



March, 2018



Both of the feature wineries for this month's New World Red selections have also appeared in the Reserve Club. We were so successful with the Reserve features that they offered us these as exclusives in the the state of Florida.

The first pick is the **2014 Basel Cellars Red Vine (\$18)**, which is from a winery located in the Walla Walla AVA of Washington State. This property was formed in 2002 when Walla Walla grape grower, Greg Basel, purchased the Double Acre ranch and estate house. He recognized that the property lies between the alluvial flood plain of the Yellowhawk creek and the Walla Walla river. The deep, rocky soil is the perfect environment for vineyards, and so he planted it to vines. Greg also saw potential in the 13,800 square foot house as a winery and tasting room. The previous owner even built it on a 9,600 square foot cave which was used to house his car collection. Today "the bat cave" as it is called by the employees, provides the ideal environment for their wines to mature in barrel. In 2004 Greg Basel invited long-time friends Steve and JoMarie Hansen to partner with him in Basel Cellars. Then in 2011 the Hansen's bought out the Basel's and today are the sole owners of the estate. In addition to the Double River vineyard in Walla Walla they also own a second site, the Double Canyon vineyard in the Horse Heaven Hills. This region, which I will abbreviate as HHH for space, is a relatively large growing area that lies south of the city of

Yakima, and north of the Columbia River. It is classic high desert, with little rainfall and steady winds that blow across the barren landscape. The region is famous for self-rooted vines, meaning those not planted on rootstock, as the poor soils and arid conditions prevent most pests and fungus from thriving. Elevation in HHH runs from 300 to 1800 feet above sea level, and during the growing season they receive a staggering 17 hours of sunlight per day. The grapes that grow in the area are known for having very thick skins due to the wind and sun, as well as deep concentration. Many wineries buy grapes from this area to add color and power to their wines from vines growing in less severe conditions.

To make the Basel Cellars wines, winemaker Dirk Brink utilizes not just their two estate vineyards, but also grapes purchased from the prestigious Phinny Hill and Gamache sites as well. Because the growing conditions in the various AVA's of Washington are so extreme, most winemakers feel the best wines need to come from a blend of sites. This is a new bottling, a blend of 46% Cabernet Sauvignon, 45% Merlot and then equal parts of Cabernet Franc and Malbec. The wine is aged in older French oak barrels for a year before bottling. They produced 365 cases of this wine.

When you open this wine, decant it for a half hour before serving. When you pour the first glass it offers up a seductive bouquet of dried black cherries and blueberries, blackberry jam, creme caramel, sassafras, milk chocolate and espresso powder. On the palate it is initially soft and generous, before a subtle frame of tannin brings focus into the finish. Drink this wine over the next three to five years with grilled tri-tip steaks or all by itself.

My second pick, the **2010 Capp Heritage Meritage (\$30)** is also a TWM Florida exclusive that is produced by the current generation, of the first family to homestead Napa Valley. The current owner, Dan Capp, is the great, great grandson of David Hudson who came across the Sierra Nevadas on the first successful wagon train to cross the mountain range in 1845. Homesteading in what is now Calistoga, building two log cabins. Shortly thereafter, Mexico sent an army to boot the "squatters" off the land, resulting in the Bear Flag Revolt in Sonoma. Dan's family made up roughly a third of the opposition army and the battle lasted only a few days. In 1847 they found gold in the hills north of Napa and the Hudson's went to seek their fortune...which they did. They then returned to the Napa Valley and bought what is now the town of St. Helena where they built a house and planted a vineyard. Shortly after planting the vineyard the Hudson's hired a vineyard foreman by the name of Jacob Beringer. Eventually due of health reasons the vineyard and house were sold to the Beringer family. The Hudson family then moved up to what is now Lake County where they built yet another house and planted more vineyards. They eventually sold the property to actress Lily Langtry, which is now the site of Guenoc & Langtry Vineyards. Now you understand where the "heritage" comes from in their name.

