

WINE Talk: May 2015

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 54

Welcome to the May 2015 newsletter which we have almost managed to release in time – we really are going too close to the wire recently.

However we were distracted by the Handmade event that we went to in Melbourne at the end of May – a weekend of great conviviality and sharing where Australia’s leading natural wine importers and local natural winemakers came together to share ideas and offer their products to the public and the industry.

Our special thanks go to Campbell Burton who organised the event and the management and staff of the Builders Arms Hotel who helped make it all possible, and to Dan Pepperell from Sydney’s 10 William Street who cooked a wonderful dinner on the Saturday night. Here’s hoping there’s a Handmade 3 and, if there is, don’t miss it!

We have some exciting packs for you this month. We have our annual Tour de France pack where we choose wines from the regions that the tour passes through or nearby. The second is the “Denial of Winter” pack for those of us who refuse to give in to winter by only drinking heavy reds. We have designed a pack of whites, sparklings and light reds so that you can raise a finger to the cold weather!

We then have a new concept for us. We have designed a pack which matches six wines to six cheeses from across France. We then have a sale 12 pack which reflects our need to reduce the stock in our warehouse due to the imminent arrival of our next container. This pack attracts a massive 20% discount.

Following a number of silly press articles about natural wines being cloudy and other self-serving suggestions by the wine press who have a vested interest in wines which conform to the commercial norms we have assembled a pack that is comprised of totally natural wines but ones which the doubters would be unable to identify as natural!

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

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.

Public Wine Tasting – Hobart

We would like to extend a huge thank you to the many wholesale and retail customers who flooded the bar at Franklin in Hobart for our public tasting of natural wines. We found it hard to keep up with our pouring duties because we had so many wines on display and so many of you turned up to try them! Buoyed by this, we plan to do another one very soon so stay tuned.

Only days to go for the next container!!

There is only a short time to go before our next newsletter will announce the arrival of a huge range of wines – some that have never been seen before in Australia as well as some old favourites such as Domaine Mosse, Herve Villemade, Champagne Piillot, Philippe Bornard and Jean-Paul Brun.

Dark Mofo 2013

Our home town of Hobart is at its wintry best during Dark Mofo, a collaborative festival, staged by [MONA](#), that celebrates the winter solstice. There will be feasting, fires, music, installations, thinking and much more (and some great visiting chefs - O Tama Carey Martin Boetz, Mike McEneaney, Sean Moran and Jake Kellie).

At the Winter Feast, Adam James (from Hobart's much loved Tricycle café) will reprise his Rough Rice stall, which was so successful at the summer MONA Market. But at the Winter Feast he'll also be selling natural wines. Some, poured from demijohn, are locally made by Tasmanian winemaker Peter Dredge, and some, available by the bottle, are from our portfolio. Expect pet-nats, orange wines and more, including some brand new wines from our container which is perfectly timed to arrive at the start of Dark Mofo.

Dark Mofo runs from 12-22 June and the Winter Feast from 17-21 June.

Visit darkmofo.net.au for more information.

Wine of the month: Julien Altaber Bourgogne Blanc 2013



This month's wine is a sleeper! We have had a few cases of Julien Altaber's white Burgundy in our warehouse for a few months and we recently tried a bottle and it was beautiful!

Sometimes these wines need a while to settle down after the long trip from France. This one has certainly survived the journey and improved by having a rest in the cool environment of the warehouse.

This wine is 100% Chardonnay made from grapes picked from Julien's vineyards around the village of Saint Aubin which shares some of the best terroir in Burgundy with the neighbouring appellation of Puligny-Montrachet.

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.

More News on SOULFOR WINE – 5 July

Since our last newsletter we've gathered more information about the huge wine party in Melbourne on Sunday 5 July which is being organised by Giorgio di Maria, Campbell Burton and Josh Murphy.

Soulful Wine is a celebration of wines made without adding sulphites. Every wine available on the day has no added sulphites.

The European wines, which are from France, Italy, Spain and Switzerland are all made by winemakers who never use sulphites in any of their wines. We're pleased to say that at this stage, if we still have the wines available, up to six of our producers will be represented, including Julien Peyras, whose wines arrive in Australia for the first time midway through June.

While the wines from Australian winemakers for sale on the day are all made without sulphites, some of which will be served directly from the barrel, their rules of engagement are slightly more flexible. They may have other wines they add sulphites to.

As well as lots of fun – it is a party– the day has a serious educational role too, allowing customers and Australian winemakers to find out for themselves just what's possible making wines this way, and to then form their own opinions. No doubt there will be plenty of discussion and debate, which we're looking forward to.

