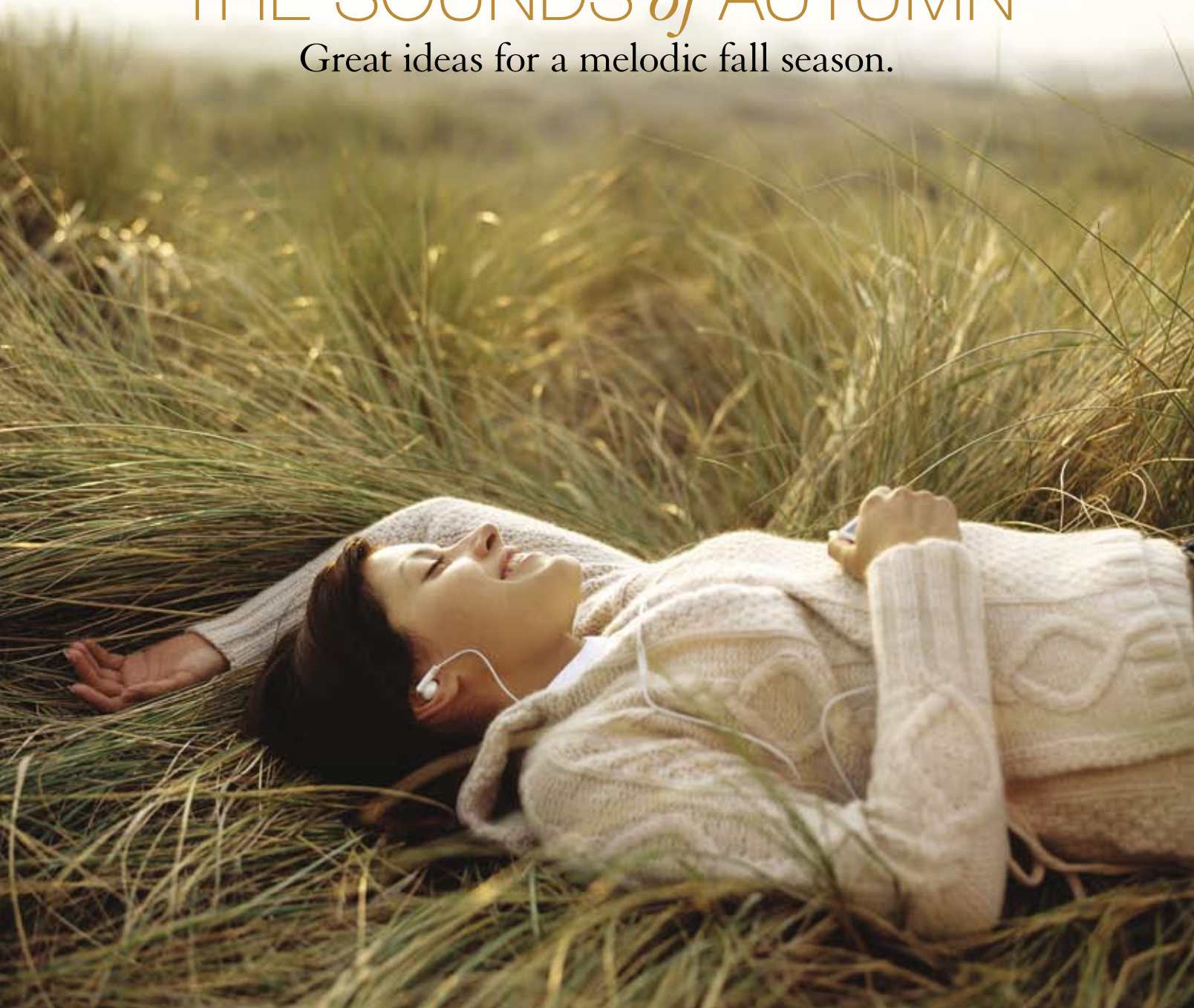


805 LIVING

OCTOBER 2009

THE SOUNDS *of* AUTUMN

Great ideas for a melodic fall season.



NEW RELEASES, PART 1

Grab these value-priced bottles for every-night entertaining.

AS HARVEST SEASON ROLLS THROUGH CALIFORNIA, vintners are releasing their latest vintages to make a little space. In fact, there are so many new releases out there, I'm going to need two columns in order to make a real dent in the inventory. This month, the focus is on new bottles that'll only set you back \$25 or less. (Check back in November for "New Releases, Part 2," which will feature splurge-worthy bottles over \$25.)



