

Inside Trader Joe's Podcast Transcript — Trader Joe's Wine Club: Super Summertime Sippers

[Light acoustic guitar-based background music begins.]

Matt: Help. I have an earworm, and I can't get rid of it.

Tara: An earworm? You mean like a catchy song that gets stuck in your head and repeats uncontrollably?

Matt: Yes, that.

Tara: Okay, sing it Matt, don't be shy.

Matt: (clears throat, singing to the tune of "Summer Lovin'" from the movie Grease)
♪Summer lovin', had me a glass♪.

Tara: (laughs) Matt, you mean blast. That Summer Lovin'. It's not just an earworm, that's a misheard lyric, which is also known as a mondegreen, a misinterpretation of a song's lyrics, often leading to humorous or nonsensical alternative meanings.

Matt: No, those lyrics make perfect sense because when I think of summer, I think of having a nice glass of wine.

Tara: Actually, we have two delicious, refreshing summer wines to recommend on this special Wine Club Mini Episode of *Inside Trader Joe's*.

[Theme music begins with two bells at a neighborhood Trader Joe's.]

Matt: All right let's call this meeting of the Trader Joe's Wine Club to order.

[Gavel banging.]

Tara: I'm Tara Miller.

Matt: And I'm Matt Sloan.

Tara: And we are joined by our friend, James, from the Trader Joe's wine team.

[Theme music ends.]

James: Hi, Tara. Hi, Matt.

[Light upbeat music begins.]

Matt: Hello. Thanks for coming back. You're such a great guest. I mean, you don't have to always bring bottles of wine, but it's nice that you do.

Tara: Always glad when you do.

Matt: James, what makes a perfect wine for sipping in the summertime?

James: Well, I've thought of a couple wines from our assortment that could be very fitting for summertime. One white, one red. For the red, it's a new wine to our assortment. For the white, I thought it was really refreshing and balanced and could see it pairing with a lot of different food that would make sense in the summertime. I think summertime could call for wines that are more crisp and refreshing versus rich and heavier.

Matt: So that winter coat metaphor, it might actually work. Something light and airy, not something so comfy and cozy maybe.

James: Yeah.

Tara: I want to get into the wines. I think maybe we start with the white.

Matt: So when we introduce a product to our stores, to the crew, we'll often put together a bit of information. And we poetically call these product information sheets.

[Music transition.]

Matt: Terre Del Casone Toscana Vermentino is a vibrant white wine from the sun-drenched hills of Tuscany, where Vermentino is one of the few white grapes that's perfectly acclimated to the Mediterranean climate. It loves sea breezes and sunlight and walks on the beaches. And in return it provides minerality and brisk acidity resulting in a refreshing crispness.

[Light applause.]

Tara: Well, that sounds delightful.

Matt: It does. I hope it lives up to this write-up.

Tara: I am not super familiar with Vermentino.

James: We thought Vermentino was a great wine to add. It's part of an effort to really offer different white wines from Italy that could be enjoyable to learn about as a customer.

Tara: I think Pinot Grigio is actually a really great place to start because when people think Italian white wine, people generally think Pinot Grigio, which is really light, really crisp, really pale in color. How is Vermentino, and this Vermentino in particular, how is it different from Pinot Grigio?

James: It's different in a couple of ways. If a customer enjoys Sauvignon Blanc or some other crisp white wines, this could be a great alternative to that crisp profile. Pinot Grigio can have a spectrum of flavors and crispness levels. There's different regions where it's being grown and produced. But this Vermentino and a lot of historical areas where Vermentino came from, are all around the Mediterranean Sea. So Tuscany has a lot of inland vineyards, but also some

exposure towards the coastal area. I think some of that comes through in the wine's profile with some elements of salinity and minerality. Connects back to where it's being produced.

Matt: I think this is such a nice invitation to try something new. And to be clear, we certainly did not invent or discover Vermentino. This has been grown and turned into wine for a very long time. Do you know, is it a grape that's only found in Italy?

