



Arlequin Wine Merchant
Three Bottle Monthly Club: February 2018
\$69.00 (tax & shipping not included)

MANNI NÖSSING “SAIS RIGAS” MÜLLER-THURGAU, 2016

List Price \$30/ Arlequin Regular Price \$27/ Wine Club Exclusive Reorder \$25

Manni Nössing is a humble, unassuming winemaker who farms just 14 acres of vines in an isolated corner of northern Italy, in the shadow of the Dolomites. His vines climb the slopes of the Valle Isarco, a narrow rift in the snow-clad peaks northeast of Bolzano that is known for its spectacular hiking, ski resorts and crisp white wines. Manni grows only varieties typical of the region, namely Kerner, Grüner Veltliner, Müller-Thurgau, Riesling, Sylvaner and Gewürztraminer. Related to Riesling, Müller-Thurgau is nevertheless low in acidity and prone to high yields. The latter characteristic makes the grape attractive to farmers who get paid by the ton, and also why many basic examples of Müller-Thurgau are watery and bland. But when planted in a cooler climate, on rocky soils, and farmed for quality, not quantity, Müller-Thurgau can yield structured, fresh whites of real interest and character. In Manni's case, his vines are refreshed by the Alpine climate and dig their roots in lean soils riven with glacial deposits. He vinifies this rare wine in stainless steel and ages it for eight months on its lees (spent yeast) to add a silky texture and a hint of nuttiness. The result is a textured, unusually focused and flavorful Müller-Thurgau that's redolent of ripe pears, citrus and white peach, with a floral top note and lovely freshness. Pair it with light vegetarian fare or simply flavored seafood or poultry dishes, such as baked halibut or chicken with herbs and lemon.

TRUCHARD VINEYARDS MERLOT, CARNEROS, CALIFORNIA 2015

List Price \$29/ Arlequin Regular Price \$27/ Wine Club Exclusive Reorder \$23

In 1972, Texas natives Tony and Jo Ann Truchard purchased 20 acres of an abandoned prune orchard in Carneros, a region of gently undulating hills that straddles the southernmost tips of Napa and Sonoma counties. Tony's French grandfather had planted one of southeast Texas's first vineyards in the late 1880s, and he and Jo Ann dreamed of becoming vinegrowers themselves. Ignoring local wisdom, which held that the Carneros climate was too cold and its groundwater too salty for farming, the Truchards planted their land to vines. For years they lived during the week in Reno, where Tony practiced medicine, and, together with their six children, camped on the property in a trailer on weekends to work the vineyards. Today, Truchard Vineyards is celebrated as a Carneros pioneer. And while most people think of the region as a source of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, we're partial to Truchard's Merlot. Made from a selection of fruit from five separate hillside locations, it consistently displays a balance of ripeness and vivacity that's rare for California renditions of the variety. Redolent of red and blue plums and berries, the generous, midweight palate gains an herbal edge with the addition of one-quarter Cabernet Franc. Twenty months of maturation in French oak lend a subtle accent of vanilla and cedary spice. Try it with a rosemary-crusting pork chop, slow-braised *osso bucco* or baked portobello mushrooms stuffed with spinach and plenty of aged cheese.

CHESSA CAGNULARI ROUGE, ISOLA DEI NURAGHI IGT, SARDINIA 2015

List Price \$30/ Arlequin Regular Price \$28/ Wine Club Exclusive Reorder \$26

Sardinian varietals have bewitched sommeliers on both sides of the Atlantic in recent years, and no wonder: The island's zesty Vermentinos and plump, plummy Cannonau (Grenaches) are hard not to love. So we were intrigued to discover this red, which is made from Cagnulari, a grape that's either indigenous to Sardinia, or genetically identical to the Spanish variety Graciano, depending on whom you believe. In any case, this inky red delighted us. It's made by Giovanna Chessa, one of Sardinia's brightest young vigneroni. Founded by her grandfather 60 years ago, Chessa's small estate lies in the northwest corner of the island, near Usini, where prized limestone soils predominate. Giovanna's winemaking style is elegant, and expressive, and her wines are clean but full of character. This offering is juicy and fresh, with powerful black and red fruit aromas and flavors limned in that unmistakably Mediterranean scent of wild herbs—a jumble of thyme, rosemary, lavender and juniper. Fresh acidity and fine tannins make this a versatile companion at the table. Pair it with rustic meats accented with garlic, herbs, olives, peppers and tomatoes. For vegetarian dishes, substitute eggplant for meat and be generous with olive oil and cheese. Baked eggplant parmesan, or pasta with smoked mozzarella, basil, eggplant and peppers, will work beautifully.