

RED ROGUES
FALL 2009



PLUMPJACK
WINES

Our selections for this quarter are a Tempranillo from Spain, a Sangiovese Cabernet Sauvignon blend from Italy, and a Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon blend from California. All three of the wines are associated with very famous people with recognizable reputations--ownership and wine-making teams alike.

Do history and reputation translate into great wine? In many cases quality begets quality so the fact that Aubert de Villaine partnered with a great grower is an automatic home run. Equally true is the fact that Illy, a coffee and tea company that is known for its soaring quality, paired with prestigious growers in a historical area of Italy known for their great bottlings of Brunello. Both of these proprietors took the necessary measures to keep true to the greatness of their vineyards and their basic philosophies of "letting" the vineyards speak for themselves. Alejandro Fernando's Dehesa la Granja needs no other further endorsements as he is so highly regarded in nearly every avenue of the industry for his dedication, hard work and idealistic values in life and in making wine.

Without further ado, we have chosen the 2000 Dehesa La Granja from Spain, the 2006 MastroJanni San Pio from Italy and the 2005 HDV Belle Cousine from California. These are perfect wines for the fall.

Of the three wines, Dehesa La Granja, from Spain, has the longest history and perhaps the most celebrated name within the world of wine. Alejandro Fernandez, nearly mythical in the world of Spanish wines, started plowing fields in Spain when he was 17 years old. At the age of 40, he and his wife purchased their first bodega called Pesquera. Says Robert Parker of Alejandro's wines, ". . . discovery of the wines of Ribera del Duero happened over a bottle of Alejandro's 1982 Pesquera." He called the wine Spain's Chateau Petrus, fairly high praise for any wine, which established acceptance of an additional fine Spanish wine other than the ultra-expensive Vega Sicilia. Wines of Spain, the Spanish trade organization, honored five Spanish winemakers for their contributions to wine-producing, and Alejandro was amongst the five, noting his success story for Spanish winemaking covering more than 40 years. Clive

Coates observed that the finest wines exhibit the same personalities as the winemakers who crafted them. "Alejandro is a proud, forthright man who speaks his mind, . . . a self-made man in the best, honest, old-fashioned sense." He also says that Alejandro's wines mirror his personality traits--full-bodied wines with lots of extract.

While the acquisition of the second winery, MastroJanni, is much more recent, the history of the land is long, and the oenologist is highly regarded—the MastroJanni family has owned and operated the winery since 1975. To add further clout to an already impressive producer, the winery was purchased by the Illy Company of coffee fame, and their reputation for quality and flavor is legendary. For Riccardo Illy of Trieste, finding the estate to purchase was a 10-year journey which fulfilled his life-long dream. He started drinking Brunello's from this estate as early as 1979, while living part-time in Switzerland. Both the oenologist, Maurizio Castelli, and the managing director, Andrea Machetti, have been with the MastroJanni family since 1992, and they remain critical pieces to the on-going success of a prominent producer in the Montalcino area, where Brunello is king.

The history of the third winery is certainly shorter, but the Hyde de Villaine Winery, now called HDV has a rich and very distinguished partnership on both sides of the continent. Larry Hyde planted his highly-celebrated Hyde Vineyard in the Carneros appellation on the Napa side more than 30 years ago. Under Larry's guidance, the Hyde Vineyard sold grapes to some of the most notable producers in California, such as Kistler, DuMol, Paul Hobbs, and Spottswoode, to name a few. As all of us know, great wine begins with superb vineyards under ideal conditions. In 2000, Larry's cousin, Pamela De La Guerra, married into the de Villaine family, one of the most esteemed families in Burgundy. Her husband is Aubert de Villaine, the co-director of the illustrious Domaine de la Romanee-Conti. Aubert and Pamela also have a winery called A & P de Villaine, which produces world-class Burgundies. The collaboration between Larry Hyde and Aubert de Villaine has become one of the most highly-regarded international partnerships of our young California wine-making history.

