

2010 New World Wine Experience: Chefs' Favorite Wines Four Grand Award winners make their personal recommendations

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In another first for the Wine Experience, *Wine Spectator* invited four leading chefs in the United States to share their favorite wines with the audience in individual mini-seminars over the weekend. Each chef runs multiple restaurants; over the course of their careers, each has developed a passion and dedication for wine that led to at least one of their restaurants earning a *Wine Spectator* Grand Award—our highest honor for excellence in a restaurant wine list.

Choosing a single wine to present was not an easy task, acknowledged executive editor Thomas Matthews. “This is a very personal choice for them.”

Each of the chefs spoke about their personal love for wine, and how that developed and evolved, as well as how it influenced their cuisine and their restaurants’ wine programs. Below are excerpts from their explanations for why they chose their wines.

Charlie Palmer

Aureole in New York and Las Vegas



Camilla Sjodin

[Seghesio Zinfandel Alexander Valley Home Ranch 2008 \(92, \\$36\)](#)

Palmer is known as a Pinot Noir guy, but when he started Dry Creek Kitchen in Healdsburg, in the heart of wine country, his perspective began to broaden. “It wasn’t until I moved to Sonoma that I really began to understand Zinfandel,” he said. “Seghesio Home Ranch is a perfect expression of Zinfandel in my mind. He loves it for its big burst of juicy fruit and recommends matching with wild birds and other game. “When you drive by a vineyard several times a month and see where the wine comes from, that makes it special. When you get to know the family that makes the wine, that makes it special. ... It’s a thing of place.”

Michael Mina

Michael Mina and RN74 in San Francisco

[Quilceda Creek Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley 2007 \(94, \\$125\)](#)

Introduced to him by his longtime wine director Rajat Parr, Mina’s selection comes from an icon of his childhood home state. One day, they were holding a tasting of beef types and cuts to choose the menu for a new steak house, and Parr brought the Quilceda Creek Cabernet in as a foil. “This wine brought everything together, everything tasted different. Raj said it was a perfect steak wine. We ended up changing the entire meat program based on this wine. Then he told me it was from Washington state and I really fell in love.”



Camilla Sjodin



Kent Hanson

Gary Danko

Grand Award for Restaurant Gary Danko in San Francisco

[Captûre Sauvignon Blanc California Tradition 2009 \(91, \\$30\)](#)

Having worked in Sonoma wine country earlier in his career, Danko chose a new winery in Healdsburg, from the winemaking team of Denis and May-Britt Malbec, formerly of Château Latour. “They have a lot of passion and love. Like cooking, all of the ingredients of the world are great but you also need great technique and experience. ... This wine has structure, it has substance.” He recommends it with oysters and other shellfish, and has had success pairing it with a beet salad with goat cheese mousse (“the wine makes the goat cheese sing”) and even quail stuffed with foie gras and quinoa. He concludes, “This is a winery to look out for.”



Kent Hanson

Daniel Boulud

Grand Award for Restaurant Daniel in New York

[Domaine Roulot Bourgogne White 2008 \(NYR, \\$35\)](#)

Originally from Lyon, France, Daniel turned to Burgundy for a bit of the Old World. “I wanted to make sure the wine was affordable, from someone who was taking a lot of pride in making a simple wine, from a winemaker who spends the same energy and passion in making a simple wine as in making his *grand cru* or *premier cru*. This Bourgogne Blanc from Jean-Marc Roulot from the commune of Meursault is certainly one of the best examples of that. ... This is the largest production of Roulot. Jean-Marc is attached to this cuvée. This is what he wants you to have as an introduction to Meursault.”