



SOUTHBURY PACKAGE STORE

UNCORKED

Steve's Picks

About fifteen years ago I was on a company sponsored wine trip to Italy. The winery, located in Lecce, Puglia (heel of the boot), was hosting us for a night and took us to a marvelous dinner at a local fish market. Afterwards we walked around the bars and sidewalk cafés. Lecce is a vacation area as the beaches are a thirty-minute car ride in either direction (east or west) and the streets were bustling with people. We stopped at an open-air bar where our host was well known. He proceeded to order a bottle of his top-level wine, which was Tre Bicchieri (the highest award for a wine in Italy). A blend of local varietals Primitivo and Negroamaro, aged 24 months in oak barrels, this wine was built to be a monster. The bartender grabbed the bottle on the shelf behind him and poured us our glasses. Did I mention it was July in Italy? Granted it was close to midnight, but that bottle was hot, and I am not referring to the alcohol emanating from the glass. It was an exceedingly difficult serving of wine to get through. Here I was holding a top-level wine which should have been a great experience, but it was not. I learned a lesson that night and it has stuck with me ever since. There is a time and a place for everything - something I always try to apply today when making recommendations.

So, let us "pair" a few wines for the months of June and July. If you are anything like me there is nothing I'd rather do than sit on my deck on a late Sunday afternoon sipping on rosé and enjoy the weekend winding down. In the spirit of the above story the **Botromagno Rosé di Lulù 2019 (\$15.98)** is a fitting way to start my picks. This wine is made from an ancient Puglian varietal (Nero di Troia). Nero di Troia was widely planted in the 19th and early 20th centuries throughout southern Italy but fell out of favor as bulk wine production dissipated. It has a savory bouquet of peaches and dried herbs with a spicy, zesty finish. Delicious! Sliding westward to the island of Sicily, the **Feudo Montoni Rosé di Adele 2019 (\$19.98)** could be Italy's response to the wines of the Côtes de Provence. This wine is made from an indigenous varietal, Nerello Mascalese, which can be found on the slopes of Mount Etna. It poses a floral nose with exotic pomegranate and strawberries and is a very persistent wine where each sip will lead to another. Grab two bottles - you will not regret it. I would be crazy not to mention a wine from the Côtes de

Provence in my picks and trust me, the **Sainte Croix Côtes de Provence 2019 (\$16.98)** is worthy! Classic Provencal. Bright, fresh, and satisfyingly juicy with ripe berries and flowers on the nose which lead into a crisp and refreshing finish. A dynamite value from this area. The pervasive thought in the wine consumption world is that rosé should be the freshest vintage. And for the most part, I agree with this concept. Occasionally we taste older vintages of rosé and usually the wine shows fine, but once in a while, BAM! The extra time in the bottle did not do harm and some of these wines can be better with bottle age. I give you **Elk Cove Vineyards Estate Pinot Noir Rosé 2018 (\$15.98)**. The 2018 vintage allowed for a longer growing season. The result was a big, ripe core of concentrated red fruits in this Pinot Noir. Absolutely beautiful. Shifting our refreshment gears to white wine, the country of Austria has a long and interesting wine producing tradition and their signature varietal, Grüner Veltliner is one of my favorites. An exhilarating varietal that has a multitude of acidity, minerality and white fruits. **Weingut Stadt Krems Grüner Veltliner 2018 (\$15.98)** is a terrific example of what this wine is. The winery was founded in 1452 as a revenue stream for the Krems hospital, a duty it fulfills to this day. Green apples, lemons, bitter garden vegetables (yes, it is a good thing) and a heaping dose of minerality will keep those long summer evenings going in the right direction. Our next wine, **Bodegas del Palacio de Fefiñanes Albariño 2018 (\$18.98)** might be the best version of this grape I have ever tasted at any price. I love the subtle flavors of mandarin oranges and peaches followed by the velvety palate from lees ageing. Throw some fresh clams on the grill and enjoy. It would be silly for me to not include at least one red wine, after all grilling is a great way to cook during the Summer months and red wine does have its place. **Bliss Family Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon 2017 (\$12.98)** certainly struck a chord with me when I first tasted it. To begin with, it hails from Mendocino, California's most northern appellation and is better known for Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay (hemp too). However, Cabernet Sauvignon grown in the highland valleys and mountain slopes offer as much structure and concentration of other more well-known wine growing regions in California. This is a great value.

Thank you for your time and as the great Bartles & Jaymes used to say: "Thank you for your support."

