



Splicing the MAINBRACE

Vol. 6, No. 4 December 2001

Editors' Notes

For the last few months, and perhaps for many months to come, most of us have been preoccupied with the events of September 11 and their aftermath. The loss of life on and since September 11 is truly dismaying and there is every indication that the toll will continue to mount. One of the results of the war is that many people, especially in the United States, are cutting back on travel plans.

When combined with a serious economic slowdown, this is bad news for tourism in Atlantic Canada that had already begun to feel the effects with a sharp slope downward during the fall shoulder season. Since in the beverage alcohol industry here we all depend, to one degree or another, on revenue from tourists the immediate future does not appear bright.

Perhaps the weak Canadian dollar will help attract visitors from the United States, perhaps the recession/depression will be over quickly, perhaps fear of flying will pass soon, perhaps . . . perhaps . . . But in the meantime, life goes on and we all must work extra hard to overcome problems. For Mainbrace that means getting listings for new and attractive products that can help licensees build volume even in tough times, for licensees it means striving to build customer and sales volume through better selection, better service, and perhaps keener pricing.

In the longer run, a turnaround will come. May we all be there to see it!

Holiday Suggestions

Here are some suggestions for the festive season, whether you are looking for gifts, decadent self-indulgence, or supplies for traditional mixed drinks or food preparation.

Champagne and Sparkling Wines

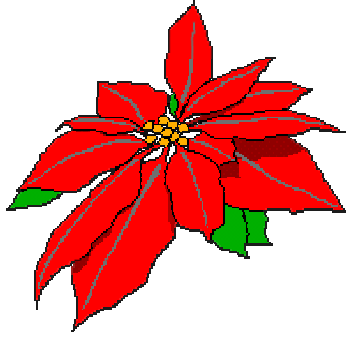
Nothing says celebration better than a glass of bubbly.

From **Michel Gonet**, four champagnes for shoppers in New Brunswick:

* **Michel Gonet Brut Reserve** (CSPC 793091, NBL, \$36.10) Made from 70% Chardonnay and 30% Pinot Noir, this champagne is pale gold in colour with slight green tints, with a fruity, floral nose. The taste is fresh and vivacious, with a nice balance between finesse and elegance. The finish is long as is the aging potential. This makes a fine aperitif and can also be served successfully with fish-based entrees.

* **Michel Gonet Blanc de Blancs** (CSPC 793117, NBL, \$37.75) The Blanc de Blancs is 100% Chardonnay, with aromas of fruit and floral hints. It has a long finish following a fresh, elegant taste. An excellent aperitif sparkler.

* **Michel Gonet Prestige 2000** (CSPC 793083, NBL, \$48.38) 100% Chardonnay grapes from the Grand Cru classés vineyards of Oger (Le Mesnil-sur-Oger). The nose is floral with mineral overtones, the taste of red fruit with a hint of jasmine. Ideal as an aperitif, it also accompanies fish, seafood, and cold dishes



What miracle cannot
the winecup work? It
lifts the load from
human hearts
-Horace

(Holiday Suggestions cont'd)

* **Michel Gonet Champagne Rosé** (CSPC 793109, NBL, \$37.95) Made from 100% Pinot Noir grapes, this champagne's fine bubbles and nose of cherries are most appealing. A supple wine with a long finish, this would be great as an aperitif or as a food accompaniment for throughout a meal.

From **Castellblanch** and **Segura Viudas** in Spain:

* **Castellblanch Brut Zero** (CSPC 188276, NS POW, \$12.33) Made from a blend of 30% Macabeo, 60% Parellada, and 10% Xarel.lo, this sparkling wine is well-balanced, with fruity tastes, light body and fresh palate. A fine example of the Spanish cava style. A wine to quaff by itself or to mix in any drink that calls for a sparkling wine. Serve well chilled.

* **Segura Viudas Reserva Heredad** (CSPC 94912, NBL, \$33.05; NS POW, \$31.41) 67% Macabeo, 33% Parellada. Straw yellow in colour, with a full delicate taste. It has power, character and delicacy. Best served at a temperature of 8-9° C. This is a sparkling wine for special occasions. Its pewter-based bottle makes it an attractive presentation wine or gift.

