

# Want something different? Here's a trip off the beaten path

BY ANTHONY GISMONDI

This week's column is a mixed bag, perhaps mirroring the changeable fall weather. As local growers sweat out the final few weeks of the harvest, waiting for their grapes to fully ripen, we suggest you move off the beaten track for a week and taste something different.

A good place to begin the value hunt is among varietal or regional wine — labels that are off the radar of everyday consumers. Instead of heading into the chardonnay or merlot section of California, you might want to look for grüner veltliner from Austria or a chenin blanc from South Africa.

As weird as it sounds, the

tougher a wine name is to pronounce, such as the juicy garnacha of Spain, the more likely it will be priced below its true value because so few buyers will reach for it.

Tinta roriz and touriga nacional are just two examples of grape names that have yet to penetrate the mainstream wine market, yet both are major contributors to Portugal's flagship wine Vintage Port.

Almost every wine can be a journey if you want it to be — you need only open your mind and try something new. Today we offer just that.

There was a time when South Africa tried to hang its hat on chenin blanc, or steen as they refer to it, but in recent years

southern hemisphere producers have focused on marketing pinotage. Too bad, given the recent improvement we've seen in chenin blanc.

For big-time value, it is hard to beat the **KWV Chenin Blanc 2006**. The nose is youthful, showing honey, green apple and floral, citrus notes with a whiff of banana. Look for fresh, slightly-sweet fruit reminiscent of red apple, floral, honey and lime-rind flavours with a touch of passion fruit. A simple, easy-sipping, bargain white wine.

The **Simonsig Chenin Blanc 2005** boasts a Stellenbosch address and a peachy, honey, floral nose. It's much richer in the mouth than the KWV with honey, baked pear, floral flavours and a

touch of mineral. It's a bit on the sweet side, but with fine fruit and ripeness. Should be perfect with spicy Indian food.

Grüner veltliner is hardly a household-grape name, but the Austrian varietal is making inroads internationally, especially in more progressive restaurants. The **Laurenz V. Friendly Grüner Veltliner 2005** is new to B.C. and well worth trying. The perfumed lees nose with its mineral-quince flecks attracts, as does its crisp palate. Look for mineral, passion fruit and lemon-rind flavours. Elegant, fresh and ready to drink. Very well made and it's food friendly.

**Borsão Selección Tinto Joven 2005** mixes mostly garnacha with tempranillo and

cabernet sauvignon from Campo de Borja in the North of Spain. Offering riper, far better fruit than the '04, it would appear the move from natural cork in '04 to a synthetic closure in '05 has been effective. Black fruit dominates the mid-palate with a spicy, grapey, licorice finish. This should be very appealing to that consumer moving away from the simple, sweet, introductory reds.

Clean, spicy, peppery nose with black cherry jam, vanilla, orange peel and ginger aromas mark the nose of **The Black Chook Shiraz Viognier 2005**. The palate is rich and soft with juicy black cherry, vanilla pudding, cardamom flavours. It finishes warm and acidic, but with fine fruit and a touch of tannin. Fresh, young and

finished with a screwcap.

Cool nights signal a return to port on the coast and while you may not drink the **Dow's Vintage Port 2003** for a few years, you need to put some in the cellar. Look for a black tea leaf, floral nose with black cherry jam, spicy, licorice, stewed fig aromas spiked with pepper and mint. It's intense on the palate with plenty of tannins and structure and more black cherry jam, licorice, tea and candied-fig flavours. Long and well balanced, it finishes with a smoky fruit aftertaste. It will require 12 to 15 years more in bottle to fully mature. One for the cellar.

Sun wine columnist Anthony Gismondi is also co-host of *The Best of Food and Wine*, which airs at noon each Saturday on CFUN 1410 AM.