

## **WINE Talk: August 2015**

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 55

**Welcome to the August 2015 newsletter which follows a dismal performance on our part over the last couple of months where our newsletter has not eventuated due to pressure of other work. Next time, we will try to do better and get a September newsletter out early.**

**We are very excited about the arrival of our latest container and this edition of the newsletter contains a number of offers that have wines from new producers and new wines from existing producers.**

**We have included in the newsletter a story about the Côte des Bar Champagne which is an emerging area in the very south of Champagne. We have also written a story about how rosé is produced and how it should be drunk all year round. And we have a short article of the Terret grape variety found in one of the special wines this month.**

**This month we have six special packs and a secret pack (buried in the text) for you. We are delighted to offer these packs as they represent some of the best wines from our many new producers as well as some exciting new wines from existing producers.**

**We start with a New Arrivals Value Pack and a New Arrivals from New Producers Pack which give a good introduction to the styles of wines that we brought into Australia in our latest container. As we get more producers from the emerging Languedoc region in southern France we are happy to promote the wonderful reds of this region via our Southern Reds New Arrivals Pack that sees wines from Julien Peyras, Ivo Ferreira and Mylène Bru. We also have a wonderful selection of rosé wines in our Rosé Pack.**

**We have also included a pack which we have called “Wines it makes us nervous not to have around 6 pack” which is comprised of currently available wines we’re keeping close at hand. And finally we have assembled a pack of six different Champagnes from Roland Piollot who is releasing some amazing wines at present.**

**For a full list of wines currently in stock and their prices see:**

**[http://www.livingwines.com.au/Catalogue/Buy\\_wines.htm](http://www.livingwines.com.au/Catalogue/Buy_wines.htm)**

**There is a link to our order form for these packs and any other wines at the end of this newsletter. But there’s no need to use the order form. Just send us an email listing the wines and/or packs you would like to order if that suits you better. We’ll confirm the price by return email before processing your order.**

## Success for SoulFor Wine 2015

The Soul For wine event held in Melbourne in early July was an outstanding success.



This was an event especially celebrating wines from producers who do not use sulphur at any time in the making of their wines. There were wines from Australia, Italy, France and Spain plus a few others such as New Zealand and Switzerland.

Some of Australia's most exciting chefs were there to cook dishes to sustain the crowds through the afternoon and evening (think Luke Burgess, David Moyle, Mat Lindsay, O Tama Carey, Josh Murphy and Morgon McGlone). Attendees would buy a dish and a bottle of un-sulphured natural wine from the bar and settle in to enjoy the experience.

We were delighted to see the level of conviviality in the sprawling space with people wandering around swapping bottles and discussing the individual wines with enthusiasm and passion.

Congratulations Giorgio di Maria, Cam Burton and Josh Murphy. We very much look forward to this event again next year.

## Wines of the month:



We decided to nominate two wines this month as our "Wines of the Month". The reason is that a number of our clients have been asking for "bigger reds" and, as you know, we usually steer away from the heavier red wines towards the more delicate end of the spectrum.

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However in the latest shipment we have brought in some wines that combine elegance with strength which we quite like. These wines are from the Languedoc where wines of just about every style are produced due to the incredible variability of the local climate.

So, the two wines that we have chosen are one from Julien Peyras called Coste Fere which is made from two-thirds Syrah (Shiraz) and one third of very low-yielding Carignan. This is a rich, warm, spicy, big wine with loads of charm that weighs in at 14.8%. It does have the effect of slowing down our rate of drinking though, which is slightly disturbing.

The second wine is also an absolute stunner. It is the Mylène Bru Vin de France Bordigue 2012 which is made from 100% Grenache grown on clay and limestone soils with large red Villafranchian pebbles near the village of Saint Pargoire in the hills behind the village of Sète. This wine is very much like a dry Banyuls red with notes of chocolate and candied fruit and a very long finish.

We have made a secret pack of these wines with three of each in the six pack. And we will give you the normal 15% discount off a newsletter pack.

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$255 but the pack price is \$216.75 including freight. To order, ask for the Wines of the Month Special 6 pack!**

## Rootstock Sydney 2015 – 27-29 November 2015



Australia's biggest celebration of natural wines, Rootstock, is back again this year with a new date late in November 2015. It's at CarriageWorks again and promises to be bigger and better than ever. As well as public tasting sessions with Australian and overseas producers, it includes the Rootstock Night Festival, and Rootstock Food Market, featuring chefs partnering with producers of sustainable delicious food, and new pavilions for indigenous food, cheeses, Slow Food Australia, and coffee. The orange bar and sake bar will be back again, with more extended hours and there will also be many talks, panel discussions, with tastings, and even arguments.

## Pack 1: New Arrivals Good Value 6 pack



This pack is comprised entirely of new wines or new vintages that have arrived recently. It is also a pack that represents excellent value for money.

