

WINE Talk: January 2020

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 88

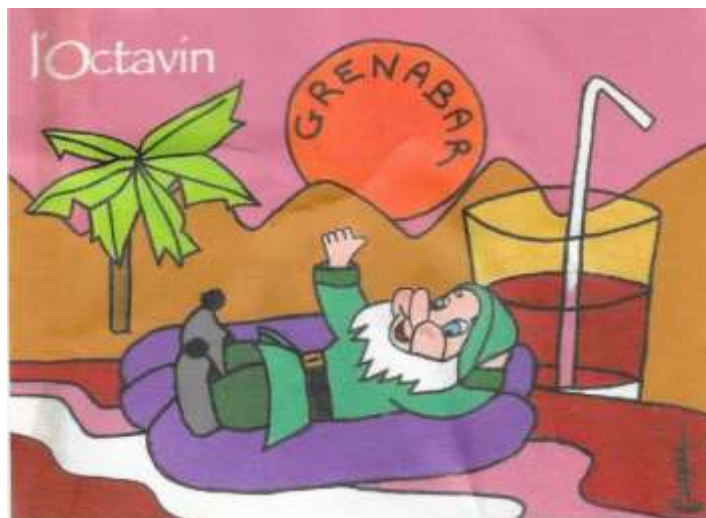
We hope you enjoy this newsletter and remember that all past newsletters are available to read on our Living Wines Web site.

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

<http://www.livingwines.com.au/Catalogue/Catalogue.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. If you're not personally known to us or haven't already, please also provide your date of birth so we stay legal (a requirement of Tasmanian legislation.)

New arrivals in February



We have delayed shipping a number of wines that were ready until late December, so we didn't have new wines arriving and for sale during the worst of the shipping season and the heat. That means February is going to be a huge month. We now know exactly what's coming because our order has been shipped.

We have wines arriving from twenty different producers from eight different regions. It's likely some of them, because the quantities are very limited, will only be available to people who request them in advance. By the time we fill the requests they will be fully allocated. So if you are interested in buying wines from some of these producers let us know. We always do our best to make sure everyone gets something and, at least for Bornard and Octavin, there are a couple of cuvées in good quantities which will make it easier, including the very delicious 2017 vintage of Grenabar, one of Alice Bouvet's négociant l'Octavin wines, which is pictured above.

WINE Talk – the newsletter of Living Wines

This is the complete list by region.

Jura

Domaine Bornard, Domaine des Cavarodes, Bruyère / Houillon, l'Octavin, Arnaud and Malou Greiner, Domaine de la Loue (new producer), Eric Thill (new producer)

Loire

Mosse family, Les Capriades, Toby Bainbridge

Alsace

Jean-Marc Dreyer, Jean Ginglinger

Burgundy

Yann Durieux, Cadette/Montanet Thoden, Alice and Olivier de Moor (Not the 2018 de Moor Chablis yet though – they will come later in the year. This shipment is 2018 Aligoté and Chitry).

Languedoc

Les Temps des Cerises (Axel Prüfer), Le Bouc à Trois Pattes (Wim Wagemans)

Provence

Domaine Milan

South-west

Dominique Andiran (the ever popular Vain de Rû and Magnus return)

Auvergne

Mito Inoue (We already have too many requests for Mito's wine but can put you on a waiting list. Not everyone may want to take it once they know the price.)

We don't have a full list of individual wines ready yet but email us if you are interested in advance notice for any particular producers. We will also send a general email to newsletter subscribers once the wines are for sale, hopefully as part of a February newsletter which will have lots of exciting new packs.

If you sent an email request as a result of the draft list we published in the November newsletter there is no need to tell us about your interest in those wines again. We have that information tucked away.

Pack 1: Last bottle Pack - 20% discount



We had no last bottles at the time of our last newsletter but have plenty to choose from this time. This pack is a good mix – 2 whites, 3 reds, and 1 light red. The light red (the Opi d'Aqui Les Cliquets) is perfect for summertime drinking. The pack also includes two very special wines (the Fanny Sabre Clos des Renardes and the Belluard Mondeuse).

Julien Peyras Gourmandise 2015 – The Gourmandise is comprised of 100% Cinsault (a variety found throughout the Southern Rhone and the Languedoc) from 40 year old vines which have been raised on clay and limestone soils then made into an easy-drinking wine. The grapes were picked by hand, as all of Julien's grapes are, and then carefully sorted before undergoing natural fermentation in stainless steel tanks. This is a fresh, lively, juicy, red which really shows what this grape variety can demonstrate when in the hands of a good winemaker.

Le Raisin à Plume (Jacques Février) Elsass Connexion 2017 – In 2017, Jacques was hit by the dangerous frosts that took a toll on vineyards throughout the Western Loire region, but particularly around the village of Oudon where Jacques lives. This wine therefore is made entirely with Sauvignon Blanc grown by Paul and Corinne Gillet from Les Maisons Brûlées in Touraine. Most of the wine was aged in fibreglass but this one was aged in 400 litre barrels. It's called Elsass Connection because the Gillets came from Alsace. Jacques added 2 grams of sulphur to this wine.

