

Spanish whites a good buy

Spanish wines continue to impress American wine buyers not only because of their low prices but improving consistency of wines on the shelves.

Not too long ago, purchasing a Spanish white **WINE** for under \$12 could be a crap shoot, a winner sometimes and a loser more often unless you knew the wine well. That has changed, though, in recent years as Spanish wine makers have adopted more modern and cleaner production techniques.

My wine-tasting group believed any of the five listed today would be a good value for the price (under \$12) and pleasing to the taste.

We had to pick a winner, though, and the results follow.

■ 2008 Torres Sangre de Toro Sol Catalunya, \$12.99. Scents included strawberries, rhubarb, kiwi, bubble gum, cotton candy and a metallic twang. We found suggestions of the fruit wrapped in a light texture that was easy to drink. The Torres was squeaky clean

and almost effervescent. It won our tasting.

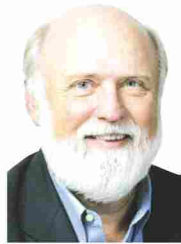
■ 2008 El Coto Virua Rioja, \$12.99. The rather muted aroma showed scents of lime peel, banana chips, white pepper and a bit of matchstick at the beginning. Clean and light, this wine, made from the virua grape, had good acidity -- good, perhaps, with Iberian ham.

■ 2008 Marques de Riscal Verdejo Rueda, \$11.99. The nose reminded us of pink grapefruit, red cherries, fruit cocktail, fresh grass and honeysuckle. This wine was grassy on the palate with all of the fruit cocktail flavors becoming more metallic on the finish. This tastes of this verdejo grape were reminiscent of a sauvignon blanc.

■ 2007 Rainmat Vina 24 Albarino Costers del Segre, \$11.99. The bouquet offered cocoa dust, cooked sugar, bananas, peas, oil and a lot of oak. We tasted lime, brine, and white pepper, backed by great acidity. The palate was much better than the aroma.

■ 2007 Coto de Hayas Chardonnay, Campo de Borja, \$9.99. My panelists thought this wine smelled like bananas Foster, with scents of rum, sugar, baked apples and lemon zest. Although this was an unoaked chardonnay, it had toasty oak flavors.

Contact Frank Sutherland at fsutherland@gmail.com. Frank, former editor of The Tennessean, has a wine-tasting panel that includes representatives from five wine distributors in Nashville, a wine collector, a sommelier and food writer Thayer Wine.



FRANK SUTHERLAND

