

## **WINE Talk: March 2015**

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 52

**Welcome to the March 2015 newsletter. We apologise for the lack of a January and February newsletter this year, but we were travelling to natural wine trade shows in France for the latter part of the January and early February and after that travelling within Australia to show our wines. We're not sure where the time has gone. In France, we attended shows in Montpellier, the Auvergne, Angers and Saumur over a period of about 10 days.**

**The good news is we have secured a number of new producers (see news story in this newsletter) as well as receiving good allocations from our existing producers. It was fairly full-on. We now have over fifty old and new producers and we were able to meet up with all but three of them in the 2 weeks we were in France!**

**We've tried to make up for our absence with a bumper issue. This month we seem to have a lot of news and a lot of articles but we also have our special offers as always. One article addresses the issue of certification for organic, biodynamic and natural wines and the legislative underpinning of the certification. Another looks at the grape variety Melon-Queue-Rouge to see what the controversy is surrounding this variety. We also have a story about a delightful afternoon we spent with Mito Inoue in the Auvergne visiting her winery and vineyard.**

**There are six special offers (and a secret one, again buried in the text!). The first comprises wines based on Cabernet Franc from the Loire Valley and the tiny Buzet appellation. The second is a collection of sparkling wines made using the Méthode Ancestrale technique which sees just one natural fermentation which leads to a fresh lively sparkling wine. The third pack is of lighter style reds with low alcohol content for those of you who like to match red wines to food or just to sip and savour a red wine without being assaulted by it.**

**The fourth pack is a selection of wines from across the south of France which comprise three red wines and three white. The fifth pack is a collection of elegant and delicious white wines that speak of the terroir from which they came. And the final one is a pack of robust reds from throughout France.**

**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.**

## Le Dive Bouteille, Saumur, France, 2015



Every year hordes of enthusiastic professionals from around the world head for the wine village of Saumur in the Loire Valley to attend one of the iconic events in the natural wine calendar. It is called Le Dive Bouteille and between 200 and 250 vigneron from round the world head here to show their wines to the tens of thousands of attendees who mill around the barrels set out for the vigneron in the crowded cellars.

It is held over two days and from the moment the doors are opened, the tunnels and caves are packed with people anxious to discover new producers and new taste sensations.

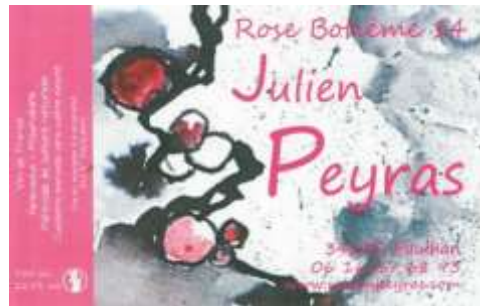
In the three years we have been attending this event we have noticed it getting more and more crowded. We now have to squeeze through the throngs milling around the winemakers to reach the wines we want to try.

We also use it to catch up with our suppliers and to try the newly bottled wines that they have brought along. It is a very social time meeting up with old friends and making lots of new ones.

And it is not only Le Dive Bouteille, there are five or six “satellite” events held in the nearby city of Angers. We attended Anonymes which is the ‘loosest’ event of them all full of more free-wheeling. At this event we met up with Alice Bouvot from Octavin and Julien Peyras from the Languedoc whose wines we are now importing and a producer from the Ardeche who we will be importing as soon as his wines for this year are in the bottle.

There is also the Return to Terroir event (which has also just been held in Melbourne – see below), Les Pénitentes, a small event featuring some of France’s most highly-regarded natural wine producers, including our producers Agnès and René Mosse, Hervé Villemade and Dominique Belluard), a new event organised by Demeter, for producers with Demeter certification and, finally, la Levée de Loire, a salon for organic producers from the Loire. All of these event are well-worth attending and reinforce the depth of organic, biodynamic and natural winemaking in France and beyond.

## Wines from new producers arriving in May



We will be receiving wines in May from three exciting new producers from the Languedoc. We have secured the lovely wines of Julien Peyras, all made without any added sulphur. His rosé is amazing as are all his other wines that are heading this way. Next is Ivo Ferreira from Domaine de l'Escarpolette from near Montpeyrroux in the hills behind Montpellier. Ivo makes a beautiful orange wine from Macabeo and Muscat à Petits Grains and some exciting red wines, one from old vine Carignan and another from very old vines of Cinsault. We also will have wines from young winemaker Olivier Cohen from the same area who makes a stunning rosé as well as some very interesting red wines.

## Wine of the month: Bainbridge and Cathcart l'Acrobate Rosé



Just arrived in Australia this week is the 2014 cuvée of Toby Bainbridge's lovely l'Acrobate Rosé made from his very best old-vine Grolleau. We have written before about this amazing vineyard where the gnarled old Grolleau vines have been growing for at least 85 years and some exceeding 100 years of age. Grolleau is little known outside the western end of the Loire, but in the right hands (i.e. grown for quality not quantity) it is a wonderful grape variety for making approachable reds and rosé wines of considerable elegance.

This one is a great example of what you can achieve with this grape variety. It is savoury, incredibly fresh and lively and lasts for ages on the palate.

We have good stocks of this wine and it is very fresh having only just been released. We look forward to drinking a lot of this wine ourselves. The recommended retail price for this wine is \$36. If you would like a bottle or two, remember that you can make up your own mix of 6 wines and we will give you a 10% discount and ship it to most major cities freight free.

## Return to Terroir – Melbourne and Angers 2015

Causse Marines' winemaker Patrice Lescarret was one of our producers who attended Return to Terroir at the end of February this year. This was a wine tasting in the Melbourne Town Hall with approximately 70 of the world's leading biodynamic winemakers. It was held in conjunction with the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival, and was an outstanding success.