Belluard Vin de Savoie AOP Rouge Mondeuse 2017 – Dominique Belluard used to make this wine in amphora, but this vintage he has changed back to his beloved concrete eggs which stand about 8 feet high. The Mondeuse red grapes are hand-picked and 70% of the harvest was destemmed and the remainder whole bunch. It was left on skins for five weeks, which is a long time, but the results show that it was a good call by Dominique. This wine is silky and supple with a beautiful mouthfeel.

Fanny Sabre Beaune Rouge Clos Des Renardes 2017 – The Fanny Sabre Clos des Renardes is a new vineyard that Fanny has acquired in this very good terroir. It is made from 100% Pinot Noir and the wine benefits from clay and limestone soils found in this vineyard. Fanny macerated the juice in stainless steel for 5 days and then transferred the juice to old barrels for fermentation for 15 days and then maturation for 12 months. This is a beautiful, elegant wine that is drinking

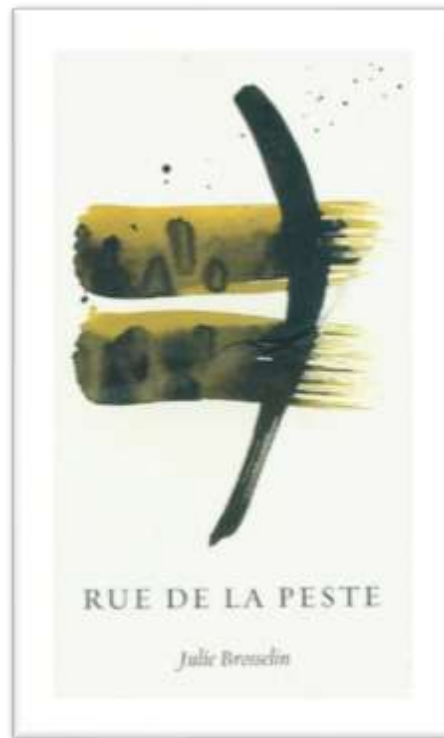
nicely now but which will benefit from a year or two in the cellar. There is also a dramatic new label for this wine as you can see!

Jean Ginglinger Sylvaner Reserve 2017 – The production of Sylvaner in Alsace almost halved between 1958 and 2006 in favour of Riesling, however since 2006 it has undergone a revival as some young winemakers, including Jean have started making exemplary wines using this grape. Sylvaner was also recognised as a quality grape by the French INAO which created two Grand Cru appellations based on Sylvaner. Jean's vineyards are in the south of Alsace where it is recognised that the best Sylvaner comes from. This wine is well worth a try to savour the flavours of this truly interesting grape variety.

Opi d'Aqui Les Cliquets 2017 – This wine has been made from 100% Grenache Noir which came from a small plot (0.8 hectares) near the town of Vendémian which lies approximately 16 kilometres south-east of Clermont-l'Hérault. The soils here are clay over limestone. The process was started using whole bunch, cold carbonic maceration for 3 weeks. It was then aged in stainless steel tanks for 6 months. It was bottled without fining or the addition of sulphites to preserve its freshness. It is a red wine, but very light in colour. It almost looks like a rosé in the glass, but it has more weight in the mouth. We love this wine!

The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$344 but the pack price is only \$275.20 including freight to most Australian cities.

Pack 2: Red Sale Pack - nearly 40% discount



Our bargain basement sale pack, which is almost a 40% discount is all red this month, a reflection of our depleted cellar of pink, orange, sparkling and white things. We know some of our customers prefer red wine so this is a pack for you. It may be one to take advantage of the bargain price now but put the wines away for cooler weather.

Mylène Bru Violet de Mars 2016 – The story behind this wine is very special. This is a beautiful, silky Grenache that used to always feature on the wine list at the famous Garagistes in Hobart. This wine is made from grapes picked from Mylène’s stunning vineyards in the hills behind the Languedoc seaside village of Sete. Mylène normally produces blended red wines, but in seasons when the Grenache ripens perfectly and when the grapes are very healthy she loves to make a wine from 100% Grenache. She calls the wine Violet de Mars. The vines grow on crumbly clay and limestone soils on slopes which face north and north east providing protection from the hot summer sun. The vineyards are ploughed by horse to avoid compacting the soils. The grapes are picked by hand to ensure they are in good condition and then fermented on their skins for between 10 to 20 days. The wine is then matured in tanks until March (Mars) when the wine has become quite purple (Violet). This a pretty, elegant and delicious red wine.

Domaine Saint Nicolas Reflets Rouge 2017 – All of the wines produced by Thierry Michon benefits from the many years he has been tending his vines using strict biodynamic principles. The vines for Reflets thrive on a south-east facing slope where the soil is schist-derived clay mixed with quartz pebbles. The wine was matured for between 6 months to a year in wooden foudres. It is an elegant wine with good structure. It has not been filtered at our request and we are very happy with the results. This is a smooth and delicious wine that will go very well with a wide range of foods.

