



PLUMPJACK
WINES

PlumpJack Wine Club

March 2008

A customer recently called and asked me for some help. A special occasion was coming up and my assistance in choosing wines for the event was requested. My first question was about the menu. The next question was to get an idea what the wines should cost. The final question was to find out what the honoree preferred to drink. The questions were all answered, but the comment that struck me the most was that it didn't really matter if the wines paired perfectly with the food, or how expensive they were. What mattered most was the "WOW factor!"

How is the "WOW" factor determined? For me, there are some objective and quantifiable qualities

that must be met. Does the wine have attractive aromas that jump out of the glass? Are the flavors well defined, intense, complex and delicious? Does the wine have good balance, acidity, and structure? Does a sip send my organoleptic sensors into orbit? Chances are that if all those requirements are met, the wine will fall into that special category. The club selections this month do just that. My customer was right. Price doesn't have to be a factor, although most consumers are hesitant to believe that a wine can be great if it is not expensive. Our wines this month prove that you can find "WOW" wines without the "ouch" price.

2006 Weingut am Stein Ludwig Knoll

Silvaner

Würzburg, Germany

●●●●●●●●

2006 Casa Silva

"Los Lingues"

Gran Reserva Carmenère

San Fernando, Chile

●●●●●●●●

Many travelers who visit German wine country usually head straight for the Rhine. Wines produced along that river's picturesque banks west of Frankfurt are familiar in the United States because they are readily available here. However, southeast of Frankfurt, a different river, the Main, winds through another beautiful wine region, Franken. Its wines, considered by many Germans to be their country's best, are not well known in North America. Almost all Franken wine is purchased in Germany, so little is available for export. The Franken wine country boasts an identity distinct from the popular impression of southern Germany as a fairy-tale land of snow-capped mountains, quaint villages, and Oktoberfest. The Franken people are great wine drinkers and have been so for over twelve centuries. Most Franken vineyards are planted on the hilly slopes of the Main and its tributaries. The climate is continental: warm summers with little rainfall give way to cold winters with lots of rain and early frosts. The soil consists of combinations of weathered, primitive rock, colored sandstone, shell limestone, gypsum, and keuper. These soils give Franken wines their distinctively earthy flavor. The Franken region produces 92% white wine and 8% red wine. The varietals include Silvaner, Riesling, Müller-Thurgau, Scheurebe, Bacchus, Mario-Muskat, and the red Domina grape. Usually dry and earthy, the Franken wines are generally more masculine than other German wines. Würzburg, the old Franken capital, is the region's center of wine production and marketing. Würzburg was ruled from the 10th century by wealthy and powerful prince-bishops, who created the city as it stands today. The buildings have been largely restored, having been heavily damaged during World War II by bombing that lasted only 20 minutes, but

devastated 87 per cent of the city. Weingut am Stein is operated by Ludwig Knoll, who took over the facility in 1984 from his father. The winery was established in 1890, by Ludwig's great-grandfather, who was a cooper. Back then, coopers were the primary wine makers, as they were the ones in need of so many barrels. The winery, which was moved to its present location in 1980, is located at the base of the Würzburger Stein vineyard and overlooks the city of Würzburg. The Würzburg Stein is one of Germany's oldest Grand Cru vineyards, with vines planted there more than 1300 years ago. Ludwig Knoll follows a clear, straightforward style that has taken him into the upper echelons of wine producers in the region in recent years. Knoll's pride is clear as he describes the philosophy of his Weingut am Stein. "You can't make a good wine if you're too serious," Knoll says, "you have to have inspiration. You have to be able to celebrate." Weingut am Stein is a 50-acre estate which includes the highly regarded Würzburger Innere Leiste and Stein, Stettener Stein, and Randersacker Sonnenstuhl vineyards. Silvaner, generally regarded as the Franken region's most distinctive variety, accounts for approximately 25% of Knoll's vineyards. The 2006 Silvaner is a cuvee from all the vineyards. The grapes are hand-harvested, gently pressed, and fermented in stainless-steel. The wine offers lovely aromas of pears and quince that follow through in the mouth. There is a fruit-driven juiciness on the palate that is balanced with crisp, refreshing acidity. It is a wonderful light wine to drink on its own, and is one of the few wines that can pair nicely with asparagus. It also works wonderfully with "Schwaebische Kasespaetzle" (small drop-shaped flour dumplings topped with cheese and butter).

The 2006 Weingut am Stein Ludwig Knoll Silvaner is \$19.99/bottle, \$215.90/case.



Chile has become a major player in the global wine market in recent decades. The seeds of the past decade's investments in new technology, modern vinification techniques, and high quality, low-yielding vineyard sites, are now coming to fruition. No other region in the country stands out as much as the Colchagua Valley. Approximately 93 miles south of the capital city, Santiago, Colchagua is a narrow agricultural valley that begins at the foot of the Andes and extends west to the Pacific Ocean. The valley corresponds to the natural formation of the Tinguiririca River, which begins at the base of the Tinguiririca Volcano in the Andes Mountains, 14,100 ft. above sea level, and empties into Lake Rapel, which itself drains into the Pacific Ocean. The distance between the Pacific Ocean and the Andes Mountains through the Colchagua Valley is just 75 miles, which creates a unique condition in Chile and generates a very special climate. The approximately 2,250 acres in between offer many different microclimates, soil types, and steep hillsides, ideal for vineyards planted to Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Carmenère and Malbec. Casa Silva was founded in 1892 by Emilio Bouchon, a French oenologist and wine pioneer. Today, Casa Silva is owned by Mario Silva and family - the fifth generation of winemakers. With the passing of years, and for political and economic reasons, the historic vines of the estate were divided up among different owners. In 1977, Mario began recovering the land on which the old vines were planted, and eventually recovered all the original family holdings. Many of the vines planted were carried over from Bordeaux by the first generation, are pre-phylloxera, and over 90 years old. Los Lingues is one of three estates belonging to Casa Silva. It is situated on the northern edge of the Colchagua Valley and was the first estate ever to be planted in the foothills of the Andes. The main varieties planted at Los Lingues are Carmenère and Cabernet Sauvignon. Carmenère has become Chile's unique signature, as the grape is not prominent in any other wine region. Carmenère is a former Bordeaux variety that hid out in Chile during the years when phylloxera devastated the vineyards of Bordeaux. The grapes for the 2006 Los Lingues Carmenère are hand-harvested plant-by-plant as opposed to plot-by-plot. Such lavish attention to detail shines through in this impeccable Reserva, which is concentrated and a complex expression of its terroir. After fermentation, 80% of the wine was aged in French oak barrels for 10 months, the remainder in stainless-steel. The 2006 Los Lingues Carmenère offers well-defined aromas of ripe red fruits, orange peel, tobacco and coffee, complimented by well-integrated French oak. The sweet, juicy, rounded palate has great concentration with notes of cinnamon and blackberry. This wine is ideal when matched with lamb, veal, roast chicken or spicy Mexican food.

The 2006 Casa Silva Los Lingues Carmenere Gran Reserva is \$22.99/bottle, \$248.30/case.