



PJ's Wine of the Month Club

August 2008 Selection

White Selection

2007 Domaine de la Pepiere Muscadet Serve et Maine sur Lie, France

Suggested Retail Price: \$14.99 PJ's Price: \$11.99

Location: Domaine de la Pepiere is located in the Nantes region of the Loire Valley. This is the region that situated at the mouth of the Loire River on the Atlantic coast.

Muscadet: The Muscadet region it is about 13,000ha/32,000 acres or gently rolling hills at the mouth of the Loire. The appellation Muscadet Serve et Maine is named for two small rivers that flow through the appellation. The grape used for production is known as Melon de Bourgogne. However some people and wine texts will refer to the grape as Muscadet for ease sake, but the correct name is Melon de Bourgogne. This varietal is rather neutral in flavor and aroma when left to its own devices. It is not like Sauvignon Blanc or Riesling which will provide loads of aromas and flavors, Melon de Bourgogne is more reserved.

Sur Lie: Because of the neutral nature of the grape producers in the region encourage the development of more flavors and character by ageing the wine "sur lie." Lees are basically the "stuff" that settles to the bottom of a fermentation vessel while the wine is fermenting. This "stuff" is primarily dead yeast cells and sometimes grape seed, skins or even stems and insoluble compounds that are formed during fermentation. In the case of this wine only the dead yeast cells are present because this wine is made after pressing and separating the skins and seeds from the juice. After fermentation is complete the yeast have created an environment that is too alcoholic to survive and the vast majority perish (a noble death). By keeping the wine resting on its lees the wine begins to absorb some of the flavors of the yeast cells. This includes a laundry list of amino acids and other compounds that add body and complexity to the resulting wine.

Domaine de la Pepiere is owned and operated by Marc Ollivier, a renowned name in the Loire. He takes a lot of pride in the wines he produces which can be seen in how he treats his vineyards and wines. Everything is hand harvested, a rarity for the region, he only uses native wild yeast and keeps the wine in contact with the lees until bottling which takes place in late may. Most Muscadet is produced like a bulk wine with large producers rushing production and limiting the time the wine is in contact with the lees. Marc must stay true to the old ways and the difference is perceivable in the wine. The vines used are all at least 40 years old and overlook the river Sevre. The grapes are crushed with in 2 hours of harvest and no skin contact is used.

Description: This is just a great clean crisp summer white that can be used for a thousand different things this time of year. The nose is vibrant with notes of citrus fruit including grapefruit and lemon and there are deeper yeasty notes that a followed by a precession of minerals. It is dry on the palate medium bodied and has nice high levels of acid, as one would expect in a Muscadet. There is also an underlying richness, a kind of creamy texture and flavor that adds to the experience.

Food Pairing: The classic food pairing for this wine is raw bar, basically any assortment of raw or "barely touched" shellfish like oysters or clams with lemon or a nice mignonette sauce.





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White Selection

2006 Martinez Lacuesta Rioja Blanco

Suggested Retail Price: \$13.99 PJ's Price: \$10.99

Location: Bodegas Martinez Lacuesta is located in the center of Haro, the Rioja wine capital in the Rioja Alta sub-region.

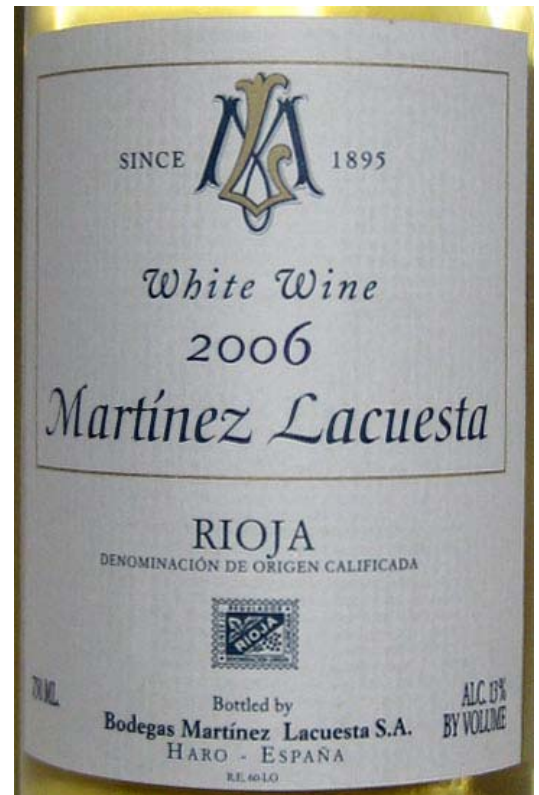
History: Félix Martínez Lacuesta, a lawyer by profession, politician and businessman by vocation, set up the Martínez Lacuesta Hermanos business in 1895. Almost immediately his five brothers joined the firm and began a voyage into the world of Rioja wine which today their heirs from the third generation of the family, are proud to continue. From that time until the present, the firm has stuck to the same initial philosophy: to create great Rioja wines. The Bodega focuses many on red wines that range from Crianza to Gran Reserva however as crisp and clean white came into fashion Martinez Lacuesta started to produce white Rioja.