**Terres Dorées (Jean Paul Brun) Beaujolais Cuvée Première 2014** – The Jean-Paul Brun Cuvée Première is released under the Beaujolais appellation and is 100% Gamay. Jean-Paul does not use the common carbonic maceration technique so widely practiced in Beaujolais, nor does he use the commercial yeast 71B which is also widely used. Instead he uses Burgundian methods of destemming and maceration and the fermentation uses only natural yeasts. This wine is produced from younger vines (about twenty years old) but is still a beautiful wine that is drinking very nicely right now.

**Domaine Saint Nicolas Gammes En May 2014** – The Domaine Saint Nicolas Gamme en May is a light, refreshing and delicious pure Gamay red wine. It is great for summer drinking served slightly chilled. It has less filtering than other Domaine Saint Nicolas wines, which gives it a meaty texture that belies its apparent light juiciness. Thierry Michon does not always make a pure Gamay, but the quality of the fruit in 2014 was, again, exceptional. Because this wine is very natural you might find quite a bit of sediment in the bottle - but it doesn't matter, this wine is really, really fresh and delicious.

**Henri Milan Milan Nouveau 2014** – Although it doesn't appear in the name it does on the label - this is another wine from the Milan team which has no added sulphur. This wine is mainly comprised of Grenache and Syrah but it also has a little Mourvèdre added. This is a delicious wine.

**Cause Marines AOC Gaillac Blanc les Greilles 2014** – Les Greilles is a classy white wine blended from local Gaillac grapes Mauzac and Loin-de-l'Oeil with a little Muscadelle thrown in. We perhaps do not give this wine full praise. To us it is an amazing wine of great complexity and with nuances that make it a perfect wine to match with a very wide range of foods. The grapes come from a number of low-yielding parcels in their stunning vineyards with the maximum yield being a low 35 hectolitres per hectare. The low yield leads to increased fruit intensity that shines through in this wine.

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**Hervé Villemade (Domaine du Moulin) Vin de Pays du Val de Loire Sauvignon Blanc 2014** – This wine is a pure Sauvignon Blanc from Hervé Villemade that belies its moderate price tag. He does great things with Sauvignon Blanc and this wine is no exception. It is classified as a Vin de Pays because the Cheverny appellation requires that white wines are blends of Sauvignon Blanc and either Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc or Menu Pineau. This is an excellent wine for teaming with charcuterie, chicken dishes, fish and a wide range of vegetable-based dishes.

**Hervé Villemade (Domaine du Moulin) Bulles Rosé 2011** – We have been able to secure a small allocation of sparkling wines from Hervé Villemade. They are presented simply with attractive labels and crown-seal closures (just like a beer bottle). These are ideal summer quaffing wines. This one is a blend of 50% Pinot Noir and 50% Pineau d'Aunis.

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$177 but the pack price is **\$150.45** including freight.**

## Pack 2: New Arrivals from New Producers 6 Pack



Each of the wines in this pack are new wines from new producers who we are just starting to bring in to the country.

**Laurent Lebled La Sauvignonne 2014** – This wine is an entry level Sauvignon that has been treated with great respect during the winemaking process. Laurent will never release a wine that he is not happy with. In fact, we had to convince him that we treated his wines well in bringing them to Australia. We were able to explain that there was complete traceability of our wines from the moment they were picked up at the winery until they arrived in our temperature-controlled warehouse in Australia. This Sauvignon Blanc has been produced from organically-grown grapes and then fermented naturally so that the wine retains the true flavour of the Sauvignon Blanc grape rather than the "tropical" flavours introduced via commercial yeasts.

**Domaine L'Escarpolette (Ivo Ferreira) Le Blanc 2014** – The first time we tried this wine it was electrifying! It is made from Muscat à Petits Grains and Terret and Grenache Blanc which have been left on skins for a short time and some of the white juice from Grenache Noir to produce a mellow, orange wine. It definitely exhibited spicy notes for us such as cinnamon as well as some hazelnut nuances which is often produced by mild oxidative treatment. There was also some fenugreek notes that signals the presence of sotolon which is a characteristic that we only find in naturally fermented wines. While there has been some skin contact the wine is not the slightest bit tannic (such as we find in the skin contact wines from Friuli in Italy where the skins are left in contact for much longer), in fact it was a fresh, lively wine with a bright finish. Overall, a very compelling and complex wine!

**Domaine Les Grandes Vignes Anjou Villages Varenne de Combres 2013** – This 100% Chenin Blanc has been made from grapes picked from vines that are at least 20 years old. The vineyard is covered with soil derived from schist. It is very close to the famous Layon river. The grapes were pressed lightly under low pressure and then underwent a light racking before fermenting on their lees in oak barrels. Maturation for 20 months in large barrels to produce a complex white wine of elegance and power.

