

SOUTHBURY PACKAGE STORE

UNCORKED

Steve's Picks

I wanted to begin my portion of the newsletter by thanking everyone who has supported Southbury Package Store over the last few months. The store has come a long way since we opened the doors on November 21st and we're excited for the coming months and the warm weather it will bring. At SPS we do offer a few services you may not know about, so I thought I'd pass along some details.

Did you know we have a wine club? Wine has many variables and we hope you can trust us to change things up for you once a month. Think about your favorite "go to" product. How did you come to find you enjoy it? At some point you tried something new. That's what we want to do for every wine club member. You can join for as long as you'd like or as often as you'd like, but we recommend signing up monthly so you can gain the full experience. Stop in and speak with Jim or Steve for the details.

We do wine tastings! Certainly not a unique quality in many stores today, but we like to think we're special (we know because my mom said so). Our weekly tastings on Saturdays are always themed, and begin at noon and finish when the bottles are empty or its 8 o'clock – whichever comes first. We also don't limit ourselves to just being in the store, we'll come to you, please inquire about our concierge wine tasting service.

Events! Want to get out during the week, but aren't sure what to do and where to go? We'll help you fill your activity calendar as well. In April we're going to be starting an in store educational series, the SPS Wine School is officially in session! These classes will happen during the week and will last about an hour. Space is limited to 12 people. Please sign up in the store, a refundable cash deposit is required to reserve your space.

With all the technical mumbo jumbo out of the way, I'd like to make a few recommendations for your early spring months. If you're like me, you can't wait to get out and start grilling at night. While you'll hopefully be grilling all summer long, the first few times you are outside grilling after winter (even one as mild as this

one) are special. So I'd like to kick-off with a couple of full-bodied reds capable of standing up to a flame grilled dinner. I'll start with **Bodegas Renacer Punto Final Malbec 2018 (\$11.99)**. This wine over delivers on the palate and in the pocketbook. There are so many wines from Mendoza, why choose this one? It comes from high altitude vineyards in the foothills of the Andes Mountains and is made with once used French oak barrels. It is smooth, soft, and full of fruit with integrated tannins and a steal at the price. Pick up a bottle or two. Of course if I'm talking red wine, I am required to include the country of Italy. Enter **Feudi Montodi Lagnusa Nero d'Avola 2017 (\$19.99)**. Lagnusa means that which is lazy, in this case the vines which bear little fruit. We know older vines produce less quantity and yield higher quality fruit. This wine offers a complex structure with notes of dark red fruits and baking spice with a hint of menthol on the finish. Worth every penny! Sliding over to the Rhône Valley, we should really discuss the **Domaine Maby Brin de Garrigue 2016 (\$14.98)**. A fantastic value from an elevated appellation (Lirac) and has quite a bit of "umpf" behind it. Classic Rhône garrigue (local herb blend) on the nose and a powerful fruit punch make this a delicious find from my second favorite region in the wine world. Village level wine usually goes for \$20.00 or more. Enjoy! My last red hails from Washington. **Requiem Cabernet Sauvignon 2017 (\$21.98)** is exactly the kind of wine I like to drink from Washington: powerful, full of flavor with sufficient tannin that craves ribeye. The dark and red fruits are balanced with the "grippiness" of the tannin. The way this wine drinks merits twice the price from California. Okay, okay I know, I know. We do sell white wine too. I will mention one, but as the weather warms up expect me to flip the switch to rosé and whites almost exclusively. So which is the lucky white wine? **Sunday Mountain Sauvignon Blanc 2018 (\$13.98)** hails from an area south and east of the Wairau (pronounced why-rao) Valley. This location is slightly cooler than Marlborough, the most famous growing region in New Zealand, which allows it to show off an herbaceous nose with a delicate citrus palate. Soft but supple this wine doesn't disappoint. Definitely Zingy. Enjoy!

Cheers until next time!

Jim's Picks

My topic for this portion of the newsletter is Grenache. In my professional wine career I have been asked innumerable times, "If you could only drink one variety which one would it be?" Over the years I've pondered that question but now my answer is quick and unequivocal ...Grenache. Most people express surprise, expecting the answer to be Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir or perhaps Sangiovese; but for me, Grenache is the most interesting of grape varieties; capable of making world class reds, very good white wines and delightful rosés. Few varieties can pull off that trifecta.