Clayhouse Vineyard 2008 Malbec, Paso Robles (\$15);

www.clayhousewines.com

This youthful red wine is a barbecue chef's dream. It doesn't sit back and let the meat take over; rather, the forward flavors of black pepper and dark berry, as well as the assertive tannins, practically grab the meat off the grill to get things going.

Daou Vineyards 2007 Paripaso Cabernet Sauvignon (\$16);

www.daouvineyards.com

After sitting in the glass for 10 minutes, this Paso Robles cab opened up into a soft and smooth cab with legs. Fine black and red fruits with some lingering juiciness that's perfect with a thick steak or roast beef. A nice price for a nice bottle of wine.

Lucas & Lewellen 2008 Riesling, Santa Barbara County (\$16); www.llwine.com

L&L calls this a "full-bodied" riesling. For me, that translates to full of flavor, because the richness of the varietal is definitely on display in this off-dry white. Of course, there is some sweetness, but the lush melon flavors produce great mouthfeel and keep it from becoming too cloying.



Pali Wine Company 2007 "Huntington" Pinot Noir Blend, Santa Barbara County (\$19); www.paliwineco.com

In 2005, Lompoc welcomed the Pali Wine Company, a boutique wine producer that sources grapes from many different areas of the West. Pali has an affinity for pinot noir, and its Huntington is a cuvée featuring fruit from different Santa Barbara County vineyards. Blended to show off the friendly, rounded side of pinot noir, this is very approachable, and very affordable.



Bianchi Winery 2008 Pinot Grigio, Santa Barbara County (\$21); www.bianchiwine.com

Although Bianchi is based in Paso Robles, the winery utilized high-quality fruit from Santa Barbara County to produce this lovely example of pinot grigio. It's lively and not too acidic, so it goes down smooth by itself on sunny days. The tropical hints and very subtle bouquet would also pair nicely with Asian dishes and dinner salads dressed with citrus.



Zaca Mesa 2005 Syrah, Santa Ynez Valley (\$22); www.zacamesa.com

Santa Ynez-based Zaca Mesa is dedicated to Rhône varietals, and this syrah truly shows such fidelity. Using estate-grown grapes, winemaker Clay Brock (who has since moved on to other ventures) fashioned a full-bodied red with deep, dark flavors—perfect for lamb chops, blackened fatty fish, or earthy mushroom dishes.



Vina Robles 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon, Huerhuero, Paso Robles (\$22); www.vinarobles.com

Very smooth, full-bodied, and structured with utmost care, this cab could go glass-to-glass with any from the Napa Valley. The tannins are ripe, the finish is lengthy, and the balance is superior.



Midnight Cellars 2006 Syrah "Nocturne,"

Paso Robles (\$24); www.midnightcellars.com

A very nice expression of the varietal, known for its youthful drinkability and its ability to age gracefully. Right now, this Nocturne is indeed dark, both in color

and rich flavor, but it doesn't eclipse spicy pizza toppings or herbed red sauces for pasta. It could be cellared for another five years.



Derby Vineyard 2007 "Fifteen 10" White Rhône Blend, Paso Robles (\$24); www.derbywineestates.com

Rhône reds often overshadow their white cousins, which is a shame. This blend of marsanne, roussanne, and viognier demonstrates the complexity and beauty of Rhône whites: aromatic and weighty, warm and refined. ■



GARY HOVLAND

The Armchair Oenophile®

CENTRAL COAST WINES MADE EASY.

By Anthony Head

Some people put away the white wines for the winter until it's okay to fashionably wear white again in the spring. I don't: I love drinking white wine all year long. In some respects, white wines are more versatile than reds because they're rarely heavy enough or complex enough to overpower the foods you pair them with. Most whites are produced to be enjoyed soon after their release date, so they have that bright, youthful taste of spring, which can be a boon to the colder, darker, wintry days.

But look—it's only October, so let's not get too maudlin. The thermometer is still gonna hit 90 degrees on occasion, and when it does I'll have a bottle of Beckmen Vineyards 2008 Estate Sauvignon Blanc already chilled in the fridge. It's intensely

flavored yet balanced with kiwi, grapefruit, and melon. Although sau-blanc is typically a good style of wine to drink on its own, I think this one is better with food: Its profile pairs with many seafood dishes (when they're not ladled with heavy sauces) along with chicken and pork. So, if you can eat white meat in the winter, you can also drink white wine. ■



Beckmen Vineyards 2008 Estate Sauvignon Blanc, Santa Ynez Valley (\$16)
www.beckmenvineyards.com