In our own portfolio we have winemakers with many different perspectives. Some, like the winemakers represented at this event, will not ever use sulphites in their wines, others prefer not to but will if they think it's necessary for a particular wine or vintage (we have one winemaker who used sulphites in 2014 for the first time in 17 years), and others who always add low levels of sulphites, mostly, but not exclusively, just before they bottle. It's a rainbow world out there!

Early bird tickets are \$20. It's an entry charge, which also includes a glass for you to keep. Inside you will be able to buy wine to drink at the event (and to take away) from a wonderful list of natural wines and also dishes cooked by some of Australia's most exciting chefs (Josh Murphy (Builders Arms), Mat Lindsay (Ester), Luke Burgess (Garagistes), Morgan McGlone (Bar Clarine & Belle's Hot Chicken) and Dave Moyle (Franklin). Ashley Huntington from Two Meters Tall will also be pouring his naturally-fermented beers. Add to that some artisan producers with great products - Ramarro Farm's vegetables, Holy Goat's cheese and Wapengo Rocks live oysters – and you have an amazing day.

It's at 1000 Pound Bend, at 361 Lt Lonsdale Street, right in the middle of the city, and there's room for plenty of people. It runs from midday until midnight – a whole 12 hours of no added sulphites! Early bird tickets are available from Eventbrite. Visit the <http://soulforwine.com.au/> website for the link.

Pack 1: Le Tour de France 6 pack



This year's Tour de France route is not as vineyard friendly as others. Without what would have been some serious "drawing a long bow" we didn't think we could make up a full dozen bottles so we've created a six pack. So if you're a cycling fan and you'd like some regionally-relevant ciders and wines to drink during Le Tour then this pack will give you that. Needless to say, with only 6 bottles and a 21 day event, we're only able to supply you for a few stages. Conveniently they are all on weekend days.

Stage 7 Livarot to Fougères Friday July 10

Livarot, which shares its name with a famous cheese, is in the Calvados department in Normandy. It's also very close to Julien Fremont's ciderie so we're starting our part of the tour with two of Julien's ciders. There are over 30 varieties of apples in Fremont's ciders, each playing a role to give a balance between sweetness and acidity. The **Fremont Brut Nature 2013**, which is almost orange, is savoury with noticeable tannins. The **Fremont Argile 2013**, which is only 3.5% is sweet but still with great length and complexity. It's a perfect refreshing dessert cider. Although these are naturally sparkling, they are a world away from harsh, artificially-carbonated ciders.

Stage 13 Muret to Rodez Friday July 17

The route from Muret to Rodez passes south of Gaillac and Albi, not too far from Virginie Maignien and Patrice Lescarret's Causse Marines. They are near Vieux, just north of Gaillac. Because it's winter you're likely to need some red wines to get you over the line so we've chosen the **Causse Marines AOC Gaillac Rouge Peyrouzelles 2013**, an earthy blend comprised mainly of the local varieties Brauacol and Duras and Syrah, with a little Alicante, Prunelart and Jurancon, all native grapes Patrice and Virginie are helping to re-establish in this region.

Stage 14 Rodez to Mende Saturday July 18

This spectacular stage, which includes the riders passing under the dramatic and beautiful Norman Foster designed Millau Viaduct (which, incidentally, has the best autoroute stop in France for food because it's managed by Michel Bras' family), is spent largely in the Aveyron. We've included **Nicolas Carmarans IGP Aveyron Maximus 2013**, which is 100% Fer Servadou. It's made using carbonic maceration so is light and fresh and best drunk lightly chilled. This vintage, where the weather was fairly bleak, has also produced a lighter wine. It's only 11% alcohol which makes it extremely easy to drink. It also has no added sulphites. Fer Servadou is the same grape as Braucol, but of course, as Gaillac is a couple of hundred kilometres away so you'd expect a different name!

Stage 20 Modane Valfréjus to Alpe d'Huez Saturday July 25

The last make or break day of Le Tour takes place on the famed Alpe d'Huez in the Savoie. The wine choice here is the **Belluard Vin de Savoie AOP Blanc Gringet Les Alpes 2013**. Dominic Belluard's vineyards are a little north of here but still in sight of the French Alps. This flinty white wine, made from the rare local Gringet grape, is a great accompaniment with any food that can benefit from a touch of acidity. Use it to balance against richness or it can also stand up to a reasonable amount of spice.