Samuel Boulay Baltringue 2015 – This wine comes from a remote area of the Ardeche. The name Baltringue seems to have originally come from the circus and refers to a person who organises the show but does not perform any of the feats. It also refers to someone who claims they can do anything but never actually gets around to it. This red wine is made from around 95% Merlot with a small addition of Viognier. It is lively, fresh and very moorish with the Viognier adding a hint of stonefruit. As with all of Samuel's wines, this one has no added sulphites, but he manages to ensure that his wines do not fall apart once the bottle is opened.

Jolly Ferriol Syrahre 2015 – This is one of Jean-Luc's prize cuvees. Made from 100% Syrah, the grapes for this wine are carefully selected during hand harvesting. Nothing is added in the winery, including no additions of sulphites at any time. The wine is fermented with the yeasts that are on the grapes and the wine is neither fined or filtered. This is a luscious wine that ranks amongst the best.

Julie Brosselin Rue de la Peste 2015 – Rue de la Peste is a blend of Carignan and Syrah which at 12.5% is a fresh wine that captures the spirit of the Mediterranean so much better than the heavier, high alcohol wines for which the Languedoc is better known. This wine has good structure but does not dominate food due to Julie's light touch in the winery. Montpeyroux, where Julie lives, is quite close to Saint Chinian which is the "spiritual" home of the Carignan grape variety. It is in the rugged terrain around this area where the grape variety thrives. The Syrah gives it strength on the finish to ensure that this is a well-rounded wine which has been cleverly blended to bring out the best qualities of each of the varieties. This is a wine for enjoying with food as it has structure and strength while still showing a lightness that makes it so appealing.

Le Temps Retrouvé Syrah Version Light 2015 – The Syrah vines for this deliciously light cuvée are tended biodynamically and any ploughing work is carried out using a horse. After the grapes are picked manually and are placed in small crates they are macerated for a short time and then the juice is transferred to old wooden barrels for twelve months to mature. The result is a very light, quaffable wine that almost looks like a dark rosé but has the structure of a red wine.

The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$310 but the pack price is only \$190 including freight to most Australian cities.

Pack 3: What we're drinking - 15% discount



We always like putting together this pack. The best way to prepare it is to have a look in the recycling bin! It's a real mix – 2 orange, one pet-nat, one lively red, and a serious white, the Mosse Le Rouchefer 2017, which, incidentally, we recently had some feedback from a customer who loved this wine when drunk over several days. It got more and more interesting. Always with a touch of oxidation, as a result of the aging in older barrels, he drank the wine over several days and found, possibly because of its oxidative characters, it became more and more beguiling as time went on.

Causse Marines Zacm'Orange 2018 – The Zacm'Orange is an orange (skin contact) wine made from 100% Mauzac that has had some 21 days of skin contact prior to being transferred to 400 litre barrels to mature for 7 months. The vineyard where the Mauzac is grown is in front of their winery and the vines love the clay and limestone soils that they grow in. It is a complex wine with a bright orange colour from the skin contact, a hint of spritz (natural winemakers often encourage a light spritz because carbon dioxide is a very good preservative and anti-bacterial agent) and some very nice tannins making it a perfect food wine. No sulphites have been added at any stage and the wine has not been fined or filtered thus making it suitable for vegetarians and vegans.

Laurent Lebled Ça c'est Bon 2018 – We have always loved the juicy, gulpable qualities of this smashable Gamay, made with carbonic maceration, which also has plenty of length. Some of this length comes from the rocky soils that the Gamay vines grow in and further complexity is the result of the carefully selected (selection massale) vines that were planted in 1950 and 1970 and are therefore at the peak of their maturity. The label shown above was created by the talented Michel Tolmer who is also responsible for the iconic Épaulé Jeté poster that hangs in almost every natural wine bar.

Opi d'Aqui Massale 2017 – This light-red, smashable wine is made from a single plot of grapes where the three Grenache varieties (Grenache Noir, Grenache Gris and Grenache Blanc) all

grow. Hence this wine is a “mix” of 40% red, 30% grey and 30% white grapes that have undergone cold carbonic maceration for 3 to 4 weeks before being transferred to stainless steel tanks for 6 months to produce a wine that will match with a wide range of foods or which can simply be sipped while sitting outside in the summer sun.

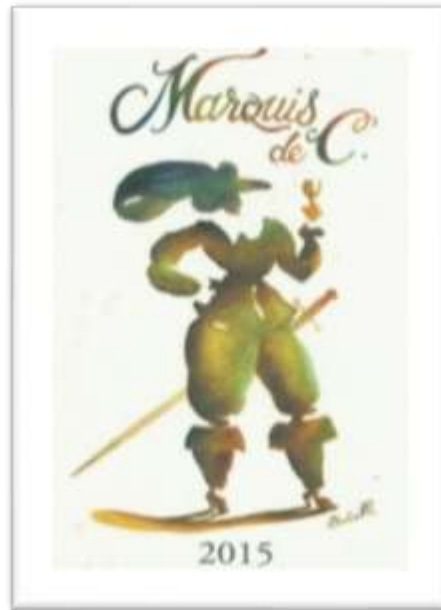
Geschickt Pet-Nat 2018 – This wine from Alsace has everything. It is not sweet, the bead is fine, the acidity adds to the taste sensation without dominating and it lingers for a long time. It is made from Pinot Auxerrois, Riesling and some Muscat. There are no added sulphites in this wine and the alcohol level is an appealing 12%. And, of course, the best thing is that it is a pet nat. We have been importing pet nats for a long time and they have become incredibly popular in Australia. This one will not disappoint. It is fresh, it is vibrant, it is dry, it has lots of energy, it has fine bubbles and it is very, very tasty.