**Laurent Lebled Vin de France Ça C'est Bon 2014** – This is the wine that we have been following for some years. We have come across it a number of times in fashionable wine bars and bottle shops in Paris on our perambulations through that wonderful city. We have always loved its juicy, gulpable qualities and the fine winemaking that sits behind it. However our paths never crossed until just after the Dive Bouteille event in Angers this year where we had the opportunity to drive along the Loire levees to Savigny-en-Véron which is sandwiched between the famous wine villages of Saumur and Chinon almost exactly where the La Vienne tributary meets the Loire. It is an incredibly juicy, smashable Gamay but with depth and elegance wrapped up in a fine package of flavour and length on the palate. This is a perfect wine at a great price for a wine that has been made with such care and dedication with such beautiful grapes. Laurent does not add any sulphur to his wines!

**Julien Peyras Vin de France Lo Tarral 2013** – The Lo Tarral, which is the Occitan name of the local north wind that blows down from the hinterland mountains behind Montpellier is made from the trinity favoured in this area, namely Grenache, Carignan and Syrah. The yield for the Syrah is a low 30 hectolitres per hectare and for the Carignan and Grenache is a miniscule 15 hectolitres per hectare thus producing a wine of intense concentration. These grapes are vinified separately in stainless steel containers with pigeage (punch down) occurring daily. The wines are then matured in separate containers. They are blended together just before bottling. This is a delicious, earthy and interesting red wine with strength and wonderful heady aromas.

**Domaine L'Escarpolette (Ivo Ferreira) La Petite Crapule 2014** – At our tasting in Montpellier when we caught up with Ivo, he explained that he had named this wine "cheeky boy" because young Carignan vines have a reputation for being troublesome. This wine has 25% of grapes picked from young Carignan vines and the rest is made up of Grenache. The Carignan vines grow on a small plateau with clay and gravel soils in the commune of Lagamas which lies about 30 kilometres inland from the city of Montpellier in the Languedoc. He explained that he allows carbonic maceration to occur for about ten days and then allows the natural yeasts to take over and finish the fermentation. The vibrant colour is a deep red and the wine has notes of red fruits, spice, cocoa and even hints of licorice on the finish. There is a really nice balance to this wine with delicate tannins rounding out the fruit flavours.

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$241 but the pack price is \$204.85 including freight.**

### Pack 3: Southern Reds New Arrivals 6 pack



The Languedoc is one of the largest wine producing areas in the world. The last figures we saw showed that the Languedoc produces more wine than the entire continent of Australia. It is therefore obvious that there is a lot of bad, commercial wine produced there.

However it is also the case that over the past ten years many enthusiastic young winemakers have moved to this region due to the fantastic terroir available and also because land is much, much cheaper than in places such as Burgundy and Champagne.

We have been very lucky to start working with some of the very best young producers from this area such as Axel Prüfer, Mylène Bru, Olivier Cohen and Ivo Ferreira among others.

**Domaine L'Escarpolette (Ivo Ferreira) Jeux de Mains 2013** – The Jeux de Mains is an amazing wine made from carefully selected grapes from a very old vineyard of Cinsault where the vines, which are more than sixty years old, grow in soils that are a mix of clay and limestone. The whole grapes undergo 10 days of maceration before the juice is transferred to old Bordeaux barrels to mature for one and a half years.

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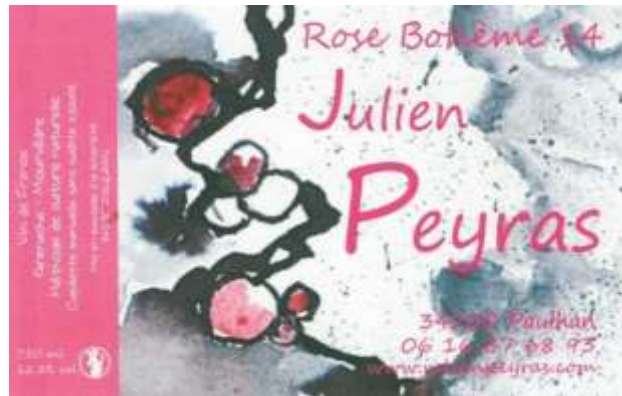
**Julien Peyras Costefere 2012** – Costefere is a blend of Syrah and Carignan (with twice as much Syrah as Carignan) with the age of the Syrah being around 30 years and the Carignan around an astounding 70 years. The yield from the old Carignan is a low, low 15 hectolitres per hectare making the juice very, very concentrated. The wine is fermented naturally and then transferred to three year old 400 litre barrels that have rid themselves of the nasty wood chemicals such as lignins, where it matures for 18 months. Very little of this wine is produced so we are lucky to have our small allocation.

**Mylène Bru Vin de France Rita 2013** – The Rita is Mylène's latest wine and is named after her Andalusian grandmother and also St Rita the saint of desperate causes! The wine is made from 100% Carignan from 50 year old vines which is not unusual in her area because it is quite close to Saint Chinian where Carignan is revered. The grapes were hand-picked in the cool of the morning and placed in 10 kilogram baskets to preserve the quality of the fruit. The juice was macerated for approximately 20 days to extract the deep colour of this wine which then matured for 10 months in tanks before being bottled with a very small amount of sulphur this year.