James: There are some other areas where it's grown and if you continued from Sardinia to the island of Corsica, you might find some Vermentino under a slightly different name. Same is true in southern France, so Provence area into Languedoc. It's also found in some parts of California, even Australia.

Tara: Okay. I think we should try it. Let's break open a bottle.

[Squeaky sound of a cork being pulled out of a bottle.]

Matt: It's like the haunted cork.

Tara: (laughs)

[Popping off cork. Pouring wine into glasses.]

Matt: Don't spill it on my pants, James.

Tara: (laughs) In our notes on our product sheet, it's straw yellow color with greenish reflections. And you know what? That's very, very well explained. I don't think it's...

Matt: It is pale.

Tara: Yeah.

Matt: It is pale.

Tara: It is. But it's like a pale straw yellow color.

Matt: Sure.

James: With that light color, I think there's also connection with the light and vibrant profile that you're tasting. I find it really zesty and really crisp. This is the 2023 vintage. We're about to transition into the 2024, but this is still tasting really fresh. And I find the acidity level to be really pleasant and kind of intense.

Tara: I would have that with a chicken sandwich, like grilled chicken off the grill, and serve this. I would also have that with a really nice roasted vegetable salad. I was surprised by how full flavored the wine was because the color is very light. And it's still very crisp and has a really nice finish, but it is more full-flavored than I was expecting, which is a nice change from what my expectation for a light-colored Italian white wine.

Matt: This has enough body or lingering flavors to hold up to some stronger flavors, so grilled things would work.

Tara: Yeah.

Matt: You could go like fresh, whole grilled sardines, but you could even just go with a tin of grilled sardines and some baguette and some fruit and some things here. This is pretty open-ended and the flavor, while maybe bigger, if you will, than a classic Pinot Grigio, the flavors are not radically different. So if you're a fan of Pinot Grigio, I think you would like this as something that could hold up to some stronger flavors in what you're eating, what you're pairing it with.

James: Yeah, I definitely think it calls for some seafood, could be grilled or roasted fish with some vegetables, as well. Chicken tacos, fish tacos.

[Music transition.]

Matt: I think that sounds great because you could have any range of salsa type of thing from a freshly made coarsely chopped tomato thing to something more pureed. This would work really well with that.

Tara: I think a fruit salsa would be really good on fish tacos with this wine, like a pineapple or a mango or something like that. It's a really striking bottle. It has an orange capsule at the top and the label has a really pretty blue seashell on it.

James: While the seashell may initially make you think of a beach or the coastline, a lot of these vineyards at one point were part of the sea. And when I visited the producer behind this wine, he showed me a slice of the ground where you could literally see fossilized seashells very easily.

Matt: It's wild because those seashells would turn into trace minerals, which are taken up by the vines and then put into the grapes all by natural means, of course. But that's that minerality that you were talking about. It's actually some form of calcium coming from those seashells.

Tara: It's \$7.99 a bottle. It could be more in some areas based on costs that are outside of our control, but \$7.99 a bottle. This is a really impressive wine.

James: Compared to a lot of competitors where almost half of what a typical Vermentino is selling for.

Matt: This is an interesting opportunity just to try something different, but it's not a radical departure. It's still comfortable. It's not going to push anyone's concept of what wine could or should be. It's just different enough.

Tara: Obviously you want to drink this chilled, but you don't want it to be super, super cold. So if you take it out of your fridge, maybe wait half an hour and you'll get more of those flavors. If it's really, really cold, you'll just miss out on a lot of the flavor.

James: Yeah, I agree. That's very true.

Tara: Let's move to red because I think a lot of people don't think about red wine as a summer wine and so let's disabuse them of that notion right now.

Matt: Let the disabusing begin.

James/Tara: (laughs)

James: For that reason, I chose a Pinot Noir today and it's a new wine in our assortment coming from Oregon. Thinking about summertime rather than a heavy cab or Zinfandel or red blend, I think Pinot Noir opens the door for enjoyment in the warmer months.

Tara: Okay.

Matt: Is there anything about Pinot Noir grown in Oregon that you think makes it particularly well suited to this time of year?

