

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

This lively Spanish red wine pairs well with wintry braises and grilled steaks



FROM LEFT: Puerto del Monte Mencía 2019, Anna Maria Abbona Sorí dij But 2020, Sartarelli Vino Spumante Brut, Ridgecrest Vineyards Estate Pinot Noir 2019, Donnafugata Ben Ryé Passito di Pantelleria 2018. (Scott Suchman for The Washington Post)

By Dave McIntyre

December 16, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. EST

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Here are some wines worthy of your holiday table this season. We have two reds — one from Spain, the other from Italy — that show versatility with a wide array of foods, as well as an Italian sparkler to get your party started. Two splurge-worthy wines round out the lineup: A pinot noir from an Oregon pioneer family now in its second act, and a rare dessert wine from the Mediterranean that may have you dreaming of sunshine and citrus.

Puerto del Monte Mencía 2019
(Excellent/Extraordinary)

Bierzo, Spain, \$18

Vibrant with dark cherry and blackberry flavors and a hint of wild sage, this lively red is a great partner for casual fare such as braised meats, steaks off the grill or kebabs. Alcohol by volume: 14 percent. BW: 390 grams (Light).

Imported by Long Wines; distributed in the District and Maryland by Artisans & Vines, in Virginia by LK Wine Tours & Sales: Available in the District at A. Litteri, Classy Corks Wine & Spirits, Cleveland Park Wine and Spirits, Each Peach Market, Rodman's. Available in Maryland at Bella's in Annapolis; Beer Wine & Co., Bradley Food & Beverage, Georgetown Square Wine and Beer in Bethesda; Bethesda Co-Op in Cabin John; Cheers & Spirits in Arnold; Crescent Wine & Spirits in Bowie; Dawson's Liquors in Severna Park; Fenwick Beer & Wine, Locavino in Silver Spring; Franklin's Restaurant, Brewery & General Store in Hyattsville; the Girl & the Vine in Takoma Park; Greenbelt Co-Op in Greenbelt; Grosvenor Market in Rockville; Old Farm Liquors in Frederick; Patuxent Wine & Spirits in Lusby; Potomac Grocer in Potomac; Rodman's in White Flint; Wine Bin in Ellicott City. Available in Virginia at Aldie Peddler in Aldie; Murphy Beverage in Winchester; Planet Wine & Gourmet in Alexandria; ViNoVA in Front Royal.

Anna Maria Abbona Sorí dij But 2020
(Extraordinary)

Dogliani, Italy, \$20

Dogliani is in Piedmont, southeast of Turin, and these dolcetto grapes are grown in vineyards on steep slopes at 1,600 to 1,800 feet above sea level. They yield a red wine electric with energy and acidity — and at a moderate level of alcohol, refreshing. This is a great food wine capable of cutting through the richness of holiday menus. ABV: 13.5 percent. BW: 450 grams (Light).

Imported and distributed by Le Storie: Available in the District at Ace Beverage, MacArthur Beverages. Available in Virginia at Arrowine and Cheese, Osteria da Nino in Arlington; Grape + Bean, Unwined (King Street) in Alexandria; Vino Market in Midlothian.

GREAT VALUE
Sartarelli Vino Spumante Brut
(Extraordinary)

Italy, \$24

This exuberant bubbly features bright flavors of red currants and berries — more on the fruity side of sparkling than the yeasty, brioche style. It's great with lighter foods or on its own. One sip can transform any occasion into a celebration. ABV: 12 percent. BW: 800 grams (Sparkling).

Imported and distributed by Elite Wines: Available in the District at Cork Wine Bar and Market, Rodman's. Available in Maryland at Bin 201 Wine Sellers in Annapolis; Snider's Super Foods in Silver Spring; Wells Discount Liquors in Baltimore. Available in Virginia at Department of Beer and Wine in Alexandria; the Italian Store (Westover) in Arlington.

Ridgecrest Vineyards Estate Pinot Noir 2019
(Extraordinary/Sublime)

Ribbon Ridge, Willamette Valley, Ore., \$45

Worth a splurge: Ridgecrest Vineyards is a new label from Harry Peterson-Nedry and his daughter, Wynne Peterson-Nedry. But in a very real sense this is old-vine Oregon, because 2019 was the 35th harvest from the vineyard Peterson-Nedry planted in Ribbon Ridge, the first vineyard in this area in the western part of Willamette Valley. Harry was the guiding force behind Chehalem winery until he sold his interest in that label a few years ago. This is his second act, with Wynne as winemaker. The vineyard is predominantly marine-sedimentary soils, which give the wine a brooding dark-fruit character and umami

savoriness that brightens a bit with some air. Try to enjoy this over two nights, if you can restrain yourself. “A dad, a daughter and a hill,” the label says. And a darn good wine. LIVE certified sustainable. ABV: 13.3 percent. BW: 460 grams (Light).

Distributed by Lanterna: Available in the District at Ace Beverage, Cork Market, Rodman’s. Available in Maryland at State Line Liquors in Elkton; Wine Cellars of Annapolis in Annapolis; Wine Source in Baltimore; Wishing Well Liquors in Easton. Available in Virginia at Unwined (Bellevue, King Street) in Alexandria.

Donnafugata Ben Ryé Passito di Pantelleria 2018
(Extraordinary/Sublime)

Italy, \$45 for 375-milliliters

Worth a splurge: Made from grapes air-dried after harvest until they become raisins, this exquisite dessert wine tastes of spiced orange rind, caramel and roasted nuts, with flavors that continue to rollick across your palate for more than a minute after each sip.

Pantelleria is a remote island in the middle of the Mediterranean, southwest of Sicily. The wine somehow evokes blood oranges, sea air and sunshine in every drop. Have this on its own or with custardy desserts, especially any with a citrus component. Certified sustainable. ABV: 14.5 percent.

Imported by Folio Fine Wines, distributed in the District and Maryland by M. Touton Selection, in Virginia by RNDC: Available in the District at A. Litteri, Ace Beverage, Batch 13, Black Salt, Blue Duck Tavern, Bombay Club, Bourbon Steak, Calvert Woodley, Fiola, Fiola Mare, Hop Cask & Barrel, Il Canale, Imperfecto, MacArthur Beverages, Maialino Mare, Potomac Wine & Spirits, Rodman’s, Sherry’s Fine Wine & Spirits, Tosca, Wide World of Wine. Available in Maryland at Citron, Cosima, Wine Source in Baltimore; Edgewater Liquors in Edgewater; Giolitti Delicatessen in Annapolis; Legal Assets in Easton; Oxford Inn in Oxford; Port of Call Liquors in Solomons. Available in Virginia at Gvino Enoteca in Leesburg; Total Wine & More (Alexandria, McLean); Vienna Vintner in Vienna.

Availability information is based on distributor records. Wines might not be in stock at every listed store and might be sold at additional stores. Prices are approximate. Check wine-searcher.com to verify availability, or ask a favorite wine store to order through a distributor.