

UNCORKED

A vintage year

Looking back at faves and bargains from 2007

Plenty of corks have been popped by the Good Eating staff over the past year in order to deliver to you wines for almost every occasion. We've ranged from cheap jug wines to expensive California cabernets. We've "traveled" from Portuguese reds to Alsatian whites to California blends both red and white. And we've matched wines with ceviche, Chinese spareribs and ripe tomatoes.

Here are the wines that particularly stood out for us in 2007; all rated three corkscrews, which means "Very Good" on our 1 to 4 corkscrew scale. (New vintages now may have replaced some of these in area stores. Consult your wine merchant before buying.)

Top wines

2005 Delille Cellars Chaleur Estate

This Bordeaux-style white from Washington's Columbia Valley paired beautifully with ceviche. Big without being brash, and a tad buttery, the wine had great acidity that allowed the fish to shine while holding its own. One taster thought the wine's body served as a "cornerstone" for the "hidden flavors of a complex ceviche to build upon." \$35

2005 Lucien Albrecht Gewurztraminer Reserve

Smelling of fruit and flowers, with a flavor profile spiced with notes of pear, tropical fruit and washed stone, this medium-weight dry gewurztraminer from Alsace would be great with sausage or pork. \$16

2003 Marques de Vargas Rioja Reserva

This Spanish wine made from the tempranillo grape was so good it even could have stolen the show from the Thanksgiving turkey. We paired it with turkey gravy and found it came within a whisker of winning a 4-corkscrew rating. Expect flavors of cherry, clove, mint underscored by a flinty minerality. If you do want to pair this wine with gravy, perhaps in a post-Christmas sandwich, know the red wine brought out a delicious savory note in the gravy, enriching it. \$26

2001 Nittnaus Trockenbeerenauslese TBA Premium

This Austrian white had a beautiful golden color, a slightly syrupy texture and a heady aroma of apple and spice. Good acidity kept sweetness in check. The wine was paired with blue cheese; they matched each other for intensity. \$40 for a 375-milliliter bottle



Tribune photo by Bob Fila

Welcome 2008 with Artezín, a California zinfandel that was among our favorite moderately priced wines of the year.

2003 Quinta Vale D. Maria Douro Red

A dark, almost mysterious wine made from a single vineyard in Portugal's Rio Torto Valley. Rich with the aroma of cooked plums and cedar, the wine's fruit is reined in by strong yet never overly assertive tannins. Expect notes of mint, cinnamon and spice, including pepper. Serve with braised beef and mushrooms, pork stew with clams. \$42

Bargain sips

2004 Artezín

Made with grapes from Mendocino, Sonoma and Amador Counties, this zinfandel from a division of the Hess Collection seemed merely soft and sweet at first but then the wine got interesting. Layers of flavor, from fruit to earth to spice, unfolded. Nicely balanced. \$14

2006 Colome Torrontes

From Argentina, a refreshingly crisp white with notes of litchi, pear and stone. \$15

2003 Lavradores de Feitoria Tres Bagos

This Portuguese red had a tongue-tickling pepperness that gave way to cherry and earth flavors. Nice spice. Serve with roast chicken and garlic, grilled chicken pizza, bean and beef stew. \$13

2005 Mary Michelle Winery Illinois Cellars Norton

The strong grassy aroma turned some tasters off at first, but they came around when this Downstate wine was matched with Chinese spareribs. The wine tasted of smoke, bacon and black cherries—ideal for ribs. Its aggregate score jumped two points with the pairing. \$7

2004 Ravenswood Old Vine Zinfandel

From Lodi, this zin offered a roller-coaster ride in the glass: quick, peppery start; mounds of ripe blackberries in the middle; quick shot of violets to end. \$15

2006 Yellow Tail Merlot

Anyone who wonders why Yellow Tail is such a success story need only taste this smooth Australian red. It was ripe with fruity berries and cherries, seasoned with black pepper and oak and smelled sweetly of raspberries or plum. Soft but not snappy, approachable but nuanced. Serve with grilled duck breast, steak. \$6

wdaley@tribune.com

Bill Daley answers questions on wine and spirits every Sunday in Q. Hear him on WBBM Newsradio 780 at 8:52 a.m., 11:52 a.m., 3:41 p.m., 6:21 p.m. and 10:22 p.m. Monday and 7:52 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

As Seen in

The Chicago
Tribune
Good Eating Section

12/26/07

2001
Nittnaus
Trockenbeerenauslese
Premium

