



Costco Red and White Wines

RED WINES, PART TWO

FOR SEVERAL YEARS, the Kirkland Signature (KS) Chianti Gran Selezione (\$20) has been made by Basilica Cafaggio. This category of Chianti represents Chianti's highest level of quality and generally costs multiples of this wine's price. It has aromas of wild berry and dark spices with floral notes. The palate shows ripe cherry, cranberry, and cloves with bright acidity and firm tannins. This is a great wine and value.

The KS Chianti Classico Riserva* (\$10) was originally produced by Basilica Cafaggio, but the 2021 and 2022 are made by Barone Ricasoli—a truly great producer. The wine shows deep cherry flavors with black currant background with intense dark color and aromas of ripe fruit and wild herbs. This wine is a good introduction to Chianti at an outstanding value. It is a great pasta and pizza wine.

Another excellent Tuscan wine is the KS Brunello di Montalcino* (\$20). For the last several years, it has been made by Feudo Maccari who has a long history of making great Brunello di Montalcino. This wine, as all Brunello, must be made from 100% Sangiovese Grosso so it delivers tastes and flavors of other well-made Chiantis, but in general ages well and longer and has deeper

flavors and tastes. The wine is best served with beef (steaks and roasts), pasta, and aged cheeses.

One red wine that I most eagerly anticipate is the KS Old Vine Zinfandel from Sonoma Valley* (\$10). This wine is made for Costco by Jeff McBride, a winemaker of note. As some of my readers may remember, my favorite Zinfandels are made by Ridge (Geyserville and Lytton Springs). These two Ridge wines are five times the price of this wine and this wine compares well to the pricey and far-more-difficult-to-find Ridge wines. Red and black fruit notes and aromas softened by mild tannins result in an excellent food wine for Chinese, Indian, Mexican, and barbecue, and can be substituted for Chianti with Italian entrees. In addition, it is enjoyable by itself.

My favorite U.S. Cabernet Sauvignon (\$20) wines from Costco are the Rutherford* and Oakville* appellation offerings from Napa Valley. Both offer full-bodied black fruit (cassis and cherry), supple tannins, and spice box notes with balanced acidity and a long finish. These wines along with the KS Single Vineyard (Suscol)* represent an excellent value (\$18) introduction to the world's most ubiquitous grape. Most Suscol Vineyard wines cost multiples of this offering.

Other popular Costco red wines include the Rioja Reserve (\$7) which is largely Tempranillo and offers an inexpensive introduction to this grape. It is good just for drinking by itself but is excellent as an accompanying beverage with roasted chicken, lightly spiced pork and beef as well as being vegetarian friendly. Another best seller is the KS Malbec (\$7) from Argentina. It has notes of ripe plums, cherries, and cocoa and is lightly oaked. This wine is made by the Broquel winery and is the same wine as the one I sold for \$15 almost 20 years ago. Trust Costco to provide value!

Other Costco wines include the Pinot Noir Russian River Valley (\$11) crafted by Alison Crowe. She describes the wine as "A core of dark cherry, pomegranate, and raspberry combines with vanilla, brioche, and warm spice notes leading to a rich, complex mouthfeel followed by a long, smooth finish." Sounds like a Pinot Noir worth trying to me! I do know that five years ago, five knowledgeable Pinot Noir people rated the then-current Costco offering made by Anthony Austin very close to a Grand Cru Burgundy from my cellar at 25 times the cost of the Costco wine, so it pays to try these wines.

A final red wine is the KS Bordeaux Supérieur



(\$7). This current vintage is 70% Cabernet Sauvignon and 30% Merlot. It shows a deep, intense purple color, a nose of black fruit (blackberry) with a light oak toast. The palate is well balanced with sweetness and full body leading to a fresh and persistent finish.

I will finish the red section with a perennial favorite, the KS Tawny Port–10-Year-Old (\$17). This wine is produced by Fonseca, one of the top port houses in the world and is full of delicious flavors of nuts, caramel, and dried fruits with notes of ripe oranges. My favorite way to drink this is after dinner with walnuts and dark chocolate. What a dessert! Once opened, it will last for 30 days if kept at refrigerator temperatures and unlike Vintage Port, it has no sediment. It should be consumed within two years of release.

WHITE WINES

By any measure, I rate the KS Chablis Premier Cru Chablis* (\$23) the best wine value of all the wines made under the Costco label. In fact, I am on record as saying that this wine often reminds me of a theoretical wine which cannot be. I am referring to a Chardonnay from Chablis which conjures a mixture of Premier and Grand Cru vineyard grapes. This would not be made because it would sell well below the costs of the lowest level Grand Cru Chablis. This wine truly shows the attributes of the unoaked Chardonnay grape at its best. With its brilliant acidity it is the perfect accompaniment with shrimp, scallops, white fish, soft cheese (e.g.

Brie and Camembert), as well as being a great wine for just sipping. Like most of the wines in this article, it is released only once a year so buy accordingly.

The only other outstanding still white wine is the Sancerre. From Loire Valley, it is from the Sauvignon Blanc grape and is redolent of white fruits—apple, pear, and peach with great acidity and rich mouthfeel.

For those who prefer sweeter wines, the KS Moscato has notes of honeysuckle and ripe peaches. It is an excellent aperitif wine as well as a good pairing for both sweet and savory dishes.

My final white wine is the KS Sauvignon Blanc from Marlborough, New Zealand. It is from the Ti Point Winery owned by three generations of women from the same family. It has tropical fruit flavors with vibrant lemon-lime citrus notes and crisp acidity. In fact, this is my favorite wine in the world with my bruschetta made from my heirloom tomatoes. It also improves with one to two years of bottle age and helps me get through Chicago winters as a great wine with guacamole and chips.

A perennial favorite of many is the KS Champagne Brut, made by one of Champagne’s best small growers, Manuel Janisson. It consistently outperforms many of its competitors at multiples of its price. It has a delicate nose of yeast, bright apples, apricots, orange rind, flowers, and honey. It is well balanced on the palate showing richness

and great acidity.

One final note—the KS Prosecco is available in both white and rosé. Both are Extra Dry which are sweeter than Brut. The Rosé D.O.C. (\$9) is made from top vineyards with fresh berry and tropical fruit flavors. The white version is DOCG (\$8) and both are great for celebrations (toasts), for making mimosas, and can pair with a variety of cuisines from Italian and Asian to classic American fare.

A Vôtre Santé! 

*Please note that the wines marked with an asterisk are received only once per year at the store.



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

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