Patrice showed the latest cuvée of the exciting Les Greilles which is a white wine from the Gaillac region of France made from Mauzac, Loin-de-l'Oeil and Muscadelle. The freshness and energy in this wine was remarkable. It is a wine that will pair with just about any food. There was also a lot of interest in his Dencon cuvee which is made from the rare Ondenc grape variety which is native to the region.

Also in attendance was Théophile Milan, the son of Henri Milan from Saint Remy de Provence who makes the outstanding no added sulphur wines that so many Australians have come to love. They are also the makers of the famous Grand Blanc, one of the best white wines in Provence, which graces the lists of many great restaurants in Europe and Australia.

We were also there on the Domaine Saint Nicolas stand (Thierry Michon was unable to attend so we offered to take his place). It was great to meet up with so many of you at this event!

The morning sessions were reserved for the trade and these were very well attended, however when the doors were opened to the public we really saw the crowds pour in! We have said this before and no doubt will say it again, but the interest shown by the public confirms our view that the natural wine movement is a ground-up phenomenon whose engine room are people with curiosity and open minds who are yearning for new wine experiences from different regions, made from different grapes varieties and using different winemaking techniques.

The many people who attended wanted to try even the most obscure wines and not one of them asked if a wine had any medals! This confirms to us that they want to make up their own mind by experiencing the wines rather than be told what to drink.

Four weeks earlier there had been the annual Return to Terroir event held in Angers where 200 winemakers from France and Italy crowded together in the Greniers Saint Jean function centre to show their wines. It was very crowded this year with three and sometimes four winemakers sharing a single table. It just gets bigger and bigger every year.

## Forthcoming natural wine events in Australia

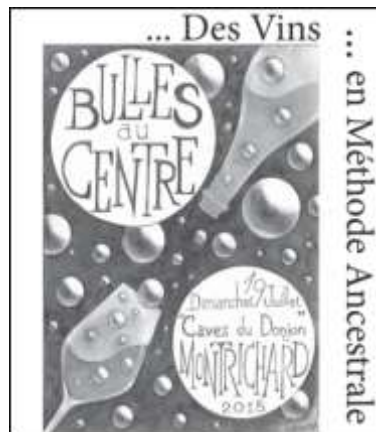
There are a number of natural wine events on the horizon in Australia. The first is a repeat of the insanely successful Handmade event that was held at the Builders Arms hotel in Melbourne last year. This year Handmade 2015 will be held on the afternoon of Sunday the 24th of May at the Builders Arm again. We will have more

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details in our next newsletter about times and prices for the tickets. This is just a heads-up so that you can pencil it into your diary.

There are two other major events being finalised for this year and we will bring you details as soon as the dates and details are finalised.

### Sparkling wine event in Montrichard, France



A group of natural winemakers have banded together to hold the Bulles au Centre event in Montrichard in the Cher valley some 60 kilometres east of the city of Tours. This salon is only for the producers of pétillant naturels (i.e. sparkling wines made with a single ferment, where the wine is bottled prior to finishing its alcoholic fermentation, and the gas captured while it finishes fermenting in the bottle is what gives it the bubbles. And, of course, that original ferment happens courtesy of naturally-occurring yeasts not any additions. This is its second year, a sign of the ever-increasing enthusiasm for these easy-to-drink sparkling wines. It will be held on 19<sup>th</sup> July and will see such luminaries as Les Capriades, Michele Aubery, Vincent Carême from Vouvray, Agnès and René Mosse, Hervé Villemade and Bruno Duchêne from Roussillon amongst many others. There will even be a producer of sparkling sake present.

It's a great event to look out for if you're holidaying in France in summer.



To see more about this event click on the link below:

<http://www.livingwines.com.au/Bulles-au-centre.pdf>

## Visit by French winemakers from Causse Marines in Gaillac



We were fortunate to have had an extended visit to Tasmania by talented French winemakers Patrice Lescarret and Virginie Magnien and their charming five year old son Abel. Patrice and Virginie are from Gaillac and their business is called Causse Marines.

They were delighted to spend time touring around Tasmania visiting many of the remotest parts of the island. They were equally delighted to see their wines on the wine lists of many of the restaurants they visited.

They also enjoyed a visit to like-minded winemaker Dirk Meure and were very complimentary about the quality of his wines.

Patrice returned to Australia in late February for the Return to Terroir event in Melbourne which is the subject of another piece in this newsletter above.

## De Moor Chitry 2013

We have just received a minute allocation of Alice and Olivier de Moor's 2013 Aligoté and Chablis. It's less than half of what we received last year. This is entirely the result of a bad vintage and they have assured us 2014 has been much kinder and our allocation will return to something much more normal next year!

To give you an idea, in 2013 they harvested 30% less than in 2012, which was already 20% less than 2011. They even didn't make two of their most important cuvées this year (Chablis Rosette and Plantation 1902). Generally these wines are allocated to our wholesale and retail customers who have either bought them before or who have specifically requested to be considered for an allocation. It's been a challenge this year, with significantly fewer wines, to satisfy all those requests.

We decided not to pre-allocate any of the de Moor Chitry 2013, the wine we received the most bottles of. We don't have much of it but we wanted to have at least one wine available to our regular customers. We don't expect it to last though.

If you would like to buy some of the other de Moor wines we did ensure that supplies went to the Oak Barrel in Sydney and Blackhearts and Sparrows in Melbourne, two of the retailers who regularly stock our wines. You might be able to get in early with them as the wines will be just arriving. If you would like an allocation of the 2014 wines, which we will have more of, please email us and let us know. We will ensure you get something.

