 minutes.

Using the back of a fork, mash half cup of the beans and add them to the pot. Add the remaining beans whole, the stock and 2 cups water. Bring the soup to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer for 5 minutes.

Add the pasta and adjust the heat to maintain a low simmer. Cook until the pasta is al dente, 8-10 minutes.

Ladle the soup into bowls. Drizzle each with olive oil, and sprinkle with the reserved crumbled sausage, fresh basil, plenty of pecorino, and more black pepper if desired. Serve hot with Sheila's staff pick, below.

Manhattan Cocktail

Adapted from Food & Wine magazine

Ice
11 oz sweet vermouth
11 oz rye whiskey
2 1/2 oz Grand Marnier
16 dashes of Angostura bitters
8 orange or lemon twists



Fill a pitcher two-thirds full with ice. Add the vermouth, rye, Grand Marnier and bitters; stir for 30 seconds to chill. Strain into 8 chilled martini glasses and top each with a twist.

September 2019 Staff Wine Picks

Sheila: 2018 Saint-Véran Les Pierres Grises (Bourgogne) **\$13.59** (reg \$15.99) Sustainably grown chardonnay grapes are aged mostly in stainless steel with the remaining 20% in barrel. Bright citrus notes are complimented by balanced acidity and a clean streak of minerality. *Easy weeknight pasta e fagioli, *see recipe above*

Ian: 2017 L'Umami Pinot Gris (Willamette Valley) **\$12.99** (reg \$14.99) Named for the savory mushrooms that grown in the Pacific Northwest and surround the vineyards, this ethereal white is aromatic of white flowers, almonds, butter and citrus with a crisp, dry palate of vibrant citrus and stone fruits. *Pan seared scallops with a white wine butter sauce and green beans

Brian: 2016 Nadia Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Barbara Highlands) **\$16.99** (reg \$19.99) A Bordeaux-style blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot, the high elevation terroir and appellation's heat for optimal ripening make this Cab sing with fine tannins and notes of black fruit, espresso and spice. *Grilled sirloin steak and mushrooms

Tony: 2018 Michel Sarrazin et Fils Pinot Noir (Bourgogne) **\$16.99** (reg \$19.99) Grown in the village of Givry's clay and limestone soils and sustainably produced, this Pinot Noir is made using indigenous yeasts and is aged in seasoned barrels, letting the Pinot flavors of red berries come forth uninhibited. *Roast chicken on a bed of shallots, thyme and buttery carrots

John: 2015 Gundlach Bundschu Gewürztraminer (Sonoma Coast) **\$16.99** (reg \$19.99) **92 WE** Aged mostly in stainless steel, 10% is aged in neutral oak and a small portion is frozen and thawed to add weight to this medium-bodied wine. It is smooth, round and bone dry with perfect acidity and apricot flavors. *Thai red curry chicken stir-fry with lime, chile and basil

Bill: 2017 Dry Creek Vineyard Chenin Blanc (Clarksburg) **\$10.99** (reg \$12.99) Sustainably produced, this elegant white is made from the same grape as Loire Valley Vouvray. Aged in 100% stainless steel, it offers juicy stone fruit flavors with supremely balancing acidity and medium body. *Sautéed monkfish with shiitakes and leeks