

Oriel brand consistently hits it out of park

There's a new team in town, and these Boys of Summer have been honing their game with a little warm-weather spring training.

Oriel wines are a hot new brand with a unique story. Unveiled in 2006 by John Hunt, the company has sought out more than 20 established and respected wine makers in more than nine countries. What they bring to the table are years of experience and a specific knowledge of the wines they are making. As a result, consumers are presented with high-quality wines that are true and indicative to the region where they are made. The Oriel brand continues to grow and offers some new arrivals this spring.

I've covered a few of these ringers in the past and done some play-by-play analysis, but never before have I seen a new team hit like these fence busters. You won't find any Bush Leaguers around this diamond, and with a skipper like John Hunt, you can bet a big bag of peanuts that these players will be swinging for the fences.

Check out this new lineup:

n 2006 Oriel Mana Sauvignon Blanc

The lead-off batter for the Oriels is the 2006 Oriel Mana Sauvignon Blanc. This power-hitting first baseman from the South Island of New Zealand always comes through in the clutch. With aromas of Granny Smith apple and a tart grapefruit flavor that cleanses the palate, it's no coincidence that broadcasters refer to him as the Kiwi Express. Refreshing and solid, this Oriel is like manna from heaven.

n 2004 Oriel II Gattopardo Nero d'Avola

Every team needs a sure thing, and the Oriels have it in their wily veteran catcher. The 2004 Oriel II Gattopardo Nero d'Avola is deep in texture and sophisticated beyond his years. Although this tobacco-chewing southern Italian has a touch of that tough-guy image, you won't catch him calling any bean balls or brush backs. Instead, he's best suited for some grilled pork tenderloin and a dinner party with good friends. Throw in a little zesty sauce to go along with him and he'll be hitting plenty of downtowners in the Fall Classic.

n Oriel Jasper Pinot Noir

The Oriel Jasper Pinot Noir is one of those go-to players that you can rely on from one vintage (I mean year) to the next. In fact, this slick-fielding shortstop can really flash some leather. From the west coast, this Pinot abounds with black cherry flavors and a well structured body. With its solid and balanced frame, this Oriel won't be caught off kilter. Plus, his versatility as both a food wine and an anyday sipper also makes it one heck of a switch hitter.

n 2005 Oriel Palio Montepulciano d'Abruzzo

On deck is the Oriel's golden glove second baseman, better known as Palio the Montepulciano d'Abruzzo. The 2005 Oriel Palio is intense. Loaded with red berry flavors and smooth tannins, this award-winning player is often out late on the club scene and makes the big money in the line-up. He has the gun and the prowess to throw out most aspiring base hitters. Best of all, this magician for a fielder can also do some swinging from the heels. Pair it up with gamey meats, aged steak, lamb or wild boar.

n 2005 Oriel Iconic Bordeaux

If ever there were a fireman to come out of the dugout and close the deal, then it would have to be the 2005 Oriel Iconic Bordeaux. This crafty southpaw can throw some heat and just mows 'em down one after another. This icon successfully blends together cabernet and merlot. This wine could one day be as iconic as baseball's Goose Gossage. Just don't get any on your mustache.

n 2004 Oriel Palatina Riesling

And if the game of life takes you into extra innings, be sure to call on the master of fundamentals, the 2004 Oriel Palatina Riesling. This Mosel River kid has a clean, drier-style finish with faint hints of honeysuckle. He's a precision pinch hitter that knows as much about finding the gaps in the outfield as he does about finesse and style. The Palatina Riesling will roll through your palate like a panzer through the French countryside.

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