



Merry Monks

Wine Club of Cantiga Wineworks



PO Box 66, Somerset, CA 95684

(530) 621-1696

info@cantigawine.com

February 10, 2023

WC 2023-Q1

Earth and Spice and Everything Nice

One of the greatest joys of fine wine is its rich diversity in flavor and bouquet. Depending on factors such as grape variety, climate, soil, and growing/winemaking techniques, wine nuances can be far-ranging—inspiring such descriptors as grass, flint, barnyard, and leather, to name just a few.

For our winter club release, we selected wines that share some common ground...in more ways than one! These decadent, bold offerings are defined by their earth and spice characteristics, which particularly suit them to enjoying with rich, hearty winter menus.

Earthiness in a wine might be interpreted as suggestions of mushrooms, root vegetables, graphite, leather, tobacco, herbs, potting soil, or even forest floor. These notes can come from chemical compounds inherent in the grape variety (such as terpenes or pyrazines), from the “terroir” of the region (Paso Robles is particularly known for this), or even from a spoilage microbe (such as *Brettanomyces*).

Similarly, certain wine varieties are known for spice characteristics released by certain chemical compounds (such as phenols and rotundone). These can suggest black or white pepper, anise, cinnamon, clove, nutmeg, mint, ginger, or cardamom. Such flavors can be intensified by climate, soil, and winemaking method. They can also be highlighted by pairing the wines with the right food.

Read on, and we will delve into the earth and spice of your shipment wines. We will also give ideas for how to bring these beautiful flavor nuances to the forefront, through food pairing.

Enjoy, have fun, and bon appétit!

In this shipment:

2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, El Dorado (New Release)

Harvest Brix: 25.7 pH: 3.58 TA: 4.55 Alc: 14.5% RS: 0% ML: 0%
Cases: 234 Barrel age: 3 years in mostly neutral European oak

Description: Cabernet Sauvignon is known for its robust, yet classic structure and balance, for its lush cherry fruit, and its signature “bell pepper” notes. This defining, herbaceous characteristic—an “earth” quality—comes from a concentration of pyrazines in the grape. Additionally, cabernet is often associated with baking spices (e.g., nutmeg and cinnamon). Although these can be quite subtle, they can really stand out with the right food pairing.

Pairing: Our Cabernets are brilliantly paired with beef, subtly seasoned with baking spices. A small dash of cinnamon or nutmeg in your meatballs or meat sauces will bring out some lovely nuances. Another recommended winter pairing is Tourtière, a French-Canadian spiced meat pie recipe that can be found on our website. Additionally, the earthiness of mushrooms and roasted root veggies aligns particularly well with the herbaceous notes in this wine.

2015 Shiraz, Estate (New Release)

Harvest Brix: 25.3 pH: 3.85 TA: 5.83 Alc: 14.7% RS: 0% ML: 0%
Cases: 74 Barrel age: 3 years in mostly neutral European oak

NOTE: Along with one bottle of our new 2015 vintage, we are delighted to offer our **Ambassadors** (12-bottle club) a 3-vintage vertical of Library Shiraz, 2009-2011! Each one is unique and stunning. For our **Professional Winos** (6-bottle club), we are offering a side-by-side of the 2015 and 2011 vintages, so you can experience how a few years of aging can benefit this wine!

Description: The new vintage of our Estate Shiraz is epic! As the vines mature, the characteristics we love about Shiraz come out more and more. Made from an intensely dark grape that has notes of blueberries, this wine has pronounced pepper spice and hints of tobacco and leather. The spice in this wine comes from the presence in the grape of a terpene called rotundone.

Pairings: There are so many ways to enhance the spice and earth characteristics in Shiraz. You can pepper-crust your meat (try basting with Dijon first, to help the pepper stick). Rub your slow-cooked or grilled lamb with garlic and Garam Masala or other warm, Indian spices. Your sautéed mushrooms can be liberally seasoned with freshly ground pepper. Naturally spicy, bitter greens such as collards make a great side dish. And don't forget to include fresh fennel in your earthy, roasted root veggies. Hint: Anise, particularly star anise, is one of our favorite spices with Shiraz!

2015 Syrah, Baby Rattlesnake Vineyard (Current Release)

Harvest Brix: 26.4 pH: 3.82 TA: 5.30 Alc: 15.4% RS: 0% ML: 0%
Cases: 225 Barrel age: 3 years in mostly neutral European oak

NOTE: Our **Ambassadors** will receive one bottle of **2012 Library Syrah, Baby Rattlesnake Vineyard**, along with three bottles of the current 2015 vintage.

A limited number of 2012 bottles are available for other club levels to add or substitute—first come, first served!

Description: Our 2015 Syrah has blossomed into one of our top Syrahs of all times. Its rich blackberry fruit is underscored by notes of chocolate, bacon and smoke. Less spicy than the Aussie-clone (Shiraz), this wine leans more heavily toward the earth characteristics. While some argue that Syrah and Shiraz are the same, tasting these two side-by-side paints a very different picture.

Pairings: When planning a menu around Syrah, we find it works well to emphasize more earthy ingredients. While lamb and beef are excellent choices, try preparing them with Greek seasonings such as oregano and garlic. Be sure to serve a hearty side of roast potatoes. Eggplant dishes are perfection with this wine; try slicing and grilling them, perhaps with summer squash, basted simply with olive oil and seasoned with salt and pepper. Or even better, layer them into a dish of Moussaka, or stew them in a Ratatouille. In most cases, you can't go wrong with a dash or two of cumin or smoked paprika!