Stage 21 Sèvres to Paris Sunday July 26

No, we don't have any wine made in Paris, although there is a small vineyard in Montmatre, but really, the last day calls for Champagne, and Roland Piollot, our Champagne producer from the Aube, has a river at the bottom of his garden called the Seine. It's only tiny in Polisot but it is still Paris's famed river. So there is a direct line from his cellar to Paris, via the Seine River (ok it's a long bow but ...). We've chosen the **Champagne Piollot Père et Fils Cuvée Val Colas Robin**, which unusually is 100% Pinot Blanc. It's a perfect wine for an aperitif and of course all Champagne is good for celebration.

So, to summarise, the wines and ciders are:

Fremont Brut Nature 2013

Fremont Argile 2013

Causse Marines AOC Gaillac Rouge Peyrouzelles 2013

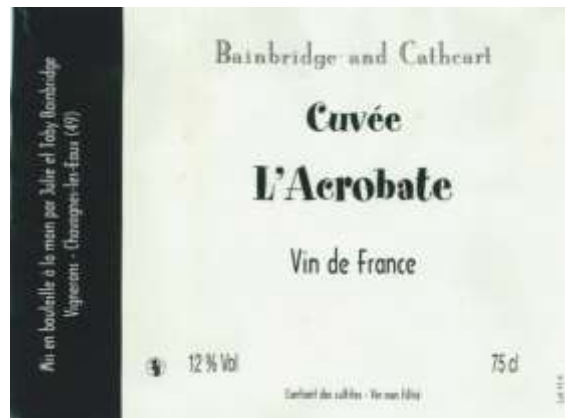
Nicolas Carmarans Aveyron Maximus 2013

Belluard Vin de Savoie AOP Blanc Gringet Les Alpes 2013

Champagne Piollot Père et Fils Cuvée Val Colas Robin

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$272 but the pack price is \$231.20 including freight.

Pack 2: “Denial of Winter” 6 pack



OK –we know it is cold and you would like to settle in and kick back with a warming red, but we have a better idea. Do the opposite! We refuse to give in to winter and be told that we can't drink a delicious rosé or a light sparkling wine or a chilled red. So we have put together a pack of whites, sparklings and light reds

Les Capriades Vin de France Pet'Sec 2013 – The Pet'Sec is a dry version of the pétillant naturel wine produced by Pascal Potaire and Moses Galouche. This vintage sees Chenin Blanc at 80% and Cabernet Franc at 20%. It weighs in at only 12% alcohol. This is a truly lovely sparkling wine made using the "Methode Ancestrale" where the fermentation begins in a tank and then the wine is bottled before fermentation is complete. The fermentation continues in the bottles and the yeasts die, leaving a sediment in the bottle. The sediment has been removed in this wine through a process known as disgorgement.

Bainbridge and Cathcart Vin de France "L'Acrobate" Rose Sec 2014 – The l'Acrobate is a dry rose wine made from the Grolleau (Groslot) grape variety that is a lesser known grape in the Anjou area, but one that the locals love. This wine is made from a very special parcel of Grolleau vines that are between 85 years old up to over 100 years old. The vines thrive in red clay and schist soils.

Causse Marines AOC Gaillac Blanc les Greilles 2013 – 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 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.

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.

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Jolly Ferriol Vin de France Neo 2014– The Jolly Ferriol Néo 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 very well in the schisty marl that litters the vineyards nestled in the elbow of the Agly River.

Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Hautes Cotes de Beaune Rouge 2012 – This elegant Pinot Noir from Fanny Sabre comes from the high Hautes-Côtes de Beaune sub region of the Côtes de Beaune region that clusters around the central city of Beaune. This region lies on top of the escarpment to the west of Beaune and behind the famous Cote d'Or. This is an elegant Pinot Noir with good structure offset by lovely floral and herbal notes that make it very interesting to match with food. This is the first time we have had this wine from Fanny and we are enjoying it very much.

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$232 but the pack price is \$197.20 including freight.

Pack 3: Cheese and wine pairing 6 pack



Since we began visiting France on a regular basis many years ago, we have definitely taken on the French obsession with cheese. A day without savouring an assortment of well-selected cheese would be unthinkable to many French.

We can now be seen at Customs every time we return from France declaring our latest purchases of Comté or Beaufort or Cantal that add to the weight of our suitcases along with the inevitable bottles of wine that we have found on our travels. (And, yes, it is perfectly legal to bring in up to 10 kilos of cheese from countries such as France for personal consumption, although there is always that nerve-wracking moment when you declare it when you know it could be taken away if it looks anything other than acceptable. So far, all of our purchases have made it through though.)