Opi d'Aqui l'Orangeade 2018 – The name “Orangeade” is a light-hearted attempt to explain this wine. It is made by macerating the Clairette grape variety (a variety that we particularly like when in the hands of a skilled winemaker) which was destemmed and macerated for 15 days then aged in stainless steel. It is a lightly orange wine which we have found stands up quite well over a couple of days of being opened. It is not aggressively tannic like some macerated wines. It will go with a wide variety of foods.

Mosse Le Rouchefer 2017 – The Le Rouchefer is a pure Chenin Blanc that comes from a small parcel of gently sloping, southwest facing land that extends over 1.66 hectares with clay and gravel (studded with quartz) sitting on schist. The yield from this vineyard is very low with 20 hectolitres per hectare being common. The grapes are hand harvested and meticulously sorted before slow pressing and then being allowed to go through both alcoholic and malolactic fermentation. The wine is aged in old barrels for 12 months. There is a tiny bit of residual sugar in this wine which adds to its charm. This is a complex and elegant wine that matches beautifully to a range of foods including grilled fish, sweetbreads, chicken and mountain cheeses.

The RRP for this selection of 12 wines is \$319 but the pack price is only \$271.15 including freight to most Australian cities.

Pack 4: Mixed whites - 15% discount



There's one red pack so we thought we should balance it with some whites. These are a real mix of grape varieties ranging from the less common (Picpoul, Mauzac and a Muscat which is a mix of several of Jean Ginglinger's Muscat variants, including Muscat Ottonel) to more familiar flavours like Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay.

Opi d'Aqui Poupoule 2018 – The Picpoul grapes were picked by hand from a 1 hectare plot near Pinet (limestone and clay terroir) and placed in small 10 kg baskets. The grapes were then pressed and 50% of the juice transferred to tanks and 50% to old oak barrels for a period of 6 months. The wine was then bottled without filtration and without the addition of sulphites to ensure freshness. This Picpoul is a lively, fresh and slightly acidic (in a good way) white wine that can be enjoyed year round.

Causse Marines AOC Gaillac Les Greilles 2017 – Les Greilles is a classy white wine blended from local Gaillac grapes Mauzac and Loin-de-l'Oeil with a little old vine Muscadelle. We perhaps do not give this wine full praise. 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. It is a perfect aperitif wine as well as being an ideal accompaniment for a range of foods such as charcuterie, including cured meats and many spicy foods such as those from Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, India and Sri Lanka. 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.

Jean Ginglinger Muscat 2017 – This complex and charming wine is made from three varieties of Muscat that thrive on calcareous soils. The varieties are Muscat Ottonel, Muscat d'Alsace Rose and Muscat d'Alsace. Muscat Ottonel was created in 1852 by crossing Chasselas with Muscat. It is particularly suited to the Alsace region. Muscat d'Alsace Rose is a pink variety of Muscat which is quite rare, but Jean is lucky enough to have a small plot of this variety. Muscat d'Alsace is the local name for Muscat à Petit Grains which is widely planted in the Languedoc and Roussillon and probably came originally from Greece via Italy. This wine is a stunner. If you

haven't tried a complex Muscat then this is one that you will find to be a beautiful companion to a wide range of foods.

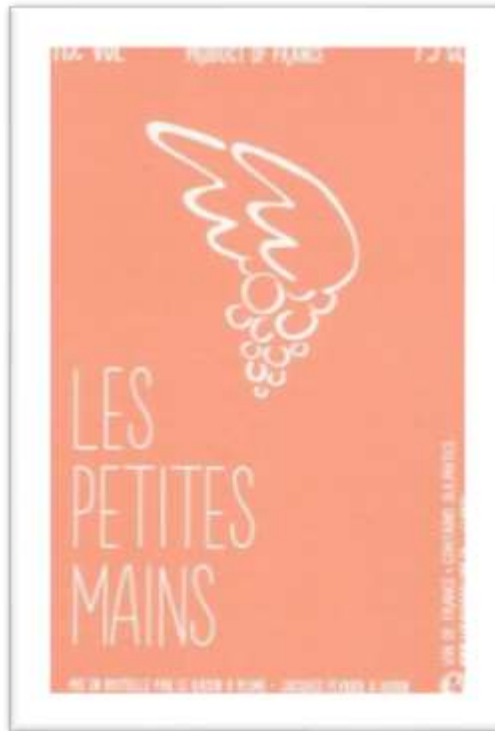
Nicolas Carmarans Selves 2014 – The Nicolas Carmarans Selves is produced from old vine Chenin Blanc plus some grapes from his newly-planted vineyard on the Selves River slopes that thrives in the cold valley near Campouriez in the Aveyron. This is an unbelievably beautiful wine for those who love the power and elegance of this much sought-after grape variety. When we tried it this year during a lunch at chez Nicolas overlooking the beautiful river that meanders through the steep gorges here we were stunned again by the purity and elegance displayed by this wine.