**Mylène Bru Vin de France 20/13 2013** – This wine is a surprise. Mylène has a small plot of Marselan which is normally blended in to her Far Ouest cuvee. Marselan is an interesting grape variety because it has only recently come into existence. It was bred by ampelographer Paul Truel according to Vitis International with the parent grapes being Cabernet Sauvignon and Grenache. Cabernet Sauvignon was chosen because of the finesse it adds to a wine and Grenache due to its ability to survive in hot climates and also due to its disease resistance. The stock used to produce the new grape variety was special phylloxera-safe rootstock. This is an elegant wine with deep colour and very gentle, soft tannins and a wonderful flavour profile.

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$255 but the pack price is \$216.75 including freight.**

Pack 4: Rosé 6 pack



Here are six beautiful rosé wines that are drinking very nicely right now. If you would like to know more about how rosé wines can be made, see the story later in this newsletter. These are all new arrivals from our recent container.

**Jean-Paul Brun Beaujolais Rosé Rosé de Folie 2014** – This is the quintessential Jean-Paul Brun wine! And once again there is a stunning label and attractive bottle to enhance the experience. The Rosé d'Folie is a light pinkish-orange tinted wine that gives raspberry on the palate, an appealing freshness and a nice lingering finish. This wine was fermented in tanks and has seen no wood at any time, therefore it remains fresh and vibrant and perfect for easy drinking. There has been no carbonic maceration as Jean-Paul prefers Burgundian methods of wine making.

**Les Vignes d'Olivier Vin de France Rosé 2014** – This is an absolutely stunning biodynamic rose made from Grenache and Cinsault grapes grown in Olivier Cohen's 5 hectares of vineyards at Argelliers not too far inland from the Languedoc city of Montpellier. The rose is absolutely stunning. He makes this wine by macerating the Grenache for 10 days (to extract some colour from the skins to provide the beautiful pink-orange colour to the wine and then by direct pressing the Cinsault. As with all of his wines this one has no sulphur added at any time.

**Domaine Saint Nicolas Fiefs Vendéens Reflets Rose 2014** – The Domaine Saint Nicolas Rose is a delicate, pale pink perfumed beauty that is quite savoury with a dry finish making it perfect as an aperitif. The wine is predominantly Pinot Noir although there is a touch of Gamay and Groslot Gris as well to provide some additional complexity.

**Julien Peyras Vin de France Rose Bohême 2014** – This deep pink, delicious rosé is comprised of Grenache and Mourvèdre two of the most popular reds grapes used in the Languedoc. The age of the Grenache is 35 years and the Mourvèdre is slightly younger at 30 years. The yield from the vines is quite low at 30 hectolitres per hectare, but this means that there is more flavour concentrated in the grapes. The skins were macerated for about 12 hours to extract the colour to a medium pink colour. The result is a juicy, deeply-flavoured and enticing rose of considerable charm.

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**Hervé Villemade Cheverny Rosé 2014** – This delightful rosé wine is made from a blend of equal parts of Pinot Noir and Gamay which are crushed and fermented and matured in tanks prior to bottling. It is a fresh, lively wine that is perfect for drinking at any time of the year. These two grape varieties marry so well in the bottle.

**Domaine Milan Sans Soufre Ajouté Rosé 2014** – Each year recently, Henri has crafted a very interesting rosé wine by direct pressing of Mourvèdre, Syrah and Grenache. This rosé is also a wine with no added sulphur. It has a vibrant colour for a Provençal rosé and a long lingering flavour in the mouth. It is perfect for drinking with a meal or as an aperitif. This is an exceptional rosé of great character for which there was only a tiny allocation for Australia this year.

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$195 but the pack price is \$165.75 including freight.**

Pack 5: Wines it makes us nervous not to have around 6 pack



Most of our wine is safely locked away in a temperature-controlled warehouse a good distance away from us. It's at least 20 minutes by car, not far from Hobart's wonderful MONA, and 20 minutes is a long trip in Hobart. It means anything out there is not available for spur-of-the-moment drinking. Of course we have a small stock that's a bit more accessible, both for us and for anyone in Hobart wanting to place a late afternoon emergency order. It a mixture - some bin ends, some grabbed because it was the last bottle in a carton, some with dodgy "artisan" labels that aren't quite good enough to sell and, of course, there are always a few wines that we feel nervous if we don't have close at hand. They vary depending on what's in stock but this pack contains a few of the wines that, at the moment, we always have nearby, ready for any occasion that might arise.

**Jean-Pierre Robinot L'Opera des Vins Fêtebulles 2014** – This is a fine example of the wine genre known as Petillant Naturels - wines that are fermented once in the bottle and then sometimes disgorged to release the dead yeast and sometimes not, depending on the winemaker. This wine has been disgorged after being aged for 12 months in the bottle and topped up with the same wine. It is made from 100% Chenin Blanc that has had no dosage (added sugar), therefore is quite dry. The wine is incredibly delicate with very fine bubbles and a superb, lingering finish, reflecting the careful aging that the wine has undergone. Clear and bright in the glass, this pet nat is a treat for anyone who appreciates this genre of wine.