In turn, this has made us think a lot more about how to match cheese and wine. Many of the traditional orthodoxies in Australia come from a different era. For example, red wines are often paired with hard cheese, however this fashion emerged in the sixties when Australian red wines were often 10% or 11% alcohol and were nowhere near as alcoholic and tannic as they are now.

So we have come up with six readily available cheeses that you can source from your favourite deli (we are not supplying the cheese) and six matching wines that will enhance the enjoyment of both the wine and the cheese.

Philippe Bornard Cotes du Jura Savagnin Ouille Les Chassagnes 2011

paired with

Comté cheese

Comté (pronounced com-tay) is a flexible and versatile cheese produced in the Jura region of eastern France from the milk of Monbeliard cows. The cheese is made in

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large wheels which require between 500 and 600 litres of cows' milk for each wheel. The wheels range from 50 to 70 centimetres across and between 10 and 12 centimetres in height.

You can buy Comté of various ages but the oldest is not always the best unless it has been aged with real care.

We like to pair an aged Comté with a Jura white made from the local Savagnin grape variety. For younger Comté cheeses we would use a slightly oxidative Savagnin such as the Bornard Chassagnes that we have chosen for this pairing. For older, nuttier versions of this cheese we would choose one of the amazing Vin Jaune wines that are a specialty of the region.

The Chassagnes that we have chosen is made from 100% Savagnin which is a white grape that is native to the Jura region. It is named after the lieu-dit or plot of land where the Savagnin is grown. As with many wines from the Jura this wine has been made with a slight oxidative edge which gives it a beautiful, nutty, savoury, umami quality that makes for compelling drinking. The same qualities make it perfect for enjoying a few slices of Comté either at the end of a meal or at any time of the day for a snack.

Les Capriades Vin de France Vignassou 2012

paired with

Crottin de Chavignol cheese or any other slightly salty, sour, sweet goat cheese

Chavignol is a small village in the centre of the Sancerre wine appellation which is famous for the quality of the Sauvignon Blanc produced there. In fact, Chavignol is regarded as having the finest terroir in all of the appellation. But, the soils here also create pastures that are ideal for the goats that graze here to produce milk of the highest quality and therefore Chavignol goat cheese is regarded as the best in the Loire Valley. It is usually shaped as a crottin which is slightly smaller than a cricket ball and is aged for about a month where it takes on a bluish-black colour.

If you can't find a Chavignol at your deli choose another good quality goat cheese such as one from the Meredith Dairy or Tongola. Make a celery and herb salad and crumble the cheese into the salad and then dress it with oil and vinegar making sure to add enough oil to take the edge off the vinegar.

Les Capriades Vignassou is a still Sauvignon Blanc made by Pascal Potaire and Moses Galouche at Faverolles-sur-Cher. This is not all that far from Chavignol, but outside the Sancerre appellation, therefore is a bit cheaper than a Sancerre, but it still has many of the qualities that you would expect thus making for an excellent pairing.

Champagne Piillot Cote des Bar Extra Brut Pinot Blanc Cuvee Val Colas Robin NV

paired with

Fromage de Meaux

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Fromage de Meaux is a soft, cows' milk cheese made near the village of Meaux which lies just a short, one hour drive east of Paris. Note that it is made in exactly the same way as Brie de Meaux but, by law, Brie de Meaux must be made using only unpasteurised milk, and as far as we know such cheeses cannot be imported commercially into Australia. It is usually matured for about two months before gaining perfect ripeness when it displays a 'mushroom' smell and an enticing richness and creaminess in the mouth.

The perfect foil for this richness and creaminess is a dry Champagne. We think the Piillot Champagne from the Val Colas vineyard made from 100% Pinot Blanc has the perfect texture and level of dryness to fully complement the flavour of the cheese. This is no accident because Champagne is the closest major wine region to Meaux.

Julien Frémont Cidre Argile

paired with

Pont l'Evêque cheese

Pont l'Evêque is a washed-rind cheese made from cows' milk that is made in Normandy and presented in squares about 10 centimetres a side. We were lucky enough to visit one of the best producers (La Fromagerie de Houssaye) of Pont l'Evêque and the similar Livarot (which is always circular and wrapped in local reeds). We were taken there by Julien Fremont who makes the lovely apple cider that we import. He has a strong association with the cheese manufacturers because Pont l'Evêque is usually accompanied by a glass of the local cider!

