

Two Wines to Ease You into Autumn

There is no denying that we have entered into the cooling clutches of Fall! This is my favorite time of year; Mother Nature has a months long finale to her Spring and Summer recital; She is no holds barred with her vibrant colors. Harvest is in full swing and the rich flavors of squashes, apples, pears and mushrooms are vogue in seasonal restaurants as well as on our tables.

Two wines, a red and a white, leapt at me last week, begging for autumnal food; begging me not to spit but to savor all their beautiful flavors. In fact, I didn't spit. It was my birthday and I was off for the night!

Cal Star Cellars Manchester Ridge Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Chardonnay 2009

Okay, it's a mouthful to say, but every bit the mouthful where it counts, on flavor! This Chardonnay is unlike anything you have tasted out of California. Is it rich and viscous? Has it seen oak? You betcha to both, but it is not a flabby butterball. Instead, it's as if you smashed together a well-structured Pinot Grigio from the Alto Adige of Italy with all of its ripe peach and tangerine blossom flavors and that thicker than cream texture of California with a healthy dose of Chablis' vibrant acidity. Rick Davis, the winemaker, with whom I tasted, said that it is a combination of old Wente clone and Musque clone, which I have only seen in Sauvignon Blanc. The Musque Clone gives this wine its awesome weight and floral notes. If discussion of clones means nothing to you then suffice it to say it's what makes you lick your lips after tasting this wine!

What would I pair with this wine? As Autumn descends I often find myself scrambling for the last fresh seafood. Chef Ray has a butter poached sturgeon and lobster mushroom dish on our current menu. Sturgeon is a meaty fish that will stand up to the heaviness of this white wine and the butter and lobster mushrooms will only continue to compliment this Chardonnay. In turn, the beautiful acidity to Cal Star's Manchester Ridge Chardonnay will cut through all of these rich flavors and cleanse your palate and ready it for the next bite.

Retail Pricing: \$35

Mas Sorrer Montsant 2009

Hailing from one of my most beloved regions of Spain, Montsant, this little number is not short on power nor flavor! Montsant encompasses the famed wine region, Priorat, and both are in the larger appellation of Calalunya in the northeast of Spain just south of the Pyrenees. I bring

up Priorat because the winemakers, Sara Perez and Renee Barbier Jr. are the children of famed winemakers behind the luminary Priorat wine Clos Martinet and Clos Mogador. Cutting your teeth in Priorat and choosing vineyards that are up to your standards in Monsant is no easy task. They didn't just hit a homerun but a grand slam considering the price of this wine. The fruit leaps out of the glass with black sweet raspberries, cherries and blackberries. The smells of campfire, raw beef and forest floor weave through the fruit to create an olfactory image of a place that I would call Heaven! The palate on this wine is expansive and lingers with soft tannins. Who knew that the beastly Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot could be tamed so completely by the charming Syrah!

What would I drink with this wine? Anything! But if forced to narrow it down, I would grill a venison loin with rosemary and thyme and serve it with roasted morel mushrooms, a butternut squash mousse laced with maple syrup and finished with a fresh blackberry demi-glace!

Oh Hell Yeah!

Retail Price: \$15