**Le Petit Gimios Vin de France Rosé 2013** – This wine is made from at least the following red grapes Cinsault, Alicante, Grenache, Carignan and Aramon, and the white grape Muscat a Petit Grains. This rose this year is a very robust pink that opens slowly in the glass but lingers on the palate for a long time. We love the mouth feel and we love the layers of interest contributed by the Carignan which thrives in this region and the very rare, native Aramon which is rarely found in wines these days.

**Domaine d'Escarpolette Vin de France Le Blanc 2014** – The first time we tried this wine it was electrifying! It is made from Muscat à Petits Grains and Terret and Grenache Blanc which have been left on skins for a short time and some of the white juice from Grenache Noir to produce a mellow, orange wine. It definitely exhibited spicy notes for us such as cinnamon as well as some hazelnut nuances which is often produced by mild oxidative treatment. There was also some fenugreek notes that signals the presence of sotolon which is a characteristic that we only find in naturally fermented wines. While there has been some skin contact the wine is not the

slightest bit tannic (such as we find in the skin contact wines from Friuli in Italy where the skins are left in contact for much longer), in fact it was a fresh, lively wine with a bright finish. Overall, a very compelling and complex wine!

**Philippe Bornard Côtes du Jura Les Marnes 2011** – This wine will grab the attention of the oxidative crowd even though the level of oxidation is, to our taste, relatively minor. Let's explain about sous-voile wines. These are wines that evaporate in the barrel (usually a very large cask) during the four years of ageing and a 'veil' of yeast forms on the surface of the wine to protect it from the more negative effects of oxygen. The resultant wine develops nutty characteristics and a savoury palate that is quite compulsive. The wine was produced with native yeasts and very little sulphur has been added to the bottle. The old casks that the wine is matured in impart little if no oak flavour. This is an intriguing and beautiful wine that will appeal to lovers of the Jura experience.

**Jean-Pierre Robinot Les Vignes de l'Ange Vin Lumière des Sens 2013** – Pineau d'Aunis is a native grape of the area around the city of Tours in the Loire Valley. While it is little known outside this area, it is a grape variety that can be used to create exciting red wines of great complexity and interest. This lovely Pineau d'Aunis comes from vines that flourish in soils of red clay, quartz and limestone in the Jasnieres appellation even though Robinot has not applied for appellation status. There is no sulphur added at any time during the winemaking process and the vines are certified organic by Ecocert.

**Mylène Bru Vin de France Violet de Mars 2014** – This wine is made from grapes picked from Mylène's stunning vineyards in the hills behind the Languedoc seaside village of Sete. Mylène normally produces blended red wines, but in seasons when the Grenache ripens perfectly and when the grapes are very healthy she loves to make a wine from 100% Grenache. She calls the wine Violet de Mars. The vines grow on crumbly clay and limestone soils on slopes which face north and north east providing protection from the hot summer sun. The vineyards are ploughed by horse to avoid compacting the soils. The grapes are picked by hand to ensure they are in good condition and then fermented on their skins for between 10 to 20 days. The wine is then matured in tanks until March (Mars) when the wine has become quite purple (Violet). This a pretty, elegant and delicious red wine.

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$314 but the pack price is \$266.90 including freight.**

Pack 6 – 100% Champagne 6 pack



This is quite an amazing offering. Every one of the Champagnes in this pack come from the same producer in the Côte des Bar, namely Roland Piollet and every one of them is completely different.

Five out of the allowed seven grape varieties are represented in this pack (Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Pinot Meunier, Pinot Blanc and a tiny amount of Arbane). There is a Blanc de Blancs (a white Champagne made from white grapes) a Blanc de Noir (a white Champagne made from red grapes), a rosé-style Champagne and a very special Champagne made entirely from Pinot Blanc.

These are very fine Champagnes made by a great producer who we will a lot more about in the coming years as his wines become known throughout the world.

For more about this producer and this region you can read the story later in the newsletter about this wonderful wine region.

**Champagne Piollet Champagne Côte des Bar Cuvée de Reserve Brut NV** – When we first tasted this elegant Champagne we remarked on its beautiful light golden colour, the citrus aromas and the silky freshness on the palate and very good length. The base wine is made from Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier providing additional richness. Further complexity is gained from using base wine from two different vintages to make the champagne. This is an ideal aperitif!

**Champagne Piollet Champagne Côte des Bar Cuvée Come des Tallants** – The Come des Tallants is a brand new cuvée from Roland Piollet and represents a step-up in quality in a range that is already very, very good. This champagne is a classic "Blanc de Noir" – a white Champagne made from a red grape variety, namely 100% Pinot Noir. This Champagne has small but persistent bubbles, a bracing freshness, and great length that you would be lucky to find in wines of twice the price. It is a perfect aperitif wine that can be used to break the ice at the beginning of the evening but it also pairs very nicely with a range of foods, especially rich seafood dishes such as crab and lobster. Matched with smart new labels and the fact that there is not added sugar in the wine (zero dosage), we have here the perfect wine for a celebration at an amazingly good price.

