

FRENCH LESSONS

Multipurpose whites

Our wandering Wine Pros waded into the Loire and Languedoc this month, fishing out some stunning bargains.

Jake Parrott stumbled upon the captivating **2008 Marc Ollivier Domaine de la Pepiere Muscadet Sevre et Maine (\$15)** whilst unwinding at Trummer's on Main, hailing the "flinty, oyster-shell edge" and "zippy lemon/lemongrass flavors" of the well-crafted white.

Kelly Magyarics pushed forth into the Languedoc, paying tribute to the precursor to Champagne with a nod to **NV Saint-Hilaire Blanquette de Limoux Blanc de Blancs (\$12)**. She billed the "mouthwateringly appealing apple and citrus flavors" and "clean finish" of the alterna-bubbly as the perfect complement to freshly shucked oysters or coquilles St. Jacques.

Meanwhile, she suggested that bargain white hunters would be wise to stock up on the **2007 Hugues Beaulieu Picpoul de Pinet (\$9)**. Magyarics touted the "subtle aromas of melons, green pear and grapefruit" as adept foils for all manner of entertaining staples (soft cheeses, seafood, pasta dishes with cream sauce).

Returning stateside, Parrott picked the **2008 Montinore Estate Boreal (\$14)**—a muller-thurgau/gewurtztraminer blend boasting "a pithy, grapefruit edge and juicy acidity"—as the ideal companion for some of Trummer's most savory morsels. "With the country ham or chicken confit sandwich, this little white blend is a winner," he advised, adding, "I don't drink many New World wines, but this one is both intriguing and a crowd pleaser."



KELLY MAGYARICS

Wine Educator/Wine & Spirits Writer
www.kellymagyarics.com

JAKE PARROTT

Wine Aficionado

and herb-dusted specimens versus breaded and deep-fried rings)—to carefully choreographed tasting menus. A yeasty homemade tart sprinkled with cured ham bits, caramelized onions and assorted garden vegetables is thin-crust pizza by any other name (though the dough lacks the direct-fired char). Pan-seared salmon played savory straight man to a supporting cast of fresh mandarin oranges and crisp red peppers drizzled in a sugary, toasted-sesame dressing. Elsewhere, slow-roasted pork deposited atop poblano-spiked polenta would make Sergio Leone proud. **5723 Lee Highway, Arlington; 703-538-4600. L Tue-Sat, D Tue-Sun**

TUTTO BENE \$\$

Though his restaurant continues to serve disparate dining factions—Italian dishes dominate during the week, while Bolivian delicacies appear on weekends—Tutto Bene owner Orlando Murillo remains single-minded of purpose: keep the customers coming back. One terrific loyalty-builder is the half-portion pasta option, a sampling-friendly solution that makes everyday dining/occasional experimentation a breeze. A crowd-pleaser of a calzone arrives stuffed with hearty rounds of zesty pork, tangy marinara and molten cheese [the precious ricotta and mozzarella payload oozing out from every corner]. The milanese Napoletana delivers breaded veal shrouded in ham and melted mozzarella [stretches from stem to stern and drips over the sides] and nestled in a thin, herb-laden marsala sauce that contrasts against the cheesy richness while lending a homey/natural

undercurrent to the meat. **501 N. Randolph St., Ballston; 703-522-1005. L, D daily**

culpeper co.

HAZEL RIVER INN \$\$\$

The down-home restaurant occupies what appears to be an old warehouse [it's proudly billed as the oldest commercial building in historic Culpeper]. A quick scan of the well thought-out menu reveals a wide array of gourmet selections, while a glance around the cozy dining room suggests a much more laidback scene [locals wander in wearing blue jeans]. A New Orleans-style chicken-and-sausage gumbo is simply fantastic [the roux is delightfully spicy]. A smoked salmon and avocado quesadilla delivers soft bite after soft bite of fish, tropical fruit and citrusy lemon aioli. Bison short ribs summons a plate of tender briquettes swimming in a saucy red-pepper ragout, all served with buttery German noodles. White peach and mixed berry strudel arrives blanketed by an intoxicating vanilla bean sauce. **195 E. Davis St., Culpeper; 540-825-7148. L daily, D Thu-Mon, Br Sun**

fairfax co.

ACKK COCOA BAR \$

This snazzy cocoa bar represents the con-

solidation of Artfully Chocolate and Kingsbury Confections, simpatico sweets merchants who joined forces and unveiled their first combination drink palace/confection depot in the District. You can almost taste the love. Solid indulgences include a petite but infinitely pleasurable gourmet chocolate and cheese plate, a dairy duet of milk, dark and white chocolates partnered with organoleptic curds [often acquired from neighboring Cheesetique] ranging from ripened blues to fiery jalapeno cheddars. Meanwhile, nostalgic eaters can retreat to a less hectic time by sinking their teeth—no braces, please—into bulbous candy apples shellacked in gooey caramel, milk chocolate, mini M&M's, toffee chips, crushed nuts, sprinkles and just about any other crunchy topping you can imagine. **2003-A Mount Vernon Ave., Del Ray; 703-635-7917. B Sat, L, D daily**

BAZIN'S ON CHURCH \$\$\$

One of the cornerstones of Vienna's Church Street revitalization, Bazin's has evolved into a neighborhood go-to for local families and food fans from all around. The vibe remains solidly casual [regulars arrive in T-shirts and jeans, the original cork-bound menus have been replaced by foldable paper guides], though the menu continues to flirt with the fanciful. Flatiron steak wants not for savory au jus, gives easily with each knife stroke and delivers plenty of beefy goodness in every bite. Grilled portobellos smeared with pungent goat cheese add muscle to a delicately balanced mix of bitter greens and juicy tomatoes [fresh and vibrant]. Minced

