



Tim's Wine Market

July 2023

By J.P. Donnelly-Davis

With summer in full swing and barbecue on our minds, this month's Explorers Club wines have been chosen specifically to pair with burgers, ribs, or anything cooked on a grill. Beginning in Bordeaux, we will highlight an older vintage from one of our favorite wineries on the Right Bank before venturing down to South Africa for a history lesson and a look at how French grape varieties fare in a hot climate. Food pairings are the name of the game this month, and these versatile wines will be right at home on your table all summer long.

2014 Château Leconte-Marquey Saint-Émilion - \$25

One of France's largest wine-growing regions, Bordeaux is bisected by the Gironde River, which forms a natural dividing line between regional wine styles and terroirs. To the West, the Left Bank's gravelly soils form the ideal growing environment for Cabernet Sauvignon. However, to the East on what is called the Right Bank, the soil is composed primarily of sandy clay and limestone, which are ideal for the ripening of Merlot. When grown in sandy clay or limestone, Merlot exhibits great power and more pronounced aromatics, while retaining its fruit-forwardness and lower tannins. In addition, Cabernet Franc thrives in limestone soils as well and is often blended with Merlot to add acidity and structure. Finally, due to a warmer climate some producers are starting to use Cabernet Sauvignon, which historically would not ripen, to add tannin and age-worthiness. The resulting blends are food friendly and often require less time in bottle than other Bordeaux communes before reaching maturity.

We featured Château Leconte-Marquey early last year and it was a runaway favorite. The importer offered us the opportunity to buy an older vintage and we jumped on it. The chateau is located in the tiny hamlet of St. Hippolyte, one of the many villages that make up the Saint-Émilion AOC. The property itself constitutes 32 acres, most of which is planted to Merlot, although Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon are also cultivated in limited quantities. The current owner of the château, Jean-Paul Borderie, purchased the estate from his mother after a string of successful vintages, and in recent years has begun expanding his family's vineyard holdings. In addition, Jean-Paul has invested heavily in improving vineyard health, emphasizing biodiversity and reducing the use of man-made fertilizers or pesticides. This wine consists of 85% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, all harvested by hand, and each variety is then vinified separately in stainless steel. After fermentation is complete, the three wines are blended and racked to gently used French oak barrels for 12-15 months before filtration and bottling.

When you open this wine, I strongly suggest decanting for at least half an hour. As this is a mature bottling it needs a little time to breathe, but the aromatics are worth the wait. On the palate, this is a traditional expression of Saint-Émilion with notes of blackberry, black plum, blackcurrants, dark roast coffee, black pepper, and Worcestershire sauce. Drink now through 2026 with braised short ribs, beef Burgundy, or marinated steak tips.

2018 Anwilka "Ugaba" Red Wine - \$25

The history of South African winemaking dates back to the 17th century, with the founding of the Dutch Cape Colony. Much of the country's winemaking can trace its lineage to Simon Van der Stel, 10th governor of the colony and an avid wine lover. His property, laid out in the 1680s, contained several hectares of vines and in fact produced the first Cape wine to be exported back to Europe, known today as Vin de Constance. After his death, the estate was divided into multiple small farms, which formed the basis for South Africa's Constantia and Stellenbosch growing regions. One of these properties, Klein Constantia, dates back to 1685 and is the owner of our feature winery as well.

This wine began as a collaboration between Bordeaux winemakers Bruno Prats and Hubert de Boüiard, who purchased the Anwilka estate in the late 1990s. Chosen for its cooler climate and high elevation, the property sits in the Helderberg sub-zone of Stellenbosch, within sight of the Southern Ocean. This maritime influence creates growing conditions similar to their native Bordeaux, and the two friends set about re-planting much of the property to French varieties such as Cabernet

Sauvignon, Malbec, and Syrah. For local expertise they partnered with Lowell Jooste, co-owner of Klein Constantia, and the relationship between these two properties, one new, one old, was born.

Since their inaugural vintage in 2005, this wine has traditionally been a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. Today, the property is owned by Klein Constantia, although all three partners remain involved in the project, and the wines are made by oenologist Jean du Plessis. Great steps have been taken to reduce the need for pesticides or manual intervention in the vineyard, and most of the “pest control” is taken care of by the numerous bats and owls that roost on the property. In this way, the winery continues to innovate, combining New World and Old World traditions in a region that defies categorization.

To make this wine, each variety is harvested by hand and brought to the winery for de-stemming. This wine is predominantly Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon, with small amounts of Malbec and Petit Verdot added for color and tannin. Each variety ferments separately in stainless steel using native yeasts. Once dry, the final blend is assembled and racked to new and gently used French oak barrels for 10 months. The wine is then filtered and bottled.

When you open this wine, I strongly suggest decanting for at least half an hour. Once you do, be prepared for plenty of aromatic intensity, as notes of blackberry preserves, fresh black cherries, crushed violets, cedar, and eucalyptus abound. Drink now through 2028 with sausage gumbo, marinated flank steak, or grilled lamb.

Flank Steak with Mustard/Chive Butter

This is a fantastic Cooks Illustrated recipe for preparing flank steak, which can be tough and is easily overcooked. The process is to create 4 smaller steaks from the larger cut, then slowly bring them up to temperature in the oven. Once they are close to the desired internal temperature they get a quick sear in the skillet to develop a crust, and finish with a composed butter. The composed butter can also be adapted to what you have on hand, for instance garlic and lemon peel or anchovies and shallots. This recipe is great with both wine features this month.

**1 (1 1/2- to 1 3/4-pound) flank steak,
trimmed**

2 teaspoons kosher salt

1 teaspoon sugar

1/2 teaspoon pepper

3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

3 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

2 teaspoons Dijon mustard

**1/2 teaspoon grated lemon zest plus 1
teaspoon juice**

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 225 degrees. Pat steak dry with paper towels. Cut steak in half lengthwise. Cut each piece in half crosswise to create 4 steaks. Combine salt, sugar, and pepper in small bowl. Sprinkle half of salt mixture on 1 side of steaks and press gently to adhere. Flip steaks and repeat with remaining salt mixture. Place steaks on wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet; transfer sheet to oven. Cook until thermometer inserted through side into center of thickest steak registers 120 degrees, 30 to 40 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine butter, 1 tablespoon chives, mustard, and lemon zest and juice in small bowl.

Heat oil in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Sear steaks, flipping every 1 minute, until brown crust forms on both sides, 4 minutes total. (Do not move steaks between flips.) Return steaks to wire rack and let rest for 10 minutes.

Transfer steaks to cutting board with grain running from left to right. Spread 1 1/2 teaspoons butter mixture on top of each steak. Slice steak as thin as possible against grain. Transfer sliced steak to warm platter, dot with remaining butter mixture, sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons chives, and serve.