

## LEMON STUFFED OLIVES

I spent yesterday unloading our latest container from Spain which contained **The Spanish Table Brand Lemon Stuffed Olives** as well as all sizes of cazuelas and hand painted ceramics. Also arriving from Spain was **Carnejal cheese**, an amazing little cheese with a hard rind. Cut the top off to expose a massively flavorful, soft, gooey interior which you scoop out to eat. As George, our cheeseman says, "It is Creamy & Dreamy!" The ½ lb mini-wheel is \$22.99, the price of a good bottle of wine.

## WINE

Sharon is restocking some old favorites and discovering new treasures from the ever growing selection offered to us by importers so drop by and let her share what she has discovered this week.

The other night, Sharon and I dropped into Tapa Bar **Bilbao** in Seattle's University District. A little piece of Spain tucked into an otherwise undistinguished stretch of Americana, **Bilbao's** traditional menu feels like eating comfort food at a Spanish aunt's house. Sipping through their glass pours, the **Aventino 2004 (\$13.99)** grabbed our attention. From Ribera del Duero, the fruit comes from old vines and is hand harvested. The warm days and cool nights of the region bring out the complexity and rich fruit of the Tempranillo grape. "It's rare to find a Ribera del Duero selling at this price that shows so much concentration and power. Firm, slightly chalky, with crisp red fruits and a trace of mineral" Paul Gregutt, *The Seattle Times*.

The wines of Ribera del Duero are produced from a clone of tempranillo grape unique to this region. The skin is more delicate and requires less pressure to extract the juice, producing wines with more fruit and body than a Rioja tempranillo. Some other outstanding wines from Ribera del Duero now in stock:

### **Emilio Moro 2004 \$29.99:**

One of Sharon's favorites! Mouth filling and elegant, with notes of blackberry and vanilla, this wine is fantastic for sipping and also pairs wonderfully with rich meats, such as jamón iberico. *92 points Robert Parker's Wine Advocate*

### **Vega Real, Roble 2005, \$8.99:**

We have sold case after case of this affordable red. Vega Real delivers true Duero taste with classic lamb-loving musky notes, dark framboise and black cherries along with a sweet balsamic twist. Creamy with white pepper spice, this wine is easy to enjoy!

### **Protos Gran Reserva 2001, \$60.00:**

A customer ordered a case after drinking a bottle at The Harvest Vine. The lush, feminine fruit so typical of Ribera del Duero is tightly structured here with both French and

American oak. Even after seven years, it demands decanting but once it opens up, it packs a palate-pleasing wallop of dry currants balanced with acidity and hints of vanilla. Whether you want a wine to drink now or one to cellar, this one should be on your short list. Dating back to 1927, Protos is one of the most respected wineries in Ribera del Duero but it is less known in the USA than in Spain. If you haven't yet, you should try their Roble (Oaked) Wine which is only \$14.99.

## THE BODEGAS OF VEGA SICILIA

We currently have three vintages of **Alion** in stock, produced by the owners of Vega Sicilia. This high quality modern wine expresses the terroir of Ribera del Duero but at a more affordable price than Vega Sicilia's Unico or Valbuena. (We do also have a Vega Sicilia **Unico 1996** in stock (\$366.00), **Valbuena 2000** (\$169.00), **Valbuena 2001** (\$176.00), and **Valbuena 2002** (\$147.00).

### **Alion 2000, \$67.00:**

"Alion's 2000 Ribera del Duero is a beautifully rich offering that was aged 13 months in French oak prior to bottling. A gorgeous perfume of espresso roast, smoked herbs, roasted meat, and black currant liqueur is followed by rich, full-bodied flavors, a velvety texture, and a long, luscious finish. Consume it now and over the next 10-12 years," *92 points Jay Miller, Wine Advocate*

**Alion 2002, \$57.00:** "While 2002 was a lesser vintage, you would never know it from tasting the 2002 Alion. Saturated purple in color, it offers up an exotic nose of coconut, espresso, herbs, black currants and cherries. Rich and complex on the palate with lots of glycerin and layers of black fruit flavors, it has a pure, long finish that goes on and on," *94 points Jay Miller, Wine Advocate*

### **Alion 2003, \$73.00:**

"The good news is that the 2003 Alion is even better than the 2002. It has a similar personality but with more depth and concentration as well as structure. The ripe tannins suggest much more will be revealed with another 6-8 years in the bottle. It will drink well for 15+ years thereafter," *96 points, Jay Miller, Wine Advocate*

## THE COLLECTOR'S BOTTLE:

### **Pingus 2005, \$680.00:**

Peter Sisseck's hand crafted and highly allocated Ribera del Duero wine. Only three bottles arrived in Washington State and we consider ourselves fortunate to score one! Jose Andres, celebrity-chef owner of Jaleo in Washington DC and author of *Tapas: A Taste of Spain in America*, (\$35.00), bought our prior allocation last summer. "The 2005 Pingus spent 18 months in new oak. It is purple/black and a bit muted at present. However, notes of toasty new oak, mineral, scorched earth, espresso, blueberry, and blackberry can be discerned. The wine has great balance, sweet fruit, and poise but it will

need 12-15 years of cellaring. It should drink well through 2050. It is a true tour de force. Kudos to Peter Sisseck for a brilliant and enthralling set of wines," 99 points Robert Parker's *Wine Advocate*.

### **ARGENTINA:**

If you saw this Wednesday's Paul Gregutt article on Argentine Malbecs in *The Seattle Times*, you are probably excited to try some. We have his top picks plus several dozen other Argentina wines in stock from Mendoza, Patagonia and the very high altitude vineyards of Salta in northern Argentina.

### **ANOTHER NEW ARRIVAL IN THE CHEESE CASE**

: **Nevat** ~ One of our most dramatic cheeses yet! Catalan cheese maker Josep Cuixart takes same-day goat milk from his own herd and his neighbors. He hangs the curds in cheese cloth until it looks like a snow capped mountain. This can be positively oozy when ripe, or like a firm brie when young, but at either stage, it captivates the palate with its chalky core and sweet tang.