

March 2018



Grapevine

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Merlot is Making a Comeback!

Though a firm fixture in Bordeaux, where Merlot is one of the region's chief varietals, it is often seen in the US as the under-achieving younger sibling to Cabernet Sauvignon. It's a chameleon grape with different faces, depending on where it is grown and vinification; and given the right conditions and care, it can shine. Red fruits, cocoa, a velvety finish and soft tannins are some of the common descriptors for warm climate Merlot, while tobacco, earth, licorice and blueberries are more typical of a cool climate. It is made all over the world, but we'll focus on California, Washington and France.

In Bordeaux, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot are often combined. Appellations north of the Gironde River (Right Bank) tend to be Merlot-dominant, while Gironde-south Bordeaux is governed by Cab. When Merlot arrived in California in the mid-19th century, instead of blending it, winemakers used the grape solo, and not always with the best results. Not so, anymore. "We were thrilled to have so many customers seeking holiday gifts ask us about this once unfairly maligned grape," says store owner, Sheila McNeil. "The movie 'Sideways' threw



Chateau Ste. Michelle vineyards in Washington State

Merlot in the ditch in favor of Pinot Noir. We love Pinot Noir, but we want Merlot back on the road, too."

California's **Blackstone Merlot** put the grape on the US map long before the 'Sideways' premiere. Blended with 21% of Syrah, Petite Sirah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec, the **2016** is aged for 11 months in French and American oak, amplifying the warm climate flavors of black cherries and plums, bolstered by vanilla and toasty oak. \$9.99

Founded in 1971, **St. Francis Winery & Vineyards**, the house of Big Reds, is a Sonoma County staple. Family-owned and certified sustainable, they work to conserve nearby creeks and waterways. Blended with 4% Malbec and aged for 20 months in French oak, the **2014 St. Francis Merlot** exudes dark fruit flavors with a lingering finish. **90 RP** \$15.99

Emmolo Wines in Rutherford, Napa Valley makes exceptional Merlot, thanks to winemaker Jenny Wagner of the esteemed Wagner family. (Her father is Chuck Wagner, winemaker and owner of Caymus Vineyards. Emmolo was started by her mother, Cheryl Emmolo.) With the winemaking lineage that backs Emmolo wines, it's no surprise that the **2015 Emmolo Merlot** is terrific. Made with grapes from the Oak Knoll District, it is bold, plush and aromatic, with notes of red berries and chocolate. \$45.99

Chateau Ste. Michelle's original winery was built on the estate of a Seattle lumber baron in 1912, 55 years before its first released wine, a 1967 Cabernet Sauvignon. In 1976, the current winery chateau was built in Woodinville, Washington, where to this day it practices environmental

sustainability. Grapes for the **2015 Indian Wells Merlot** were sourced from the Wahluke Slope and aged in new French and American oak. This warm climate Merlot is full-bodied with red berry fruit flavors and a supple finish. \$15.29

The **2015 Chateau Saint-André Corbin** from the small right-bank appellation of St.-Georges-St-Emilion is a Bordeaux blend of 70/30 Merlot and Cabernet Franc, matured 12 months in new French oak. The ancient estate was owned by a 4th century poet, and its wines graced the table of Caesars. Medium-bodied, it is fragrant with cherry, herbs and coconut, with warm flavors of black cherry and leather. \$14.49

March is when we shift gears from heartier to lighter fare, and Merlot is just the wine to brighten that transition. Help us to celebrate Merlot and its comeback. ♦

Incredible Savings!
15% off all Wine —
Every Bottle,
Every Day!!!

Did you know... In terms of body and color, Merlot is in the middle of the spectrum between Pinot Noir and Petite Sirah. This mid-position makes it food-friendly and versatile.

Wine Tastings Fri, 4-7 & Sat, 2-5

Days not mentioned will feature New Arrivals.

Fri 3/2: 90s wines

Fri 3/9: March Staff Picks

Fri 3/16: Merlot wines from page 1 & a Slam Dunk Slane Irish Whiskey tasting

Sat 3/17: Wines to go with Corned Beef dinner

Fri 3/23: Light reds and full-bodied whites for Spring

Fri 3/30: Unheralded gems...unrated, but spectacular

Sat 3/31: Wines for Easter dinner: Wines to pair with traditional ham dinner, served with ham-pineapple kebabs.