The current generation, Dan and Marguerite Capp have been growing grapes and making wine since 1973. Dan developed his knowledge of the area developing vineyards for Franciscan, of which he was their first employee. The Capp Heritage vineyards are in the Wooden Valley District of Napa Valley, north and east of the city of Napa. Wooden Valley is unusual as it lies on the ridge line that eventually becomes Howell Mountain south of Lake Berryessa. It is usually described as one of the warmest microclimates in the valley, but occasionally the influence of San Pablo Bay is felt and fog lays across the vines cooling things off. The soils are mixed, the result of the weathering of the Vaca Mountain ranges, so soils are very poor. All of the red wines produced by Capp Heritage are from estate fruit but they actually sell 95% of their grapes to other wineries, including Caymus and Beringer.

The wines are crafted by Chris Markell. The Capp's do not have a winery facility so they rent space at Coppolla and a custom crush facility. The fruit for all their wines is hand harvested and fermented in stainless steel tanks. Once it is dry it is moved to French oak barrels where it is aged for twenty-two months. The blend of this wine is 85% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot and 5% Petite Verdot. There were 643 cases of this vintage produced.

When you are ready to serve this wine, you will want to decant this for a half hour and, being almost eight years old, pay attention to a small amount of sediment that it throws. It is fantastic to show a wine with this much bottle age, from Napa Valley, so prepare yourself for an experience. The nose begins with deep nose of dried red plums, cassis syrup, blackberry cobbler, milk chocolate, caramel, dried porcini mushroom and bergamot. The feel on the palate is dense and full, with tannins that are still forward, but dominated by the rich sense of fruit. Drink this wine over the next two to three years with braised lamb shanks, pot roast or filet mignon with a wild mushroom sauce.

Lamb Shanks Braised in Red Wine with Herbes de Provence

Braised lamb shanks are one of my favorite meals, particularly with wines that are mature, such as the Capp Heritage Meritage. This dish will also work great with the Basel Cellars Red Vine, but the youthfulness of that bottle really goes with everything. This is a basic dish and the only real trick is trimming the excess fat off the lamb shanks. If that intimidates you, don't bother! The meat is still going to fall off the bone and you can pick off any fatty bits at the table.

6 lamb shanks, 3/4 to 1 pound each, trimmed of excess fat and fell (thin, white papery covering)

Table salt

1 tablespoon canola oil

2 medium onions, sliced thick

3 medium carrots, peeled and cut crosswise into 2-inch pieces

2 medium ribs celery, cut crosswise into 2-inch pieces

4 medium cloves garlic, minced

2 tablespoons tomato paste

1 tablespoon herbes de Provence

2 cups dry red wine

3 cups low-sodium chicken broth

Ground black pepper

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Sprinkle shanks with salt. Heat oil in a large, nonreactive sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add shanks to pan in batches if necessary to avoid overcrowding. Sauté until browned on all sides, 5-7 minutes. Using tongs, transfer shanks to a plate as they brown.

2. Drain all but 2 tablespoons fat from the sauté pan; add onions, carrots, celery, garlic, tomato paste, a light sprinkling of salt and 1 teaspoon of the herbes de Provence; sauté to soften vegetables slightly, 3 to 4 minutes. Add red wine, then chicken stock to the skillet, stirring with a wooden spoons to loosen browned bits from skillet bottom. Bring liquid to simmer; transfer vegetables and liquid into a deep braising pan, large enough to hold the shanks in a single layer. Add shanks, season with salt, pepper, and remaining herbes de Provence.

3. Cover pan (with foil if pan has no lid) and transfer it to the oven; braise shanks for 1 1/2 hours. Uncover and continue braising until shank tops are browned, about 30 minutes. Turn shanks and continue braising until remaining side has browned and shanks are fall-off-the-bone tender.

4. Remove pan from oven; let shanks rest for at least 15 minutes. Carefully transfer shanks with tongs to each of 6 plates. Arrange a portion of vegetables around each shank. Skim excess fat from braising liquid and adjust seasoning. Spoon a portion of braising liquid over each shank and serve.