In case you're heading to Normandy, the web site for the cheese producer we visited is: <http://www.fromageriedelahoussaye.fr/>

Causse Marines Vin de Table Mysterre 2011

paired with

Roquefort blue cheese

Roquefort is one of the most famous blue cheeses in the world (along with Stilton and Gorgonzola). It is produced from raw sheep milk cheese around the village of the same name which lies a little way north-west of the southern city of Montpellier, just off the main highway north to the spectacular Millau Viaduct. This cheese was actually mentioned by Pliny in AD79, so it has been around for a long time!

Although, traditionally, the cheese could only be made in the commune of Roquefort-sur-Soulzon, a decree in 1961 says that the cheese can be made more broadly, but it must be matured in the caves that lie within the commune. This decree virtually gives the commune a monopoly over the production.

The cheese has a very strong salty flavour which is balanced beautifully by the lactic sweetness of the sheep milk.

We have a real treat to pair with this wine – the alluring Mysterre from Causse Marines. This is a solera wine (from the 1997, 98, 99 and 2000 vintages) made from

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oxidative Mauzac which has hints of a Jura Savignan as well as aromas of Armagnac. There is an underlying, but not cloying, sweetness to the wine and it has the power to balance off the strong flavours of the cheese.

Causse Marines Gaillac Les Greilles 2013

paired with

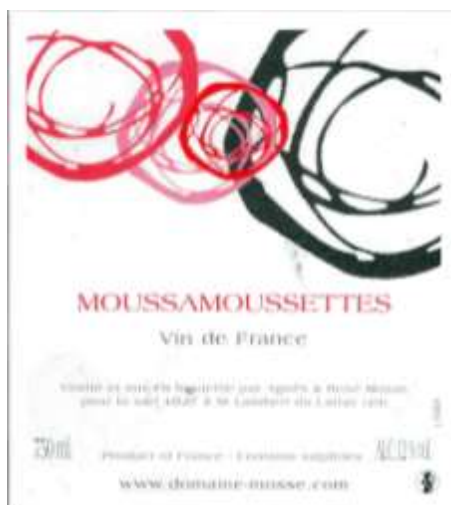
Ossau Iraty cheese

Ossau Iraty is a beautiful hard sheep milk cheese from the Pyrénées which is often matured for 90 days. The cheese is named after the Ossau Valley in south-west France where the sheep graze high in the mountains in the Irati Forest which has extensive tracts of beech trees and lies in the Basque country. It is one of only three sheep milk cheeses in France with full appellation status (the others are Roquefort and the Corsican Brocciu). It must be matured for a minimum of three months.

It is traditional in this region to drink a dry white wine with this hard cheese, although with some varieties which have a stronger flavour a red wine is occasionally permissible. We find that the local grapes used in the Causse Marines Les Greilles is a perfect accompaniment for the cheese.

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$326 but the pack price is \$277.10 including freight.

Pack 4: End of Financial Year Sale 12 Pack



We have been tidying up our warehouse to make room for our next container that is arriving soon so we've decided to have a sale to help make room for them. .

To make this an attractive price we will give you a 20% discount on this pack!!!

The wines are:

Stephane Guion Bourgueil Domaine 2012	Red	Loire Valley
Domaine Saint Nicolas Reflets 2012	Red	Loire Valley
Henri Milan MGO2 Rouge	Red	Provence
La Paonnerie Coteaux d'Ancenis Simplement Gamay 2013	Red	Loire Valley
Bainbridge and Cathcart Rouge Aux Levres Vin de France 2013	Red	Loire Valley
Bainbridge and Cathcart L'Acrobate Vin de France 2014	Rosé	Loire Valley
Terres Dorées Jean Paul Brun Beaujolais Blanc 2013	White	Beaujolais
Hervé Villemade Cour-Cheverny Les Petit Acacias 2008	White	Loire Valley
Causse Marines AOC Gaillac Blanc les Greilles 2013	White	Gaillac
Vincent Carême Vouvray Sec 2013	White	Loire Valley
Fremont Brut Nature	Cider	Normandy
Mosse Moussamoussettes 2013	Sparkling	Loire Valley

For more information about each of the wines visit our website.

The RRP for this selection of 12 bottles of wine is \$381 but the pack price is \$304.80 including freight.

