

WINE *By Dale Robertson*

Summer sippers earn high ratings

We're touting two whites from California, a perfect summer sipper from Texas and a pink wine from the south of France that has proved to be a panel pleaser every time we've tasted it. Unless otherwise stated, the prices listed are what Spec's charges for a cash purchase and bottles were available at the chain's Midtown store at press time. That doesn't mean you won't find the wines elsewhere locally or by ordering directly from the winery.

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2013 **Bonterra** Sauvignon Blanc

Overall score: 18.9 (8.9 for quality, 10 for value)

Our tasters: Gave it a unanimous recommendation with a high score of 9.1. "Juicy and fresh — lovely!"

My score: 9. Using only organically grown Mendocino (60 percent) and Lake County (40 percent) grapes, winemaker Bob Blue has created a fresh, acidic wine full of zesty citrus notes and a hint of grass that over-delivers for the price. No surprise, though. A true organic pioneer in California, Blue has been doing it his way since 1990 with help these days from Jeff Cichocki and Bonterra's vineyard director, Dave Koball. Organic alcohol: 13 percent.

Price: \$10.19



Courtesy photos

2012 **Duchman** Family Vineyards Vermentino

Overall score: 18.8 (8.8 for quality, 10 for value)

Our tasters: Missed a unanimous recommendation by one-tenth of a point with two scores of 9. "Fine citrus notes with a good acidic backbone."

My score: 9. The Driftwood winery owned by Houstonians Stan and Lisa Duchman has this Texas vermentino thing down pat. Despite the vagaries of our climate from one vintage to the next, the Duchmans' self-made winemaker Dave Reilly routinely delivers an aromatic, refreshing wine with excellent minerality that holds its own against the best vermentinos from northwest Italy, Sardinia and the south of France, places where the grape also carries names such as favorita, pigato and rolle. Alcohol: 14.8 percent.

Price: \$13.67



2012 Mondavi Napa Valley Chardonnay

Overall score: 18.8 (8.8 for quality, 10 for value)

Our tasters: Gave it a unanimous recommendation with a high score of 9. "Apples, pears and citrus notes. Juicy!"

My score: 8.8. The Mondavi folks haven't exactly broken any new stylistic ground here, but the wine delivers lots of satisfaction for not too many bucks, having profited from a perfect vintage start to finish. The grapes are a blend of four Napa growing regions (Carneros primarily) with a few thrown in from the Russian River Valley. Two-thirds of the juice was fermented in French oak barrels with the rest cold-fermented in stainless-steel tanks. Alcohol: 13.5 percent.
Price: \$15.99



DRINK PINK!

2013 Domaine de Mourchon Loubié Rosé

Overall score: 18.4 (8.9 for quality, 9.5 for value)

Our tasters: It didn't work for one taster, but three others scored it 9 or higher. "Intense red fruit. A bold wine."

My score: 9. The most consistent rosé we've tasted over the past several years, the richly hued Loubié smells of strawberries and offers plenty of the same on the palate. It's a 60-40 grenache-syrah blend from grapes grown on Rhone Valley vines averaging 40 years of age, helping explain the intensely concentrated flavors. With an alcohol content of only 12.5 percent, the wine is immensely refreshing.

Price: \$18.83