## A visit to Mito Inoue in the Auvergne

We have been communicating with winemaker Mito Inoue for a number of years but she has never had enough wine to allocate some to us. This year we finally got the opportunity to visit her and see her tiny, tiny cellar and walk in her vineyards, despite snow covering the vertiginous slopes to which they precariously cling!

She works in the Auvergne in central France in a village 30 minutes south of the main city of Clermont-Ferrand.

We were introduced to her wines by Pierre Jancou when he owned Vivant in Paris (he is now at Heimat where we had an enjoyable lunch on our last day in France). However these are true “unicorn” wines – they are very hard to locate and there are very few of them.

Mito has always been very gracious and has answered our emails and has kept in contact despite the last three vintages being incredibly low yielding.

When we visited her cellar she only had one barrel of wine from the 2014 vintage – too little to satisfy her existing customers let alone us.



This year the wine is a lovely blend of Gamay and young-vine Pinot Blanc. After tasting the wines and watching Mito label some of last year's vintage to send to a lucky customer she offered to take us to see her Pinot Blanc vines which she has



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planted on a steep mountain-side about twenty minutes away from the village where we were tasting the wine.

Mito warned us that the walk would be slippery and steep! The slopes were covered in snow and the track wound up the mountain via dry-stone terraces that were being restored by volunteers.

You can see the distant volcanic peak and the pale blue sky on this snowy afternoon as we walked up the snowy slopes to the terraces.



Our sedentary legs were not the ideal vehicles for this climb, but we persisted and eventually arrived at the top where the beautiful terraces were planted with two and three year old Pinot Blanc vines, looking stark and cold in the winter snow. It was a magical experience.

Here is a photo of the terraces and the Pinot Blanc vines. The local name for these dry-stone terraces is “pailhats”.

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And in the photo below you an even better idea of the pailhats:



This was a cold, but thoroughly enjoyable afternoon!

## Pack 1: Cabernet Franc Six Pack



While Cabernet Sauvignon is better known in Australia, in some areas of France, and especially in the Loire Valley, Cabernet Franc is preferred.

**Domaine de la Garrelière Le Rouge des Cornus 2012** – This lovely entry-level wine is made from biodynamic grapes grown on the Plouzeau's property about 35 kilometres south of the city of Tours. It is 100% Cabernet Franc and displays a silky smoothness that makes it a perfect quaffing wine, yet it is not a big wine therefore matches well with a range of dishes such as braises and roasts.

**Domaine du Pech Buzet Jarnicoton Rouge 2006** – This complex wine is a mixture of Cabernet Franc and Merlot from South-West France in the Buzet region not too far from Bordeaux. It has softened over time and is now drinking beautifully. It is rare to find a wine this old from the Buzet region that is still for sale.

**Domaine Saint Nicolas Cabaret Rouge de Brem 2011** – This wine is a pure Cabernet Franc made in one of the sub-regions (Brem) of the Fiefs Vendéens appellation in the western Loire Valley where the vine grow in sight of the Atlantic Ocean. It is a beautiful wine with lots of charm.

**Bainbridge and Cathcart Vin de France Highway.8 2013** – This is a youthful, juicy, no frills wine designed for quaffing. It is bottled in clear glass topped with a crown seal so you can admire the vibrant colour.

**Stephane Guion Bourgueil Domaine 2012** – This wine comes from almost the spiritual home of Cabernet Franc. Even though some Cabernet Sauvignon is allowed in the Bourgueil appellation hardly any of the winemakers use it, preferring instead the pure flavour of their favoured grape variety.

**La Paonnerie Anjou Rouge Le Rouge de la Jacquerie 2013** – This wine comes from a single vineyard (La Jacquerie) which is owned entirely by the Carroget family from La Paonnerie. This wine also contains some Cabernet Sauvignon, but the majority is Cabernet Franc. This wine has had no sulphur added at any stage of the winemaking process.

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$202 but the pack price is \$171.70 including freight.**

## Pack 2: Méthode Ancestrale Sparkling 6 pack



We have put together a six pack of sparkling wines from across France, often called, pétillant naturels that use the Méthode Ancestrale single fermentation technique which has been revived throughout France recently, particularly by makers of natural wines. All are delicious, refreshing and perfect for warm weather drinking. We have a small number of these packs as some of the wines are in short supply.

**Cause Marines Vin de France Raides Bulles 2013** – This wine has been made using the technique known as Méthode Ancestrale whereby the wine is fermented in the bottle and the yeast is not disgorged. It is made from Shiraz, Duras, Braucol, Jurançon Noir and a little Mauzac. It has a little residual sugar but not enough to make it taste sweet as the sugar is balanced by lovely acidity.

**Les Capriades Vin de France Pepin La Bulle 2011** – The Pepin La Bulle is a sparkling wine that was disgorged about a year ago after spending 2 years on lees to develop complexity. It contains 70% Chardonnay, 20% Meslier and 10% Menu Pineau.

**Les Capriades Vin de France Pet'Sec 2013** – The Pet'Sec is a dry version of the petillant naturel wine produced by Pascal Potaire and Moses Galouche. This vintage sees Chenin Blanc at 80% and Cabernet Franc at 20%.

**Domaine Mosse Vin de France Moussamoussettes 2013** – This is a light, delicious, limpid, very slightly sweet and the perfect aperitif for a spring or summer lunch or evening aperitif. It's also a great breakfast wine. This year it is made from Grolleau Gris with a little Cabernet Franc which have been co-fermented. It was bottled at only 8g residual sugar making pleasant sweetness to match the acidity in the wine.

**Jolly Ferriol Vin de France Pet'Nat** – This Jolly Ferriol wine which is made in the Pétillant Naturel style is a beautifully savoury sparkling wine made from a 50-50 blend of Muscat à Petit Grain and Muscat d'Alexandrie. The vines grow in schisty marl soils and the yield is very low at around 20 hectolitres per hectare. It is a dry refreshing style which is packed with flavour that makes for a perfect aperitif.