Causse Marines Zacmau 2015 – The Zacmau is a white Vin de France wine made from 100% Mauzac, the favoured local white grape of the Gaillac appellation which has been grown here for many hundreds of years. The vineyard where the Mauzac is grown is in front of their winery and the vines love the clay and limestone soils that they grow in. This is a classy, elegant wine that shows what Mauzac is capable of, especially when yields are as low as 20 hectolitres per hectare. Up to 50% of the juice is aged in old wooden barrels and the rest in stainless steel or fibreglass tanks. It is a complex wine with considerable finesse with lots of the characteristic Mauzac flavour and a very long and very satisfying finish.

Domaine de la Garrelière Marquis de C 2015 – The Marquis de C is a beautiful wine made from 100% Chardonnay grapes, which is rare in the Touraine region of the Loire Valley with Sauvignon Blanc and Chenin Blanc being more common. The grapes were pressed and the juice transferred to 500 litre wooden fûts for fermentation and maturation on lees for 12 months without any battonage. The grapes were hand harvested from thirty year old vines in early October with a yield around a very low 25 hectolitres per hectare. The vineyard soils are flint and flint clays sitting over limestone. The name for this wine comes from one of the works of the prolific 17th Century French author Charles Perrault who either adapted or was the originator of many fairy tales including Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood and Puss in Boots. It is from Puss in Boots that the character Marquis de Carabas is to be found and this fictional character is from where the name for this wine is derived.

The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$283 but the pack price is only \$240.55 including freight to most Australian cities.

Pack 5: Warehouse Clearance Pack - 20% discount



You may have noticed in another story that we are expecting a large shipment in February. We have less than a dozen bottles of each of the wines in this pack left so there are only a few available. It's a mix of three reds and three whites. The Derain is a glorious red burgundy from a vintage, which although marred by spring rain and poor flowering, has turned out to have produced some ethereal wines, low in alcohol and still plenty of acidity. This is a 20% discount pack.

Le Raisin à Plume (Jacques Février) Les Petites Mains 2015 – This is a light red wine as it was only given two days of skin contact and was bottled after a few months in the tank. It is therefore a lighter style of wine even though the colour is quite ample. Jacques Février calls it a “red wine in a frame of white”. We look on this as a winter rosé and would serve it slightly chilled. It has a beautiful, lingering flavour and the characteristic minerality and tension found in Jacques wines still exists despite the short maceration.

Derain Mercurey La Plante Chassey 2013 – This is an interesting cuvee because it has a small amount of Pinot Beurot (Malvoisie, Pinot Gris) blended with the dominant Pinot Noir. (Incidentally, Pinot Liébault is also permitted in this appellation). The Mercurey appellation is increasingly receiving critical acclaim as a number of young winemakers have recognised the attractive nature of the terroir here and are producing wines of considerable elegance. La Plante Chassey is a south-east slope with clay soil. The grapes for this wine are harvested by hand and the wine is fermented in wooden vats before being transferred to old wooden barrels for 18 months. The wine is not fined or filtered before bottling.

Henri Milan Papillon Rouge 2015 – The name of this wine gives you a clue about how it was made. In French the words ‘Sans Soufre Ajouté’ means no added sulphur. This wine has not had sulphur added to the bottle. The only sulphur in it is naturally occurring sulphur which is in

miniscule quantities. The wine displays a liveliness and freshness that is typical of naturally-made wines that have not had sulphur added. The grape varieties are Grenache, Shiraz and Mourvèdre and it only spends 8 months in old barriques. No filtration or fining has been applied to this wine and only indigenous yeasts have been used to ferment the grapes. It is only 12.5% alcohol. This is a great wine for people who have developed a reaction to sulphur or for those addicted to the freshness of natural wines.

Domaine Saint Nicolas Haut des Clous 2012 – This is the prestige white from this domaine and is made from 100% Chenin Blanc. It has been fermented with natural yeasts then aged for 18 months in 80% old oak and up to 20% of the wine exposed to new oak. The grapes benefit from the schist soils that dominate this area and provide the minerality that is so marked in this wine and the cooling breezes from the Atlantic Ocean which you can see from the vineyard which reduce disease pressure. The vines are approximately 25 years old. The biodynamic viticulture that Thierry Michon has practised for so long leads to healthier grapes packed with flavour.

Dominique Andiran Chut! 2015 – Chut! is an intriguing wine because it is made from a very rare grape variety that makes a beautiful wine with subtle aromas and a long finish. The grape variety is Sauvignon Rose which is so named because the skin has a soft pink colour. It is thought to be a mutation of Sauvignon Blanc that probably occurred hundreds of years ago in the Loire Valley. The grapes are a deep pink in colour and produce a wine with a pink hue which is not a rosé but rather a white wine. This is a very pleasant drink with a lot going on. Think herbs and flower petals and a lovely streak of minerality.

