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MERITAGE WINE: A FEW SELECTIONS

Conundrum 2008

Conundrum is a blend of Sauvignon Blanc, Muscat Canelli, Chardonnay, Vognier and Semillon. A full white with a lot of character. Conundrum was a product of the Caymus vineyards until 2001 when it was established as its own brand. Steve Huckaby discovered it on a Disney cruise with his wife, Dawn, their kids and Dawn's folks.

2006 Hey Mambo, Sultry Red

Steve Huckaby and his wife were introduced to this wine by Steve and Lindsay Gutterman at a small bistro in Colorado. Steve's company, MBH Enterprises, was an investor in Meritage's predecessor, Arista Midstream. That night was full of good food, good wine and good company. A neat thing about Hey Mambo is it comes with its own unique cork, called a "zork". Sultry Red is a blend of Syrah, Barbera, Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Malbec, and Licante Bouchet.

Consentino 2007, "The Novelist"

A big strong California white that needs a sturdy companion. It's made from 80 percent Sauvignon Blanc and 20 percent Semillon.

Cameron Hughes Evergreen Meritage 2006

A blend of what is best in Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Malbec. The flavor profile concentrates on currant, black cherry, blackberry and smoke. This is an opulent wine in the mouth at a great price point. Big finish with toasty French oak, dark chocolate and fresh roasted coffee.

1992 Simi Sendal, Sonoma County

Forward, fragrant and deep, with scents of spice, melon, citrus and fig and a well-integrated vanilla oak. Crisp and fresh, smooth and clean in the mouth, this wine is a blend of 75% Sauvignon Blanc and 25% Semillon.

Kendall Jackson Vitner's Reserve Meritage 2006

Kendall Jackson is one of the first wineries that Tim and Dawn Pimmel ever visited. They are still members of the KJ wine club. The 2006 Meritage is a great follow-up to the delicious 2004 and 2005 vintages. It has a similar aroma profile; blackberry, black licorice, chocolate and rich Bing cherry. A lasting finish full of flavor.

1992 Benziger Family Winery "A Tribute," Sonoma Mountain

Tim Pimmel describes Benziger as the coolest winery he's visited. The "Tribute" Meritage wines are produced in honor of winery patriarch Puno Benziger, who passed away in 1989. According to winery co-founder Mike Benziger, "These wines are the culmination of all the blood, sweat and tears my father put into the land." Tim met Mike during a tasting at Benziger and has a bottle of Tribute aging at home.

1993 Estancia White Meritage, Monterey County

Toasty oak dominates this blend of 71% Sauvignon Blanc and 29% Semillon, with a spicy apple fruit showing through.