**L'Octavin Vin de France Foutre d'Escampette** – The Foutre d'Escampette is a lovely sparkling wine made from 100% Chardonnay from the Octavin vineyards around the town of Arbois. We have tried a couple of these bottles recently and have been delighted with the beautiful line of acidity, the depth of flavour and the lingering finish of this wine.

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$251 but the pack price is \$213.35 including freight.**

### Pack 3: Light Reds six pack



This month we have decided to assemble a pack of red wines that are lower in alcohol and not as tannic as other wines. These have been designed to match with food and to smash down when you want a quaffable wine.

**Jean-Paul Brun Beaujolais Cuvée Première 2013** – This very popular wine is made from 100% Gamay and is designed for easy drinking while exhibiting the structure of a serious wine. It is made from grapes grown near Jean-Paul's house in Charnay in the south of Beaujolais not too far north of Lyon.

**Nicolas Carmarans Vin de France Maximus 2013** – The Maximus is a fresh, vibrant red wine that sees 16 days of carbonic maceration to ensure the freshness and flavour that you expect from a wine made using this process. It is lower in alcohol, lighter, fresher and more elegant than before. But flavour has not been sacrificed. The wine is made from local grape Fer Servadou.

**Michel Guignier Vin de France Melodie d'Autumn 2013** – This is a light, ethereal wine that gradually engulfs you from the purity of the fruit in this wine. Michel often makes a lighter, fresher wine which he macerates for only 6 or 7 days in the concrete vats. When we first tried it at the Renaissance event in Angers this year we were immediately captivated by its charms. There are no sulphites added at any time.

**Sextant – Julien Altaber Bourgogne Rouge 2013** – This wine belies its humble Bourgogne Rouge tag. It is made from grapes picked from his vineyards around the village of Saint Aubin. About half of the grapes for this 2013 vintage were destemmed and there was less pigeage this year. It is a silky Pinot with lots of elegance and structure.

**Domaine de la Paonnerie Anjou Villages La rouge de la Jacquerie 2013 Sans Soufre** – This is a blend of 66% Cabernet Franc and 34% Cabernet Sauvignon picked from the Clos de la Jacquerie which the Carroget's own exclusively. This is a lively, vibrant wine that is very gluggable!

**Hervé Villemade Cheverny Les Ardilles Rouge 2011** – At the vineyard tasting this wine stood out for its elegance and structure. We loved the blend of 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Gamay. The soil for the vines is clay over quartz. It is an intense, elegant wine that matches to foods such as roast lamb or roast chicken.

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$233 but the pack price is \$198.05 including freight.**

Pack 4: Wines from the South 6 pack



We love the south of France. Whether we are driving through the back roads of Provence or negotiating our way to the mountainous areas at the back of the Languedoc we love the ancient rock outcrops, the perched villages and the garrigue – the vast sweeps of low lying herb bushes that smell so enticing. We have therefore assembled a pack of six wines that represent the best the region has to offer.

**Le Temps des Cerises Vin de Table Un Pas de Côté NV** – Un Pas de Côté is a dark purple wine that has a beautiful, soft tannin structure with complexity coming from the blend of grapes used. This year the wine is a blend from 2009 and 2010. This year it is 40% Merlot, 40% Grenache and 20% of a blend of Cinsault, Aramon and Carignan. The vines grow on granitic quartz soils and the minerality is pronounced.

**Le Temps de Cerises La Peur du Rouge 2013** – This incredibly complex Chardonnay is like no other we have ever tried. It is packed with minerality and is totally expressive of the vineyard from which the fruit has been derived. Axel Prüfer is a clever winemaker who treads his own path in the Languedoc near Campouriez.

**Henri Milan Vin de France MGO2 Rouge** – This assemblage of Henri's favourite red grape varieties is a light, silky beauty. The grapes are Grenache, Shiraz, Mourvedre, Cinsault and Cabernet Sauvignon but with more Grenache than usual. It is a blend of wines from the 2009, 2011 and 2012 vintages to create added complexity.

**Jolly Ferriol Vin de France Néo 2014** – This is a light, fresh, young red wine made using carbonic maceration to preserve the fruit flavours and the liveliness of the juice. It is made from 80% Grenache and 20% Carignan - two grape varieties that grow well in the schisty marl that litters the vineyards nestled in the elbow of the Agly River in Roussillon. This is a wine for knocking back slightly chilled!

**Mylène Bru Vin de Table Lady Chasselas Blanc 2013** – The plot where Mylène has her Chasselas vines is a site of amazing beauty. The vines are at least 50 years old and face East North East. Chasselas is almost unknown in this region so this is a very rare wine, but one of some delicacy and with a really lovely mouth-feel. The clay and limestone soils give the wine a persistent minerality that is very appealing.

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**Mylène Bru Coteaux du Languedoc Far-Ouest Rouge 2012** – Far-Ouest has a film connection because of Mylène's passion for film from an early age. She loves Western films such as Clint Eastwood in 'The Good, The Bad and The Ugly'. It is a blend of all the red grapes so it has some Grenache, Syrah, Carignan and Cinsault but might also have a little Marselan and Aubun depending on the vintage.

**Causse Marines Gaillac Les Greilles 2013** – The Causse Marines vineyards are near Gaillac which is on the same latitude as Avignon but further to the west. Les Greilles is a classy white wine blended from local Gaillac grapes Mauzac and Loin-de-l'Oeil with a little Muscadelle thrown in. 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 RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$248 but the pack price is ~~\$248~~ \$210.80 including freight.**

## Pack 5: Elegant Whites 6 Pack



We love white wines of all varieties. We don't mind whether they are a single variety or a blended wine – in fact many times blended wines are extremely interesting and we have a couple in this pack to show you just how interesting they can be. Each of these is a beautifully-made wine that has amazing purity and great depth of flavour.

