



# Tim's Wine Market

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In keeping with the old adage “the more things change, the more they stay the same,” this month we will dive into two growing regions known for their adherence to traditional viticulture. France’s Loire Valley is considered by some to be one of the birthplaces of the “natural wine” movement, with independent winemakers focusing on terroir becoming the exception rather than the rule. While this region has pivoted away from modernization, our second feature never fully abandoned its viticultural traditions. Umbria, one of Italy’s smallest growing regions by volume, is a stronghold of native varieties and sustainable winemaking. Taste them with us and you will understand why so many winemakers are looking to the past for inspiration.

## **2021 Angelique Leon Chinon Rouge - \$25**

In recent years it seems as though the conversation surrounding Cabernet Sauvignon has pivoted to include Cabernet Franc as well. However, many consumers may be confused by the difference between these two varieties, particularly in the New World where the two grapes are often vinified in a similar manner. Cabernet Franc is one of the parent varieties, together with Sauvignon Blanc, of Cabernet Sauvignon. Both are grown in Bordeaux, likely where this initial crossing occurred, however for many Old World wine fans the heartland of Cabernet Franc is France’s Loire Valley. On the River Vienne, a tributary of the Loire, the commune of Chinon produces some of the greatest examples of varietal Cabernet Franc. Here, many independent wineries choose to produce their wines in a more traditional or “natural” manner.

One such producer is Angelique Leon, who manages 15 acres of vines in Chinon and exclusively cultivates Cabernet Franc. Working on her family’s old property in the village of Savigny-en-Véron, Angelique is active in both the vineyard and the winery and does virtually everything by hand. This led to her conversion to organic-certified viticulture in 2018, although she has been making wines in an “Eco-friendly” manner for far longer.

To make this wine, Angelique sources fruit from her younger vineyards, located on alluvial soils on the banks of the Vienne. Green harvests are employed to reduce yields, and manual leaf pruning helps mitigate fungal diseases such as mildew without resorting to chemical intervention. Harvest takes place entirely by hand (and mostly by Angelique), and the fruit is partially de-stemmed, with some stem inclusion for additional flavor and concentration. After fermentation in stainless steel the wine is bottled unfiltered.

When you open this wine, you will want to serve it slightly chilled, closer to cellar temperature or around 60 degrees Fahrenheit. In addition, you will want to decant for up to a half hour. On the palate, this wine delivers the aromatics of a traditionally made red Chinon with notes of fresh blackcurrant, wild blackberry, oolong tea, and fresh-cut ivy. Drink now through 2025 with grilled salmon, chicken salad with walnuts, or turkey burgers.

## **2019 Tenuta Bellafonte “Pomontino” Montefalco Rosso - \$26**

To call Umbria an isolated region would be an understatement. This is Italy’s only region that does not border the sea or another country, and the red wines here are chiefly composed of Sagrantino, a grape variety seldom seen outside the region. Thick-skinned and high in natural acidity, Sagrantino is often closed off in its youth, requiring extended aging. However, when blended with Sangiovese, this variety becomes much more accessible while retaining its complexity and color. This is commonly seen in the Montefalco Rosso DOC.

Like many wineries in this small growing region, Tenuta Bellafonte focuses on traditional viticulture which is actually a form of polyculture. That means that in addition to grape vines there are apple and olive trees on the estate as well, acting as natural cover crops and increasing soil health. No herbicides or pesticides are used in the vineyard, and the only purchased “fertilizer” is sourced from their neighbors who coincidentally raise horses and

donkeys. In recent years, the property has taken steps towards carbon neutrality, and the winery itself is run partially on solar power. Though most Umbrian wineries eschew the “natural” label, there is no denying that this is a region of Italy that prides itself on traditional and minimal-intervention viticulture.

To make this wine, fruit is sourced predominantly from the estate’s younger plantings, around 15 years old. Close planting and manual green harvests help to reduce yields and concentrate flavor. In the vineyard, all work is carried out by hand, and after harvest the grapes are manually sorted and de-stemmed. The Sangiovese and Sagrantino are co-fermented on native yeasts. Once dry, the wine spends 12 months in neutral oak barrels and is bottled unfiltered. After 6-12 months of bottle aging, required by the appellation, the wine is released.

When you open this wine, you will want to decant for at least half an hour, though 45 minutes is ideal. Once this wine has some time to open up it displays notes of dried raspberry, red cherry, dried sage, black peppercorn, balsamic syrup, and earth. Drink now through 2027 with vegetable gnocchi, braised short ribs, or an Italian sub with plenty of deli meats.

## **Imbrecciata**

For the recipe this month I was looking for a dish that checks a few boxes; an original to one of the places of origin of the wine selections, preferably vegetarian (or at least adaptable) and perfect for the oppressively hot weather we currently enjoy. This classic Umbrian dish meets two of the three requirements, unless eating a vegetable based stew is your idea of a light summer dish. However, I was so impressed with this version that I simply cranked the A/C down a few degrees and dove in. You want to serve this dish with a drizzle of good olive oil, plenty of grilled or toasted bread and a bottle of red wine like either of our selections this month.

### **Broth**

**1 medium onion diced**

**1/2 cup celery diced**

**1 medium carrot, peeled and diced**

**4 cups of water**

**1/2 cup lentils**

**1/2 cup spelt**

**1/2 cup barley (not pearled)**

**1 cup canned chickpeas, drained**

**1 cup canned cannellini beans, drained**

**1 cup canned fava beans, drained**

**1/2 cup corn, fresh, frozen or canned/drained**

**1/4 cup diced pancetta (omit if making vegetarian)**

**1 clove garlic, peeled and diced**

**1 cup tomato sauce**

**sea salt and black pepper**

**fresh marjoram or oregano leaves, chopped**

**fresh parsley, chopped**

**extra virgin olive oil**

When looking for a recipe for this dish the top Google search was, not surprisingly an Italian site. While it looked good it was also very long, fussy and all the measurements would need to be converted. Digging a bit I found another, which is virtually the same recipe, except the blogger converted the metric measures to the US standard. I took the recipe a bit farther and utilized canned beans, which for some may be sacrilege, but for a dish that cooks down like this one I felt was a good compromise to save time and cleaning 4 additional cooking pots.

Prepare the broth with 6 cups of water, celery, carrot and onion and simmer until reduced by 25%. Add 2 teaspoons of salt and taste, or more to your preference. (You could also start with 4 cups of vegetable broth if you really want to cut some steps.)

Add spelt and barley. When they are al dente (roughly 30-45 minutes) add all three beans and the corn then lower the heat to a medium simmer.

In another sauce pan add 1 tablespoon of olive oil and the pancetta if using, and cook until fat is rendered and meaty bits are crispy. Add the garlic and stir until fragrant (30 seconds) and then add the tomato sauce. Season with salt and pepper and cook over medium heat for about twenty minutes until thickened.

Add the sauce to your soup and cook over low heat for ten more minutes, sprinkle with herbs and a drizzle of olive oil, serve hot.