2000 DEHESA LA GRANJA SELECCION - \$32.99

The history of wine in Spain goes back hundreds of years, and there are more than 2.9 million acres planted—the most-widely planted wine producing nation in the world. However, due to the low yields of old vines and the wide spacing of vines, they are ranked as only the third largest producer of wine. The vagaries of war and politics weren't helpful to the growth of wine as an economic resource, and in fact, the 8th Century, during the Moors reign, wine became a black market product. After the Spanish Reconquista, Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella opened up new opportunities for exporting wines. However, the contemporary Spanish wine scene didn't really begin until the 1950's which brought domestic stability and consequently a revival for the Spanish wine industry. There are more than 600 types of native grapes planted throughout Spain, although 80% of the wine production is from only 20 grapes, including Tempranillo, Albarino, Garnacha, Palomino, Airen, and Macabeo. La Granja is Alejandro Fernandez' third wine project, and the Bodegas y Vinedos Fernandez Rivera is located in the province of Zamora, 3 ½ hours northwest of Madrid. The historic 1,800-acre property, formerly known as a famous breeding ranch for bull-fighting bulls is in the village of Vadillo de la Guarena. The estate was a major supplier of wine from the 17th through the 19th Centuries to local and European markets. The cellar encompasses 40,000 square feet of cellars that were built by 125 laborers over 17 years during the 1700's. The property has been completely restored and renovated and utilizes modern wine-making equipment and aging cellars. While 10 of the 250 planted acres are technically in the Toro or Ribera del Duero, the wine is marked as Vino de Mesa (table wine) so it is not a Denominación de Origen. The soil is brown and limey, with sand and clay—very rocky—perfect for depth of flavor extraction, breadth, and minerality. While the climate is challenging, moving from cold, harsh winters to hot, arid summers, and the stress of the old vines produces wines with powerful aromatic flavors. The wine sees 24 months in American Oak and 6 months in bottle before release. The beauty of the robust, extracted wine is immediate as the aromatics give off pepper, dusty old world charm, rich drawing out dark berry flavors and cured meat. Filled with huge blackberry flavors and ripe raspberry, the beautiful deep ruby color leads to the coffee, nutty, rosemary and tar flavors. The roundness of the wine with a surprisingly, long finish shows off the elegance. Decant the wine for at least ½ hour before serving. It will work great with grilled steak or a gamey meat dish. Only 6,660 cases were produced.

2006 MASTROJANNI SAN PIO - \$33.99

We've used the term Super Tuscan before, and we've always tried to leave behind the "super price tag" which for years went hand in hand with these wines. Years ago a group of young Italian wine makers decided to go against the traditional methods of using only grapes that were indigenous to Italy and began planting Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, thinking that they could begin making world-class wines in Tuscany. Many of these young people were from the Montalcino area where Brunello, made from 100% Sangiovese Grosso, hails. The MastroJannis were of a mind that determined that they could make world class wines by adding Cabernet Sauvignon to Sangiovese, and the San Pio is just that—20% Sangiovese Grosso and 80% Cabernet Sauvignon. There is no D.O. for a Super Tuscan at this time. Up until 2 years ago, the MastroJanni wines were 100% family owned, and their reputation as a prestigious producer of Brunello and Rosso is legendary. Now they have an extraordinary fairly-priced Super Tuscan added to their portfolio. The old world charm of the wine combines with new age wine-making techniques for a beautiful representation of wines from the winery which is located just on the south east side of Montalcino, where the Asso river flows into the Orcia. While there are 90 hectares on the estate, only 25 hectares (61 acres) are planted in grapes while the rest of the property is planted in olives or natural scrub and woods. The rich, stony soil, and the south easterly exposure, with gentle slopes, guarantees that both the soil and the climate are perfect for growing grapes. The wine is aged in French oak barrels for 18 months and in bottle for an additional 6 months before release. The color of the wine is magnificent with a dark ruby color and a brick-hued reflection, while the aromas emit spicy nutmeg with an earthy terroir emanating from the glass. The mouth is filled with deep raspberry flavors and hints of allspice, vanilla and plum. I always equate flavors to feelings, and this wine suggests passion to me. It's definitely old world wine, but certainly its diversity suggests new world flavor profiles. There is a deep and lingering finish with no harsh tannins. Serve it with grilled meat or osso bucco. There were 7,300 cases produced.

2005 HDV BELLE COUSINE - \$35.99

The HDV or Hyde de Villaine winery embraces both names of the impressive collaborators of Larry Hyde and Aubert de Villaine. The Hyde vineyard, while only 10 acres has produced some of the most well-known single-vineyard designated wines in California, including Joseph Phelps, Paul Hobbs, Frog's Leap, and Patz and Hall. The Hyde vineyard is easy to find bordering the eastern edge of the Carneros area north of Highway 121 heading east toward Highway 29 in Napa. Here the breezes of the San Pablo Bay keep the evenings cool with warm to hot days in the growing season. The HDV wines are certainly known for their California style but with a definite French influence. In 2002 Larry and Aubert hired winemaker, Stephane Vivier. From the first aroma of the Belle Cuisine, you get a glimpse of what Vivier has brought to the table with his experience taken from the cellars of Pommard, Chassagne-Montrachet, Meursault, New Zealand and now California. Stephane works with Larry and Aubert to adapt and use the strictest viticultural and wine-making techniques that France is so known for, such as sustainability where the vines flourish under a naturally-balanced environment. The soil components in the Hyde Vineyard are ideal with shallow, loamy soils and old stream beds. The Belle Cousine is named after Pamela, who through her marriage to Aubert, brought the two prominent families together. The blend is 80% Merlot and 20% Cabernet. The color of the wine is a beautiful garnet, tints of a purple hue, and the aromatics inform the drinker of a mysterious new-world wine. Vivier says, "The nose features the restraint of the old-world contrasted by the opulence of the new world. Showcased are complex aromas of sweet spice and intense black fruit that evolve into black pepper and red fruit with time." The wine displays soft tannins but with plenty of backbone and natural acidity for a food worthy wine. The finish lingers pleasantly. Serve with rack of lamb or grilled dry-rubbed steak. There were 1,560 cases produced.