**Dominique Belluard Vin de Savoie AOP Blanc Gringet Les Alpes 2013** – From the Savoie, Les Alpes is made with Gringet, a grape only grown in this region, and in commercial quantities only by Dominique Belluard. It was Belluard who proved it existed and wasn't just a synonym for Savagnin by having DNA tests on samples from his vineyards.

**Domaine de la Cadette Bourgogne Vézelay La Châtelaine 2013** – La Châtelaine is one of Domaine de la Cadette's best cuvées made from the only permitted white grape variety in the Bourgogne Vézelay appellation, Chardonnay. The wine comes from grapes from the vineyards on the pretty south-facing slopes of the Vézelay hills. The grapes are harvested by hand and then fermented naturally in stainless steel tanks. This is a beautifully-textured wine, showing that white wines of considerable elegance can be produced in this region.

**Terres Dorées Beaujolais Blanc Classic 2013** – This great-value Chardonnay gets its freshness from natural vinification and no use of oak barrels. The vines thrive on limestone soils in Beaujolais. It is a lively, fresh wine that is drinking beautifully right now. The finish is long and clean and the flavour profile is classic southern Beaujolais. This is a wine of some interest as very little white Beaujolais is produced.

**Domaine Milan Vin de France Le Grand Blanc 2011** – The 2011 vintage is a lovely departure from the 2009 vintage which was full and ripe. This vintage sees Grenache Blanc, Rolle (the local name for Vermentino), Roussane, Chardonnay and Muscat à Petit Grains used in the blend. The wine was raised in old barrels on the lees for twelve months. This is a beautiful wine that is fresh and lively now but will continue to change character and improve well into the future.

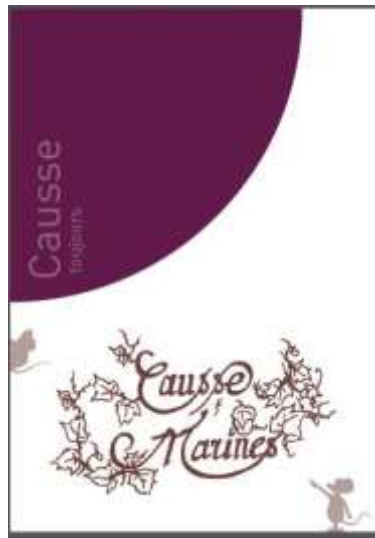


**Domaine Mosse Vin de France Les Bonnes Blanches 2011** – René Mosse has stopped submitting his Bonnes Blanches to the authorities. He knows his wine is good and he knows it will sell and the bureaucracy, dominated by conventional winemakers, is tedious. He therefore released this and subsequent vintages as a Vin de France as so many winemakers are doing these days. It is a white wine made from 100% Chenin Blanc. The vines are from a 2.5 hectare plot where the vines are over 35 years old and the yield is very low at only 20 hectolitres per hectare. The wine is aged in old wooden fûts. Grapes are picked by hand on this domaine. This is one of his top cuvées (along with Initials BB). The alcohol percentage is 13.5 and there is a very small amount of residual sugar while still finishing dry.

**Domaine Saint Nicolas Fiefs Vendéens Cuvee Maria Blanc 2011** – Cuvee Maria is named after Thierry's grandmother. This is a very Burgundian wine style Chardonnay. It spent 18 months in small old oak barrels and now has had several years' maturation in the bottle. If you like the wines of Burgundy then you will find this cuvée from the Loire fascinating to compare.

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$286 but the pack price is \$243.10 including freight.**

## Pack 6 – Robust reds six pack



This pack assembles some of the more interesting robust reds from throughout France. They are not necessarily high in alcohol, but they exhibit a robust flavour profile and lip-smacking deliciousness.

**Domaine Mosse Anjou Rouge 2011** – The Anjou Rouge is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc picked from small parcels of old vines (ranging from 30 to 50 years old). This is a pure, thrilling wine that is fresh and lively on the palate and has a lingering finish. There are blackcurrant leaf, tobacco and cocoa notes that linger accompanied by a quite complex aroma. The tannins are quite fine and well-integrated. This is an elegant, moreish wine.

**Domaine de Causse Marines Vin de France Causse Toujours 1102** – The Causse Toujours is a special cuvee that was created in 2011 because the yield from the Syrah plot at the top of the hill was so low that it was not possible to make the Sept Souris which is always made from 100% Syrah. This wine is made from the Syrah which provides silkiness, spice and body and some Prunelart (a local ancient grape that is being revived in the area by Patrice and some of his fellow vigneron in the area) from young vines to provide a more rustic element to the wine. The wine is a deep purple colour with lots of spice and pleasant tannins at the front of the mouth. The Prunelart adds a touch of mystery and fruitiness that you would expect from the parent (father) of Malbec.

**Jolly Ferriol Vin de France Jolly Rouge 2013** – This wine is made from Carignan (30%) and Grenache (70%) and is only 13% alcohol, unlike many wines from this warm area of France. The grapes grow on schisty marl soil and the yield is low at 25 hectolitres per hectare. It undergoes carbonic maceration in tanks for 15 days after which the wine is transferred to old barrels for a minimum of 18 months. The result is a light, thirst quenching wine that can be served slightly chilled in summer. You will smell cherry notes when trying this wine. It has great mouth feel and the finish is very smooth with an almost Syrah-like spiciness on the finish.