Jim's Picks

Parr for the Course

Some are born into the wine business, others are born for it. Rajat Parr is the latter. In the small world of wine, Parr is a superstar. Born and raised in Calcutta, Parr had never tasted wine (although he had read about it) until he was 20 in 1993 and living with an uncle in London who introduced him to some of the great wines of Europe. After earning a bachelor's degree in Hotel Administration, Rajat entered the Culinary Institute of America at Hyde Park, New York, graduating in 1996. He began his wine career as an apprentice to one of the industry's most acclaimed master sommeliers, Larry Stone at Rubicon in San Francisco. There, he worked closely with Larry to gain extensive knowledge of great wines from around the world and developed affection for the wines of Burgundy. Rajat continued on and brought his expertise to the award-winning Fifth Floor before being named wine director for The Mina Group. During these years, Rajat traveled extensively around the world, visited the best vineyard sites and met many of the great winemakers of our time. This began the cultivation of Rajat's deep understanding and appreciation of the distinctness of terrior and the vital but delicate role of winemaker. Rajat mastered the art of recognizing the impressions these elements imprinted upon wines and quickly became known for his ability to identify vineyards, producers, and vintages by taste alone. As he honed these skills, Rajat's interest shifted further towards winemaking and in 2011, Rajat launched Sandhi, a partnership with Charles Banks and Sashi Moorman, to produce Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from select vineyards in the Santa Rita Hills.

Sandhi is a small production Californian winery focusing on select vineyards from the Santa Rita Hills in Santa Barbara County. "*Sandhi is an ancient Sanskrit word that means collaboration,*" explains Parr, "*Sandhi Wines represents a union essential to the production of wine: the collaboration between man, earth and vine.*" When asked why he chose Santa Barbara County, he replied, "*I feel like Santa Barbara County has the most promise of any new wine region in California. I think that Santa Barbara County is the only place where I can produce the style of wines I like—wines that are intense and rich with balance and vibrancy.*"

The Sandhi Santa Barbara County Chardonnay 2018 \$24.99 is a blend from different vineyards located in Santa Maria Valley, Santa Ynez Valley, and Santa Rita Hills. Vineyard sources include Bien Nacido, Gainey, Zaca Mesa, Rita's Crown, Wenzlau,

Bentrock, Duarita and Sanford & Benedict. The average vine age is 25 years old. The wine was fermented in used older French oak barrels with ambient yeast and without any other additions (except a little SO₂). The wine was aged for 10 months in barrel and finally racked to stainless steel tanks and bottled with a light fining.

Refreshing! That is the word that comes to mind when you first smell and taste this wine. Clocking in at a mere 13% alcohol, this is the antithesis of buttery, oaky, high octane fruit bombs so common from Cali. The nose offers lemon zest, a surprising hint of pineapple and a distinct minerality. There is excellent, mouth-watering acidity and length on the palate. Chablis-like but not Chablis. I describe it as 'thirst quenching'. You finish one glass and you want to have another.

Pigs Fly

Normally Steve would be the guy talking about Italian wines, (with a last name like Segretario you understand why) but we recently tasted two Italian wines that really impressed me. **Paitin Arneis 'Elisa' 2018 \$24.98** is the white wine from a very respected producer of Barbaresco. The grape is Arneis, which I have almost always found imminently forgettable. The Elisa is the exception. It comes from a single vineyard, organically grown. I will just copy my notes, verbatim, to this newsletter, "great nose, great texture, great aromatics and flavor. First rate! Long. Notes of pear. Very well made. Texturally significant. Bravo!" You could substitute this wine for any Chardonnay or white blend you like and you would be very happy. I can't believe that I am recommending an Arneis.

Equally surprising to me is a terrific little red wine from Sicily. The island of Sicily is a bit of a 'darling' these days in the Italian wine world but that charm has often alluded me. Well, slap my face and call me a liar because I was totally charmed by **E Colosi Nero d'Avola 2018 \$9.99**. The Colosi winery has been around for 45 years but this is the first vintage of their new wine, E Colosi rosso. It is certified organic. It is certified vegan. Neither of those means anything if the wine doesn't taste good. I am here to certify the wine as DELICIOUS. You notice something odd about this red wine without opening the bottle. The color appears to be really light for a Nero. You pour it into a glass and the wine is a translucent light beet red color. The nose is bright and fruity filled with cherry and other red fruits. Similar flavors on the palate when it suddenly hits you...this is Italy's version of an excellent Beaujolais. This is delicious with a slight chill. The ultimate picnic wine. A certified winner.

Liquor Locker

If you travel into and through Roxbury, you may have passed the **Mine Hill Distillery (MHD)** without even noticing. The site was purchased in 2015 by Elliott Davis and refurbished for almost two years to what it is today. The MHD encompasses four buildings and the distillery is in a refurbished cigar factory with the old Roxbury Transfer Station right next door. Davis has since hired a chemist turned distiller Charisse Woods who distilled for Diageo first in Canada with Crown Royal and then in Kentucky with Bulleit Bourbon. Since production began, MHD has produced a vodka and gin with the brown spirits currently maturing in barrel.

