

The Washington Post

Some Makers Can't Be Labeled

By Karen Page and Andrew Dornenburg

April 16, 2008

When "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" was released in 2004, we almost skipped it. Jim Carrey? We immediately pictured the star's over-the-top, cartoonish persona and had a hard time believing he could credibly play a dramatic role. But he surprised us -- pleasantly.

Some winemakers are even more typecast than Hollywood actors. Say "Georges Duboeuf," and it's hard to think of anything other than Beaujolais, even though the leading exporter of French wines makes a wide array of both whites and reds.

At a recent preview of the Georges Duboeuf 2007 vintage wines, to be released in September, we dove into the reds almost instinctively. But when we went back to taste the whites a couple of hours later, we were surprised at how impressed we were -- and said as much to the "king of Beaujolais" himself and his son, Franck, who oversees operations for Les Vins Georges Duboeuf.

"I don't know why people are often so surprised to find how much they enjoy our whites," Franck Duboeuf responded with a laugh. "Our family has been in the [Pouilly-Fuisse] region for more than four centuries."

It shows. Although the 2007 Pouilly-Fuisse was still very young, it already exhibited great promise of rounding out into a beautifully elegant wine, much as the 2005 and 2006 Georges Duboeuf Pouilly-Fuisse (\$24) have done. Those crisp, full-bodied, fruity yet well-balanced wines with notes of almond and vanilla were Karen's food-friendly find of the week. We plan to keep a bottle or two on hand all spring and summer to pair with chicken, fish, pork, veal and turkey.

Later, curiosity about what other overlooked treasures we might be missing out on led us to sample whites from Jordan Winery, which makes a celebrated cabernet sauvignon. Andrew especially loved the rich complexity of the 2006 Jordan Russian River Valley



Chardonnay (\$30), which is fermented in French oak. Jordan's executive chef, Todd Knoll, who devises dishes to pair with the wines, recommends a potage Saint-Germain (pea soup) with Atlantic lobster with this one. But we enjoyed this creamy-bodied white with sauteed chicken in a lemon-butter sauce and with cheese ravioli in basil pesto sauce, the latter of which brought out some nice herbaceous qualities in the wine. (By the way, both of our picks this week were acidic enough to pair well with salads. Our secrets for a better pairing are to dress your greens with a softly acidic -- thus more wine-friendly -- champagne vinaigrette and to shave a little Parmesan cheese on top.)

Here are some other discoveries that play against type for each winemaker:

Dr. Konstantin Frank: Best known for its Riesling, Dr. Frank makes other crisp, refreshing whites ideal for spring sipping, including the unusual 2006 Dr. Konstantin Frank Rkatsiteli (\$20), which tastes like a blend of Riesling, Gewuerztraminer, Gruener Veltliner and New Zealand sauvignon blanc.