Grenache (aka: Garnacha, Granatxa, Cannonau and 15 other synonyms) was born in Spain but has travelled around the world and now has established homes in southern France, California, Italy and Australia to name the most prominent. What does it taste like? Of course, it depends on where and how its grown but Grenache's descriptors include: red fruits (strawberry, black cherry, raspberry) and assorted spices (anise, cinnamon, citrus rind, oregano and tobacco). Grenache's acidity is medium, as is the body and the color can vary from a light (Pinot Noir-ish) red to a deep, full ruby crimson red. Grenache makes some of the world's most expensive and exalted red wines (Chateau Rayas Chateauneuf-du-Pape and Sine Qua Non from Cali) and some of the cheapest, everyday quaffers. It can be crafted to age and develop in the bottle for 20+ years or be a tasty and delightful drink within a year of harvest. It enjoys the company of other varietals but is confident and comfortable to stand on its own. Sort of a Renaissance grape capable of doing a lot, well.

So to start off with I would suggest two relatively inexpensive quaffers to 'wet your whistle', so to speak, for Grenache. The first is simply called Grenache and it comes from famed vintner, Andre Brunel, whose family owns one of the premier Chateauneuf properties, Les Cailloux. This is not Chateauneuf-du-Pape. I would designate it as Chateau Cash Flow. I don't mean to denigrate it either. Andre uses his long experience and connections to source quality grapes from the region and then utilizes his skill and experience to produce a delightful wine that is the epitome of southern France Grenache. Medium color, fruity with a kind of warm, earthy quality and an aroma of baked raspberry tart to it. Smooth and dangerously easy to drink! **Andre Brunel Grenache 2017 (\$9.99 bottle)**. In a similar vein is a surprisingly good example of

Grenache from the north of Spain. Being the ancestral home of Grenache, it is not surprising that a ton of very good wine is made from Grenache. The **Henencia Altes Garnatxa Negra 2017 (\$9.99 bottle)** comes from high altitude vineyards in the foothills of the Pyrenees. Dry farmed, hand-picked, no wood, fermented and aged in cement. This Spanish version of Grenache has an appealing raspberry/strawberry element on the nose but the palate is brisk with acidity and a bright minerality.

We then jump over to the West Coast and explore two examples from California, one from the north of the Bay and the other from the south. One brand new and the other one of the groundbreakers for Grenache in California. Let's start south of the Bay with one of California's oldest producers of varietal Grenache...Bonny Doon. Founded and run by the deeply iconoclastic Randall Graham in 1983, Bonny Doon was one of the first Cali wineries to produce a Grenache varietal. Called 'Clos de Gilroy', (Randall's homage to the 'Garlic Capital of the World'). The fruit comes from Monterey, organically grown (but not certified). The winery describes the **Bonny Doon Clos de Gilroy 2018 (\$18.99)** as 'truly exceptional and is perhaps the most concentrated and intense Clos de Gilroy we have ever seen... the '18 Clos de Gilroy is deeply pigmented, almost verging on blue-violet, and has a vibrant level of acidity. The wine is spicy, peppery and perfumed – the scent of cassis is unmistakable." I couldn't agree more. And, this wine may soon be a collector's item. Randall sold the winery in 2020 and the new partners are no longer making a Grenache, it is the last of a long line. Moving to the north we find one of California's most celebrated winemakers making varietal Grenache and Grenache blends in Napa Valley from fruit in Sonoma and the Sierra Foothills. Helen Keplinger has worked for and with the best in California: Helen Turley, Heidi Barrett, Bryant Family Vineyards, Grace Family Vineyards and now she and her husband have started their own project, Keplinger Wines. They only make a few hundred cases of the Keplinger wines but in 2014 they sourced enough great fruit to start a separate project, Vermillon. **Vermillon Red 2016 (\$29.99 bottle)** is a terrific Grenache blend. This vintage is a blend of 62% Grenache, 21% Mourvedre, 10% Syrah, 6% Petite Sirah, and 1% Counoise. It is aged in 100% French oak barrels in a cold cellar for 16 months before being bottled without fining or filtration. It is a gorgeous red wine with layers of blackberry and raspberry, a hint of black licorice, herbs and minerality. The palate is juicy with a long finish. Superb!

