



Speaking of wine

By Russ Disotell

For many, fall means hunting season. It seems only appropriate that this column deals with matching red wine and game, specifically venison. The term venison once meant meat from any game animal, but is now solely used for Deer. The recommended wines will also pair nicely with beef, if venison isn't on your menu.

Venison can be eaten in many different forms such as steaks, sausages, stews and roasts, to name a few. It has a taste that is reminiscent of beef, but can have a richer flavour, finer texture and is usually leaner depending on the cut. Some people maintain it has a gamey, wild taste but I for one can't say I've ever noticed that. As per any food, the preparation method has a lot to do with the final flavour. For instance my mother has a recipe for moose stew using brown sugar and tomato sauce that could easily be mistaken for a rich beef stew.

Keeping this similarity in mind, match venison dishes with the type of red wines that allow rich beef dishes to shine. Look for a well-balanced medium to full-bodied reds with bright, forward fruit, and medium

tannins. If they have a little smokiness and a spicy, herbaceous quality, all the better.

Take my mother's stew or any venison stew or roast served with rich broth or gravy and pair it with Barone Montalto Nero D'Avola/Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 (CSPC# 621151, \$8.95) from Sicily. The Nero D'Avola component of this blend supplies the wine with rich berry fruit flavours, while the Cabernet Sauvignon provides excellent structure, tannins and acidity. The result is a medium to full bodied-red with aromas of spicy dark berry and oak on the nose. Plum, juicy blackberry and dark currant dominate the complex palate, with touches of toasty oak and fresh ground black pepper. There's enough bright acidity to balance the rich textures of our venison sauce and a lengthy finish with great flavour and depth.

Argentina's Masi Tupungato Passo Doble 2012 (CSPC# 620880, \$13.95) is rich and ripe. It is an excellent choice for any venison dish, but in particular grilled venison steaks or chops. The complex palate serves up luscious dark currant and black cherry fruit, with rich mocha, vanilla and fresh roast coffee flavours. Creamy and rich, it has superb balance and a finish with unbelievable depth and length. It provides the quality and character of wines well above its price range.

Other wines to consider are new style Spanish reds, Rhone and Cote Du Rhone blends and Australian Shiraz. 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.