

## Hello Spanish Table wine friends!

Happy New Year to you all! I would first like to take a minute & thank you so much for making my job here so fulfilling. After being here for over five years now, I relish the friendships that have sprung from my life at the Spanish Table & always look forward to your visits here at the store or your notes from across the country (& at this point around the world--hello all you wine lovers in Kyoto!) Thanks to you, my work is also a labor of love...

2007 was an exciting year for things Spanish--for example, the birth of [Txori](#), Harvest Vine's San Sebastian-style tapas spot in Belltown plus the first ever English translation of *1080 Recipes* which is dear to the heart of many a Spaniard I know. With the rising Euro, trips to Spain may become a little less frequent for some of us, so I feel fortunate that we can enjoy the flavors of our favorite places right here at home. But we also are seeing a surge of interest in the wines of South America which continue to get better & better despite their low prices, as the latest *Wine Advocate* surely indicates. So this week with the holidays almost behind us (there's still Three Kings day, so keep celebrating!) I have some bargain cellar-protectors & high-scoring Argentinean selections that were already a favorite of ours. Enjoy & here's to a delicious 2008!

*Salud!*

Catherine

### **ALBONDIGAS CON PICADA DE ALMENDRA (Meatballs in Almond, Garlic, & Parsley Sauce** from **Delicioso! The Regional Cooking of Spain** by **Penelope Casas**

For the last two years, we've rung in the New Year at our good friend's place on Camano Island where we open up some great bottles & go a little crazy in the kitchen. This year I think we had over 15 different dishes for the eight of us, & this was my favorite of the dishes I cooked. The sauce is incredibly delicious as it thickens from the flour on the meatballs, & every bite was ultra-tender as a result of cooking this in a clay *cazuela*. I left out the peas & added the saffron to the sauce for extra flavor rather than putting it in the *picada* mixture. Now that we're back home, there was enough leftovers to make meatball sandwiches for dinner tonight!

Makes 20 to 25

#### **Meatballs**

1/3 cup dried breadcrumb  
1/3 cup chicken broth  
1 lb ground veal or a mixture of ground beef, veal, & pork, in equal parts  
1 Tbs minced parsley  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
1/2 tsp lemon juice  
2 Tbs minced Spanish ham, capicollo, or prosciutto  
1/2 tsp salt  
Freshly ground pepper  
1 egg, lightly beaten

Flour for dusting  
2 Tbs olive oil  
3 Tbs minced onion  
2 Tbs skinned, seeded, & finely chopped tomato  
1/4 cup dry white wine  
1/2 cup chicken broth  
1 small bay leaf  
Salt  
Freshly ground pepper

1 Tbs minced parsley  
2 cloves garlic, minced

Few strands of saffron crumbled  
1 Tbs chopped blanched almonds  
1/4 tsp imported sweet paprika  
2 Tbs fresh or frozen peas

To make the Meatballs, in a large bowl soak the bread crumbs in the broth. Lightly mix in all the other ingredients, then shape into 1 1/2 inch balls.

Dust the meatballs with flour. Heat the oil in a shallow flameproof casserole & brown the meatballs on all sides over medium-high heat. Lower the heat, add the onions, & cook until wilted, then add the tomato & cook another minute. Stir in the wine, broth, & bay leaf. Season with salt & pepper, cover, & simmer 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, mash to a paste in a mortar or mini processor the parsley, garlic, 1/8 tsp salt, saffron, almonds & paprika. Add this mixture, along with the peas, to the meatballs & cook 15 minutes more.

## **BARGAINS!**

### **Terra Andina Merlot 2006, Chile \$7.99 (reg. \$8.99)**

The wines of Terra Andina are a sweet deal for the money & to introduce them to you we're taking a buck off so you can get a flavor for Chilean wines. I was researching options for a customer who was here visiting his family here & wanted to take some wines home with him since he has found so many bargains at our store. Since he was going to be slugging a case all the way back to New York, I decided I better refresh my memory as to why I thought the Terra Andina wines were amazing for the price. I popped open a bottle of their Merlot for a test drive & re-impressed with the quality to be had from Chile. This was smooth, lush, with an alluring smokiness to accompany ripe blackberry flavor that showed gracefully in the glass. I never recommend Merlot (well, we can't really get more than two from Spain) to our customers, but in this case I am all in favor of drinking the M word.

### **Ramos Pinto Adriano White 2005, Douro \$8.99 (reg. \$11.99)**

The white wines of Portugal are fascinating, especially since you'll find grapes not grown elsewhere in the world. If anyone can tell me the individual characteristics of Viozinho, Rabigato & Arinto off the top of your head, well then you deserve a prize! When I saw this marked down to a bargain price, I requested a sample & found myself smitten with this white. The wine is made in tribute to Ramos-Pinto founder Adriano, & it's 100% estate grown for top quality control. This is definitely a white with a split personality as I found myself writing notes like "steely core" right next to "rich feel", but it's not uncommon to find layers of flavors in Portuguese blends. Refreshing pineapple & tangerine up front with a long finish reminiscent of nuts & hay. Most importantly was my last note--"liked it!"

