

May 2010

Wine of the Month Club



For the next couple of months we will taste wines from the Pacific Northwest with several unique, small production examples. For May our focus is Washington State and a couple of wines from two of our favorite producers, Brett & Denise Isenhower and Ron & Jamie Coleman of Tamarack Cellars. Both wines are very distinctive and we feel are the perfect embodiment of WOM selections.

2009 Isenhower Pink Paintbrush Rosé (\$15)

As we always try and bring you unique and interesting selections for the WOM club, this one is particularly special because you can only get it from us. Earlier this year Isenhower decided to no longer sell wine through the regular distribution system, except in Florida and California. Their intention is to cut back total production to 2000 cases and focus only on fruit from their estate vineyard and a few long term contracts from their best growers. (They kept their Florida distributor because they are a small, very high quality example which understands the Isenhower principle.) When the distributor brought us the sample of this wine I have to admit I was pretty excited. First, I love Isenhower wines and Brett doesn't make any wines that are in the price point for our WOM club. Then I saw it was rosé, one of which was our most popular WOM selection last year. Then I tasted the wine and that sold me, it is the perfect wine as we head into the warm summer months.

They originally offered the distributor one pallet, and he brought it to us as a potential WOM exclusive. After I selected the wine for this month the winery began selling it in their two tasting rooms and sold out in one weekend, about 80 cases worth. To their credit they maintained the commitment even though Brett felt the wine would sell out in a week from the winery sales only.

The Isenhowers entered the wine business because they wanted to combine Brett's knowledge of chemistry with Denise's understanding of business. They spent several years researching the Pacific Northwest for potential wine growing regions and finally settled on Walla Walla, Washington in 1999. In 2002 they started construction on their winery and estate vineyard but by then had already developed several long term grape contracts with the area's top growers. All of their wines are named for native flowers that grow in the area, this wine being derived from their wine called Red Paintbrush.

Like most rosés this one is produced using the saignee method, draining juice from a fermenting tank of red wine. The goal is to make a more concentrated red wine by lowering the ratio of skins to juice. In the process a percentage of fermenting juice is drained out of the tank and allowed to ferment, in this case to complete dryness, resulting in a tinted wine. For Pink Paintbrush Brett employed this technique on several of his red wine tanks, so the resulting blend is 48% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Cabernet Franc, 19% Merlot and 4% Petite Verdot.

Serving temperature is very important when making this wine your evening libation. Don't take it directly out of the refrigerator and serve, let it warm up for 10 minutes. Once you do the aromatics of watermelon, red rose petals and the white part of the strawberry pop out of the glass. In the mouth this wine displays impressive richness, with a solid core of fruit running deep into the palate. One of the markers for good rosé is that the alcohol is balanced and with this wine it never burns the back of the throat the way lesser examples will. Serve with cold, grilled salmon on a bed of organic greens with a raspberry vinaigrette, or with the amazing shrimp recipe this month.

2008 Tamarack Firehouse Red Wine* (\$20)

We have sold several vintages of this wine but the 2008 comes with a special (*) because this is a different wine than years past. Traditionally Ron Coleman makes Firehouse from the disqualified barrels and press wine of the regular Tamarack wines and ages the wine in older barrels. The current release is made from wine that Ron purchased when a very high end Walla Walla winery pulled up stakes and sold all their assets. Ron picked up components destined for a \$100 Walla Walla Red Table wine and blended it into his own wine. Several pieces of this wine were aged in very sexy, expensive, new French oak and the results are, pardon the pun, smokin' hot.

I first met Ron in 1992, when he and his wife were guests, along with my wife and I, at Guenoc Winery. At the time they had just left Madison, Wisconsin, and were working their way to Walla Walla for her to begin her medical practice. They had chosen Walla Walla because Ron had ambitions of becoming a winemaker after working in a wine shop in Madison, and by 1998 they had founded Tamarack Cellars. The name Firehouse Red was chosen because the winery occupies the WWII era firehouse located at the local airport.

