



Tim's Wine Market

May 2025

By Lee Pancake

This month's selections transport us to two distinct and storied corners of France, each wine a vivid portrait of its native landscape. These wines eloquently capture their origins, reflecting both the rugged beauty of their terroirs and the traditions that have shaped them, inviting exploration and appreciation of these regions' timeless allure.

2022 Château de Saint Cosme “Les Deux Albion” Rouge | \$33 per bottle

Nestled in the heart of the southern Rhône Valley, the historic wines of the Barruol family are well known globally for their profound yet approachable nature. Château de Saint Cosme rests beneath the striking limestone cliffs of the Dentelles de Montmirail and epitomizes this region's storied heritage. With vineyards lovingly tended by the Barruol family since 1490, this estate embodies the resilience, tradition, and deep-rooted passion characteristic of southern French viticulture.

Louis Barruol, the dynamic and visionary proprietor of Château de Saint Cosme, inherited the estate in 1992 from his father. Driven by a fervent commitment to quality and sustainability, Louis made the pioneering move to biodynamic farming in 2010, cultivating an ecosystem where vines thrive in harmony with the land. His meticulous approach to vineyard management and winemaking has propelled Saint Cosme to new heights, affirming its reputation as one of the southern Rhône Valley's premier producers.

I vividly recall the first time I met Louis, probably 10 years ago, when he visited Tim's Wine Market for a tasting event. Our customers immediately adored him, charmed by his vast knowledge and engaging personality. After the event, while we were cleaning up, Louis casually asked if there were any good bars nearby. Assuming he meant wine bars, I eagerly listed several, but Louis laughed and clarified he simply wanted to find a place to grab a beer and chat. We spent the evening sipping humble brews, and I marveled at how approachable and down-to-earth Louis was, generously answering every question I had as a young wine professional. This experience perfectly embodies his genuine character and unwavering passion for wine.

Les Deux Albion Rouge, which was created by Louis in 1999, showcases the diversity and richness of the surrounding terroirs. The grapes—50% Syrah, 20% Grenache, 15% Carignan, 10% Mourvèdre, and 5% Clairette—are sourced from meticulously selected plots in Plan de Dieu, Saint Maurice, and Cairanne, southern Rhône communes renowned for their distinctive soils and exceptional vineyard sites. These vineyards, characterized by their schist composition, are traditionally cultivated in the gobelet style training, which allow for optimal sun exposure and grape maturity. Bringing ample body and texture to the final wine.

Louis embraces traditional winemaking methods, co-fermenting whole clusters with indigenous yeasts in cement vats and conical wooden tanks. This careful vinification process preserves the authentic expression of fruit and terroir. The wine matures over eighteen months, a deliberate duration that imparts depth, structure, and nuanced complexity. The 2022 vintage displays an opulent, inviting bouquet brimming with aromas of dark plums, black currants, roasted herbs, olives, and subtle smoked meats. The palate is generously textured yet finely balanced, revealing layers of savory spices, ripe dark fruits, and delicate mineral undertones—hallmarks of Louis's exacting standards and thoughtful blending.

In the glass, Les Deux Albion Rouge narrates a profound story of place and passion. Pair it effortlessly with grilled lamb chops adorned with rosemary, herbed roast chicken, or a hearty Provençal ratatouille. Each sip is a testament to Louis Barruol's dedication, reflecting centuries of tradition and the vibrant, untamed spirit of the Rhône Valley.

2020 Crocus “L'Atelier” Malbec de Cahors | \$23 per bottle

When most wine lovers speak of Malbec today, thoughts inevitably drift to Argentina, its adopted home that has turned the grape into a global superstar. Yet Malbec's roots run far deeper, tracing back centuries to the rugged limestone

plateaus and meandering river valleys of Cahors in Southwest France. Here, the grape is known locally as Côt, and it has historically yielded wines famed for their inky depth and tannic backbone—wines meant for cellaring and contemplation.

At Crocus, legendary winemaker Paul Hobbs, widely celebrated for his visionary work across multiple continents, teamed up with Cahors native Bertrand-Gabriel Vigouroux, whose family history in the region spans four generations of dedicated wine growing. Their mission was simple yet ambitious: to craft modern, elegant Cahors wines that reflect their ancient terroir while showcasing a brighter, fresher face of Malbec.

L'Atelier, which translates to "the workshop," is precisely this—a wine meticulously sculpted through attentive vineyard management and a thoughtful approach in the cellar. Grapes are sourced from various parcels, each carefully selected for its distinctive character, rooted in soils dominated by gravelly terraces and limestone-rich slopes overlooking the Lot River. Here, the vines dig deep, drawing nuance and intensity from the mineral rich soils.

The 2020 vintage benefited from an optimal growing season, allowing gradual ripening and balanced fruit expression. Upon harvest, the grapes underwent careful sorting to ensure only pristine berries were vinified. Fermentation took place in stainless steel tanks, a choice that preserves freshness and allows Malbec's inherent vibrancy and pure fruit character to shine without interference. Aging occurred in French oak, subtly imparting structure and flavor, but always with restraint—never obscuring the intrinsic beauty of Cahors Malbec.

Pour a glass, and its color alone—a mesmerizing, opaque ruby—reminds you why Cahors wines are historically dubbed "the black wines." Aromatically compelling, L'Atelier opens with vivid scents of wild blackberries, crushed violets, and subtle notes of cocoa powder and freshly ground coffee. On the palate, it confidently balances power and finesse. Supple tannins frame a core of blueberry compote, dark plum, and hints of licorice, giving way to an elegant minerality and crisp acidity that refreshes rather than overwhelms. This incredibly versatile wine works well with a classic cassoulet, the famous dish of the region, as well as steaks and these amazing lamb chops.

Lamb Chops with Mint and Rosemary Relish

When I started looking for a recipe to pair with the features this month I immediately pulled out my file of lamb favorites. Both wines are full bodied but not particularly tannic, and display a little bit of a wild side. While the recipe calls for either style of chops, I prefer with the loin chops for this preparation. (They look like mini T-bones.) Plan 2-3 per person unless you invite me for dinner, then double that number. This dish works great with both wines. - **Tim**

Relish

1/2 cup minced fresh mint

5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

2 teaspoons minced fresh rosemary

2 teaspoons red wine vinegar

1 garlic clove, minced

1/8 teaspoon red pepper flakes

Salt and pepper

Lamb

8 (5- to 6-ounce) loin or rib lamb chops, 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 inches thick, trimmed

Salt and pepper

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Make the relish: Adjust oven rack to middle position, place 12-inch cast-iron skillet on rack, and heat oven to 500 degrees.

Meanwhile, combine all ingredients in serving bowl. Season with salt and pepper to taste; set aside for serving.

Pat chops dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. When oven reaches 500 degrees, remove skillet from oven using potholders and place over medium-high heat; turn off oven. Being careful of hot skillet handle, add oil and heat until just smoking. Cook chops, without moving them, until lightly browned on first side, about 2 minutes. Flip chops and continue to cook until lightly browned on second side, about 2 minutes.

Flip chops, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook until well browned and meat registers 120 to 125 degrees (for medium-rare), 3 to 5 minutes, flipping chops halfway through cooking. Transfer chops to serving platter, tent with aluminum foil, and let rest for 5 to 10 minutes. Serve with relish.