White Rioja is made in all three of the different sub-regions of Rioja however the wine hailing from the Rioja Alta sub-region are regarded as the best. This has to do with the Atlantic influence that has a cooling effect on the land and the vines. The other sub-regions (Rioja Alavesa and Rioja Baja) have a drier climate and produce whites that can be flabby and sometimes flat. White Rioja can be made from a number of different grapes however the major varietal is Viura, also known as Macabeo. In addition Malvasia, Garnacha Blanca, Verdelho and Chardonnay can be used.

An Old World White: For the majority of Rioja wine history the whites produced there were full bodied wines that were treated to extended aging in barrel, similar to the reds. There are producers that still produce wines in this fashion; Lopez de Heredia is a great example. They age their whites in large oak casks for long periods of time to develop a very typical flavor profile. For instance, we at PJ Wine have a selection of Lopez de Heredia white Riojas from a number of vintages including the 96, 89, 81 and the 64. All of these wines are singular in the expression of a different style of white wine making. However due to the problems with ageing of white wines and the tastes of the wine consuming world these white are now the minority. People the world over are calling for refreshing, light, primary fruit driven white that can be drunk young and without effort. This is exactly what type of wine we have from Martinez Lacuesta.

Vinification: This wine was made in temperature controlled stainless steel tanks, this temperature control one of the big differences between the old style Rioja white and the new. In the past producers had little control over the temperature at which the wine was fermented. Not only can it still be quite warm in Rioja in the fall the process of fermentation creates heat, so many times the wine had a fast hot fermentation in which the delicate primary fruit flavors "burn off" and the resulting wine is less fruity but deeper with oxidized notes.

Description: This wine is a real treat on a hot day; it is packed with bright aromas of citrus and other fruits. This wine is a blend of 80% Viura and 20% Malvasia. The Viura provides the fruit and acidity while the Malvasia lends a bit of richness and depth. Crisp on the palate this is a wine is a bit more subtle than some big Sauvignon Blancs but there are plenty of great fruit aromas and flavors. This is a great wine to serve with grilled chicken or even some dishes that have a bit of spice to them.





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Red Selection

2006 Palacios Remondo "La Vendimia" Rioja
Suggested Retail Price: \$15.99 PJ's Price: \$12.99

Location: Palacios Remondo is in the far eastern region of La Rioja in the sub region of Rioja Baja. The bodega is just south of the city of Alfaro.

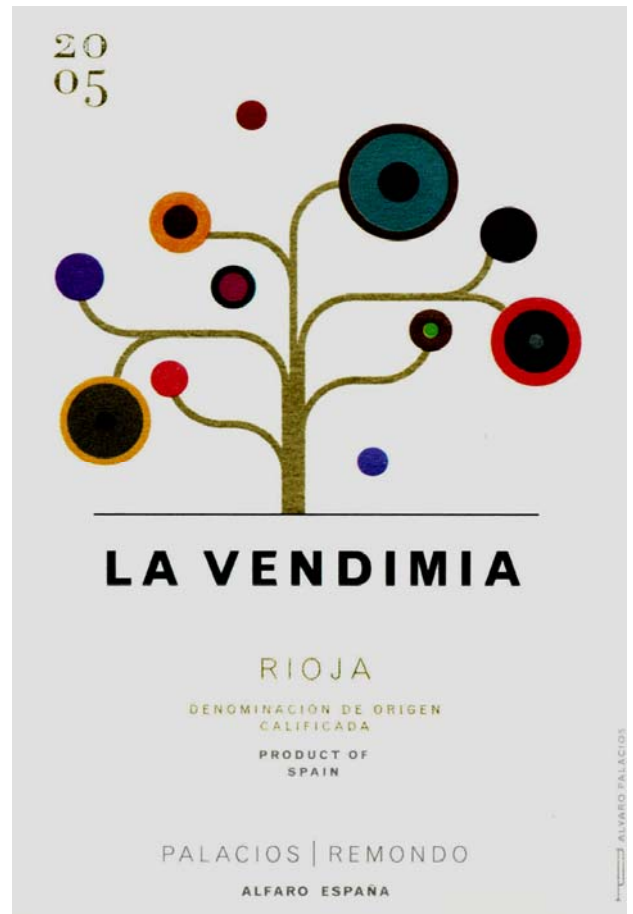
History: The bodega was established in 1942 by Jose Palacios. For most of the life of the bodega they made good wines that were well known in Spain with some following in the other countries. In the 1990's Jose's son, Alvaro Palacios gained a reputation for being one of the great Spanish wine makers of his generation. He was busy leading revolution in wine making in other regions like Priorat and Bierzo and had little involvement in Palacios Remondo. Jose fell gravely ill and asked his son to return, and always the dutiful son, Alvaro agreed. Upon his return to Palacios Remondo he began a complete overhaul of the vineyards, wine making facilities and attitude towards wine. In the 1960's his father had planted 250 acres of vines on prime land in the region and in the late 90's these vines were starting to bare amazing fruit. With these vines and the experience and skill Alvaro possessed the bodega was poised for a rebirth.

