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Odds and Ends Value Wines

JIM BRYANT OFFERS VALUE WINES THAT ARE MORE READILY AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE, ALONG WITH FOOD PAIRINGS FOR EACH

MY LAST TWO ARTICLES on "Best White and Rosé Wine Discoveries" and "Great Value Red Wines" surfaced a problem that I will try to address in this article. By the time the November/December 2024 and the January/February 2025 issues were published, the wines I featured there were no longer available. So, occasionally I will add great value wines that show up between issues that focus solely on value wines.

My most recent discovery involves the grape Albariño which I wrote about in the September/October 2024 issue.

LA CAÑA ALBARIÑO 2023

Over the past two months, I have discovered an outstanding wine from this grape which is also an excellent value offering. It is the La Caña Albariño 2023. This winery was started in 2007 by Jorge Ordóñez and he focuses on making great Albariños from 20- to 40-year-old vines. The current vintage is 100% Albariño with a medium body, bright, juicy acidity, and a clean finish. The nose detects crushed seashells, chalk, salted lemons, and sliced apples. Overall, the wine is bone-dry, austere, and begs for gastronomy. Ideal food pairing can be as simple as shrimp or oysters and Dungeness crab. It pairs well with any white fish and is excellent with appetizers and is also great by itself. Given the owner's knowledge of the grape and the grapevines' age, I believe this wine has the ability to improve with age and will last for 5 to 7 years if stored properly. This is a great find for \$16.





bright splash of cranberry on the finish.

This wine is a great alternative for Cabernet Sauvignon drinkers who wish to expand their wine knowledge and save money at the same time. Monastrell is one of my favorite grapes and while indigenous to Spain, it is my favorite grape in the Rhône Valley appellation of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, where it is known by the name of Mourvèdre.

KIRKLAND SIGNATURE 2022 GIGONDAS

Another phenomenal value red wine is the Kirkland Signature 2022 Gigondas made by Guillaume Gonnet (\$14). This is the fifth or sixth vintage in a row produced for Costco by Gonnet and without question this has been the highest quality-to-price ratio holder of any wine I have known over this period with no exceptions. This is an intensely rich wine with a lively, deep ruby color. This medium-bodied wine has flavors of dark and red fruits (cherries, raspberries, and strawberries), with grilled meat notes.

The blend in this wine is 85% Grenache, 10% Syrah, and 5% Mourvèdre, resulting in the wine being relatively high in acidity and dryness, and therefore a great choice for food pairings. I think Grenache is one of the most food-friendly grapes and this has led me to a recent practice of substituting this for other wines. My best discovery this far is substituting this wine for my favorite Zinfandel when eating Mexican food. It is less expensive than my favorite Zindandels, and often a better match with the food.

WINE SPECTATOR RECOGNIZES 2022 SEGHESSIO SONOMA ZINFANDEL

Notwithstanding my last sentence, I drink a lot of Zinfandel. While my favorites are the Geyserville and Lytton Springs produced by Ridge Vineyards, they are relatively expensive, yet worth every penny, although also difficult to find on a consistent basis. As a result of these facts, my 'go-to' Zinfandel is made by Seghesio. This winery was established in 1895 and although sold some years ago, still produces a very good wine at a friendly price of \$19 for the 2022 vintage. It is loaded with zesty blackberry and raspberry fruit, offering a vibrant structure and appealing accents of toasted sage, white pepper, and licorice. Ironically, after I finished writing this article, the current issue of "Wine Spectator" named this wine the Top Value Wine awardee for 2024. *Touché!* A Vôtre Santé! 🍷



TREFETHEN DRY REISLING 2023

Another great white wine is Trefethen Dry Reisling 2023 from Napa Valley. I have long been a friend of this winery. Coincidentally, a friend and I were becalmed directly over the winery and vineyards for one hour in a hot air balloon in 1977, which produces many fond memories when I drink Trefethen wines, all of which I appreciate. This \$20 wine's nose shows green apple, pear, lemon-lime, grapefruit, peach, Granny Smith apple and citrus. The palate detects flavors of guava and gooseberry. The acidity is high, vibrant, and results in a strong and long finish with incredible freshness and a medium body. Although pleasant to drink young, it should age and improve for several years. This wine should be paired with dishes containing minimal fat. Suggestions include shellfish and fennel, oysters and wine, and ingredients with similar flavors such as ginger or stone fruits to accent the soft notes in the wine.

2019 BODEGAS EGO 'INFINITO'

Moving to red wines, I discovered a new Monastrell offering I had never had before — the 2019 Bodegas Ego 'Infinito' from Jumilla, Spain. This wine (for \$15) has aromas of plum, raspberry, and salted almonds as well as black currant, caramel, and a fine balsamic hint. Deep ruby in color, there are distinct overtones of earth resulting in an elegant and full-bodied wine. In the mouth, it feels good showing sleek tannins and flavors of cassis, blackberry, clove, anise, and juniper berry with a



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

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