**Champagne Piollot Champagne Côte des Bar Cuvée Champs Rayés** – The Champs Rayés is another new cuvée from Roland Piollot and is the finest Champagne from that estate. The Champs Rayés vineyard is planted entirely to Chardonnay and the Champagne is a fine, elegant and rich wine of incredible finesse. This one bears the term “coeur de cuvée” on the back label as it is pressed in such a way that the second half of the pressing is not used (because as the grapes are pressed harder, more harsh polyphenols are released into the juice). Also the very first part of the juice extracted is discarded as well. Thus only the “heart” of the cuvee goes into this wine. As with the Come des Tallants, this wine sports a new label.

**Champagne Piollot Champagne Côte des Bar Extra Brut Pinot Blanc Cuvée Val Colas Robin NV** – This is a special new cuvée for Roland Piollot made almost entirely from Pinot Blanc grown on his estate. There is also 1% of the extremely rare Arbane grape variety. The vines thrive on the slopes near the village of Polisot overlooking the upper reaches of the Seine River. The Val Colas Robin vineyard was planted entirely to Pinot Blanc by the Piollot family in 1955 using selection massale rather than clonal varieties. The vineyard is one of the best in Roland's care. It has wonderful exposure so the grapes ripen easily and the soil is based on limestone with a mix of red clay which provides the minerality that is so obvious in this very special wine. This is a very elegant, savoury wine with lots of fresh fruit aromas and lovely, balanced acidity. It has a very fine bead and you also notice the light golden colour. There is a complexity in both the aroma and the flavour with lots spice and citrus notes and the intense minerality that we mentioned above. It is very rare to find a Champagne made almost exclusively from the Pinot Blanc grape, however once you taste it you will wonder why more producers don't do it!

**Champagne Piollot Champagne Côte des Bar Cuvee Millésime Rose Extra Brut 2006** – In the Cote des Bar region of Champagne it is common for rosé-style wines to be made using extended maceration of the Pinot Noir grape. The grapes (only Pinot Noir is used) are first crushed by foot and the grapes then macerate for up to five days before pressing to extract the juice which, by this time, has developed cherry, strawberry and raspberry overtones. This wine has an appealing intensity and a lingering freshness. It is a Champagne of true elegance.

**Champagne Piollot Champagne Côte des Bar Cuvee Millesime 2008** – The vintage cuvées are only produced in exceptional years and 2008 was a very good year in the region of Champagne. When Roland makes a vintage cuvée he predominantly uses Chardonnay or exclusively uses Chardonnay. In 2008 he used Chardonnay exclusively. This is a delightful Champagne with lots of character or a "strong personality" as one commentator said. In the glass it has a pale golden colour and a fine bead. The taste is quite complex with dried figs, plums and quinces showing through a delightful yeastiness.

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$430 but the pack price is **\$365.50** including freight.**

## The Aube – the quiet Champagne achiever

When we head to the Champagne district we normally anchor ourselves in the southern city of Troyes. Why? Well we just love a local natural wine bar called Aux Crieurs de Vin. The food here is exactly what you would expect from a local bar – but somehow it is quite refined. This is a bar of largesse. Everyone becomes friends here.

Order an obscure natural wine at “Crieurs” and you will immediately be drawn into a vortex of new producers, new wines, maybe old wines from producers that they hold dear. It is always an exciting evening.

Next morning we jump into the car and head to the A5 - the autoroute which leads to the Aube – the most obscure, yet so interesting area of the Champagne appellation. We take the D671 through the low-lying plains following the upper reaches of the Seine River which flows through our destination - the village of Polisot. Here we see farms everywhere instead of Chablis-like wall to wall vineyards. We know that when there are farms there is biodiversity. When we see farm animals and crops then we are likely to find the biodiversity that will improve the quality of grapes grown in the area.



The village of Polisot and surrounding farms and vineyards

It is just one of the reasons why we think that the Aube district offers so much potential for the production of great Champagnes.

The Champagne district is divided into two major, quite separate areas. The area in the north around Reims is dominated by the large, commercial producers such as



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Moët & Chandon, Veuve Clicquot and Krug who are, in turn owned by very large companies such as Pernod Ricard, LVMH, Louis Roederer and EPI. The wines from these producers are often made using grapes from vigneron who don't make their own wine but, instead, sell their grapes to the large companies.

These companies also have a 'house style' which they are very proud of and seek to reproduce year-in and year-out. They love consistency of style.

However not all in the north fall into this category with Domaine Seloisse in Avize being one of the finest producers of Champagne on the planet where the style varies with the seasons.

In the south in the Aube it is a different story with a number of small independent (and single minded) producers who not only grow their own grapes, they make their own Champagne thus producing the sought-after "grower" Champagnes. These producers are intent on producing wines that reflect the terroir rather than developing the consistent 'house style' so common in the north.

Those who make Grower Champagnes are permitted to use the restricted initials of RM on their labels. This identifies the grower as a Récoltant-Manipulant – a person who grows the grapes and makes their wine only from those grapes<sup>1</sup>.



