

## Downtown market offers buys from France, Spain

By **Gail Appleson**

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Wednesday, Oct. 01 2008

One of my colleagues was having a particularly bad morning recently. It was about 10:30 a.m. and we were getting some coffee when she bemoaned the fact it was too early for a glass of wine. Well, it wasn't too early to start thinking about wine, and it doesn't take much to get me in that frame of mind.

So at lunchtime I thought I'd take a walk to City Grocers at 920 Olive Street and look around. It always amazes me how much wine that little shop has and that so much of it is reasonably priced.

The store's manager, Joe Fuchs, was standing next to the wine racks. I asked him for suggestions.

He said one of the store's most popular inexpensive whites was the 2006 Mâcon-Lugny "Les Charmes," a French Chardonnay priced at \$12.49. The wine is produced in the Mâconnais region of Burgundy. Lugny is a village within the Mâconnais known for producing some of its better wines.

If you dislike Chardonnay wines because you find them heavy and oaky, I urge you to give the Les Charmes a try. Mâcon wines are not anything like typical California Chardonnays.

The Les Charmes is not aged in oak. It's clean and crisp with green apple and lemon flavors that shine through without any interference. This is a delicious, refreshing wine that has an excellent balance of fruit, minerals and acidity. It makes a delightful aperitif and pairs well with lighter cuisines, such as seafood and chicken.

For a red, Fuchs recommended the 2006 Paso a Paso Tempranillo from Spain's La Mancha region, selling for \$9.99. While many people associate La Mancha with Don Quixote and windmills, it's also the largest wine region in the world. Reds produced in La Mancha have been improving over the past few years, and many are great values. The Paso a Paso falls into this category.

This is a medium-bodied red that's been aged in French oak for six months. It's an intense fruity red that tastes of plums and cherries and has a long spicy finish. I enjoyed the wine, although it would probably be a little softer after a year or two of aging. It's a great hamburger or pizza wine and would pair well with hearty stews.

gappleson@post-dispatch.com

---

If you enjoy reading about interesting news, you might like the 3 O'Clock Stir from STLtoday.com. Sign up and you'll receive an email with unique stories of the day, every Monday-Friday, at no charge.

Sign up at <http://newsletters.stltoday.com>

---