

Wine specials: Plenty to pick from



With most of the bottle shops running their seasonal specials, now the browsing for new creations and vintage years begins. Time to add some welcome additions to our own racks! It's hard work, sure. But browse and haul we must.

In a continuation of last season's non-inflationary trend, reasonably-priced offerings abound with many good ones in the \$15 range. Never to be left behind, [AJs](#) has been hard at work putting together numerous interesting introductions. These are nicely displayed with write-ups and clearly posted pricing. But which ones to try first?

One of AJs eye-catchers (\$15.99) comes from a big name, [Raymond Vineyards](#). It is part of the R|Collection and they simply call it the Lot No. 7 Field Blend. [Field Blends](#) have been around a long time, but this technique is not normally associated with New World operations like Raymond. It is traditionally done to create multi-varietal blends by planting several varietals in the same field. Then, the blending happens automatically when all the grapes are picked and crushed together.

It seems that Raymond's new management is changing things a bit to reintroduce their name to buyers. Going to market with a \$15 bottle is a great start, but it better be good! When this happens, it is always advisable idea to check it out because it may mean a wine that screams "Try me, if you like me, remember my name, Raymond". These are often an excellent value.

Sure enough, tasting this ruby-colored wine was no disappointment. At first whiff, it seems quite "zin-like" with a bouquet of raspberry, ripe cherry, and a faint dustiness. But the body has none of the jamminess of a Zinfandel. It has a light tannin structure, nice acid balance like a French wine, and a peppery finish that will amplify any spiciness present in the accompanying meal.

Lot No. 7 will go very well with tangy barbeque sauce slathered meats, Sloppy Joes (with mustard, of course), or peppered lamb. It is very versatile and will even slide down along with burgers and beans. Here's to Raymond's new marketing efforts! Good choice.