

EAT DRINK

A GUIDE TO THE GOOD LIFE

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ANTHONY GISMONDI
 IN THE CELLAR

VALUE FOR MONEY

The best of the moderately priced wines

BY ANTHONY GISMONDI

I'm turning to some personal favourites this weekend that really over-deliver for the price. The wine world is full of high scores for high-priced wine, but it is a lot more difficult to source medium- to high-quality wines at moderate prices. By that I mean wine that speaks to its origin, and is made by someone who resides in the same area code as the wine, and has a passion for the subject.

The good news is that our lousy summer, characterized by mostly cool temperatures, leaves all of us a wider slice of styles to choose. It's a welcome relief from last week, when I was caught in southern Ontario's heat wave, where temperatures in wine country spiked to the 45C range in the afternoon. In that extreme heat I had little interest in most reds, and frankly, most New World whites, especially those bound in oak and fat, sweet fruit that simply becomes undone in the heat.

That shouldn't be a problem here in the Lower Mainland this summer. One wonders what the rest of 2011 may have in store for British Columbia grape growers, who will be working long into October and November trying to ripen their grapes for harvest. In the meantime, all we can do is hope the weather remains dry.

We begin this week with an organically grown Chardonnay that so far has managed to deliver consistent quality and freshness for three years in a row. A former Killer Value under \$15 at the Wine Access International Value Wine Awards in 2009, the **Cono Sur Organic Chardonnay 2010** from the cool Valle de San Antonio, close to the Pacific Ocean, remains a real bargain. Expect its trademark clean fruit with gooseberry and passion fruit aromas mixed with just off-dry fruit with the taste of citrus, guava and passion fruit along with a generous swath of minerality. A versatile white for summer salads or grilled chicken. Should be a wine list favourite in neighbourhood restaurants.



The unseasonably cool weather may be a drag, but on the bright side it leaves us with a broader range of choice when it comes to wine styles.

Another winner from Chile with a slightly different tack is the **Emiliana Novas Limited Selection Chardonnay Marsanne 2010** from Valle de Casablanca, also situated near the cool Pacific coast. This unusual blend is an organically grown 60-40 blend of Chardonnay and Marsanne. The nose and palate are a mix of melons, lemons, pineapples perfectly balanced by ripe red apples with bits of honey and apricot in the finish; the textures are round and ripe. Perfect for a Thai curry, or grilled fish with a fruit salsa.

Rilento Nerello Mascalese 2009 is an interesting red wine, again grown organically, on the slopes of Sicily's Mount Etna. Expect a peppery, black cherry, red plum, licorice, meaty, savoury nose with a palate that is round, dry, fresh and elegant with juicy acidity. There is more smoky black cherry, clove and licorice fruit flecked with cedar and rhubarb that finishes juicy with finesse and length. Hamburgers, grilled sausages and/or ribs would all be fine choices to accompany this red.

We head back to mainland Italy, where a solid vintage and attention to detail has really upped the quality of a simple Tuscan sangiovese: **Frescobaldi Remole Chianti 2009**. Look for a fresh peppery, meaty, black cherry nose with tobacco and cassis aromas. The attack is supple with light tannins and more black cherry, cassis, tobacco and earthy, forest floor flavours. Simple, rustic, fresh and fruity with solid balance that offers fine value. Pork chops or chicken cacciatore would be fine matches.

Moving north to southern France, the **Château de Cabriac 2008**, from Corbières in the Languedoc sits just far enough from the sea leaving its Syrah mourvèdre, Grenache and carignan a little riper on the nose and the palate. The style is smooth and rich with black raspberry, black cherry and smoky licorice notes. An impressive red wine for the price that is ready to drink with barbecue favourites. Lamb chops or flank steak would be especially well suited to this French gem. Excellent value here.

Our final pick today is a great example of why so many people are excited about the 2009 vintage in the Rhone, and why many have said to me that they expect, in the long run, it will be better than the very fine 2007 harvest. The **Reserve Perrin Côtes du Rhône Rouge 2009** speaks to how good the vintage is. Try this delicious Rhone red blend where the fruit is ripe and round and the nose fresh and peppery flecked with the famous scent of wild herbs or garrique and meaty notes. The palate is almost glossy with smooth textures and ripe, plummy, black cherry flavours and notes of mandarin skin. Super value and it will only likely get better in bottle for the next few years. Stock up.

There you have it. Some fun wines to while away the long weekend.

