



## Smart Buys in Red Blends

Many of the finest wines in the world have always been blends. The great Bordeaux, Rioja, Napa and Rhone wines use different grape varieties to create their superb elixirs in the bottle. To create a masterpiece one must have various elements to draw upon. In wine many times it's combining the right types of grapes together to achieve a perfectly balanced wine with character and complexity. In Bordeaux they typically use five grape varieties. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec. Each grape adds a certain proponent to the wine. Cabernet Sauvignon gives structure, Merlot fleshy fruit, Cabernet Franc lifts aromatics and so on. In our country you have to have 75% of that grape to be labeled that varietal. So the remaining 25% can be of different varieties. This is a good thing because many times using only one grape type can result in a wine that lacks certain components. Enough mumbo jumbo let's get to meat and potatoes of this newsletter. I have been tasting some superb red blends domestic and imported. All of these wines are incredibly complex for the money and are well worth seeking out. Every wine is a totally different blend which makes it fun and exciting. The production level varies on each wine but should be available at all Westside stores. If your store doesn't stock a wine please have the staff call us in Waite Park and we will have some shipped out.

- 1) Mannina Cellars Cali Red Blend 2010, Walla Walla Valley - This wine was poured at the "Gems of the Pacific Northwest" wine class and was a hit. The winery is a small family run operation that crafts delicious limited production wines in Walla Walla, Washington

State. Cali is their blend comprised of 54% Cabernet Sauvignon, 38% Merlot and 8% Sangiovese. All of the grapes are sourced from four select vineyards in Walla Walla. The wine has a dark ruby color with intense aromatics of blackberry and plums. Mouth filling flavors of black cherry, fig, spice and a hint of vanilla float on a nice long finish. A new favorite of mine and priced right. Pair with grilled Tri Tip or a grilled burger.

2) Amalaya Malbec Blend 2010, Argentina - South America is on a roll and Argentina just doesn't stop with the super values. This wine has complexity and flavors you find in a bottle triple its price. The wine is mainly Malbec with a touch of Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Tannat. A deep dark purple color shimmers in the glass with fabulous aromatics of raspberries, cherries and spice. Flavors of mulberry, blackberry, chocolate and white pepper explode on the palate with nice weight and a velvety long finish. Great with grilled meats, aged cheeses or just to sip.

3) H3 Les Chevaux Red Blend 2010, Washington State - All of the grapes for this wine are sourced from the famous area called Horse Heaven Hills in South Eastern Washington State. Les Chevaux is French for "the horses" - which is a reference to the horses that roamed the area years ago. This blend is 80% Merlot, 13% Cabernet Sauvignon and 7% Syrah. It sees 18 months in French and American oak and is another wine that tastes well beyond its price. Wonderful aromas of blueberries and anise float out of the glass. Velvety flavors of dark fruits, mocha, licorice and nuts fill out the wine with a long lasting finish. Washington State is crafting outstanding wines today and should be experienced. Pair with leg of lamb, pot roast or some aged gouda.

4) Hess Treo Winemakers Blend 2010 - Donald Hess continues to produce fabulous wines vintage after vintage. This is a new wine to the collection and is well worth tasting. The blend is interesting in that it is made up of Merlot, Syrah and Petite Sirah. The wine is rich, full bodied and has tons of flavor. An easy sipper by itself or good with hearty fare. Aromas of plum, cherry and vanilla fill my nose. Succulent rich flavors of black cherry, cranberry, boysenberry and spice fill the palate. Nice and juicy with excellent weight and a lengthy finish. This is California all the way baby! Pair with BBQ ribs, Chili, Prime Rib or all by itself.

5) Caves Velhas Cabeça De Toiro Reserva 2008, Portugal - This all

estate grown Portuguese red is mind blowing for the money. If you like searching out global gems here's one for you. The wine is made with two famous Port grapes but made in a dry full bodied style. 50% Touriga Nacional and 50% Castelao make up the blend. A nice 6 months in French oak rounds out the wine and adds structure. Aromas and intense flavors of cherries, blackberries and chocolate fill the palate with nice ripe tannins. Very complex and super finish on the end. This is a lot of wine for under 20 dollars. Portugal is starting to put out some big bold gems for the money. These guys are definitely someone to watch in the coming years. Pair with grilled skirt steak, flank steak or Osso Bucco.

Hope you get the chance to explore some of these gems!

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