The vodka is made with red wheat and wheat malt from Thrall Family Farm in Windsor which has been around since the mid-1600s. Davis attributes the vodka's "creamy" mouthfeel to the wheat malt which is certainly a unique component to this spirit. The gin is based with the vodka and uses the three traditional botanicals: juniper, cardamom, and coriander. A great start, but to give this product a unique feel, they also use eastern white pine, hawthorn berries, and black walnut. The combination of these botanicals earned MHD a double gold medal and a first-place finish in the 50 Best Gin Competition. Both spirits are gluten free as the gluten molecule is too large to pass through the steam phase of the distillation process.

Mine Hill Distiller Vodka 200ml \$9.99 375ml \$17.99

Mine Hill Distiller Gin 200ml \$10.99 375ml \$19.99

Producing a world class spirit is certainly an "Everest" for some producers. MHD has gone out and taken the best resources of the state of Connecticut and done just that. Bravo!

Recent Arrivals

Ryan Patrick 'Rock Island' Cabernet Sauvignon \$19.98 - Honest Cabernet Sauvignon. Classic nose. Black currant. Balanced. As good as you can get at this price.

Les Ailes Bourgogne Pinot Noir 2018 \$14.98 - Hard to find a French Pinot Noir that can play in this price ballpark. Les Ailes hits a solid double. Classic Burgundy nose and color. Great lighter summer red.

Pico del Sole Cannonau di Sardegna 2018 \$12.98 Grenache from Italy's Sardinia. Easy, juicy, tasty red wine. Along the lines of a Rhone Grenache but this is its own animal. Very good. Terrific value.

Eugene Carrel Savoie Rose 2019 \$12.98 – Fruity and tasty. Nice acidity with delicious cherry, strawberry and pomegranate flavors. Dry.

Cloisonné Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2018 \$19.98 From a classic area for elegant, complex Cali Pinot Noir. Just released, the wine already shows layered flavors and good depth. Try with some salmon.

A Closing Note

It is a conversation I have quite a bit when discussing wine. Is sulfur dioxide (SO₂) the reason I get headaches when drinking a glass or three of wine? The answer? Maybe (Isn't that always the case?). It is true that some people have a sensitivity to SO₂ and can have negative reactions to ingesting it including headaches, coughing and irritation of the eyes. However, most wines do not pass the smell test (no pun intended) as the cause of your discomfort. All things considered the great majority of wine has minimal amounts of SO₂.

SO₂ is a natural by-product in the wine making process as 10-40 ppm is produced naturally during fermentation. The potential issues come when exterior factors force winemakers to add SO₂ to help preserve the final product and some are heavier handed than others. In most wine countries around the world - the maximum levels of SO₂ that a wine can contain are 150 ppm (parts per million) for red wine, 200 ppm for white wine, and 400 ppm for sweet wines. Although the actual levels are much lower, for example, many (the majority) dry red wines have around 50 ppm of SO₂. In the United States, any wine that contains more than 10 ppm of SO₂ must display the "Contains Sulfites" warning on the label. To give you an idea, dried fruits like raisins contain anywhere from 500 ppm up to 2000 ppm of SO₂ and bacon clocks in somewhere around 900 ppm of SO₂ and forget about your favorite French fries.

In conclusion, the addition of SO₂ in our favorite wines is a relative necessity. Connecticut is quite a trip from many of the prominent wine growing regions in the world, all due respect to the local wineries. To enjoy the wine in the way the winemaker wishes to present it, the SO₂ is an important factor in making sure the wine is stable for travel and tastes as it should. Pro tip: try to find wines that say estate grown and bottled on the label. Generally, because of the proximity to the vineyards where the grapes are grown, these wines tend to have less need for SO₂ use prior to the actual wine production. Cheers!

Wine School Update

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, we postponed our Spring Semester. We will be restarting it the Fall. The dates will be announced in the coming weeks along with the course offerings. Keep an eye out!

Services Offered

We'd like to thank everyone for their support during the pandemic. We will continue to offer a curbside option for the foreseeable future, just give us a call to set up your order.

We have offered delivery since our first day, and we will continue to do so. We deliver to Southbury everyday; Lakeside, the Purchase, Southford, Heritage Village, Georges Hill, etc. If you live in Southbury, we will deliver it to you.

For free delivery in town we require a \$75.00 minimum order. Again, thank you.

In-store Tasting Schedule

We're going to start up our tasting on July 11th. Here's our Summer "Stay-cation" tasting schedule:

July 11th – *It Doesn't Have to be Expensive to be Good* – BBQ/Grillin' and Chillin' Edition

July 18th – *Trip to Club Med* – Wines of the Mediterranean

July 25th – *Weekend in the Hamptons* – North Fork, South, Dinner Fork

August 1st – *Beach Bottles* – Perfect wines to sip while watching the surf

August 8th – *It Doesn't Have to be Expensive to be Good* – Weekend in the country picnic edition

August 15th – *Back to School Shopping Pre-game Tasting* – Getting' the kids ready

August 22nd – *Dogs Days of Summer* – It's hot, wines to cool you down

August 29th – *End of Summer* – Nobody wants Summer to end, some things to lift your spirits



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