From the Loire Valley of France:

* **Bouvet-Ladubay Brut** (CSPC 35444, NS POW, \$17.93) Using the méthode champenoise on grapes grown in vineyards where Chenin grapes were being cultivated well before the Roman conquest of Gaul, Bouvet-Ladubay produces one of the great sparkling wines of France. Serve well chilled either on its own, or as an accompaniment to hors d'oeuvres and appetizers. A favourite pairing with fresh oysters.

Aperitifs

What better way to start a holiday meal than with sheries to go with the canapés and other appetizers:

* **Gonzalez Byass Tio Pepe Dry Fino Sherry** (CSPC 242669, NBL, \$20.29; NLC, coming soon; NS POW, \$19.66) This dry fino sherry is aged in casks for six years. A pale golden straw coloured sherry with a mild taste of almonds that charms your mouth, leaving a crisp, fresh, clean aftertaste. A superb aperitif, especially with nuts, olives, and cheese and crackers. Serve chilled, on the rocks, in a martini, or as a mixed drink with tonic.

* **Gonzalez Byass Alfonso Oloroso Dry Sherry** (CSPC 233324, NS POW, \$19.70) **Gonzalez Byass**, Spain's largest producer of sherry, has developed this dark, dry, nutty sherry of great power. It is medium sweet and very smooth with a soft, distinctive flavour and a dark golden colour. If served on the rocks, it is an ideal "all-purpose drink." It can be taken any time of the day and is also very agreeable with desserts.

* **Burdon Amontillado Sherry** (CSPC 348219, NS POW, \$11.24) A classic flor sherry with an exceptional hazelnut/almond bouquet. Light amber in colour, great depth of flavour, and a dry, clean aftertaste. Serve slightly chilled as a warming aperitif or with soups or seafood.

Liqueurs and After-Dinner

Try these with after-dinner coffee

* **Sempe VSOP Armagnac** (CSPC 105346, NS POW, \$36.54) Peter Rockwell, writing as Wineguy (<http://wineguy.ns.sympatico.ca>) rates Sempe VSOP Armagnac at 88 and says, "Even though it's France's oldest brandy, Armagnac has often gotten lost in the shadow of its more famous

Eggnog

250gm sugar
 1 dozen eggs
 1500ml milk
 600ml whipped heavy
 cream
 750ml **Sempe
 Armagnac**

Separate eggs and beat the yolks with sugar in a large punch bowl. Stir in milk and whipped cream. Add **Sempe** and refrigerate for an hour. Before serving, whip egg whites and fold into eggnog. Garnish with fresh nutmeg.

**(Holiday Suggestions cont'd)**

cousin, Cognac. Created back in 1411, it predates Cognac by almost 200 years. It's a true, old-fashioned drink with the character of Cognac and the fruit expression of fine white wine. **Sempe** is a major producer of the style, tracing its roots back to the 14th century. The flavour is slightly rustic but it offers a rich, round perfume and deep, almost tropical character." Serve straight up (preferably in a brandy snifter) or on the rocks as a delightful after dinner drink, or with ice and soda water as an aperitif.

Sempe XO Armagnac (CSPC 483495, NBL, \$87.95) This is the XO version of **Sempe Armagnac**: more refined, more elegant, somewhat deeper flavour. To be sipped from a snifter, after dinner or with a fine cigar.

Matusalém Cuban Tradition Rum (CSPC 464222, NS POW, \$33.57) Judged best rum in America in 1999, this is a velvety smooth aged rum made in the Cuban tradition since 1872. Straight up, on ice, or with a touch of water, this is the quintessential sipping rum. We also like it with grilled shrimp and hot peppers.

Ponche Caballero (CSPC 515809, NS POW, \$20.85) Sometimes called the spirit of Spain, this is a blend of the distinguished Caballero brandy with all natural ingredients including Andalusian oranges. A very versatile orange brandy, you can enjoy it straight, on the rocks, in a shooter, mixed with other beverages, or as part of a dessert.

Dessert Wines

Dessert wines make great accompaniments for fruit cake and holiday cookies

DeBortoli Black Noble (CSPC 935114, NS POW, \$36.33) This fortified Semillon is an incredible taste experience. Top Scoring wine in the

Nova Scotia Port of Wines Festival 1999 (also Top Scoring fortified wine and a Gold Medal Winner), it is dark, viscous and hugely concentrated, displaying a complex array of flavours and aromas suggesting coffee, anise, soy sauce, brown sugar, black olives, and toffee. The finish is long and luscious. Enjoy it now or cellar for a few years. This is to be treated like an outstanding Port. Sip it by itself, with simple accompaniments such as almonds or walnuts, or with strong flavoured cheeses such as Stilton.

