

WINE POSTCARDS: Spain and Portugal are our first love at The Spanish Table but we are too adventuresome not to venture further abroad in search of unique flavors, culinary experiences or glasses of wine that speak of distant terroirs. After all, when Columbus sailed for Ferdinand and Isabella, his quest was a search for the exotic spices of the Far East not the gold of El Dorado. Here are some postcards from wine roads we have traveled down:

SPAIN:

Under a blue sky, we were driving down a road near Villabuena de Alava in Rioja one autumn day after the grapes had been harvested, yellow leaves still covered the gnarled vines from which the ripe bunches of tempranillo grapes had only recently been plucked. When we pulled into the Izadi bodega, we could smell the wine fermenting before we got out of the car.

Heredad Ugarte, Rioja Crianza, 2004, \$15.99

: This interesting Rioja was made in a contemporary style. Fruity and peppery, it pairs well with grilled meat, especially barbeque.

Carro 2006, Yecla \$8.99:

A new vintage of an old favorite from Jumilla with the cart on the orange label. Once again, a great value. Blending tempranillo, monastrell, syrah & merlot has produced an easy drinking, dry wine with subtle acidity.

GREECE:

After a lifetime of travel, there are a few places that linger more in my mind than the Greek island of Santorini. The stark white washed building, the shimmering blue Aegean Sea, the little table on our private patio set with feta cheese, ripe olives and a bottle of the local wine we had purchased in a small shop. We felt like models in a photograph, it was so gorgeous it did not seem real. We have discovered an untapped trove of unique and well made wines from Greece and will be carrying a select few of the tastiest.

Lafanzanis 2005 Peloponnese St George, \$10.99:

St George is the grape (*Agiorgitiko* in Greek) the Peloponnese is one of the oldest wine growing regions in the world. To say the least, this wine is unique. It is rustic, tannic, herbal, bursting with intense flavors of the Greek countryside. Let this one breathe before serving with aged feta cheese sprinkled with oregano & anointed with Greek olive oil and some grilled lamb sausages.

Atlantis, 2003 Santorini Argyros, \$19.99:

Santorini wines have been getting a lot of good press recently so we decided to try this example with our Easter lamb. Made from the Greek Mandilaria grape, the wine is rich and plummy, with Bing cherry notes and a hint of hyacinth. It is reminiscent of a Zinfandel but has only 12.5% alcohol.

MEXICO:

When we stayed at *Casa de los Recuerdos* in Oaxaca, our hostess, Nora, offered to take us with her to the *Mercado* to shop for the ingredients for lunch. We always walk through food markets on our travels but we seldom have a reason to shop. What a joy to stroll down the aisles with serious intent and to have the women in the stalls call out greetings to Nora. Women with bundles of fresh herbs, piles of ripe fruit, buckets of exquisite moles. Laden with her purchases, we dutifully followed her back to the B&B where in her beautifully tiled kitchen, we prepared a multi-course Oaxacan lunch.

Cocina Mestiza Oaxacan Style Black Mole, \$6.99:

This is the real thing, believe me! The concentrated paste in the jar dilutes to make 5 cups of rich, authentic mole sauce.

Badia Naranja Agria, \$3.49:

Along with *achiote* (available as powder or paste), this sour orange marinade is the key ingredient to the signature dishes of the Yucatan: *Pollo Pibil* and pork *Poc Chuc*. For recipes, check out **Foods of the Maya, \$13.99.**

ARGENTINA:

Thanksgiving 2006 was a beautiful spring day in Buenos Aires. We decided to celebrate by eating on the patio of a riverside restaurant in *Puerto Madera*. It was the kind of restaurant where fresh breads and appetizers appear before the menu. Where everything they serve is perfectly prepared. The wine we chose was, naturally, a Malbec. And what a Malbec: Lush, gentle and food loving! Because they are such a great value in times of the rising Euro, we are adding more wines from Argentina to our stock and we now have 50 in stock. Drop by and peruse them!

Punto Final Malbec 2006 Classico Mendoza, Argentina, \$11.99:

This Spanish Table favorite has aromas of ripe wheat blended with plums and buttered toast. This is a low acid, medium body wine, lightly oaked. An easy drinking wine, this is just the antidote to a stressful day at work.

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Sandeman 40 Year Old Tawny Port, \$127.00:

Cradled in an individual wood box, this port is the perfect 40th birthday or anniversary gift or it can be just an indulgence for yourself. An average of forty years of aging in oak barrels results in an amber toned tawny port with layer after layer of flavor and a long, long, lingering finish reminiscent of honey roasted nuts and dried orange peel. Amazingly aromatic, you will want to inhale its fragrances with every sip.