Domaine de la Garrelière Touraine Marquis de C 2013 – The Marquis de C is a beautiful wine made from 100% Chenin Blanc grapes for this older vintage. They now use a beautiful plot of Chardonnay for the cuvée. The grapes were pressed and the juice transferred to 500 litre wooden fûts for fermentation and maturation on lees for 12 months without any battonage. The grapes were hand harvested in early October with a yield around a very low 25 hectolitres per hectare. The vineyard soils are flint and flint clays sitting over limestone.

The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$310 but the pack price is only \$248 including freight to most Australian cities.

Pack 6: Mylène Bru Far Ouest Pack - 20% off



We don't think we've ever done this before – created a pack made up entirely of one wine so we will be interested to see what the reaction to it is. It's not exactly the same wine though because there are 5 bottles of its 2015 vintage and 1 bottle of its 2014 vintage. We chose to feature Mylène Bru's 2015 Far Ouest because, when we did a public tasting in Hobart in December it was one of the most popular wines in the selection, even though it's high summer. This is a fully-fledged red wine which has hit a very nice spot just now. Its fullness is balanced with plenty of minerality and, as always with her wines, the aromas of the wild herbs of the surrounding garrigue seem to find their way in. This is also a special discount of 20%.

Mylène runs a small biodynamic, 5 hectare vineyard in the mountains behind the Mediterranean port of Sète in the commune of Saint-Pargoire. Here she grows Chasselas, Grenache, Syrah, Carignan and Cinsault with small amounts of a very rare grape from the Rhone called Aubun as well as Marselan and Tempranillo.

For this pack we have included 5 bottles of her flagship red wine from the 2015 vintage and one bottle from the 2014 vintage to compare the effect of the weather in different years.

Far-Ouest has a film connection because of Mylène's passion for film from an early age. She loved Clint Eastwood in 'The Good, The Bad and The Ugly' and also admires French New Wave director Francois Truffaut who used the metaphor of the Wild West to shape his films.

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 (an obscure grape from the Vaucluse) depending on the vintage.

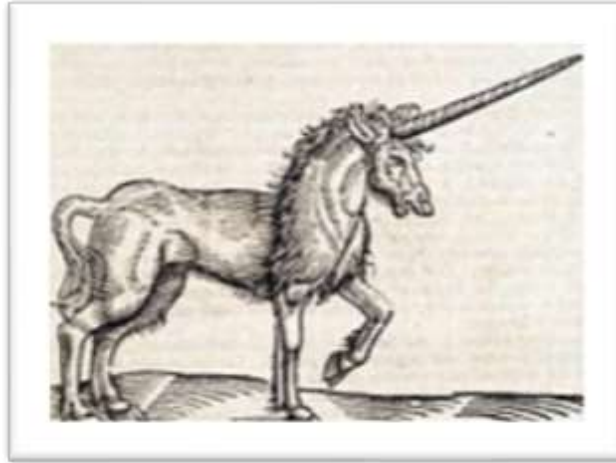
Mylène Bru Far Ouest 2015 (5 bottles)

Mylène Bru Far Ouest 2014 (1 bottle)

The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$290 but the pack price is only \$232 including freight to most Australian cities.

Pack 7: Unicorn magnum pack - no discount

Only one pack available



There are no discounts with this pack but these wines have not been available on our website at all so it's their rareness that makes it a special offer. The wines are from our personal allocation which we've decided to sell, knowing that we can replenish them in about 3 weeks from the new stocks arriving. It's one of those moments when you realise you can't drink everything you want and it was time to let them loose.

Tant Mieux and Ça Va Bien are pet-nats and the Melon Le Rouge Queue magnum is the rare variant of Chardonnay found in the Jura called Melon Le Queue Rouge.

The pack is therefore made up of three magnums each based on a different local grape variety. We only have a one of these packs so first in will be first served.

Philippe Bornard Ploussard Tant Mieux 2017 Magnum

Philippe Bornard Melon le Rouge Queue 2014 Magnum

Philippe Bornard Savagnin Ça Va Bien 2016 Magnum

The RRP for this selection of 3 very special wines is \$365 including freight to most Australian cities.

Special Living Wines offers for our rental house in Provence

Living Wines exists because, with two friends, we bought a house in Provence. That was 2006. After a year or two of drinking affordable, delicious local organic wines our palates had a dramatic about face. The equivalently-priced bottles we were drinking at home at the time were jammy, sweet and unbalanced (so much alcohol and so little acid) – very different to the minimal intervention Australian wines you can find today.

We decided the only way we could afford to drink like we did in France at home was to import some of the local wines we drank in France to Australia. Within a year or two we narrowed things down – the flavours we liked were all wines that were fermented naturally and soon Living Wines (Terroir Wines then, before fortunately we were forced to change our name to Living Wines) was only importing natural wines. It was a big epiphany, taking a little while to pin down but once bitten there was no turning back.

We owe our house a lot for this big turning point in our lives. Without it and the experiences it's allowed us to have in France, the idea to become a wine importer would never have been seeded.

The house, La Louche, is in Caromb, a village not far from Avignon on the slopes of Mt Ventoux and is available for holiday rentals. We normally rent it for a week at a time from Saturday to Saturday and the weekly rental is 1400€.