DeBortoli Noble One (CSPC 931782, NLC, \$36.85; NS POW, \$34.14) Nice golden green hues. Well developed nutty/toasty nose showing some lifted apricot and apple aromas mingled with botrytis characters. Lusciously rich and complex, the palate has great structure with lovely flavours of mandarines and marmalade. This is the wine that single-handedly changed the way Australians thought about sweet white wines. In blind tasting it has been known to outscore Chateau d'Yquem, the illustrious Sauterne that sells for many times Noble One's price. This is a very rich, "one glass" wine, a drop of golden nectar to partner with almost any sweet dessert or with blue cheese. A superb ending to a fine meal.

Achaia Clauss Imperial Mavrodaphne of Patras (CSPC, NS POW, \$10.92) First produced by the founder of the Achaia Clauss winery, Gustav Clauss in 1861. It is a great full-bodied yet delicate dessert wine that has been lightly fortified. Distinctly ruby in colour and well balanced, this excellent "vin de liqueur" has been aged for a year in wooden tanks and for a further year in oak barrels. It makes a nice aperitif when chilled to 8 - 10° C and served with, say, Mushrooms and Chorizo, and a perfect dessert wine when served at room temperature. Try it with a dessert like Cabernet Truffles or Poached Figs and Thyme.

Coming Soon

News from the beer front:

Warsteiner Premium Verum Beer, Germany's best selling beer, is set to return to Nova Scotia. Lots of 500ml cans were shipped in late November and should be in the stores before Christmas. (CSPC 556720, 500ml, NS General, \$1.80)

Faxe Extra Strong 10% lager beer (CSPC 497032, 500ml, NS POW, \$2.00) and **Faxe Fest Bock 7.7%** beer (CSPC 433664, 500ml, NS POW, \$2.00) are on order and should be on Nova Scotia shelves early in the New Year. Both beers are made with no artificial additives in the old Danish tradition.



(Holiday Suggestions cont'd)

* **Angove's Spatlese Lexia** (CSPC 437053, NS POW, \$10.98) The taste is fruity, clean, and long lasting. The wine is medium to sweet with a crisp, citrus-like acidity on the finish. 68% White Frontignan, 20% Gewurztraminer, 12% Muscat Gordo Blanco. The Spatlese Lexia is a nice dessert wine (Tarte au Sucre or Summer Zabaglione with Fruit) and will also complement spicier cuisines such as Mexican, Thai (Veal with Saffron and Shallots), or curried dishes. Serve chilled.

* **Chaucer's Olallieberry** (CSPC 484683, NS POW, \$20.95) A flavoursome dessert-style wine. "Olallie" is a word for berry that was used by Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest. An olallieberry is a hybrid cross of a loganberry and a youngberry (both crosses themselves: loganberry = raspberry X blackberry; youngberry = blackberry X Texas dewberry). Because the olallieberry has blackberry forebears on both sides of its parentage, it is not surprising that it exhibits many of the same flavour characteristics. However, olallieberries are much larger in size and are generally sweeter than blackberries. Although the wine exhibits a richness similar to a fine liqueur, it is not fortified and contains only 10.5% alcohol. It is produced without the addition of artificial flavourings, colourings, or concentrates. The fruit is grown in an orchard near Watsonville, California - a cool region with seasonal morning fog during the summer, ideal for the production of quality berries. This makes a tasty aperitif or after dinner sip. It is nice served over ice cream or with a fruit dessert.

* **Floriovo** (CSPC 376939, NBL, \$14.98) Prepared from an antique recipe based on Marsala aromatised with natural elements of egg yolks. Warm and full-bodied with intense hints of almonds and hazelnuts, and traces of vanilla. An excellent accompaniment to

creamy and oven-baked desserts, also great over ice cream.

