

April dinner wines Marmitons

Gray Monk Cellars

**2006 Pinot Auxerrois
(Okanagan Valley) \$20.99**

Formerly successful hair salon operators, Gray Monk founders George and Trudy Heiss switched careers dramatically in 1971 when they purchased an Okanagan orchard and began converting it to grapes. Initially, they followed conventional advice and planted French hybrids. Finding the wines unpalatable, they were among the earliest growers in the Okanagan to move to *vinifera* varieties, identifying suitable varieties by consulting with the research institute at Colmar in Alsace. In 1976, they imported Pinot Gris, Gewürztraminer, Kerner and Pinot Auxerrois.

While only a few vines of each of the first three were available, they secured about 2,000 Pinot Auxerrois, establishing a good foothold for the variety in British Columbia. Curiously, it remains a mere foothold. Total plantings of the variety are only 47 acres or 19 hectares. Because the variety has not won popular fashion, several producers have dropped it entirely.

That is hard to understand on tasting Gray Monk's consistently fine Pinot Auxerrois vintages. This is an attractively fruity white with aromas and flavours of peaches, nectarines, rhubarb and melon. The texture is full and the finish is refreshingly crisp and dry. 89 points.

2008 QUAILS' GATE GEWURZTRAMINER

\$21.99

Winemakers Notes:

Harvested from cooler vineyards in Central and South-East Kelowna in October 2008. Clay and limestone soils, reminiscent of those in Alsace, give this wine a soft mineral character adding depth and power. Hand picked and whole bunch pressed prior to cold fermentation in stainless steel tanks to preserve the fresh flavours. Fermentation was

stopped with some residual sweetness to balance the wine's bracing acidity and add texture. The wine may be consumed now while the flavours are vibrant and fresh, though it will continue to evolve in the bottle and will drink well for 2-3 years.

Tasting Notes:

The 2008 vintage is fresh and fruit driven with notes of cinnamon spice mingling with pink grapefruit and hints of pear drops. Lychee nut and floral aromas will emerge with a few months of bottle age. The palate is rich and sweet with crisp acidity on the finish to balance. This wine pairs nicely with spicy Asian influenced dishes and festive Turkey dinners.

Awards & Accolades:

"This is a Gewurz with delightful feminine beauty to it, started with its perfumed floral aroma. That leads to a core of sweet fruit on the palate – flavours of peaches and apples and lychee. The acidity of eight grams is perfectly balanced with 10 grams of residual sweetness, giving the wine a tangy, refreshing finish. 6,200 cases. 88(points)"

- **John Schreiner**

2007 Gewurztraminer Awarded:
(December 2007)

92 Points - Wine Enthusiast

1999 Ismael Arroyo Val Sotillo Crianza (Ribera del Duero, Spain)

Wine - Red \$24.99 (750mL)

Bodegas Ismael Arroyo is located in Sotillo de la Ribera, a small town in a picturesque valley of the Denominación de Origen Ribera del Duero. Tradition in wine making has been transmitted from one generation to the next in the Arroyo family for more than 400 years.

Archtypical Ribera here and this ten year old Crianza is drinking beautifully now with its foresty, mildew nose, chocolate, plum and a touch of leather. Wonderful balancing acidity and resolved tannins make for a must try! Pair with braised meats.

2007 Les Vins de Vienne Condrieu (Condrieu, France)

Wine - White \$54.99 (750mL)

This is a stunning, textbook **Condrieu**, with peaches, apricots, nectarines and a good dose of slate, ginger, licorice, perfume and minerals. Dry and so oily and glycerin like that it is quite massive in the mouth feel. This is a truly first rate white from the best

Viognier producing region in the world. Serve only slightly chilled and pair with crab cakes.

2008 Michele Chiarlo Nivole Moscato d'Asti (Piedmont, Italy)

Wine - Dessert \$16.99 (375mL)

The Moscato Bianco grape is extremely ancient and its origins are not precisely known. Wines from this grape were first developed as still wines in the 17th Century under the patronage of the House of Savoy, when refined methods of cultivating and vinifying this difficult variety were discovered. The cool, steep Langhe hillsides of Asti and Cuneo, near the town of Canelli, remain the principal center of production for Moscato d'Asti (hence, the alternate name, Moscato di Canelli). Calcium-rich, chalky soils produce the most fragrant Moscato Bianco grapes, and an excellent exposure is essential to bring the fruit to perfect maturity.

Nivole is produced from a single vineyard at Torre de Cantini, located in the commune of Canelli. The vineyard is situated on steep slopes (approximately 35 degree gradient), with an exposure facing south-southwest. Vines are planted to a density of 4,000 per hectare, with an average age of 25 years. Moscato d'Asti is one of the most sublime and delicate of all dessert wines. It should be consumed at its freshest and most youthful. The very low level of alcohol makes it particularly light and soft on the palate, especially gentle for consumption after dinner, when wines of greater alcoholic content have typically been consumed beforehand. The name "Nivole," which means "clouds" in Piedmontese dialect, appropriately suggests the wine's airy, elegant quality.

The fragrant, intensely fruity bouquet, offset by musky notes, leads to a refined sweetness supported by an excellent acid balance on the palate, with a suggestion of effervescence in the texture. The finish is clean and crisp, with the persistent flavour of grape and citrus that is so characteristic of the variety. One of the best Moscato d'Asti's around - try pairing this with fresh strawberries.