

Each year, on St. Patrick's Day, my wife and I attend a small dinner party hosted by a couple who celebrate the Saint's feast day in a joyful manner. The order of the day is "family and friends," plenty of good food, and maybe a wee dram of Irish Whisky. This year was no exception.

As the time for dinner approached, we were asked to choose our wines. I saw that there were several selections, and one was a Cabernet Sauvignon called JOSH. I asked for the JOSH and – maybe it was my crazy palate – it was a perfect match with all of the food that was served. I had never tasted JOSH before; you can be sure that I will gladly do it again.

JOSH comes to us by way of Joseph Carr Winery. Joseph Carr is an award winning Sommelier, who set out on his own in 2005 to fulfill a dream of having his own wine operation, producing small batches of handcrafted wines. This venture was successful, so he created a second label called JOSH Cellars. (Josh is the name of his Father.) JOSH Cellars produces Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Legacy, which is a blend of red grapes, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot and Rose. Without exception all of the wines are wallet friendly, falling in the \$13-\$17 range. The wines must also enjoy nationwide distribution, as they are produced in California and reach us here in South Carolina.

PUBLIX

I have had an education over the last few years with wine in grocery stores. Grocery stores in Massachusetts, where I am from, do indeed have wine departments. However, they are much smaller in scale and do not carry anywhere near the selection as do the stores down here in the Southeastern States. Take Publix, for example: There are 1441 Publix stores in seven states. They are Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Alabama. Each store has a wine department. The Corporation mandates that the wine department manager of each store do his or her own buying. This is a huge concession to consumers; the manager is catering to their individual wants. In the case of common brands – brands that don't vary from one store to another – there is some price advantage, and the manager makes every effort to pass savings on to the customer. However, Publix will also go that extra mile to process special orders when they are able to do so.

One reason I use Publix as my example is that they were nominated by *Wine Enthusiast Magazine* in 2016 for Outstanding Service to the Consumer. The winner that year was Raley's. But I have to think Publix is pretty good to be able to compete at that level. We also have Bi-Lo, a regional Grocery Chain similar to Publix, and Kroger, a nationwide monster. Both have wine departments. Combine this with Costco and Wine World in Charleston and we should have some fun comparison shopping.

KING ESTATE

I call the King Estate "the one that almost got away." I was on a wine trip in the Willamette Valley in Oregon. On the last day, while trying to catch a flight back home, my wife suggested a quick stop at the King Estate. I was a little grumpy, so I suggested she go into the tasting room while I stayed in the car. Wrong decision! When she exited the tasting room she commented on how good the Pinot Noir was. Almost three years later, I attended the Grand Tasting at the Hilton Head Food and Wine Festival. I was advised by a friend to stop at the third table marked King Estate and ask for a wine that was *not* on display. I did as directed and OMG! It was the Pinot Noir, different vintage, that I had refused years earlier. All I can say is that it was a truly remarkable wine drinking experience. I have sung the praises of King Estate ever since. They also produce superior Pinot Gris and Viognier. The wines are a little difficult to get ahold of. You might be better off joining the King Estate Wine Club, which is very easy to do at www.kingestate.com

WINESPEAK

In the previous paragraph, I talked about "a truly remarkable wine drinking experience." That phrase may sound hyperbolic or snobbish, but it does happen. I experienced it in Nuit St. George with a 1993 Meo Camuzet, and once again in Washington State with a Reserve Wine from Chateau Ste. Michelle. On these two occasions, one a Pinot Noir and the other a Cabernet Sauvignon, the wine hit the palate with a force that was... truly remarkable.