

A voice from the past! This week, I am subbing for Catherine on the wine newsletter. I miss doing the old print newsletter and here a golden opportunity for me to share what wines I have been drinking with you. I hope you are intrigued and will stop by for a bottle or two ~

Steve Winston, *Jefe*, The Spanish Table

### SOME OF EL JEFE'S FAVORITE WINES FROM TST

**Tinto da Anfora 2004 \$12.99:** I have fond memories of Angela do Mar who used to work here so when I was invited to her son, Nuno's, 30<sup>th</sup> birthday party last weekend, I accepted immediately. My favorite of the wines quaffed there was *Tinto de Anfora*. It is a perfect sipping wine, lush soft, warm as an Alentejo breeze. It is extra special to me because a few years ago, my wife Sharon and I along with Andy Booth, and his wife Tanya our California partners spent a long afternoon at the winery touring and tasting. Afterwards, we drove into Evora where Sharon had a rabbit & rice confit served in a cazuela she still has been unable to reproduce here at home. I guess you had to be there.

**Txomin Etxaniz 2006 \$19.99:** Even more years ago, Sharon and I toured the seaside vineyards of Etxaniz in Getaria (up and over the massive headland south of San Sebastian). After we strolled under the canopy pruned vines, we retired to the little fishing port which the winemaker's private Basque cooking club overlooked from its second floor perch. There we dined on hake and clams in green sauce (olive oil, garlic, parsley and white wine) and drank more, what else: Txomin Txakolina, a crisp cold-climate white, slightly spritzzy, served ice cold. Try a bottle with Puget Sound seafood for the best of both worlds.

**Lan Crianza 2004 Crianza \$10.99:** Our visit to Bodegas LAN took all day. The winery is huge, with advanced technology including robots designed by the University of Valencia, not all of which worked the day we were there and the wine tasting room looked like a futuristic laboratory. All it lacked was a bathroom. Whether it was because of or in spite of all this technology, LAN was turning out some of the best Riojas around and this Crianza is a prime example. Balanced on the cusp between new and old style Riojas, it is a perfect food wine.

**Franco Espanola 2001 Crianza \$11.99:** Andy Booth called me from our Mill Valley to rave about this wine. It is old school Rioja at its best. I was a bit concerned that this would show tired, but this is a wine that will stay up all night with you. Red fruit flavors of cranberry, raspberry and plum are wrapped in smoke, old leather and touches of cinnamon, cardamom and clove on this medium-bodied treat. Tannins are soft, but present and framed by superb acidity. Open a bottle of this with dinner and you'll find its empties pretty quickly. If you just want to try just a glass, stop by Txori Tapa Bar where it is being poured by the glass.

**Zolo Malbec 2005 \$10.99:** Mendoza Argentina is one of the most interesting wine towns in the world. We were there for Thanksgiving of 2006 which we celebrated with an empanada tasting. James Hondros, co-owner of Eva Restaurant in Latona was in shopping for piquillo-stuffed olives this week and recommended this wine. Not an old school wine, this Malbec has a deep purple color and intense flavors of black raspberries and violets. The little man on the label has popped his chapeau, the southern hemisphere equivalent of having your socks knocked off?

**Pasta Portuguesa:** We started with Portugal, so let's end there. When Sharon goes off to her Book Group, I like to toss together this pasta dish. I start by softening some chopped garlic in hot olive oil then I add a tin on skinless, boneless Portuguese sardines and a spoonful of capers. I turn off the heat while I boil the pasta. I use our Misko brand Greek Orzo just because while its boiling, I can imagine being back on Ila, Santorini sitting on a stone terrace overlooking the Aegean Sea. When the pasta is done, I drain and toss it with the oil, garlic and sardines. I add equal parts minced cilantro and parsley and a splash of Portuguese Piri Piri hot pepper sauce. Then I sit down to enjoy it with a glass of the very affordable Lan Crianza.

**Cruise Wines:** For a list of some other favorite wines, go to the description of our May cruise from Morocco to England via Portugal, Spain & France <http://www.expeditions.com/Treasures437.asp> and click on "sample wine list" to see what we will be drinking on board the vessel, National Geographic Endeavor.

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