James: Yeah. I think the Pinot Noir in Oregon, especially Willamette Valley which is where a lot of wines are typically coming from, might have more of an old world Burgundian style, similar to those from Burgundy region of France or a little different from California, a little more restrained on some of the fruit intensity. And it's really well-balanced and structured even though this is coming from a different region, the Columbia Valley in Oregon, which is slightly more north. There's really great balance in the wine; lighter style compared to bigger reds like cab.

Matt: And you have a different climate, and you have less protracted hot days, fewer of them. And so the hang time, the time that the grapes are on the plant, on the vines, just different right? They don't develop as many sugars so that they tend to be lighter, lower in alcohol. And looking at it right now, it is a classic Pinot Noir color. It's translucent. You can see almost all the way through to the other side of the glass, different from some of the Petite Sirahs or the cabs that are just almost opaque. They're so darkly pigmented.

[Cork popping. Pouring wine into glasses.]

Tara: That does taste like a summertime wine. It's a really smooth, ...

James: Mm-hmm.

Tara: ...easy drinking wine, but there's so much flavor happening. And even after I've tasted it, that flavor is still filling my palate. It's really, really nice.

James: This area gets a lot of sunshine, which connects back to the name on the label, as well.

Matt: That's why we named it sunshine. It's all making sense.

Tara: This wine is made entirely from grapes from a single vineyard.

James: That is correct. This vineyard is named Sunshine Mountain Vineyard. It is part of the Columbia Valley area of Oregon, really at the northern end of the state and right on the Columbia River. On the other side of the river is the state of Washington. I think that that river influence helps these grapes develop in a really full way.

Tara: The Sunshine Mountain Vineyard Pinot Noir is in a bottle with a yellow capsule and a giant sun coming up or perhaps setting over a mountain. What are you pairing with this wine?

James: This is another versatile wine. It has some flexibility. I think it could go really well with one of our pork tenderloins that we have in stores, potentially with some roasted or grilled mushrooms, as well.

Tara: A big piece of salmon straight from the grill. Maybe I put on a cedar plank before I put it on the grill.

James: Sign me up for that, as well. I'm getting hungry.

Tara: Okay.

Matt: I think any kind of fish. I'm a big fan of letting what you like by way of taste, work with whatever you want to pair, so a red wine with a piece of fish is totally exciting and acceptable from my point of view.

Tara: That'd be a great wine with a burger with one of our new pretzel buns.

Matt: I would do those turkey burgers with the peppers and onions.

James: Yeah, I think even though it's a lighter red, there's really great balance and structure. The tannins and acidity could open up the door for a lot of pairings.

Tara: Being a single vineyard wine, it's a little more elevated in its provenance. Where it comes from is much more important to how the flavor comes together.

James: I think it also speaks to the control and focus on quality that's going into it. Even though it's a new wine in our assortment, we're planning to continue offering it throughout the year and beyond the summer. We'll know where it's coming from forever.

Matt: We were talking about temperature. I think this Pinot Noir, if it were at what's maybe talked about as cellar temperature, like something around 60 degrees and you're outside it's summer and it's warmer than that, this would feel really refreshing.

Tara: If you're having a 4th of July barbecue and you're looking for a wine possibility. We have two of them here.

Matt: I love this. Thank you so much.

Tara: James, once again, thank you so very much for coming and talking to us.

James: Always happy to join you and bring some bottles with me.

[Transition to closing music.]

Matt: The current Trader Joe's Wine Club hot summer 2025 recommendations are...

[Dinging of a glass.]

James: Terre Del Casone Toscana Vermentino.

[Dinging of a glass.]

James: And Sunshine Mountain Vineyard Pinot Noir.

Tara: We'll have another Trader Joe's Wine Club Mini Episode for you soon.

Matt: And more *Inside Trader Joe's* episodes to tell you about. All kinds of Trader Joe's products, and sharing the stories behind them.

Tara: Until then, thanks for listening.

Matt: And thanks for listening.

James: And have a great summer.