

### Spring Cleaning—A Little of This and That and All Under \$15!



A few months ago, there was snow everywhere. My arrival home each evening was announced with a loud “crunch, crunch, crunch” as attempted to maintain my balance on our icy sidewalk. On several occasions, I was pelted by hailstones while I was walking the dogs or simply shoveling snow. It was an assault by Mother Nature herself. But now, winter is in full retreat and spring is finally beginning to, well, spring.

What does this have to do with wine? Well, just like squirrels who store their acorns for the winter, we store wine samples. Each fall, I receive wine samples from PR firms, winemakers and vineyards from around the globe. During the height of the “sample season,” our neighbors regard us with a mixture of envy and concern as the boxes pile up on the porch. I’m sure the FedEx and UPS delivery guys believe I have a “problem.” And I know the recycle guys want to party with us.

But the problem with receiving so many samples is that I have to actually try them. It’s an obligation I have to the nice people who go out of their way to navigate the myriad of legal red-tape to get the wines to shipped my way. I owe it to them and, more importantly, I owe it to my listeners and readers.

Each week, the boxes are opened and the wines are organized into groups, and then sampled to see which wines I think will make the cut. For those wines that don’t fall into any specific topic or theme, I set them aside for “later” and hope that I can slide them in somewhere. But now I have a pile of good wines and no theme, so what the heck... it’s time for spring cleaning and a little of this and a little of that.

From behind the former Iron Curtain emerges a fun white wine that is getting a lot of attention. The **2012 Bulgariana Sauvignon Blanc** from the Thracian Valley of Bulgaria is golden in color, with highlights ranging from yellow to green. It has a fresh, fruity, citrus-like and youthful nose, completely lacking in oak due to its having been aged only in stainless steel tanks. On the tongue there are hints of exotic fruits and pineapples, with a gentle acidity and a highly satisfying after-taste. **\$11**

The **2011 Murphy-Goode Cabernet Sauvignon from California** is, well, good, and a great value for an easy-drinking, food-friendly cabernet. Made from grapes sourced from vineyards throughout California, it delivers abundant plum, cherry and chocolate notes across the palate and ends with a pleasing hint of licorice on the medium finish. **\$11**

If you’re looking for a Pinot Noir under \$15 that actually tastes like Pinot Noir, try the **2013 Alfredo Roca Pinot Noir** from the Mendoza region of Argentina. This highly enjoyable wine is a round, full-bodied Pinot, with scents of black cherry and vanilla aromas, and flavors of plum, strawberry and dark raspberry fruit on the palate. There is an unexpected baking-spice quality on the soft, bright finish. **\$13**

Lately, I have seen a resurgence in Lambrusco on restaurant wine lists. At first, I was skeptical, but the **Non-Vintage Villa di Corlo Lambrusco Grasparossa di Castelvetro** from Italy is not your parent’s Lambrusco. While it is slightly sweet, the sparkling, fruit-centric wine is kept in balance by the fine tannins and abundant acidity. Notes of red cherry, fresh plum and a touch of red licorice fill the mouth. A very versatile wine, it can be a wine for dessert as well as paired with lighter pasta dishes and soft cheeses. **\$14**