

Wines of the Quarter

A Spanish Garnacha and a Sonoma red and white pairing offer great value.

QRW STAFF

Quality and price dictate the kind of wines that appear in this article. Quality is getting harder to discover because there is so much sameness in wine. Wine writers used to complain just about the sameness of Chardonnay. Now the problem is more widespread. There is more sameness — sometimes more plonk — than ever in other varietals as well, especially as the globalization of wine tastes unite. The price of wine is equally difficult because it's invariably rising as industry costs and greed increase. As a consequence, what used to be a fairly easy article to write each quarter has become more problematic, prompting a less regular appearance.

THREE WINES YOU SHOULD KNOW

The wines below are for people who are serious about wine and about prices. They drink it with meals, they enjoy it casually, and they appreciate value.

SPAIN

- **2009 EVOHE GARNACHA BAJO ARAGON, \$12.** There have only been a few vintages produced and each has been generously embraced, receiving 90+ points by the major wine press. The definition of Evohe is difficult to render into English, but suffice it to say that it's related to the exotic cry associated with Bacchic delight. Evohe gives you some of this. It comes from Lecera, a remote area of Aragon known for romance. The grape is Garnacha, and the wine is soft, smooth, concentrated and approachable. As with all the best Garnacha wines, rich, ripe, raspberry flavors combine with spicy, violet-laden aromas. There is no oak. Above all, the wine is balanced — there's nothing acidic or tart — and all of a piece. The wine is easy and delicious, with an interesting and engaging lacing of anise in the finish. **This has to be the best Spanish wine buy in the marketplace today.**

CALIFORNIA

- **2009 PICKET FENCE PINOT NOIR, RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY, SONOMA, \$18.** Still looking for good Pinot Noir at a good price? We can help, but it hasn't been easy. Yes, the movie "Sideways" is still responsible for enhanced interest and

price. This fickle grape, however, is never easy to grow, and it's very site specific, labor intensive; hence the higher prices. Picket Fence comes from Russian River, one of the best regions for Pinot Noir in California, and is produced in small batch lots. Rich raspberry and soft nutmeg spice upfront make it nicely approachable and fruit substantial. Good texture and weight, with aromas of soft oak and floral perfume. **Mature raspberry and strawberry flavors in mid-palate and in the finish, that's complex, solid and elegant — the way good Pinot Noir should be. Best priced Pinot Noir in California.**

- **2009 PICKET FENCE CHARDONNAY, RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY, SONOMA, \$15.** We have been stinting in praise of most Chardonnay because, as we said above, of sameness. But here is a Chardonnay that actually over-delivers. Nice vanillin spice with engaging tropical fruit flavors upfront; there's a nice touch of citrus in mid-palate. Well concentrated, generous texture, with more vanillin, apple, and spice notes in back palate. There's **lots of length and complexity in the finish. This invites a second and third glass. Delicious. The wine is underpriced for the value it offers.** ☞

