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FOOD

Wine-shop browse always turns up something interesting

Steve Prati Special to Nashville Tennessean, USA TODAY NETWORK newsrooms in Tennessee

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Early this summer, longtime friends in New England invited me to participate in their virtual monthly wine event. With members scattered from Massachusetts to Maine, it proved to be an eclectic group of wine lovers with a wide range of experience and taste. Our friend Suzanne prompted a lively discussion from the start with a simple question: “Where do you buy your wine?”

It was an interesting question, since many Americans have never had more access to wine. A couple in Boston loved their local owner-operated wine shop, which is small, but carefully curated and a haven from super stores. Several couples belonged to one or more wine clubs that ship wines to their door based on their taste profile and feedback from previous purchases. Still other members were devoted to their favorite wineries and ordered directly from the source.



2019 Priest Ranch Grenache Blanc, 2020 Domaine Bousquet Gaia Rosé, 2020 FEL Anderson Valley Pinot Gris, 2019 Secreto de Viu Manent Malbec, 2017 Les Cadrans de Lassegue Saint-Emilion Gran Cru, 2018 Tarapaca Gran Reserve Submitted

Every purchase option has its advantages, but my first choice is a trip to my favorite local wine shop where I know the staff and they know their wines. A good wine store is like a good book store—half the fun is browsing the aisles and finding something interesting to take home. With that in mind, I’ve done a little shopping and put together some wines in a range of styles, varietals, and country of origin.

2020 FEL Anderson Valley Pinot Gris escaped the fire and smoke of the catastrophic 2020 California wildfires. “Pinot gris” is simply the French name for what Italians call pinot grigio. Clean, bright, citrus flavors. \$28

2020 Loess Gruner Veltliner (low-ss groo nr velt lainr) is sourced from Austria’s Danube River valley. A varietal seldom found outside Austria, gruner veltliner is typically light, dry, refreshing and often packaged in liter bottles. \$14 (L)

2019 Priest Ranch Grenache Blanc is from Napa Valley, although the grape is more commonly grown in France or Spain. Related to red grenache, this California incarnation is fermented in stainless to showcase the wine’s fresh fruit character and clean acidity. \$21

2020 Domaine Bousquet Gaia Rosé, an organic rosé from the pristine mountain valleys of Argentina, is dry, medium-bodied, and lively. Attractively packaged, Gaia makes a great gift wine. \$20

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2020 Bouchaine Vin Gris of Pinot Noir, the “vin gris” is a version of rosé made from red grapes—particularly pinot noir. Bouchaine leaves the crushed grapes in contact with the juice just long enough to impart lush color and flavors of strawberry/watermelon/guava. \$29

2020 Pam’s Unoaked Chardonnay, a product of Ron Rubin’s Russian River winery, Pam’s lets the fruit stand on its own. The result is light, fruit-driven, and fun. \$14

2019 FEL Anderson Valley Pinot Noir hits all the right notes: medium body, smooth tannins, dry enough to compliment food, and nicely balanced in its acidity. \$40

2017 Les Cadrans de Lassegue Saint-Emilion Gran Cru is a happy marriage of merlot and cabernet franc from Bordeaux. Les Cadrans will show you why people love Bordeaux. \$30.

Chilean wine delights

Chilean wines have earned a reputation for quality and value around the world. Americans too often think of Chilean wines as inexpensive bulk wines—great for quaffing at a barbecue, but nothing to take seriously.

Take a closer look next time you are in the wine shop, and you will see that Chile has some impressive wines that might be right under your nose. Chile’s vineyards tend to be in pristine locations requiring little or no chemical use. Ask your local wine pro to point out some hidden gems and you might discover some of the following labels.

2019 Secreto de Viu Manent Malbec, \$14

2018 Concha Y Toro Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon, \$16

2018 Makquis Cabernet Franc, \$18

2018 Tarapaca Gran Reserve organic red blend, \$19

2018 Emiliana Coyam—organic red blend, \$36

Steve Prati, Franklin-based wine consultant, www.steveswinecellar.com

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