

A collection of wine corks and a blue wine stopper. The corks are scattered in the upper right and lower right areas, while the blue stopper is prominently featured in the center, angled towards the bottom left. The background is a light, neutral color.

Speaking of wine

By Russ Disotell

Mid winter is a time to indulge and pamper yourself with some absolutely spectacular wines that offer great drinking pleasure and outstanding value.

We'll start in the Rhone region of France with Louis Bernard Cotes Du Rhone Villages 2015 (CSPC# 391458, \$16.95) a red wine that is the epitome of great balance and complexity. It is a classic Rhone blend of Grenache, Syrah and Mouverdre, with an emphasis on the Grenache. Aromas of jammy red berry and fresh cracked pepper are readily apparent on the full, open nose. The palate is medium full with layers of strawberry, red currants, juicy black cherry and cassis fruit with secondary flavours of dark chocolate, mocha and black licorice. You might even detect a light cinnamon at the back of the palate.

The generous fruit is offset by soft tannins and a zesty, racy acidity that promises great food pairings. The finish is lingering and offers a different taste experience with every sip. Louis makes a wonderful sipping wine for mid-winter contemplation or can be admirably matched with stew, roast poultry, or curried lamb.

Jacob's Creek Reserve Barossa Shiraz 2014 (CSPC# 665471, \$16.95) showcases what the Aussies can do with this classic Rhone grape. You can expect deep, rich flavours of ripe blackberry, plum, coffee and vanilla with a nice dusting of herbaceous spice, draped in a subtle toasty oak. Light dusty tannins and ample acidity team with the unctuous fruit for a superb balance. The finish is juicy, rich and lengthy.

This Aussie beauty is full bodied, yet velvety soft and supple in texture, a throwback to the older Australian style Shiraz. Easy drinking, simply pleasing, with not a lot of necessity for

discussion or examination, just enjoy it. Food partners are similar to our Rhone selection; stew, grilled red meats or roasted poultry. It will shine when served with spicy lamb.

Washington state is the overlooked American wine region, yet it produces superlative wines and has a storied history of premium wine production. Consider Columbia Crest Grand Estates Chardonnay 2014 (CSPC# 462846, \$17.95) as an example. This is a full rich toasty Chardonnay that offers all sorts of delights. The complex nose features pear, apricot, baked apple and citrus aromas. The palate is equally complex with tropical fruit, melon, citrus, green apple and butterscotch, or if you like, caramel flavours.

This is an old style oaky chardonnay, creamy and buttery. Add nicely balancing acidity and a finish with great length and voila! Sip on its own or pair with roast pork, creamy risotto, salmon or tuna.

Whatever wine you choose to compliment the meal and friends remember one thing—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. Russ has been writing for Living Here Magazine since its inception in 2013 and we are grateful for his insights and recommendations to our readers on finding the perfect wine to go with food, friends and family!