Pack 5 – “They won’t frighten the horses” 6 pack



While we thoroughly enjoy extreme natural wines and have a number of winemakers who are out on the far edge, we also enjoy the comfort of wines that verge towards the traditional. However, if the wine is to have clarity in the glass it must come from patient settling of the solids not from disruptive filtering and fining. If there are flavours that are prominent they must never come from artificial flavours of added yeast but rather from the interplay from the plethora of natural yeasts that provide complexity.

This six pack features wines that will appeal to even those who have not embraced the delights of natural wines yet. They provide a bridge to the flavours and textures that make natural wines so special.

Domaine Vincent Carême Vouvray Brut 2012 – The Brut is a natural dry sparkling wine created using only the natural sugars in the grapes. No sugar is added for the second fermentation which takes place using the natural residual sugar. . The finished wine, (despite the Brut nomenclature) still has 6 gms of residual sugar per litre, which is balanced by a beautiful acidity that runs through each mouthful. The vines give this wine a fruity character and it exhibits very fine bubbles. As with all Vouvray wines this one is made from Chenin Blanc, and it is grown on clay and flint, with limestone subsoils. This is a delicious sparkling wine that displays complexity and finesse.

Domaine de la Cadette Bourgogne Vézelay La Châtelaine 2013 – Jean and Valentin Montanet are highly skilled winemakers who take great care to ensure that their wines are vibrant, flavoursome and have a clarity that is amazing for wines that haven't been fined (see article in this newsletter). This is a Chardonnay from grapes grown in the commune of Vézelay in the northern area of Burgundy which shares the same limestone soils as those found in Chablis which is a little further to the north, although with more clay than in Chablis. Therefore white wines are permitted the higher appellation status of Bourgogne Vézelay where the village name is appended.

Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Aligoté 2012 – Fanny Sabre shows a fine touch with her Aligote. Aligoté is gradually re-emerging as an interesting wine in its own right rather than playing second fiddle to Chardonnay. It is not only the winemaking but also the terroir because Fanny's late father used up some of his precious land in Pommard to plant the Aligoté vines. This is a beautiful wine with great complexity and depth. It

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has a lovely streak of acidity, generous mouthfeel, lots going on at the end of the palate and amazing texture as well. We unexpectedly have a few bottles of this wine still available as a result of a reservation we had to cancel.

Hervé Villemade Cheverny Les Ardilles Rouge 2011 – This wine is made in the Loire Valley near the village of Cheverny and is a blend of 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Gamay. It is drinking beautifully now and exhibits all the characteristics of Pinot from this area rounded out with the earthiness of the Gamay.

Terres Dorées Moulin à Vent 2013 – The Moulin à Vent from Jean Paul Brun is an elegant beauty that belies its price. There are berry flavours on the palate and 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. This wine straddles the boundary between light and structured. It is only 12% alcohol so it fits our brief perfectly. But because it comes from some of the best terroir in one of the best appellations in Beaujolais it has good structure and the ability to age.

Domaine de la Garrelière Touraine Le Rouge 2012 – This entry-level wine from the Touraine appellation is made from 100% Cabernet Franc. The Touraine Le Rouge des Cornus from Pascale and Francois Plouzeau is a biodynamic wine that shows why people in the Loire drink Cabernet Franc. The wine is smooth and elegant, has a beautiful perfume and is very low in sulphur. We are very happy with this vintage. It represents exceptional value for money.

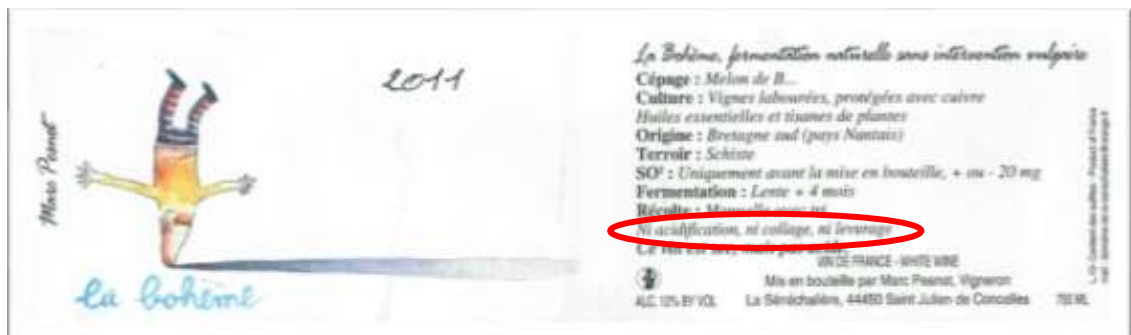
The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$223 but the pack price is \$189.55 including freight.

