



Tim's Wine Market

December 2023

By J.P. Donnelly-Davis

Most of the year the selections for our clubs focus on a theme with an educational bend; exposing you to new grapes, regions or winemakers. Recognizing that the holidays are busy for everyone, in December I like to select wines that are good to have around, that can be enjoyed by wine aficionados and novices alike. This month we have too great options to serve with friends, family or perhaps all for yourself after the crowds have departed. Have a wonderful holiday season and we look forward to taking you to new places in 2024. - **Tim**

2018 Inception Cabernet Sauvignon - \$25

Some of you may recognize this wine, which was a feature a little more than two years ago. We thought it would be interesting to feature it again as a "where are they now" feature. How often do you find 5 year old California Cabernet Sauvignon in the market? We bought this directly from the winery so the storage is excellent and it is amazing to see how far this wine has evolved since our last feature.

The reason we were able to feature this wine and buy it direct, passing it through a distributor of course, is the owner, Jonathan Hirsh now lives in Orlando and is a close friend of Tim. Born and raised in Los Angeles, he would frequently escape to Santa Barbara and fell in love with the elegant, cool climate wines of the area. After getting to know a winemaker in the area he decided to start making some wine to sell to his friends in LA, where he is a fixture in the "places to be seen" restaurants. Jon quickly found himself sourcing wines for private label clients including Wolfgang Puck, using his network of growers in the Central Coast. Of course they were all clamoring for a Cabernet Sauvignon as well, so he went looking, focusing on the Central Coast. Logically he landed in Paso Robles, where he is now producing 3,600 cases of this little gem.

For our wine, Jon has sourced from two vineyards in the Estrella and Highland districts of the Paso Robles region north of Santa Barbara. While not as high in elevation, the Estrella region benefits from the cooling effect of the river from which it takes its name. Grapes from this area ripen slower and provide good color and structure to the wine. The remaining grapes come from the Highland District, which is quite hot during the day but cools rapidly at night. For Jon's wine, this contributes a punch of fruit mid-palate and some length.

What a difference a couple of years makes! You will want to decant this wine for a half hour to let the bouquet develop and then enjoy the beauty of almost mature Cabernet Sauvignon. The nose has evolved into a melange of blackberries and blueberries, dried plums, milk chocolate, caramel and rosemary. On the palate you see the biggest evolution, as the wine which was a little disjointed is now cohesive, with rich fruit balanced by smooth, integrated tannins. My original serving suggestion still holds true, "drink now through 2028 with a roast leg of lamb, crown roast of pork or wild mushroom pasta."

2019 Owen Roe "Sinister Hand" Red Wine - \$30

The red wines from Owen Roe are a favorite in our Orlando store, and represent not only some of the best values in Washington but also some of the more unique grape varieties grown in the state. Winemaker David O'Reilly sources fruit from a number of vineyard sites throughout Washington's Columbia Valley, where the high desert climate and broad diurnal range (surprisingly hot days and chilly nights) are ideal for ripening many European grape varieties. While often associated mainly with Bordeaux varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, the valley is also home to significant plantings of Syrah, Mourvèdre, white Rhone varieties such as Clairette Blanc, and even Sangiovese, all of which inevitably find their way into the Owen Roe line of wines.

If his wines sound interesting so far, then the labels are equally so: photographs of abandoned castles, Gothic cathedral windows, and medieval wood-block prints set the Owen Roe wines apart from their contemporaries. The O'Reilly family are big history buffs and take much of their inspiration from ancient Celtic and medieval Irish

folklore. Such is the case with the “Sinister Hand,” a folk tale from the 11th century that allegedly involves David’s great-great-great grandfather. Without going into too much detail it involves warring Irish clans, a high-stakes boat race, and a frustrated warrior severing one of his own hands to prove a point.

With a background like that, you can bet that this wine is every bit as compelling as its namesake. Sourced from trusted growers in the Columbia Valley as well as the steep terraces of the Union Gap Vineyard in Yakima, this is a Rhone-style red wine with plenty of muscle. The final blend for this wine changes depending on the vintage, but is typically composed of predominantly Syrah, Mourvèdre, and Grenache. A small amount of Cinsault is used in warmer vintages to add acidity and, though it may come as a shock, some white grapes such as Grenache Blanc are blended in as well! The practice of blending red and white varieties together dates back thousands of years and increases aromatic intensity while typically decreasing tannin. All fruit ferments in stainless steel before the final blend is created. After blending, the finished wine sees the better part of a year in new and gently used French oak before bottling.

When you open this wine, I strongly suggest decanting for up to half an hour. This wine needs a little bit of time to open up but is certainly worth the wait. In the glass, this wine delivers notes of wild blackberry, red cherry, blackcurrant leaf, vanilla, and black pepper, with a hint of that earthy “barnyard” quality Mourvèdre often delivers. Drink now through 2026 with grilled skirt steak, lamb patties, or crispy duck breast.

Short Ribs Braised with Wine

This time of year it helps when entertaining to have a recipe that can be prepared ahead and pulled out when time to eat. Short ribs are the consummate example, as it is practically impossible to overcook them, and they really do not require that much effort to produce a dynamite dish. Here is my favorite recipe from Cook’s Illustrated, which works with both wines. I often make this a day ahead, and chill after cooking and leave in the pot. Then you can easily de-fat it and reheat the next day, straining the veggies and continuing the process. - **Tim**

5 pounds bone-in English-style short ribs, bone 4 to 5 inches long, 1 to 1 1/2 inches of meat on top of bone, trimmed

Kosher salt and pepper

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1 large onion, chopped

1 tablespoon tomato paste

1 teaspoon all-purpose flour

2 cups dry white wine

3 cups chicken broth

4 garlic cloves, peeled and smashed

4 sprigs fresh thyme

2 bay leaves

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 2 pieces and chilled

Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Sprinkle ribs with $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper; set aside.

Heat oil in large Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion and cook until lightly browned, 4 to 6 minutes. Add tomato paste and flour and cook, stirring constantly, until paste begins to darken, about 45 seconds. Add wine, increase heat to high, and bring to boil. Cook until mixture is slightly thickened, about 3 minutes.

Stir in broth, garlic, thyme sprigs, and bay leaves. Nestle ribs into braising liquid, bone side up (ribs may overlap). Bring braising liquid to simmer, transfer pot to oven, and cook, uncovered, for 1 1/2 hours.

Remove pot from oven. Flip ribs meat side up so meat is above braising liquid. Return pot to oven and cook, uncovered, until fork slips easily in and out of meat, 1 to 1 1/2 hours longer.

Transfer ribs to serving platter and tent with aluminum foil. Strain braising liquid through fine-mesh strainer into fat separator; discard solids. Allow liquid to settle for about 5 minutes.

Strain off fat and return defatted braising liquid to now-empty pot. Bring to boil over high heat and cook until reduced to 1 cup, 4 to 7 minutes. Reduce heat to low and whisk in butter, 1 piece at a time. Season sauce with salt and pepper to taste. Pour sauce over meat and serve.