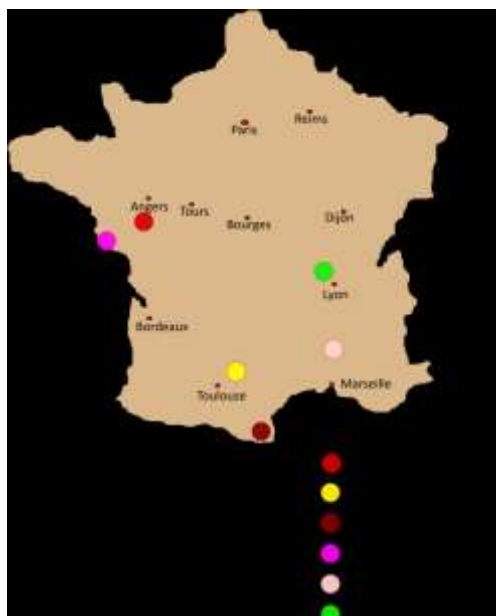
**Domaine Saint Nicolas Fiefs Vendéens Cuvee Jacques Rouge 2007** – This silky cuvee is named after Thierry's grandfather and is a blend of Pinot Noir (90%) and Cabernet Franc (10%). It was aged in barriques for 18 months prior to bottling. The Pinot Noir comes from vines between 15 and 25 years old, planted on schist soil. The Cabernet Franc vines are between 10 and 15 years old on clay soil. The vineyards have been cultivated using biodynamic practices since 1995. The grapes are hand-picked and completely destemmed. This wine has only recently been released because Thierry likes them to gain some age in the bottle prior to distribution.

**Saint Jean du Barroux Cotes du Ventoux Oligocene Red 2004** – The wine is made from Grenache, Syrah, Carignan and Cinsault which come from vines that are harvested at extremely low yields (20 hectolitres per hectare). The wines see little wood in their maturation - Philippe Gimel prefers to use concrete and enamel instead. Only 5% of the wine is treated with wood and those barrels are ten years old! This is a big wine but with very fine tannins which has had time to age and soften. It has the potential to be a great wine! Philippe is a fastidious wine maker. He eschews the use of new wood and wants the quality of the grapes that he tends with such care in his vineyard to tell the story.

**Terres Dorées Moulin à Vent 2013** – With the current faddish devotion to wines from Morgon in Beaujolais (and don't get us wrong, we love them too) it is easy to overlook the other top-ranking crus such as Moulin à Vent and Fleurie. These areas are capable of producing outstanding wines and Jean-Paul Brun shows this with all his cuvées. The Moulin à Vent from Jean Paul Brun is an elegant beauty that belies its price. There are berry flavours on the palate and with beautifully integrated tannins providing a very pleasant savoury finish. The first time we tried this wine we were blown away by both the structure of the wine on the palate and the beautiful, elegant, lively finish.

**The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$244 but the pack price is \$207.40 including freight.**

Below is a map showing where the wines in this pack come from.



## Grape variety: Melon-Queue-Rouge

When is a grape variety not a grape variety? When it is not endorsed by the official French body that controls appellations in that country.

Let's explain what we mean here. If you look at the official documents of the INAO which controls the rules for each appellation in France you will find that for each of the Jura appellations there are only two permitted white grape varieties, namely Chardonnay and Savagnin.

<p>V.-Encépagement</p>
<p>1° Encépagement :</p>
<p>a) Les vins blancs sont issus des cépages suivants :</p>
<p>– cépages principaux : chardonnay B, savagnin B ;</p>
<p>– Cépages accessoires : pinot noir N, poulsard N (appelé localement ploussard), trousseau N.</p>
<p>b) Les vins rouges et rosés sont issus des cépages suivants :</p>
<p>– cépages principaux : pinot noir N, poulsard N (appelé localement ploussard), trousseau N ;</p>
<p>– cépages accessoires : chardonnay B, savagnin B.</p>

### Extract from the INAO official décret for the Arbois appellation

However, many locals think that there is a third variety called Melon-Queue-Rouge which they swear by and which is a variety they love to use.

So what is this strange variety and why doesn't the INAO recognise its existence?

It is probably because the variety is a descendant of Chardonnay which was brought to the Jura a few hundred years ago from Burgundy. Remember that although the Jura seems like a world away from the spiritual home of Chardonnay (Burgundy) it is only an hour away by car!

We know wine professionals who have visited Burgundy every year for decades and have never once thought to take the short trip to this fascinating and compelling wine region. They have missed out on experiencing the ethereal light red wines made from Pinot Noir, Ploussard and Trousseau and the deep, complex and addictive white wines and yellow wines for which the region is rightly famous.

So where does Melon-Queue-Rouge fit into the picture? First, it has nothing to do with the Burgundian grape Melon de Bourgogne which is found in the Yonne and which is used by Domaine de la Cadette to make their beautifully precise white wine. (This is also the variety that was sent to the Muscadet region in the eastern Loire after the area was ravaged by frosts and where the vines were then replanted with this hardier variety and where it is now more well known.)

Instead, the Jura Melon is probably a mutant of Chardonnay which has changed over the time it has been growing on different soils (marl) and in different climatic conditions to those experienced in Burgundy.

We have found historical references to this grape variety in books such as *Traité Général de Viticulture: Ampélographie* by Pierre Viala which was published in 1903

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where it is called Melon à Queue Rouge. Another, earlier book is Les Vignobles du Jura et de la Franche-Comté by Charles Rouget which was published 6 years earlier in 1897 and also mentions Melon in the context of findings of Le Congrès Ampélographique de Chalon-sur-Saône about whether Chardonnay in the Jura should be called Melon or Gamay Blanc!

Melon has now morphed into a smaller grape than Chardonnay with thinner skin. It is also different because it has a stem that is red – hence the name.

But there is another, less often discussed difference. In discussions with Michel Gahier who conforms to the rules and displays the word Chardonnay on his labels, he revealed that there is an enzyme in Melon which is not present in Chardonnay. This enzyme makes it easier for the wine to create a veil of yeast on the surface thus protecting it from excessive oxidation.