Is it fine to fine a wine?

The term fining is bandied about in the wine community, but when we start to quiz people about what they really mean we get a surprising range of answers, particularly as to why these processes are so common.

But before we talk about wine we would like to talk about honey. There is a world-wide trend towards unprocessed, unfiltered, unheated honey. Why? Because these processes strip flavour from the honey. Exactly the same applies to wine. If a wine is filtered or, more importantly, fined with the addition of foreign substances which remove particles from the wine, then flavour is removed!

So we will briefly explore some of the things that wine is subjected to in pursuit of clarity and gold medals.



On the label above from Marc Pesnot of Domaine la Sénéchalière you can see the words:

Ni acidification, ni collage, ni levures

This means that neither acid has been added, nor has the wine been 'fined' nor have yeasts been added. The French word 'collage' refers to the process used to remove solid particles from a wine through 'gluing' foreign particles to the solids in suspension so that together they become heavier and precipitate out and fall to the bottom of the storage vessel.

So, that is the 'fining' process but what are the foreign particles that are used to help precipitate these solids? Let's explore just a few to give you an idea of some of the substances that can be added to wine (not ours though!) to assist this process.

Isinglass

Isinglass is a powder made from dried bladders of a range of tropical and sub-tropical fish. The process of adding isinglass to wine to clarify it was probably started in Germany and spread to the United States and Australia as well as many other countries.

Of course there is an issue here for two reasons. The first is that isinglass can contain the allergen parvalbumin. The second is that it is a fish product and vegans and vegetarians might inadvertently drink wines with traces of this fish product present.

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In many countries there is also no requirement to state on the wine label that a fish product has been used in the clarifying process.

In Australia it used to be the case that the use of fish products in wine had to be mentioned on the label if isinglass had been used to clarify the wine. However, in an extraordinary sweep of logic the food safety authority, the FSANZ, removed the necessity after an aggressive campaign by the food, wine and beer industry. In their judgement they said the decision to remove labelling would:

provide fish-allergic consumers with increased choice of beer and wine products¹

Obviously, if they don't know that there might be parvalbumin in the wine their choice is broader!!! And of course, vegans and vegetarians are similarly in the dark.

Egg whites

A solution consisting of egg whites, water, potassium chloride (KCl) and potassium chlorate is added to wines in order to remove phenols that cause astringency by precipitation as the proteins in the egg white bind to the large polymers making them even heavier and causing them to precipitate to the bottom of the vessel.

As with isinglass this causes problems for vegans as there are very few countries where it is compulsory to mention the use of egg products on the label.

The use of egg whites was once so widespread in Bordeaux that a new pastry recipe based on a custard was invented (for the famous canelé) to use up the stranded egg yolks resulting from this process. The process was widespread because it softened the sometimes harsh red wines of the region allowing them to be drunk at a younger age.

Casein

Casein, the main protein in milk is used in almost an identical way to the addition of egg whites. The addition of casein precipitates the larger phenolic compounds from the wine thus reducing the astringency but not with the same efficiency as isinglass.

Bentonite

And now we get to the almost Monty Python position where some people add dirt to clean up a wine!

Bentonite is clay. This clay has high levels of aluminium silicates. The clay particles are negatively charged therefore they attract positively charged proteins in the wine that need to be eliminated.

Other stuff

We haven't even started on what can be added. The products include carbon products, a synthetic polymer called Polyvinylpolypyrrolidone, skim milk and many more.

¹ Food Safety Australia New Zealand Final Assessment Report Application A490. 20 March 2009

Conclusion

We just don't want any of this to happen in our wines. Every one of these processes strip out flavour just as they do with honey. So if you see the words "Ni Collage" on a label grab it. It means that the producer is serious about their wine. They don't want to strip out the goodness in the wine.

Celebrate the difference!

Grape variety: Muscat à Petit Grains

Muscat à Petit Grains is a grape variety that is widely distributed around the shores of the Mediterranean. It is probably not a French indigenous grape variety (most likely introduced to Italy from Greece, from the island of Samos and then brought to the Languedoc by invading Romans) but it is very popular in the Languedoc and Roussillon. It is also the main grape variety used for the amazing sweet wines from the Vaucluse village of Beaumes-de-Venise in the southern Rhone north of Avignon which crouches under the stunning jagged mountains called Dentilles de Montmirail. The appellation for these wines is Muscat de Beaumes de Venise. It is a sweet wine that is quite approachable.

