

Dancing Wines

Austrian whites take your tongue waltzing

Early morning, first steamy day of the summer, our crew gathered around the table in our conference room. OK, the conference room is a corner of our ragged wine lab and the conference table is gray Formica-topped kitchen-kind that would have seemed stylish in 1956. We're a no-frills operation; we make do.

Mole was there in his white lab coat; he bounced and bobbed, animated by some stimulus I could only imagine. Mouse was elegant in a Saville Row suit, charcoal with thin pinstripe, white shirt, pale blue silk tie; a tight smile played across his handsome face and around his fog-gray



tipped us to **Territorial 06 Pinot Gris**, 'n' it's all crisp 'n' clean 'n' delish. Should, be swell fer summer seafood grub. Ticket's around \$15, 'n' dey're neighbors. Da peeps should watch for the year, 'cause da 05's still in the market, good but different."

Summer seafood, yes; gripes me to mention wines from that state south of us, but sometimes they do it right.

Kenwood 05 Sauvignon Blanc (\$10) is done right, especially for fresh crab or shellfish. The flavors are zesty citrus with nice herbal notes, finishing clean and bright, a refreshing summer value.

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eyes. Kat sat at the end of the table opposite me; she wore a black dress with small white polka-dots, topped by a black jacket with polka-dot belt. She had crossed her long legs, dangled white sandals, open-toed, nails flame-red. Her hair was perfect; her lips matched the red of the nails. Hints of Rancé's Josephine wafted across the table. She was painting her fingernails, same deep red as toes/lips, drawing the paint flawlessly to each rounded tip. I ogled, shook my head, opened the meeting: "Ubbagubba mmumphblurt, blood-redlollipops, OK?"

Mole and Mouse just stared at me. Kat gave me those hazel lamps, beamed me some pearly whites, went back to the painting. I tried again: "Right. Summer. Heat, hot, sweaty times. Not really blood-red wine time, agreed?"

"Extraordinary," said Mouse, continued: "Well, in keeping with recent policy of trying to guide readers toward a wider spectrum of their wine palates, we should mention the remarkable wines from Austria now entering the local market."

Check: We had just encountered the dry Rieslings and particularly the Grüner Veltliners (grooner velt-leener) emerging from the Wachau-district hills and valleys around the city of Krems along the Donau River, and most particularly the wines made under the Salomon label. The family has been making wine only since 1792, but they seem to have come to grips with their lands and their primary varietals, producing whites that range from steely dry to explosively fruity. We don't yet know retail tickets on these beauties; they won't be cheap but they'll be fair value. Look for **Salomon 2006 Grüner Veltliner "Hochterrassen,"** so very good, with notes of white flowers, citrus, pears, minerals, spice. If you hit the lottery, snag a couple cases of **Salomon 06 Riesling Kogl Reserve**, a late-harvest special selection with a floral nose, viscous, mouth-filling flavors, super wine that Bertold Salomon describes as "still dancing," and will dance for many years.

"We gots a terrif local," cried Mole, popping in his chair. "Our pal Ray Walsh

Kat flashed hazel high-beams, blew lightly on five bright red nails: "Sleuth, you were going to mention reds, weren't you?"

"Mmumphlufog," I answered. "Reds, of course, yesindeedy. Sure 'nuff." Pinot-heads are rushing to snatch their share of **O'Reilly's 06 Pinot Noir** (\$15). Each vintage of the last few years, this wine has been THE affordable pinot, well-made, medium body but full fruit, as easy and pleasing to drink as pinots stickered at twice the price.

Mike Wooley, owner of the venerable Long's Meats, is proud of his new wine section and is beamish to have found an Oregon cabernet sauvignon worth recommending to customers. **Spangler Vineyards 2001 Southern Oregon Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon** is big, bold, rich in dark fruit flavors, with notes of chocolate and a zing of black pepper. The price might be a bit bold for some folk (\$23), but a couple pals, couple steaks, this wine? A dining event.

Mole chimed in: "Sleut', we wuz gonna mention Wine Styles, up dere in Willamette Plaza. Sure, it's a chain, but dey're local peeps dat own it, Jon Cunningham 'n' Brie Malarkey, 'n' dey gots dis idea of puttin' wines up by how dey taste, like Bold, Mellow, Silky, Crisp, 'n' like dat, so folks dat don't really know lots 'bout vinos c'n ask for, well, some kinda style, see? Prices wuz decent, ten ta twenty bux. Dey promised ta bring in **Valley View 05 Viognier**, 'member? Was real swell last vintage, real bright, probly goes in the Crisp, mebbe Silky. Mebbe kinda tricky shelvin', huh? Heunh-heunh."

Mole's laugh has to be heard, but it makes smiles. Kat reached out a vermilion-tipped finger, ran it down his cheek, said, "Anthony, you're so sweet." His round eyes got rounder, sorta popped. His Adam's apple bobbed up and down. No words came out. I had to speak for him and all of us: "Shrumphmifflefog, bingcher-rygumdrops, OK? And don't forget to scope rosés next month, check?" Meeting over now, yumyum.

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