

This week's suggestions: a few from the Central Coast

The SAQ selection of wines from Santa Barbara County is, for the moment, quite limited. I would love to see, for instance, Bridlewood, Hitching Post, Star Lane and Cambria carried here. Others, such as Au Bon Climat, Calera and Beckmen, are available but in limited quantities. Here are a few options for the time being:

Contra 2009, Central Coast, Bonny Doon Vineyard, California red, \$22.85, SAQ # 11320587. While the carignan comes from the northern part of the Central Coast, there is some syrah in the blend from Bien Nacido in Santa Maria Valley. My friend John Szabo's critique of the wine? "It would be a disaster with scallops." Agreed, but this dark-berried, spice-filled and meaty red would be dreamy with a steak. Graham makes an extra-

ordinary 100-per-cent Bien Nacido syrah, which is not available in Quebec – hint, SAQ. Serve at 18C. **Drink now-2014. Food pairing idea:** pepper steak.

Syrah 2009, Central Coast, Qupé, California red, \$22.95, SAQ # 866335. Blended with a touch of warmer-climate syrah sourced from Paso Robles, which adds darker fruits and a touch of black olive, this is nonetheless one of the best examples of Central Coast syrah available in Quebec. Floral, raspberry and peppery, with an underlying acidity that keeps it so fresh. Walks that fine line between New World ease and Old World finesse. Serve at 18C. **Drink now-2012. Food pairing ideas:** pork roast, veal roasts with mushrooms.

Pinot Noir 2008, Central Coast, Calera, California red, \$28, SAQ # 898320. For you fans of California pinot, a very rich and juicy pinot noir that shows black cherry, raspberry and a hint of oak-driven spice on the finish. Still a touch of barrel to eat up, but for a Californian pinot, this shows wonderful restraint. Excellent. Serve at 16C. **Drink now-2013. Food pairing idea:** boeuf bourguignon.

Pinot Noir 2008, Santa Barbara County, Sanford, California red, \$43.75, SAQ # 10248528. While not the most complex, this gets the point across as to the potential of the region for pinot noir. Delicate fruit, earthy and mineral, with not too much oak getting in the way. Serve at 16C. **Drink now. Food pairing idea:** grilled salmon.