The Côte des Bar region in the south of Champagne

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<sup>1</sup> It is permissible to purchase up to 5% of the grapes from other growers but this rarely happens.

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One such RM is Roland Piollet who makes his wine in the village of Poliset in the most southern of all the Champagne areas called the Côte des Bar which lies in the Aube district. You can see on his label below that he proudly spells out the words Récoltant-Manipulant on the front of his bottles.



You can also see in the top half of the label RM 25532 – 01 which is his registered number showing that he has been inspected and passed the requirements for RM status.

But why do the young vigneron who want to grow their own grapes and make their own Champagne seem to be attracted to this area? There are a number of reasons. The first is that the land here is cheaper as it is mainly farming land rather than predominantly vineyards as in the north. The second reason we have already discussed – it is easier to practice organic and biodynamic agriculture in an area where there is mixed farming and the presence of forests to allow birds and beneficial insects to flourish.



A view from Roland's main vineyard. The trees at the bottom of the vineyard mark the route of the Seine River. Limestone pebbles are clearly visible.

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The third is that the area is quite close to Chablis, therefore the soils are derived from the same Kimmeridgian limestone found in the nearby famous Chardonnay-producing area. Combine this with good winds from the nearby mountains, great southern exposure, cold winters that provide for slow fruit development and soils that are healthy and packed with microbial and fungal life and you have the perfect terroir for the production of great wines.

A final reason for the focus on the southern areas is that there is also more diversity in the styles of Champagne produced here. There is a long tradition here of growing Pinot Blanc, for example, and making Champagne entirely using this grape. Roland Piollot has a wonderful Champagne called Cuvée Val Colas Robin which is made from 100% Pinot Blanc.

Another grape that is planted here and used for blending is Pinot Meunier. This is a traditional grape of the Champagne region and is used to add richness and texture to blends that rely on Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.



Pinot Meunier in Roland Piollot's vineyard

The grape gets its name from the French word for flour miller (meunier) because of the white down that covers the leaves of this variety.

He also has a small plot of Arbane which has traditionally been grown in the Aube which is also one of the seven permitted grape varieties for making Champagne (along with Chardonnay, Pinot Meunier, Petit Meslier, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir). This grape variety is now very rare and has almost disappeared from the

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area. We mention it because there is 1% of this grape variety in the Cuvée Val Colas Robin we mentioned above.

Roland is typical of the young, dedicated natural winemakers in this region and his wines are elegant, refined, packed with flavour and, above all, delicious!

This month we have assembled a very interesting six pack of his wines (Pack 6 – 100% Champagne 6 pack) which will show you the range of Champagnes being produced in this exciting area!

## Rosé: An all year round drink

Rosé has had a bad rap. The marketers who decided to link rosé with Provence in summer have done this versatile drink a disservice. Somehow these pale, pink or orange wines have been indelibly stamped with the word summer whereas their paler cousins, white wines, are happily drunk throughout the year!

We have many fond memories of drinking rosé in the warm sun while watching old men lazily playing boules in the streets of tiny villages in southern France.

It is unquestionable that rosé is a favourite drink of the inhabitants of Provence. But the association with summer is invalid. We often go to Provence in winter and we still see the locals happily sipping a pale rosé while demolishing a slab or terrine or some goat cheese and baguette with their lunch.

On one occasion, in the Vaucluse village of Mormoiron we were sitting at a table eating lunch on a narrow pavement outside a café when a massive semi-trailer pulled up next to us. The burly driver climbed down from this oversized rig, took a seat at the table next to us and ordered the three course lunch (which cost 9 euros) and a glass of rosé to accompany his meal. No fast food lunches here.

But as we travel around France we are finding that more and more winemakers are turning to rosé in colder climes and we find people drinking these light and refreshing wines right through the year.

It might be that with less extraction of colour there is less extraction of some of the more overpowering polyphenols such as tannins allowing drinkers to savour the true flavour of the grapes without being assaulted by the harsher tannic flavours.

We are even finding producers in the very cold areas such as the Jura and the Savoie dabbling in the production of rosé wines. And of course, Champagne which is one of the coldest areas in France has long been known for rosé Champagnes.



So what is rosé and how is it produced? Essentially there are three methods of production, one of which is frowned upon in some regions of France but practised openly elsewhere. To understand these methods it is important to realise that except for a handful of red grape varieties all grapes have clear juice.

Therefore to make a white wine the grapes are pressed and the skins immediately removed from the juice. This works for both white grapes varieties and most red grape varieties except for those known as teinturier grapes which have red pulp and hence produce red juice (Gamay de Bouze is an example). We sometimes have a

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white wine from Octavin in the Jura which is made from the Ploussard red grape variety and still have a few bottles of an amazing wine from Domaine de l'Escarpolette in the Languedoc called La Petite Pépée which is made from red Grenache grapes.

Now, if the skins of white grapes are left in contact with juice for a period of time exceeding about ten days, the anthocyanins in the skins will be extracted into the juice. These phenolic compounds are responsible for providing colour. This is how an orange wine is created.