For Living Wines customers and newsletter subscribers we have a special offer. The weekly rental is only 1120€, which is a 20% discount, and we would be happy to consider pro-rata rentals for less than a week provided they fall between one Saturday and the next and are for a minimum of three days. (We normally only rent it for a full week at a time, from Saturday to Saturday.)

Although it's in the middle of the village it has an expansive terrace just off an open living area which makes it perfect for outdoor living. We cook on the terrace a lot (although not as much as before we started Living Wines, because ironically we now get to spend less time in the house) so it is set up with everything we need, even down to meat thermometers and scales, and with quality cooking equipment (e.g. Le Creuset pots) and a charcoal BBQ on the terrace. Charcoal is available from the local mini supermarket in the middle of the village. And of course there's a library of cook books, fine-tuned to what's available locally.

Our region is full of wonderful produce, including a farmers' market at Velleron, and, in our village an excellent butcher's shop (except for 2 weeks in October when they take their annual holiday), boulangerie, green grocer, and, a couple of decent restaurants, including most recently, a new restaurant / bottle shop which has some delicious wines (Belluard, Ganevat, Labet, Lapierre).

The Velleron market is especially important for us. To work out where to buy the house we drew a circle around Velleron that represented no more than about 30 minutes' drive and the house had to be inside the circle. It operates 6 nights a week for the warmer months (from April until the end of September) beginning from 6 pm and, in the other months three nights a week from 4pm.

It's a luxury to wander amongst the market stalls in the early evening or late afternoon, depending on the season, the perfect time to decide exactly what it is you want to cook. If you're not sure what's in season and what's locally grown this is the place to find out – from tomatoes and aubergines at the height of summer, cèpes in autumn, truffles in winter and asparagus and artichokes in spring. There's a stall selling organic milk-fed veal and cow's milk cheeses and a man who makes the best apricot confiture on the planet. People leave with wooden trays of fruits and vegetables you know they are going to preserve and we always leave with far more than we can possibly eat. One day we will learn!

WINE Talk – the newsletter of Living Wines

We have a couple of excellent fromageries close by, one in Carpentras and one in Vaison la Romaine and occasionally make a trip to Marseille for lunch at La Mercerie and to stock up on Ideal's house-cured poutargue and our wine supplies (there are several good wine shops in Marseille, including an outpost of Paris's renowned Cave des Papilles). Avignon's Maché les Halles is our preference for shopping for seafood and there is also a tiny wine shop in the market with some treasures if you look carefully.

The area is also renowned for cycling, especially the ride to ascend Le Mont Ventoux. Some of our rental customers have done that but it's only something we can only report on theoretically!

The house can get hot in mid-summer but for most of the year the thick stone walls are all you need to stay cool and the terrace is shaded with a beautiful wisteria.

Here are some photos of La Louche, Velleron market and some of the other things we love. It was hard to make a small selection.

The entrance, via the terrace, in a pedestrian-only precinct.



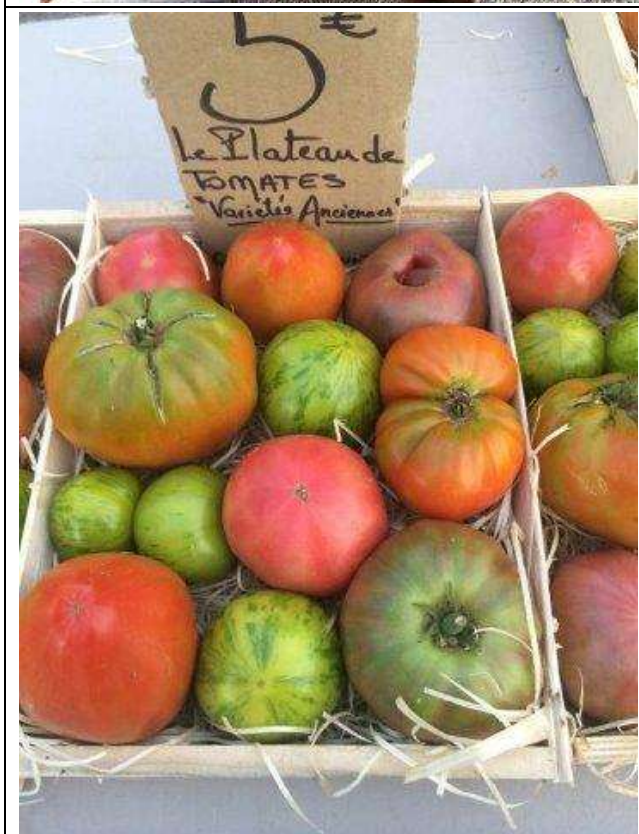
The terrace at peak spring time in mid-April, and the front door into the living room, kitchen and dining room.



Open living area and kitchen opening on to the terrace



Following the seasons at Velleron





Mercy Fromagerie in Carpentras



Guinea Fowl from our village butcher



Winter treats from our truffle supplier in Monteux



There are more photos on [Instagram](#) and the availability calendar is [here](#).

If you are interested in our special offer, or for more information email mail@provencevillagehouse.com.

The sulphur debate

The use of sulphur-based compounds in all aspects of winemaking is one of the least understood of all aides used, but one that many involved in the wine industry feel most passionate about.

