

The PICKS

FEATURE WINES

Sea Smoke Ten, Southing, and Chardonnay

Just in time for your Christmas gifts, we have a special arrival in the store from one of our favorites, Sea Smoke. Sea Smoke is from the Santa Rita Hills AVA in Santa Barbara County. It boasts the sunniest and southernmost Tier 1 region for wine growing in the northern hemisphere, perfect for Pinot Noir. With its location, the grapes get bold sun during the day and are cooled by Pacific fog -- or "sea smoke" -- that drifts along the Santa Ynez River valley each night. It creates perfect, ripe grapes for Pinot Noirs that are bold and expressive. Southing Pinot Noir (\$119.99), named after the south-facing slopes where the grapes grow, is complex with elegant acidity and notes of currant, strawberry, rose, and clove. Ten (\$119.99), named after all ten Pinot Noir clones grown on the property and used in this wine, is intense and will convert even the most dedicated Cab drinker, with notes of blueberry, cassis, hazelnut, and thyme. The Chardonnay (\$109.99), which is maybe a bit of an underdog here, is elegant with aromas of Meyer lemon zest, fresh cut melon, honeycomb, mandarin, and a slight nuttiness. These wines are organic, biodynamic, and low production, so you won't find them often. We only get them in once a year, and we have just one 6-pack of each, so stop down or give us a call if they sound as special to you as they are to us. Try one or all three in a gift box for someone extra special.

WINE PICKS

German Glühwein

Want to feel like you're meandering through the sparkling streets of a German Christmas market? Get yourself a bottle of authentic German Glühwein. Glühwein is a German mulled wine, traditionally made with red wine and mulling spices -- think cinnamon, clove, nutmeg, etc. -- served around Christmas. It is served warm, which is why we've been sampling it in the crockpot in the store this week. The balance of flavors is what makes a Glühwein special, and these bottles do a great job of it. From St. Christopher, we have Traditional, Blueberry, and Cherry. We get the Traditional in every year, but the flavored bottles are new to us. We also got a little something different this year from Albrecht Dürer, a Honey Glühwein that is made with white wine and honey in addition to the spices. This is the same honey used to make Nurberg's famous honey-spiced gingerbreads. All of these bottles are \$11.99 and make a great gift or just something to enjoy around the table or fire with your loved ones this holiday season. They are selling fast, so stop down soon.