One of the interesting facts about this grape variety is that the total plantings are actually growing significantly unlike many of the grape we write about which are slowly disappearing. In 1958 there were 2,297 hectares of plantings in France. By the year 2006 this area had increased to 7,370 hectares.

We thought we first came across this grape a long time ago when we were sitting in a restaurant in the Luberon town of Apt at lunch time. We ordered an entrée of the amazing local melons from nearby Cavaillon. The melon, split in two was brought to the table on two plates. The seeds had been taken out of both halves to create a crater in each. The owner then approached with a chilled bottle of the sweet Beaumes de Venise and proceeded to fill the centre of the melon with this rich wine. The interplay between the sweet fruit and the cold sweet wine was intriguing. It was a perfect start to our lunch.

We lately realised that it was the same grape that we used to enjoy in the wines that we bought from Rutherglen in the sixties and seventies. Australian wine buffs who used to drink fortified wines would be familiar with this grape under names such as Frontignac and Brown Muscat. This is because the grape displays different characteristics in different terroirs. In Australia the berry can become quite dark in the heat of northern Victoria. Nevertheless, the grape is responsible for some of the insanely delicious ultra-sweet wines produces in this area.

The name reflects the fact that the grapes (grains) are quite small (petit). We love wines made from this grape because they are so difficult to pin down. We have a producer in the Languedoc (Petit Domain de Gimios) who produces wines of amazing complexity and mystery.

Their Le Petit Gimios Vin de Table Muscat Sec des Roumanis is made with only this grape variety and it is a roller-coaster ride. When you first smell it you know it is going to be sweet. Then you sip it and your tongue confirms your initial guess. Then you swirl it around your mouth and it tastes amazing and you forget about sweet or dry because there is so much going on reflecting the components of the fruit. Finally you swallow and the finish is totally and completely dry!

This grape variety is also used to make the famous Muscat de Rivesaltes in the Roussillon area of France nearest to the Spanish border. These wines have their fermentation stopped by the addition of neutral spirits so that there is residual sugar

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present. The result is a delicious, dark brown liquid that is sweet yet dry at the same time.

There is even a special appellation for a rancio style that is made in this region. Rancio wines are fermented in vats and then the wine is transferred to glass demi-johns and they are left outside in the sunshine for six months. This process develops a strong nutty aroma that is a cross between hazelnuts and walnuts extending to the flavour which is true to the rancio style in which it was made. There is even a slight bitter almond flavour on the finish.



After the demi-johns have completed their outdoor exile the wine is placed in barrels which contain some of the previous year's vintage to add even more complexity. Our friends at Jolly Ferriol make an amazing Rancio wine called Jolly Ferriol Vin de France Au Fil du Temps which we treasure. It is an expensive wine at \$102 a bottle but it is one of the most amazing wines you will ever taste. And the wine lasts for ages after you open it so it is a perfect wine for an individual who would like to savour it over a few weeks or for a restaurant that would like to pour it over an extended period.

The leaves of the Muscat à Petit Grains grape variety can be seen in the photo below.



Photo courtesy: [Vitis International Variety Catalogue](#)

Notice the very distinctive five lobes on the leaf.

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The grapes form tight clusters of the very small grapes which turn a rusty colour as they ripen and can end up if left on the vine to create a sweeter wine as a dark brown colour.

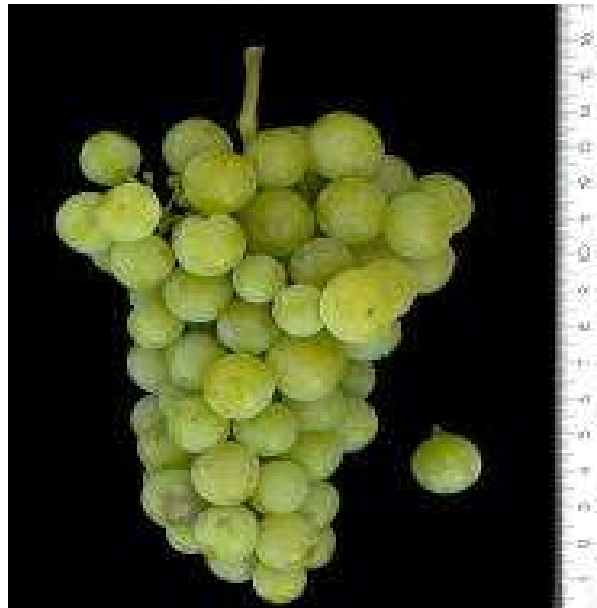


Photo courtesy: Vitis International Variety Catalogue

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