So, if you want to try a wine made from this grape a good place to start is Philippe Bornard's Arbois Pupillin Melon Le Rouge Queue 2011.

The first thing you notice about the label on this wine is that Philippe certainly regards Melon as a different grape variety.



There are some oxidative notes in this wine which makes it very appealing to those of us who crave this experience. It is a big, fruity wine but with a razor-sharp streak of acidity offsetting the sweetness of the fruit. As is the case with many of the Bornard wines, the finish is incredibly long.

Chambers Street Wines in New York said this of the Melon recently:

*This Melon-Queue-Rouge (a variety related to Chardonnay) is fermented in fibreglass and then aged in old Burgundy barrels and demi-muids. The wine is minty and green apple-y with the characteristic generosity we associate with Bornard's wines and a riveting streak of acidity that carries through to the finish.*

**The cost for a case of six bottles of Philippe Bornard's Melon is normally \$408 but we will offer you this special secret pack at a 15% discount making it **\$346.80.****

## The differences between Organic wines, Biodynamic wines and Natural wines

A recent brief article in the Revue du Vin de France about organic and biodynamic wines made us think that it is probably a good idea to explain the differences between organic, biodynamic and natural wines in this newsletter and to talk a little about the backing and authority for each, the certifications for each type, and also some of the organisations that winemakers can belong to and the charter practices that they must adopt.

This piece was also timely because in the last couple of months we have seen the Return to Terroir event in Melbourne (mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter) which saw over 70 biodynamic winemakers from around the world who adhere to strict biodynamic practices both in the vineyard and in their cellars come together to show their wines to both the trade and to the public at a very well-attended event over two days.

Another event which was held in Angers at the beginning of February was by the certifying authority Demeter which has now moved from certifying vineyards as biodynamic to certifying the winemaking practices as well. They held an event for winemakers who have Demeter certification to display their wines to the public to give a higher profile to the certification.

And of course there are legislative rules being enacted in Europe and associations being formed to ensure that winemakers who use the words such as organic, biodynamic or natural are conforming to the commonly accepted requirements for such wines. Let's now look at each of these in turn to determine what the differences between them actually are.

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### Organic wine

The term organic viticulture refers to the organic treatment of the vines in the vineyard. No chemicals or poisons can be sprayed on the vines or the ground to combat disease or attacks from predators. No artificial fertilisers can be spread on the vineyard to promote or enhance the growth of the grapes.

There are many organisations throughout the world that also certify that growers are organic. One of the most active is Demeter.

Not all vigneron who grow their grapes organically can claim to produce organic wine, however. Some use terms such as "wine made from organic grapes" when they are organic in the vineyard but not organic in the winery. Such winemakers add non-organic products such as yeast or fish meal or bentonite which may not be organic.

And of course this raises the question of whether there are any advantages to using organic grapes.

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A recent study<sup>1</sup> addressed the key issues of nutrient value and levels of pesticide residues in organic and non-organic food and found that organic food has a 19% higher level of beneficial polyphenols and a much lower level of pesticide residues and cadmium residues than conventional products. This was a massive study conducted by a large number of researchers who analysed some 343 peer-review published articles to come up with their conclusions.

Recent updated legislation introduced into the European Parliament<sup>2</sup> now regulates the term organic wine and is quite specific about what can and cannot be included in the wine. The first absolute requirement is that no synthetic pesticides or herbicides can be used on the vines or under them. In addition, artificial fertilizers cannot be used in the vineyard.

Section 7 of this Regulation is very specific about certain winemaking practices as well, ruling out the following:

- Concentration by cooling (Article 29d 2(a))
- Dealcoholisation of wine (Article 29d 2(d))
- Elimination of sulphur dioxide by physical process (Article 29d 2(b))
- Electrolyses treatment for tartaric stabilisation (Article 29d 2(c))
- The use of cation exchangers for tartaric stabilisation (Article 29d 2(e))

In addition, the Regulation fixes a maximum limit for added sulphites with that limit being significantly below that for non-organic wines.

Article 29c reinforces the fact that products used in organic wine production shall be produced from organic raw material. Therefore, while it does not enforce indigenous yeasts for fermentation it does require that commercial yeast added to the wine must be made from organic products, which often they are not.

Other practices have been allowed in the interim, however the commission has indicated that they are likely to be banned this year. These are:

- Heat treatments of the wine;
- Use of ion exchange resin;
- Reverse osmosis.

Winemakers conforming to the rules of the EU set out in this Regulation and the other Regulations it enforces are entitled to use the “Organic logo of the EU” on their products as shown below.



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<sup>1</sup> Baranski, M. et al (2014) Higher antioxidant and lower cadmium concentrations and lower incidence of pesticide residues in organically grown crops: a systematic literature review and meta-analyses. *British Journal of Nutrition*. 112, 794 – 811.

<sup>2</sup> European Union Regulation No 2013/2012

### Biodynamic wines

A more rigorous, and ultimately more successful and rewarding, approach to management of the vineyard is the application of the biodynamic processes espoused in the 1920s by polymath Rudolph Steiner - the same person who established new methods for teaching children through the Steiner schools.

Some in the industry are passionate believers in biodynamics others deride it as lacking a scientific basis and being more of a belief system than an approach to agriculture. They point to burying manure in cow horns to create a starter for biodynamic sprays and tending the vines at midnight during certain phases of the moon as being examples of the edginess of this approach.