The New Palacios Remondo: Alvaro was firmly in control of the bodega by the time of the 2000 vintage and one of the first things he did was cut the production from 200,000 cases to 70,000 cases. Much of the fruit used prior to Alvaro leadership was purchased from other vineyards in Rioja; he stopped purchasing fruit and now uses only the 250 acres of vines planted by his father. Rioja Baja, where all the 250 acres are located, extends east and south from the other sub-regions of Rioja (Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa). This makes Rioja Baja more Mediterranean in climate, that is hotter and drier. Garnacha does particularly well in Rioja Baja and Palacios Remondo uses more in their wines than producers in Rioja Alta or Alavesa.

Vinification: All grapes used for this wine come from the 250 acre plot planted by Jose Palacios which is now completely organically farmed. Every thing at Palacios Remondo is hand harvested and there is no filtration or fining. The 2006 La Vendimia is a blend of 70% Tempranillo, 25% Garnacha and 5% Graciano and Mazuelo. It was aged in new French barrels for 6-8 weeks.

Description: This is a beautiful summer red that would be at home at any gathering where food is served. The nose has notes of black cherry and other red berry fruits along with notes of cola and star anise. There are also hints of smoke and earth at the backbone of this red. It is medium bodied with flavors of cherries, cola and earth. The tannins are light and smooth which works well with the medium acidity. The finish is clean and light leaving more red fruit flavors on the palate.

Food Pairing: This is a great wine for the barbeque whether you like the spicy vinegar based variety or the sweet molasses stuff this wine will pair very well. It would also be great with grilled meats or, of course, ribs.





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August 2008 Selection

Red Selection

2007 MontGras Carmenère "Reserve"
Colchagua Valley, Chile
Suggested Retail Price: \$12.99
PJ's Price: \$9.99

Location: Montegras winery is located about 10 miles out side of the city of Palmilla in the Colchagua Valley, south of Santiago.

History: Founded by a team of brothers named Hernan and Eduardo Gras and partner Cristian Hartwig in 1993, Montgras has always had the very best in wine technology and state of the art equipment. It was their goal to produce quality wines and show off the unique qualities that Chile has to offer.

Colchagua Valley is one of the two sub-regions (Cachapoal Valley is the other) of the Rapel Valley. The region is protected by the Coastal Range to the west and the Andes Mountain Range to the east. The main feature of this valley is the climate. It has a Mediterranean climate which is characterized by four clearly defined seasons. It is this natural climate that provides the perfect growing conditions for quality wine grapes. There is low humidity which helps to prevent damage to the grapes from rot or mold. There are also huge diurnal differences in temperature which allows the grapes to get ripe while retaining acidity. These factors combined with the long growing season that allow complex flavors to develop in the fruit, add up to form a near ideal growing environment.

Carmenère: This grape is reported to be one of the original grapes of the Medoc in Bordeaux. In the early 18th century it was used in combination with Cabernet Franc to produce some of the most famous wines of Bordeaux. However in the more troublesome climate of Bordeaux Carmenère is prone to problems, such as *coulure* (this occurs at bud break and results in fewer berries per vine and can reduce yield drastically). Carmenère is a late ripening grape, even later than Cabernet Sauvignon, and in a marginal climate like Bordeaux it does not always produce well. Because of this the grape has almost completely vanished from Bordeaux and found a new home in Chile. Since vineyard management has made quite a few advancement since the 18th century, many of the problems that doomed Carmenère in the early years can be dealt with. Today Chile is the only country that produces Carmenère in volume, and if fostered in the right way it can produce great, value driven wines.

Description: This wine is a deep rich purple color that gives clues to its intensity. The nose is huge and packed with super ripe aromas of plums, cherry liquor, clove and a light toasty oak note. There are also hints of tobacco and pepper. On the palate the wine is intense and layered with rich flavors of blackberries, plums, and sweet dark fruit. There is a note of toasted vanilla from the light use of oak and there medium acidity. The tannins are fine and leave a bit of a grip on the palate. The alcohol is integrated well with the medium-full body and the finish is full of more ripe plum and spice.

Food Pairing: While this wine is fruity and plush it has some "funky" aspects, such as the tobacco notes, that make this wine suited to pairing with any number of interesting foods. Even with the tannins in the wine I enjoyed this with a spiced lamb loin with herb roasted vegetables. This wine is also great with almost any type of bleu cheese and cured meats.