Table Wines - Red

* **Angove's Sarnia Farm Cabernet Sauvignon** (CSPC 469320, NS POW \$23.99) Intense purple-red colour. Bouquet filled with minty scents rounded off with a floral, spicy lift. On the palate, intense sweet fruit characters with well integrated oak lead to a balanced, clean finish. A Silver Medal Winner at the Nova Scotia Port of Wines Festival 2001, the jury described it as: "A rich, mouth filling wine with a deep and complex palate balanced by spicy fruit flavours and rich oak characteristics." This is a great accompaniment to wild game, beef (Beef Tenderloin Flambe), rich pastas, and cheese appetizers.

* **Bleasdale Mulberry Tree Cabernet Sauvignon** (CSPC 86595, NS POW, \$21.27) (Comment from Sean Wood, Halifax Chronicle-Herald) For such a young cab, it is surprisingly approachable, with a sweet, softly perfumed, spicy vanillin and ripe fruit bouquet. The richness barely avoids being cloying. Flavours too, are unctuously rich. It reminds me of Madeira cake. The texture is velvety, with soft tannins and a raisiny overlay. The finish is long and moderately complex, with a hint of Australian mintiness. This wine cries out for roast beef (Beef Filet) or lamb (Braised Lamb Shanks with Vegetables).

* **Jim Barry Clare Valley Cabernet Sauvignon** (CSPC 600338, NLC, \$22.30) Deep red in colour, with a bouquet filled with aromas of spicy plum, blackcurrant and oak. Aged 13 months in American oak. The palate displays rich, opulent fruit, complemented by a foundation of strong tannins. The blackberry and plum flavours linger in the mouth, and the finish is dry.

(Holiday Suggestions cont'd)

. The Nova Scotia Port of Wines Festival 2001 awarded this wine a Gold Medal with the comment: "A textured wine with broad, jammy red fruit flavours and a progressive character that keeps flowing through to the finish." The traditional pairing here would be roast lamb (try Roast Lamb with Port and Anchovy Sauce), but beef dishes such as Beef Tenderloin Flambé would also go well with this big cabernet.

might also try rabbit, sweetbreads, or Prime Rib with Wine Gravy.

*** Montresor Amarone Classico Capitel della Crosara DOC** (CSPC 935122, NS POW, \$56.70) Made from Corvina Veronese, Rondinella, and Molinara grapes. Deep red colour with a fruity and spicy bouquet. Dry, warm, rich mouthfeel with scents of violet, licorice, blackberry and ripe cherries. Decant in advance and serve at 18 - 20°C with red meats, game and seasoned cheeses. Voted a Coupe de Coeur wine at Moncton's World Wine Festival in 2000.

*** J. Lohr Seven Oaks Cabernet Sauvignon** (CSPC 313825, NBL, \$28.10; NLC, \$25.20; NS POW, \$27.73) A deep ruby colour with rich purple hues. The aromas are of blackberry and plum with a hint of blueberry, and some chocolate and toasted oak overtones. On the palate, expect berries, chocolate and smoky toasted oak. The flavours are rich and full, with a soft, supple texture and a lingering finish. Serve this wine with your best roast beef, roast lamb, or roast game.

*** Wenté Crane Ridge Merlot** (CSPC 431460, NBL, \$26.35; NS POW, \$27.95) Crane Ridge is the gently sloping formation of hills running along the southeastern corner of the famous Livermore Valley where the Wenté family has planted Merlot vines. The Reserve wine produced from these Livermore Valley vineyards delivers fully ripened fruit with depth of character. The flavors found in this wine are rich in currant, plum, cedar, and spice. Aging in small French and American oak barrels gives the wine a smooth, velvety texture with elegant tannins that are a superb balance to many meals. Try this big Merlot with roasts of beef or lamb, or with red meat game dishes.



*** Quail's Gate Pinot Noir** (CSPC 411330, NBL \$24.83) This is a classic example of the very best of British Columbian Pinot Noir. Burgundian in character, it has lots of up front fruit and a lingering finish. Coq au Vin would be our suggestion here. We have also enjoyed this wine with simple grilled steak.

*** Château Cantin Saint-Emilion Grand Cru** (CSPC: 935676, NBL, about \$37; NS POW, \$39.50) 65% Merlot, 21% Cabernet Franc, 14% Cabernet Sauvignon. The grapes are hand picked and sorted then fermented in temperature controlled vats and aged 12 to 16 months in new French oak. The colour is a lovely ruby red with orange glints. The body is round and velvety and the nose has violets, green pepper and vanilla. Approachable now, but will age well for 8 or 10 years or more. Try this stunning wine with roasted poultry, feathered game, beef (Prime Rib with Wine Gravy), both soft and hard cheeses and desserts like Pears in Red Wine.