Special to The Sun
WINE TALK EVERY THURSDAY
 Anthony Gismondi and co-host Casey Wilson
 6-7 p.m.
BEST OF FOOD & WINE

VALUE PICKS

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Cono Sur Organic Chardonnay 2010, Valle de San Antonio, Chile
 Price: \$14.50
 UPC: 7804320242699
 Score: 88/100
 Remarks: Clean fresh fruit with gooseberry and passion fruit flavours.
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Emiliana Novas Limited Selection Chardonnay Marsanne 2010, Valle de Casablanca, Chile
 Price: \$18
 UPC: 007804320476650
 Score: 88/100
 Remarks: An organic 60/40 blend of Chardonnay and Marsanne from Casablanca.
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Rilento Nerello Mascalese 2009, Sicily, Italy
 Price: \$14
 UPC: 8033765259392
 Score: 87/100
 Remarks: Organically grown fruit on Sicily's Mount Etna.
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Frescobaldi Remole Chianti 2009, Tuscany, Italy
 Price: \$14
 UPC: 8007425200017
 Score: 88/100
 Remarks: Fine fruit and solid balance that offers excellent value in a pizza red.
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Château de Cabriac 2008, Corbières, Languedoc, France
 Price: \$14
 UPC: 3348882210152
 Score: 88/100
 Remarks: An impressive red for the price; try with grilled sausages.
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Reserve Perrin Côtes du Rhône Rouge 2009, Rhone Valley, France
 Price: \$18
 UPC: 631470000131
 Score: 89/100
 Remarks: How good is the 2009 vintage in the Rhone? Very good.

WINE OF WEEK

Serendipity Serenata 2008 Naramata Bench, Okanagan Valley, \$40



Love the fresh peppery cassis nose that pre-views a dry, full and warm palate and big spicy cedar, tobacco, earthy, herbal blackberry fruit flecked with bits of coffee, vanilla, cola and black tea. A bit rustic but with aging potential. Serve now with grilled meats or wait 24 months for further integration.

NEWS & EVENTS

Burnaby's Hart House at Deer Lake will hold its annual Evening in Provence garden party on Wednesday. Guests will enjoy a tasting of French wines, followed by al fresco dinner accompanied by live music for \$52. Reservations by phone only at 604-298-4278.

The BC Wine Authority will advocate government reduce the amount of vintage wine required to match the vintage printed on the label of local wine from 95 per cent to 85 per cent. Given the same producers seem bent on selling us \$50 wines from the huge meaningless Okanagan Valley appellation, it's no surprise they decided to weaken the standards so they can be even less specific about what's in the bottle. Are we, or are we not, making niche wines?

Pacific Smoked Salmon and Salad

This recipe, from Cory Parson's *Cooking with Cory*, is something he makes for guests with minimum effort. It could be an appetizer for dinner or a brunch accompaniment. If you prefer a thicker dressing, he suggests straining a cup of yogurt over a bowl in the fridge for an hour, then measuring out the amount required. — *Mia Stainsby*

- 2 crisp red apples
- 3 tablespoons (45 mL) lime juice
- 2 cups (500 mL) arugula
- ½ pound (250 mL) smoked salmon filet
- ½ cup (125 mL) low-fat yogurt
- 1 tablespoon (15 mL) prepared horseradish
- ½ teaspoon (2 mL) sea salt
- ½ teaspoon (2 mL) freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon (15 mL) finely chopped chives



Thinly slice the apples, leaving the peel on, and remove the core. Toss the apple slices in a small mixing bowl with 2 tablespoons (30 mL) of the lime juice to prevent browning. Arrange the arugula on four serving plates. Remove the skin and any bones from the smoked salmon. Cut the salmon into thin strips at an angle. Arrange the salmon and apple

slices on the arugula. To make the dressing, combine the yogurt, remaining 1 tablespoon (15 mL) of lime juice, horseradish, salt and pepper in a medium bowl, and stir until smooth. Drizzle over the salmon, apples and arugula. Garnish with the chives.

Makes 4 servings.

WINE MATCH

Cut oiliness with citrus

Riesling is the match here, cutting through the fish in the same way the apples work with the salmon.

— *Tony Gismondi*
Poet's Leap Riesling 2010, Columbia Valley, Washington, United States \$35

The mineral, citrus and peach flavours flecked with candied grapefruit and limes are the antidote for oily salmon.

Tesch Unplugged Riesling 2009, Nahe, Germany \$20
 You could squeeze the fresh honey, spicy, apricot, ginger, green apple flavours of this wine on the salmon or simply sip a bit with each bite.

DVF