Liquor Locker

For this edition's Liquor Locker segment, I wanted to mention a product a lot of us don't even put two seconds of thought into when we're making a mixed cocktail. Technically vermouth is not a spirit, rather it is an aromatized, fortified wine. The name hails from the German word wermut which were worm-wood infused wines used for medicinal purposes. As someone who enjoys his time in the kitchen, I just have one thing to say: ingredients matter. Why spend time and money looking for the best rye, whiskey, gin or vodka only to breeze over the vermouth component? If you're using quality ingredients, step up your vermouth game and try something different to add depth, flavor and complexity. We have a wide range of red and white vermouth including **Carpano, Dolin, Jacopo Poli and Berto**.

It's the **Jacopo Poli Gran Bassano Rosso and Bianco (\$22.99 750ml)** that I'd like to tell you about. The Poli family has been making some of the world's best grappa since 1898 and their vermouth is an excellent addition to their portfolio. The Bianco has a base wine made from Vespaiole and steeped hawthorn, elderflower, grapefruit, galangal, myrtle, sweet and bitter orange. The Rosso has a base wine made of Merlot and is steeped with holy thistle, yarrow moscata, rhubarb, vanilla, pimento, ginger and liquorice. I LOVE the Rosso in a Manhattan with **Breckenridge Bourbon (\$39.99 750ml)**. As the great Emeril Lagasse would say; "KICK IT UP A NOTCH!"

In Our HOPinion

It seems like the CT craft brewery scene has taken a page from Starbucks, there seems to be one in every town and on every corner. This is a good thing for our industry. The more breweries there are the more creative the brewers need to be in an effort not to get left behind. And not only do they need to be creative, they need to be consistent with product as well as quality. A couple of months ago I was minding my own business and an email popped up from this dude Ryan Broderick asking if I was interested in selling his beer. I thought to myself, who is this guy? Then I realized that didn't matter, because he's a "little guy" taking on the world. Why not? I placed an order for two of his beers "A Beaten Path" Pale Ale

and "Oo A Squirrel" IPA and I'm glad we did. The beers are out of this world fantastic and what's super cool about them, they're still hand written brewery cans (they've stepped up their labeling game since my order). For the next two months, we're going to feature beers from **Reverie Brewing Company** for April and May, and if we're lucky maybe we can get a Friday night tasting!

Oo A Squirrel American IPA (\$15.99 4pkc) – A complex flavor profile with notes of pineapple, berry, & cedar and dry hopped with Ekuanot & Denali hops. A stunner.

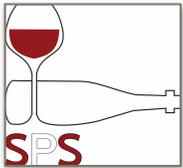
A Beaten Path Pale Ale (\$13.99 4pkc) – A dark, American Pale Ale with a hefty dose of bitterness, hops

Reverie opened their doors around this time last year and have made a mark in the local beer scene. Located at 57B Church Hill Road, Newtown, the brewery's tag line, "Don't quit your daydream" is something we all should aspire to. Father and son team, Ryan and Mark Broderick along with award winning brewer Frank Lockwood are doing just that and we're the ones who get to benefit!

A Closing Note

When it comes to wine, there's an important concept that Jim and I try to adhere to when we're deciding what wines to stock in our shop. Terroir (pronounced "tare-WAhr") used to be a pretty novel concept reserved for wines of elevated status and most likely from traditional, old world wine growing regions. I mean, how difficult can it be to grow a grape vine? They're pretty vigorous, meaning they will pretty much flourish anywhere. Well, as anyone who has planted an annual in their yard can tell you, keeping the plant alive is easy, whether it flowers to its optimal result is a different story. The grapevine is no different. Certain vines will flourish in cooler climates with rocky soils, while other vines prefer warmer climates and alluvial soils. Every vine reacts differently to their growing conditions and surroundings. As a result each wine produced will have flavor and taste variations.

Take a look at the cartoon on the next page. Choosing a wine is a lot like writing a news story. Who, what, where, when all play a factor and "terroir" is the encompassing term that binds all these concepts together to "explain" your glass of wine. It's what makes wine as a beverage interesting. We think so, and hope you do too.



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