For the Firehouse Red they use a lot of different pieces and parts to make the wine. For the major varieties, Cabernet Sauvignon (31%), Syrah (27%), Merlot (16%) and Cabernet Franc (14%), he uses at least three different vineyard sources for each grape. The blend also includes 7% Malbec, 3% Sangiovese, and 1 percent each of Carmenere and Malbec. Half of this wine was aged in new, French and American oak barrels and the balance in second and third pass wood, for 16 months before bottling.

As soon as you pull the cork on this wine you know it is not your typical \$20 bottle of red. The nose is an explosive combination of cooked cherries, cassis, cedar, celery seed, clove, anise, vanilla and espresso grounds. In the mouth this wine is big and incredibly deep, showing thick veins of fruit framed by creamy, slightly toasty notes and smooth edges. This is a stunning wine to drink now but it will age for two to four years. Drink with grilled steaks or the bacon wrapped pork medallions.

Shrimp with garlic oil

When I toured Spain in 2007 I spent an evening wondering the tapas bars of Logroño. One of my favorite discoveries was a dish of intensely garlic-y shrimp that went well with the local Rioja rosé. I have been waiting for the perfect wine for this dish, which comes from Cook's Illustrated.

14 medium garlic cloves , peeled
1 pound large shrimp , peeled, deveined, and tails removed
8 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 teaspoon table salt
1 bay leaf
1(2-inch) piece mild dried chile, roughly broken, seeds included
1 1/2 teaspoons sherry vinegar
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley leaves

Mince 2 garlic cloves with chef's knife or garlic press. Toss minced garlic with shrimp, 2 tablespoons olive oil, and salt in medium bowl. Let shrimp marinate at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, using flat side of chef's knife, smash 4 garlic cloves. Heat smashed garlic with remaining 6 tablespoons olive oil in 12-inch skillet over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until garlic is light golden brown, 4 to 7 minutes. Remove pan from heat and allow oil to cool to room temperature. Using slotted spoon, remove smashed garlic from skillet and discard.

Thinly slice remaining 8 cloves garlic. Return skillet to low heat and add sliced garlic, bay leaf, and chile. Cook, stirring occasionally, until garlic is tender but not browned, 4 to 7 minutes. (If garlic has not begun to sizzle after 3 minutes, increase heat to medium-low.) Increase heat to medium-low; add shrimp with marinade to pan in single layer. Cook shrimp, undisturbed, until oil starts to gently bubble, about 2 minutes. Using tongs, flip shrimp and continue to cook until almost cooked through, about 2 minutes longer. Increase heat to high and

add sherry vinegar and parsley. Cook, stirring constantly, until shrimp are cooked through and oil is bubbling vigorously, 15 to 20 seconds. Serve immediately.

Bacon-wrapped pork tenderloin medallions

I find this an easier recipe to eat than a big, bacon wrapped beef tenderloin filets. For this recipe I made a pan sauce of chicken stock, maple syrup, balsamic vinegar and whole grain mustard that may be one of the best food and wine pairings I have ever made with the Tamarack Firehouse. If you want the recipe, as I ran out of space here, email me at tim@timswine.com and I will send it to you.

12-14 slices bacon (1 slice for each pork medallion)
2 pork tenderloins (1 to 1 1/4 pounds each), trimmed of fat and silver skin, cut crosswise into 1 1/2-inch pieces; thinner end pieces scored and folded (see steps 1 and 2 below)
Kosher salt and ground black pepper
2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Place bacon slices, slightly overlapping, in microwave-safe pie plate and cover with plastic wrap. Cook in microwave on high power until slices shrink and release about 1/2 cup fat but are neither browned nor crisp, 1 to 3 minutes. Transfer bacon to paper towels until cool, 2 to 3 minutes.

Wrap each piece of pork with 1 slice bacon and secure with a length of baker's twine.

Season pork with pepper. Heat oil in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add pork cut side down and cook, without moving pieces, until well-browned, 3 to 5 minutes. Turn pork and brown on second side, 3 to 5 minutes more. Reduce heat to medium. Using tongs, stand each piece on its side and cook, turning pieces as necessary, until sides are well browned and internal temperature registers 145 to 150 degrees on instant-read thermometer, 8 to 14 minutes. Transfer pork to platter and tent lightly with foil; let rest while making pan sauce, then serve.