



Speaking of wine

By Russ Disotell

As this column is being put together, meteorologists have yet to issue their predictions for this coming winter. Apparently factoring in this year's El Nino is causing some complications in fine tuning their forecasts. However, that doesn't really cause us any problems in the wine world. Rest assured it will be colder in January and February than it was in June and July! That means that meals will feature stews, chili, lots of root vegetables and other assorted stick to your ribs staples.

It is also post-Christmas and many will be looking to control their budgets and recover from the holiday gift buying spree. So we're going to look at inexpensive, versatile red wines that offer honest value and great quality. Unbelievably all of these selections still ring through the cash register at under \$10 and yet won't seem out of place elevating your culinary experience.

Sangiovese is the main grape used in Chianti and when sold under the Sangiovese moniker can offer outstanding value. Citra Sangiovese Terre Di Chieti

2012 (CSPC# 480756, \$7.95) is just such a wine. A fresh cherry and herbal nose opens into a velvety soft, medium bodied red with superb balance, juicy cherry fruit with a lengthy flavourful finish. Citra is very versatile, pairing well with the aforementioned stew, as well as roast poultry, steak and aged hard cheeses.

Santa Carolina Merlot 2015 (CSPC# 361741, \$8.95) is the latest vintage of this perennial Chilean favourite. Opening with an enticing raspberry, blackberry and cedar nose, this is a simple yeoman Merlot with plenty of bright blackberry and black cherry fruit, a modicum of light oak and plenty of food friendly acidity. Not overly complex, but with deep, rich flavours. Santa Carolina is the epitome of an everyday table wine and offers good value. Chill lightly and bring on the beef or vegetarian stew. If grilled burgers are still on your menu this is your wine.

Portuguese wines remain relatively unknown in this market, which is all the better for us because they can offer excellent value. That's the case with

Sogrape Vila Regia 2014 (CSPC# 464388, \$7.95) from the Douro, one of Portugal's pre-eminent wine regions. It exhibits great balance, moderate complexity, fresh forward fruit and a dry finish with outstanding length. The nose offers up tart berry fruit, vanilla and some smoky aromas. Red currant, cherry and bright berry fruit dominate the palate, balanced nicely by refreshing acidity and moderate tannins. This is a perfect large gathering red.

So scrimp on cost, but not on quality. Enjoy! **LH**

Russ Disotell enjoyed a twelve year career with the LCBO. He spent the last four years as Product Advisor in Vintages purchasing where he was a member of the buying panel and endured the arduous task of tasting products every week! Since leaving the Board he has written columns and articles on wine, helped develop wine lists and conducted wine tastings.