If red grapes are crushed and the skins are left to macerate in the juice, the clear juice will slowly turn red as the red pigments are extracted from the skin into the juice.

So now we can proceed to explained how rosé wines are produced.

The first is the saignée method (saignée means bleed in French and is pronounced as 'sonyay') where juice is "bled off" from a tank of red juice with the skins still in the tank before the colour turns too deeply red.

The pink wine which is removed is transferred into a suitable fermenting vessel so that the fermentation can commence. This method can result is a very fresh lively wine, especially if no sulphur has been added. It also means that a deeply concentrated, tannic red wine can be made with the remainder of the juice if required (although it probably wouldn't be to our taste!).

There is a lot of controversy about this method. Many Provencal winemakers will not use the saignée method because they believe that the result produces an inferior product. They believe that rosé should never be seen as a by-product of another process.

The second method, which is the favoured method throughout Provence, is to crush the grapes and then remove the skins when the juice has reached the desired degree of 'pinkness', usually only one to three days being a common time period. This method is now quite widely used because rosé is more and more becoming a style of wine produced in its own right rather than being a by-product. The advantage of this method is the fact that white and red grapes can be combined in the crush.

This is the method used by Thierry Michon for his Domaine Saint Nicolas Reflet Rosé which is made from Pinot Noir, Gamay and Grolleau Gris and which is a pale pink colour but packed with stunning flavour from the combination of grapes used in the production of this wine.

Whole bunches of these grapes are directly pressed and then transferred to a fermenting tank as soon as the colour is deemed to be perfect. The wine then ferments using only the natural yeasts present in the juice.

The same process is used by Domaine Milan to make their Papillon Rosé from Grenache Noir, Syrah and Mourvèdre and for the Rosé de Folie from Gamay grapes made by Jean-Paul Brun.



It is also used by one of our newest producers, Julien Peyras, who leaves the skins to macerate for about 12 hours to extract the colour to a medium pink. The result is a juicy, deeply-flavoured wine derived from the grapes Grenache Noir and Mourvèdre.

Somewhere in between is the exceptional rosé made by Olivier Cohen. He makes this wine by macerating the Grenache for 10 days (to extract some colour from the skins to provide the beautiful pink-orange colour to the wine) and by direct pressing the Cinsault.



Whichever method is used the colour which results can range from almost imperceptibly pink to salmon to orange to pink to light red.

A third method of making a rosé wine is to blend a red wine with a white wine to give a paler wine. This method is frowned upon in some appellations in France with it being illegal to call a wine a rosé if it is a blend of red and white wine. However it is perfectly legal to call a Champagne which is a mix of red and white wine a rosé Champagne. Our Le Petit Domain de Gimios rosé is made this way, with Anne-Marie Lavaysse making a unique blend (she keeps the exact percentages a secret) each

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year. We do know that that its substantially white wine, (the wine that makes the Muscat Sec) with a small percentage of red wine.

We hope we have managed to convey the idea that rosé is a wine in its own right. It is not just a pale red wine, but a wine that can be incredibly complex and perfect for accompanying a wide range of foods from seafood through to steak.



## Grape variety: Terret

Terret is a grape variety native to the Languedoc region of France which has red, white and grey expressions, sometimes in the same bunch!

The reliable Vitis International Variety Catalogue claims that both Terret Blanc and Terret Gris are mutations of Terret Noir. Terret Gris is also known as Terret Bourret (sometimes called Terret Bourré). This variety adds floral notes to a wine.

There is no doubt that The Terret Gris grape variety has been out of favour in the south of France until recently when you consider that in 1958 there was 8,130 hectares given over to this variety and by 2006 it had declined to only 130 hectares.

Terret Noir, on the other hand, covered a mere 130 hectares in 1958. However this figure rose to 1150 hectares by 1979 and now has dropped back to around 270 hectares.

Terret Blanc is the most widespread variety with 180 hectares planted in 2006 down from a peak of almost 9000 hectares in 1979.

Terret is one of the 18 grape varieties permitted in the noble wines of Chateauneuf-du-Pape, for example. It is also commonly used in the Corbieres AOP where only the white and red expressions of the grape can be used.

The leaf of this grape variety is quite distinctive as can be seen from the photo below.



Photo courtesy: Vitis International Variety Catalogue

As can be seen it has a very distinctive frontal lobe and one lobe on either side rather than two lobes on each side and a frontal lobe.

We have described this grape variety because it is one of the grapes in the amazing wine of Ivo Ferreira of Domaine de l'Escarpolette called Le Blanc which we have included in the Pack 2: New Arrivals from New Producers 6 Pack.

## How to order

You can order any of these packs by sending us an email to [wine@livingwines.com.au](mailto:wine@livingwines.com.au)

Or for other wines you can use our order form or just describe the wines in an email.

[http://www.livingwines.com.au/Catalogue/Order\\_Form\\_Current\\_2015.pdf](http://www.livingwines.com.au/Catalogue/Order_Form_Current_2015.pdf)