Château Paloumey Cru Bourgeois (CSPC: 935650, NBL, about \$37; NS POW, \$38.93) 40% Merlot, about 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, about 5% Cabernet Franc. This organic wine has good structure, glorious cassis fruit and an agreeable finish. Decanter (October 1998) wrote of its "beautiful marriage of fruit and spice." The classic pairing with a Medoc is roast spring lamb, but you

Hot Cuban Punch

60ml **Matusalem Rum**
80ml pineapple juice
80ml orange juice
15ml coconut cream

Heat ingredients together. Garnish with cinnamon stick and orange slice.

Published four times a year for the trade in Atlantic Canada by Mainbrace International Limited, agent for fine wines, spirits and beers in Atlantic Canada.

The role of Mainbrace is to market the beverage alcohol products that we represent to final consumers, to licensees, and to the Provincial Government agencies. We aim to enhance enjoyment for consumers, to facilitate profitable sales for licensees, and to assist agencies in achieving their mandates.

For further information, contact:

Ann Trecartin / John Chamard
Mainbrace International
Limited
P.O. Box 27177,
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3H 4M8

Phone: 1-902-422-6193
Fax: 1-902-423-4367
e-mail: splicingthemainbrace@mainbrace.ca

Stanley Laite
Mainbrace International
Limited
6 Conran Street, St. John's,
Newfoundland
Canada A1E 5G8

Phone 1-709-368-1888
e-mail:
stanley.laite@mainbrace.ca

or view our website at:

<http://www.mainbrace.ca>

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(Holiday Suggestions cont'd)

Table Wines - White

*** J. Lohr Riverstone Estate Chardonnay** (CSPC 258699, NBL, \$25.05; NLC, \$23.75; NS POW, \$25.87) Aromas of exotic fruits complemented by a buttery toasted oak bouquet with hints of cinnamon, clove, and vanilla. Pear and apple flavours abound, balanced with butterscotch and vanilla nuances. The wine is a complex, well-rounded, luscious mouthful that offers a soft and lingering finish. An excellent accompaniment to shellfish (especially lobster), roast chicken or pork, and creamy flavourful pasta dishes.

1999 Riesling Kabinett Six Pack (CSPC 950703, NLC, \$146.40) A six pack of 1999 Riesling Kabinett wines, each 750ml, from six top estates in different growing areas of Germany. This is a real opportunity for consumers, licensees (for staff training or a wine tasting party for customers), wine societies, maitre d' trainers and others to experience just how good German Riesling can be.

What's Happening

December 2001

8 - Amici in St. John's host a wine tasting at Murray Premises. Contact Stanley Laite (709-368-1888 or e-mail stanley.laite@mainbrace.ca) for details.

8 - The Opimian Society present the annual Wine Taster of the Year competition and dinner at the Delta Barrington Hotel in Halifax. Contact Larry Graham (902-469-0790) for details.

8 - Amici del Vino in Halifax hold their Christmas dinner. For information and reservations contact Rod Meloni (902-422-0066, or meloni@netcom.ca)

12 - Newfoundland and Labrador Chefs Association Dinner at the Battery in St. John's. Contact Stanley Laite (709-368-1888 or e-mail stanley.laite@mainbrace.ca) for details.

January 2002

19 - Opimian Society holds a Halifax event. Details to follow.

19 - Society for American Wines (Halifax) dinner, details to be announced (check on the mainbrace web site: www.mainbrace.ca)

26 - Halifax German Wine Society Annual Dinner. Call Ray Roberts (902-434-2184) for information.

February 2002

Joint tasting of the Australian Wine Society and the Society for American Wines at Studio 21 on the Halifax waterfront. Contact Joel Fournier (902-443-9382) or Brian Knight (902-422-6833) for details.

Websites of Note

"Wineservice: what's your beef?" describes the results of a poll on restaurant wine service gripes. A must-read for licensees and customers alike. (<http://www.wineloverspage.com/wineadvisor/wax011120.shtml>)

