



**PLUMPJACK**  
WINES

PlumpJack Wine Club

## November 2007

For years, selecting wines for the November wine club shipment has been one of my preferred responsibilities. It is the time of year when I can't help but envision these bottles being poured at a table with friends and family enjoying a holiday feast. I picture people trying these wines for the first time, sipping them with wonder, and trying to put a finger on the organoleptic bliss they are experiencing.

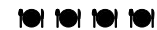
(Won't it be fun to discuss the merits of desiccated Grenache Blanc or the DNA studies on Primitivo?)

Thanksgiving has always been my favorite wine-related holiday. Wine critics' scores, gold medals at

fairs we have never heard of, and full-page advertisements mean little in the pursuit of finding the most delicious wines that will compliment the meal being served. If tradition holds true, I assume that turkey, duck, chicken, baked ham, salmon, or roast beef are going to grace one's holiday table. Using that as a guideline, our club selections were chosen to accompany these holiday dishes. But these wines should not be limited only to holiday festivities. They are delicious wines that can be enjoyed any day of the year. Both of these selections are very limited in supply, so stock up now and you'll find that every time you open a bottle, it will feel like a holiday.



*2006 Solms-Delta  
"Amalie"  
Franschhoek Valley  
Groot Drakenstein, South Africa*



*2006 Alberto Longo  
Primitivo di Salento, I.G.T.  
Lucero, Italy*

At the southern tip of Africa, where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans meet in the shadow of Table Mountain, lies Cape Town, the gateway to the South African wine lands and one of the great wine capitals of the world. Here the cultures of Africa, Europe, and the East have met and mingled for over 350 years. Setting up a refreshment station and trading post by the Dutch East India Company at the Cape in 1652, to provide fresh food to the company's merchant fleet on their voyages to India and surrounding areas, led to a flourishing wine industry and later to the birth of a nation. The Dutch had almost no wine tradition, and it was only after the French Huguenots, seeking religious asylum, settled at the Cape between 1680 and 1690, that the wine industry began to thrive. In *The World Atlas of Wine*, Hugh Johnson and Jancis Robinson write, "The most dramatically beautiful wine country in the world is surely South Africa." With its Mediterranean climate, cooling winds, and rain usually concentrated in winter, the Cape has perfect conditions for producing great wines. However, it has been hampered by many problems, past and present. Despite its history of winemaking that stretches back more than 300 years, South Africa is still waking up from the long nightmare of apartheid, which isolated the country's wine trade until the early 1990s. It currently has approximately 253,000 acres under vines for wine production producing 3.4% of the world's wine. There are about 60 appellations within South Africa's Wine of Origin (WO) system, which was implemented in 1973, with a hierarchy of designated production regions, districts and wards. (A ward is an area with a distinctive soil type and/or climate, and is roughly equivalent to a European appellation.) Solms-Delta Wine Farm, located in South Africa's historic Franschhoek Valley some 30 miles from Cape Town, was first planted to vines over 300 years ago. Solms-Delta Wine Estate is a joint venture between the Solms and Astor families and the Wijn de Caab Trust, whose beneficiaries are the historically disadvantaged residents and employees of Delta Farm and

its environs. In 2002, world-renowned neuroscientist Professor Mark Solms returned to his family's estate and revived its winemaking traditions. In 2006 the estate was substantially enlarged, when the Solms and Astor families combined their properties and purchased adjoining land. The farm's rocky vineyards stretch along the eastern banks of the Dwars River, and comprise mainly deep red, iron-rich soils with a high percentage of alluvial stone. The property is surrounded by towering granite mountains, and its vineyards are punctuated by several clusters of historic buildings, nestled among ancient oaks and camphor trees. Professor Solms considered the Cape's Mediterranean climate to be ideal for Rhône varieties, and after intensive soil tests, he planted the vineyards to Mourvèdre, Shiraz, Grenache and Viognier. To create a specific signature for Solms-Delta, Prof. Solms revived the practice of desiccation originally practiced by the ancient Greeks. Desiccation simply means dehydration. The stalks of the grape bunches are clamped on the vine, some three weeks before harvest, thus blocking the channels carrying sap to the berries. While up to 40% of the water evaporates, the natural acids and grape sugars are retained, concentrating flavor and color without sacrificing structure or balance. The 2006 Solms-Delta "Amalie" is a blend of 81% Viognier and 19% desiccated Grenache Blanc. The Viognier was sourced from 8 different vineyard sites to provide a complex range of flavors. Both varieties were fermented slowly with extended lees contact, and aged separately in new French oak barrels. The wine is remarkably Rhône-like, rich but not heavy. It offers intense peach fruit with hints of honey, a touch of earthiness, and layers of complexity. It is round and full in the mouth, with lovely fresh acidity making it a wonderful wine to pair with food.

**The 2006 Solms-Delta "Amalie" is \$20.99/bottle, \$226.70/case.**



Located in the south-east corner of Italy, Puglia (or Apulia) is "the heel" of the boot. It is bordered by both the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, giving it one of the longest coastlines of any region in Italy. Puglia is one of the most fertile regions in all of Italy. It produces more wine than any other Italian region, usually making up around 17% of the national total. Historically, wine production was oriented more towards quantity rather than quality (the region produces around 12 million hectoliters a year of which only 2% qualifies as DOC), and for a long time much of the wine made was shipped north to Turin where it was used to make Vermouth, or to France where it was used to give structure to French wines when the local harvest was either poor or insufficient. Puglia's two viticultural sectors can be divided roughly by a hypothetical line crossing the region between Brindisi and Taranto. South of the Brindisi-Taranto line lies Salento, a flat peninsula that extends between the Adriatic and Ionian seas to the easternmost point of Italy. Though hot, it is not quite torrid, thanks to the breezes that blow across the Adriatic from the Balkans. Salento's traditional wines are the powerful, inky reds from Primitivo, Negroamaro and Malvasia Nera. Puglia is the heartland of Primitivo, where many plantings dating back 250 years still remain. DNA analysis has determined that Primitivo and Zinfandel are two clones of the same variety. While Primitivo was long thought to be the ancestor of Zinfandel, current research holds that the variety originated in Croatia and was grown in California before Croatians brought it to Italy. Our featured 2006 Primitivo di Salento I.G.T. is from Azienda Agricola Alberto Longo. This 86-acre estate is in Lucera, and only released their first wines onto the market in 2005. Concentrating mainly on indigenous varieties, the wines have rapidly gained recognition as being the best of the region. The wines are made by oenologist Graziana Grassini, a pupil of Giacomo Tachis, and well known for her tremendous efforts at Fattoria di Magliano in Tuscany. Her signature of expressive fruit, while allowing the 'terroir' to show through, is evident in all of the wines. While they have the ripeness of wines from the south, they are all marked by crisp and fresh acidity. The fruit for Alberto Longo's Primitivo comes from the best selection of grapes off a 6-acre vineyard owned by Alberto's uncle, located in Manduria-Taranto. The grapes are hand-harvested and fermentation takes place in temperature-controlled stainless-steel tanks with a long contact of must with the skins. Once fermentation is complete, the wine is aged for 6 months in stainless-steel tanks and rests in the bottle for 3 months before release. This Primitivo is loaded with spice and complex fruit. It has ripe blackberry fruit on the nose, is dense in color, is packed with earthy, multi-layered flavors, and finishes with bright acidity. This is a young wine and benefits from decanting. While enjoyable now, this wine will continue to improve over the next 2-3 years.

**The 2006 Alberto Longo Primitivo di Salento is \$19.99/bottle, \$215.90/case.**