

Celebrating Five Years with Five Year Old Wines

Five years is a long time to do one thing – particularly if it is high school... But if it is spent doing the Wine of the Week segment on WTOP radio, then five years passes by in the blink of an eye.

Over the last five years, I have tasted or reviewed **over 6,500 wines**. I wrote over 400 magazine articles, newspaper columns, blog posts and tweets. And best of all, I have met amazing people and developed lasting friendships, including many of the wonderful people at WTOP Radio.

So, tonight, to celebrate five years of sharing some of my favorite wines with WTOP listeners, I am going to review wines that started their bottle-life out with me on WTOP – the 2009 vintage.

Wines of age and distinction don't have to cost a lot of money. There are many delicious choices – mostly from abroad – that have a few years of age on them. These older wines, like people, tend to be more mellow and more interesting, providing a more enhanced experience.

One other thing to consider: Most wine shops are constantly turning over stock, so from time to time, they will put older vintages on sale to make room on their shelves for newer vintages. You may only be able to snag a bottle or two, but it will give you an opportunity to experiment. Just ask your wine shop advisor if they have any older stuff they're looking to mark down and move out.

Portugal is quickly climbing up the international wine scene ladder as a country that is capable of producing interesting and affordable table wines. This is due in large part to a new generation of winemakers that are dedicated to expanding the wine horizons of Portugal beyond its famous Port wines. The **2009 Quinta do Casal Monteiro Red** from the Douro Valley, is made primarily from Touriga Nacional, but also includes bits and pieces of Touriga Franca, Cabernet Sauvignon, Tinta Roriz. It offers up a bouquet full of intense ripe fruit with hints of plums and berries. Juicy and fresh on the palate, it has a firm structure with a long and delicious finish. Excellent with spicy dishes and matured cheese. **\$10**

Spain is another region that is making large strides in providing quality wines at affordable prices. The **2009 Bodegas Sierra Salinas Puerto Salinas** from Valencia, Spain is an excellent example of an exceptional wine at a very reasonable price. Produced from 66 percent Monastrell, 19 percent Garnacha and 15 percent Cabernet Sauvignon and aged for one year in both new and two-year-old French oak, it displays an inky/purple color along with notes of road tar, melted asphalt, blackberry liqueur, camphor, graphite and forest floor. The wine is complex, full-bodied, rich and intense with terrific purity and wonderful overall balance. **\$16**

Just because a wine is white, doesn't mean that it cannot age. From the Coastal Region of Paarl in South Africa comes a beautiful, fully mature **2009 Glen Carlou Chardonnay**. This chardonnay is fermented in French oak barriques and then aged for ten months sur lie. The wine offers aromas of citrus, green apples and hints of vanilla. The palate is full and soft with flavors of peach, nectarine and lemon/lime, accented by notes of vanilla from the oak aging. The lingering finish is crisp and clean with a touch of citrus reminiscent of lemon drops. **\$20**

Sangiovese is one of my favorite grape varieties to enjoy with food. And it's also the classic wine of Tuscany. The **2009 Canonica Cerretto Chianti Classico** from Tuscany, Italy is full and soft with abundant amounts of ripe red berry and cherry fruit on the lush palate. It has an excellent balance between the sweet tannins, the fresh fruit and the bright acidity. The end notes of red berries and spices make it very a versatile wine to pair with a host of pasta and meat dishes. **\$20**