Red Curry Chicken Kebabs with Mint Yogurt Sauce

Adapted from Food & Wine

Serves 6

-2 1/2 Tbsp Thai red curry paste

-1/2 cup vegetable oil

-Kosher salt

-2 1/2 lb skinless, boneless chicken breast halves, cut into 1" cubes

-3/4 cup plain low-fat yogurt

-1/4 cup low-fat mayonnaise

-1 Tbsp honey

-1 Tbsp fresh lime juice

-1 Tbsp finely chopped mint



In a large bowl, mix the curry paste with the oil and 2 tsp of salt. Add the chicken cubes and toss to coat. Let stand at room temperature for up to 2 hours or cover and refrigerate overnight.

Light a grill. In a medium bowl, whisk the yogurt with the mayonnaise, honey, lime juice and mint; season with salt.

Thread the chicken onto 10 skewers, leaving 1/4" between the cubes. Grill over moderately high heat, turning frequently, until lightly charred and cooked through, about 8 minutes. Serve the kebabs with the mint yogurt sauce and Erika's staff pick, below, or a soft, fruity Merlot.

News & Events

A Month of Holidays and Festivities

March is a busy month, and we are up to the challenge. We'll pay homage all month long to college basketball! Root on local teams and then join us on Friday, March 16th for a Slane 'Slam Dunk' Irish Whiskey tasting.

You might think St. Patrick's Day is for beer drinkers only, but we beg to differ. Join us on Saturday, March 17th for a tasting of wines to go with your corned beef and cabbage dinner. You may never drink beer again.

And we'll round out the month with our ever-popular Easter dinner wine tasting, complete with our traditional ham and pineapple kebabs. This month bridges frigid cold to cool early Spring, and we want to celebrate with you by sharing wine ideas. Join us.

Classic Negroni

Adapted from saveur.com

A classic Negroni is the epitome of bridging winter and spring. Bright, clean and with just the right amount of bitter for those spring temperatures and vegetables, it's perfect.

2 oz Campari

2 oz your favorite Gin (we have options and suggestions)

2 oz Vermouth

Orange slices, optional



Add Campari, Gin and Vermouth to a chilled shaker with ice, stir and pour into two ice-filled tumblers; garnish with orange slices, if desired, and serve. Toast to warmer days ahead.

March 2018 Staff Wine Picks

Sheila: 2016 Rickshaw Chardonnay (California) \$12.99 (reg \$14.99) Cool Pacific breezes moderate the warm climate for optimal growing conditions. A touch of oak gives it a rich texture which brings the zippy acidity into natural balance. Notes of tropical fruit, lemon and hazelnuts. *Creamy lobster bisque

Max: 2016 Von Winning Sauvignon Blanc II Trocken (Pfalz, GER) \$15.29 (reg \$17.99) Produced in an organic, sustainable winery, it is aged in stainless steel. In style, it falls somewhere near a white Bordeaux, tasting more of cucumber, tarragon and dill than citrus. Clean, with zippy acidity. *Fish tacos with cilantro and avocado

Ian: 2013 Foppiano Petite Sirah (Russian River Valley) \$15.99 (reg \$18.99) This cool climate, estate-bottled wine is aged for 20 months in French, American and Hungarian seasoned oak barrels. Inky and dark, aromas of rose petals and white pepper segue to a palate of plums and black tea. with supple tannins. *Pulled pork sandwiches

Erika: 2016 Nik Weis St. Urbans-Hof Riesling (Mosel, GER) \$13.99 (reg \$16.99) Gently crushed, pressed and fermented in temperature controlled stainless steel tanks with indigenous yeasts, it has a complex, smoky and floral nose, a fruity, elegant mouthfeel with a minerality that finishes off-dry. *Red curry chicken kebabs, see above

Brian: 2014 Brutocao 'Contento Vineyard' Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendocino) \$16.99 (reg \$19.99) 92 WE/Editors' Choice Aromas of dark red fruit with cloves and lavender, rich with dark plums and figs. The mid-palate gives way to coffee and caramel, finishing with dark chocolate. *Braised beef short ribs