All we can do is look at the results. When we wander through the d'Meure vineyard in southern Tasmania we see a vineyard that is alive! There are worms and spiders and ladybirds and insects and crickets all keeping an eye on each other. We see wasps captured in spiders' nests before they can damage the grapes. Above all we see incredibly healthy grapes. The same, almost magical experience can be had by clambering over the rocky, wind-swept vineyards of Anne-Marie and Pierre Lavaysse in the Languedoc in France, where there is an incredible diversity of both flora and fauna - and healthy, flavoursome grapes. On the other side of France, Thierry Michon has turned marginal land near the Atlantic shores into a large (37 hectare) productive vineyard where delicious wines are produced under his Domaine Saint Nicolas.

We also smile inwardly when people denounce biodynamics as mumbo-jumbo because it follows the phases of the moon and they say that the moon cannot have any effect on vines – but the same people are quite happy to accept that the moon exerts sufficient gravitational pull on the Earth to allow electricity to be generated from the massive tidal flows caused by the moon!

There is also a large body of scientific literature that supports each of the cornerstones of biodynamics which we will incorporate in a future article in this newsletter. Ultimately, however, one of the main benefits promoted by biodynamic viticulture is healthy, “alive” soils which promote vibrant microbial life and healthy fungi which are vital for transmitting nutrients into the vines.

There are a number of organisations which certify biodynamic producers with the most active being Demeter and Biodyvin. The Renaissance des Appellations organisation which has many adherents throughout the world also has a strict set of guidelines regarding both biodynamic viticulture and natural fermentation.

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### Natural wine

Wines that are classified as natural have even more restrictions than biodynamic wines. They must be either organic or biodynamic in the vineyard and then must have no additions in the winemaking process except for a small amount of sulphur – although an increasing number of our winemakers use no sulphur at all. Of course, there may be some sulphites generated during the fermentation process.



The next requirement for a wine to be classed as natural is that the wine is fermented only with the natural yeasts that are found on the grapes and in the winery. These long, slow fermentations are generally quite gentle and produce fewer harsh polyphenols and a more complex mix of flavonoids and anthocyanins due to the greater number of natural yeast varieties found in the vineyards.

We have written before about how the term natural wine has been widely used for hundreds of years<sup>3</sup>, however Governments have been slow to legislate to define what a natural wine is, even though consumers throughout the world who drink them are in no doubt.

It has been left, in the main, for professional associations to define the standards for natural wines and there is a remarkable similarity between their requirements. For example, in France L'Association des Vins Naturels has a very clear statement of philosophy in relation to natural wines. For a wine to be natural:

- Vineyard practices must be in accordance with organic or bio-dynamic practices;
- The harvesting must be manual;
- Only indigenous yeasts can be used for vinification;
- No use of brutal and traumatic physical techniques such as reverse osmosis, crossflow filtration, flash pasteurisation or thermovinification, and
- No inputs added except for a little sulphur.

Under their charter the “no inputs added” requirement includes any inputs to the wine that are used for fining. Thus no bentonite, no fish bladders, no egg whites or any other additives can be used to strip out flavour from the wine.

These requirements are almost identical to those for the Renaissance des Appellations organisation headed by Nicolas Joly. The only area where they are silent is in the use of new wood, which we don't like to see because it results in adding chemicals from the wood (lignins) into the wine. We prefer the use of old wooden barrels and foudres where the lasting taste of those chemicals has been removed from the wood or some sort of inert vessel.

Importantly, the French Government's Ministère de l'Économie de l'Industrie et de l'Emploi a few years ago issued a decree about claims to natural products and this decree addressed in part claims of wines being natural.

In a Note d'Information (number 2009-136) issued on the 18th August 2009 it set the rules for what constitutes a natural product.

Since the issue of this decree it has been illegal in France to use a term such as *naturel*, *vin naturel* or *vin nature* unless it conforms to the guidelines set out in the document. (Note that the decree was broader than just wine, but we will stay focussed on this topic!).

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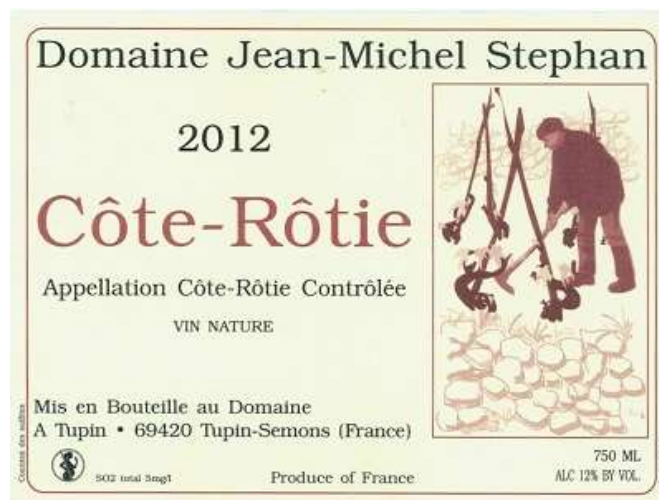
<sup>3</sup> <http://www.livingwines.com.au/Articles/History-of-Natural-Wine.pdf>

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The document deals with processes that can change the nature of a product and hence changes it from the natural state. Examples of processes that are not allowed for products that claim to be natural include pasteurisation, ultrafiltration, genetic modification or reverse osmosis, among others.

So, if a product has undergone any of these transformations it is not permitted to have any words on the label that indicates that it is a natural product. And, of course, none of our winemakers use any of these processes because they alter the basic nature of the wine.

Now let's have a look at a label from one of our suppliers, Jean-Michel Stephan from the northern Rhone in the Côte Rôtie.



You can see from this label that he quite clearly states that this wine is a Vin Nature. This means that the wine conforms to all of the restrictions laid out in this decree. Of course, Jean-Michel has for the past 17 years never even added sulphur to his wines let alone any of the other additives used widely in winemaking.

## 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\\_2014.pdf](http://www.livingwines.com.au/Catalogue/Order_Form_Current_2014.pdf)