### **Quinta do Cidro Touriga Francesa 1999, Terras Durienses \$9.99 (reg. \$19.99) 13 bottles left!**

There's an advantage of being the only store in town to stock a particular wine, & in this case, it means a real bargain for all of us Portuguese wine lovers! My husband worked with me one Saturday & his payment was in wine... Since we got engaged in Portugal, he went for a few of the older Portuguese gems on the shelf, like this one made by Jerry Luper (formerly of Chateau Montelena in the Napa Valley.) On that same trip, we had lunch with Jerry & he told me that single varietal wines had not caught on with Portuguese consumers, & they were going to stick with blends. Once we tasted it at home, we were bummed that this wine is no longer being made because it was such a lovely wine--soft & delicate with a rockrose essence that has always made me enjoy Touriga Francesa (or Franca as its now called.) I stocked up my cellar, & now I urge you to try some, as I bought the last bit that exists in Seattle!

### **Dehesa la Granja 2002, Zamora \$17.99 (reg. \$24.99)**

Alejandro Fernandez became famous for his wines Pesquera & Condado de Haza in the Ribera del Duero, but he's acquired other noteworthy estates in La Mancha & just outside of Toro. La

Granja, or "the farm" was purchased by Alejandro & his wife Esperanza in 1998, where it was being used as a breeding ground for prize-winning bulls. Alejandro transplanted 325 acres of old-clone Tempranillo from his Ribera del Duero vineyards & this vintage is the first to include fruit from those plantings, imparting a noticeable mark of elegance.

"Ruby-red. Warm, lightly roasted aromas of plum and cherry, plus a suggestion of licorice. Then sweet and supple, with deep, ripe flavors of cherry and raspberry preserves and fully absorbed tannins. Lush, suave and long, with a lingering note of blackberry and a faint hint of vanilla." -Josh Reynolds, International Wine Cellar

## **COLLECTOR'S CORNER**

### **Clos de los Siete 2005, Mendoza \$15.99**

"The 2005 Clos de los Siete is composed of 40% Malbec, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, and 20% Syrah. Two-thirds of the wine was aged in 100% new French oak, the balance in tank, and was bottled without fining or filtration. Inky purple-colored, the wine has an expressive bouquet of smoky oak, spice box, tobacco, blueberry, black cherry, and black currant. Medium to full-bodied, the wine has layers of ripe, spicy black fruits, light tannin, excellent balance, and a long, fruit-filled finish. It will benefit from 2-3 years in the cellar but can be enjoyed now. It is an outstanding value..." **-90 points, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate**

### **La Posta Malbec Angel Paulucci Vineyard 2006, Mendoza \$16.99**

"The 2006 Malbec "Paulucci Vineyard" was aged for 10 months in 100% French oak, 20% new. Purple-colored, it offers a lovely bouquet of violets, smoke, black cherry, and blackberry. Medium-bodied and elegant, it has excellent depth, a smooth texture, and excellent balance. It will evolve for 2-3 years but can be enjoyed now. All four of the La Posta wines are outstanding values." **-90 points, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate**

### **La Posta Malbec Pizzella Vineyard 2006, Mendoza \$16.99**

"The 2006 Malbec "Pizzella Vineyard" is slightly more perfumed and expressive aromatically. It is also more structured and would profit from 2-3 years of additional cellaring. This is likely the result of its slightly cooler climate. All four of the La Posta wines are outstanding values." **-90 points, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate**

### **Bodega Melipal Malbec 2005, Mendoza \$19.99**

"The 2005 Malbec, from a densely planted vineyard in Agrelo started in 1925, contains a tiny amount of Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. Inky purple-colored, it reveals an excellent nose of vanilla, spice box, cedar, clove, and blackberry. Medium-bodied, firm, and structured, the wine has gobs of ripe fruit, layers of flavor, and enough tannin to evolve for 3-5 years. The finish is long and pure. Drink this overachieving wine through 2020. It is a sensational value in high quality Malbec." **-91 points, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate**

### **Bodegas Catena Zapata Catena Alta Malbec 2004, Mendoza \$53.00 Highly allocated!**

"The 2004 Alta Malbec was aged for 18 months in French oak, 70% new, and was also bottled unfinned and unfiltered. It offers greater aromatic complexity with notes of pepper, clove, leather, and chocolate in addition to violets, black cherry, and blackberry. Medium-bodied and elegant, it has a plush texture, layers of spicy black fruits and minerality, excellent balance, and a 60-second finish. It will evolve for 5-7 years and drink well through 2025. When all is said and done, Catena Zapata is the Argentina winery of reference – the standard of excellence for comparing all others." **-94 points, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate**

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