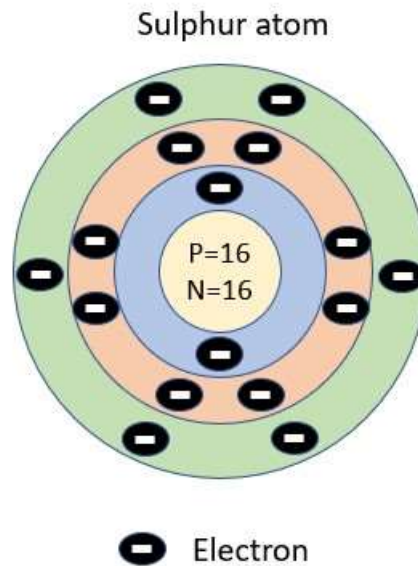
It is true that sulphur-based products can be used right through from spraying the vines to protect them from diseases such as powdery mildew right through to adding it to the finished wine to “preserve” it.

This short article will address some of the uses of sulphur/sulphites and will discuss some of our experiences with sulphured wines and un-sulphured wines.

First, we need to clarify what we are talking about from the perspective of chemistry. Sulphur is a naturally occurring non-metallic element that forms a yellow crystalline solid at room temperature that is both tasteless and odourless¹.

Sulphur has 16 protons in the nucleus of the atom – this means that it has an “**atomic number**” of 16. A proton is a positively charged entity, therefore sulphur needs 16 electrons that are found in shells around the nucleus to balance that charge since electrons are negatively charged.

There are also 16 neutrons in the nucleus of the sulphur atom. The combination of the protons and neutrons is known as the atomic mass, which for sulphur is 32 or more precisely 32.065.



The picture of the sulphur atom above shows the arrangement of the electrons in three “shells” around the nucleus. There are two electrons in the inner shell, eight in the middle shell and six in the outer shells. The electrons in the outer shell are called valence electrons because they are easy to share with other atoms to create compounds such as SO₂.

¹ Yes, sulphur is odourless – you cannot smell elemental sulphur. But when the sulphur element combines with other elements such as Hydrogen the compound formed (Hydrogen sulphide, H₂S) definitely can be detected and is often called rotten egg gas.

To determine more about the properties and behaviour of sulphur and its compounds we turn to the **Periodic Table** which is a matrix of all elements starting with the lightest (Hydrogen – H which has 1 proton and one electron) and finishing with the currently known heaviest namely Oganesson (Og which has 118 protons and an atomic mass of 294 thus it has 176 neutrons).

The position of an element in the matrix is determined by the atomic number mentioned above.

Group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Period 1	1 H																	2 He
Period 2	3 Li	4 Be											5 B	6 C	7 N	8 O	9 F	10 Ne
Period 3	11 Na	12 Mg											13 Al	14 Si	15 P	16 S	17 Cl	18 Ar
Period 4	19 K	20 Ca	21 Sc	22 Ti	23 V	24 Cr	25 Mn	26 Fe	27 Co	28 Ni	29 Cu	30 Zn	31 Ga	32 Ge	33 As	34 Se	35 Br	36 Kr
Period 5	37 Rb	38 Sr	39 Y	40 Zr	41 Nb	42 Mo	43 Tc	44 Ru	45 Rh	46 Pd	47 Ag	48 Cd	49 In	50 Sn	51 Sb	52 Te	53 I	54 Xe
Period 6	55 Cs	56 Ba	57 La	72 Hf	73 Ta	74 W	75 Re	76 Os	77 Ir	78 Pt	79 Au	80 Hg	81 Tl	82 Pb	83 Bi	84 Po	85 At	86 Rn
Period 7	87 Fr	88 Ra	89 Ac	104 Rf	105 Db	106 Sg	107 Bh	108 Hs	109 Mt	110 Ds	111 Rg	112 Cn	113 Nh	114 Fl	115 Mc	116 Lv	117 Ts	118 Og
				58 Ce	59 Pr	60 Nd	61 Pm	62 Sm	63 Eu	64 Gd	65 Tb	66 Dy	67 Ho	68 Er	69 Tm	70 Yb	71 Lu	
				90 Th	91 Pa	92 U	93 Np	94 Pu	95 Am	96 Cm	97 Bk	98 Cf	99 Es	100 Fm	101 Md	102 No	103 Lr	

As can be seen in the Periodic Table above, sulphur is found in Group 16 which is the third from the right. The other members of this group are Oxygen (O), Selenium (Se), Tellurium (Te), Polonium (Po) and Livermorium (Lv).

One of the common features of elements in this group is that they are allotropic meaning that two different forms of molecules can be created. Oxygen can exist as O₂ (the Oxygen we breathe from the air) and O₃ which is called Ozone and which is poisonous for humans.

Similarly, sulphur can exist as rhombic sulphur (α-sulphur which is the normal form at normal temperatures) and monoclinic sulphur (β-sulphur which is the allotrope created when sulphur is heated above 95°C). The same applies to the other members of this group.

What are sulphites?

While we are discussing the chemistry of sulphur we also need to address the terminology that should be used. If we are discussing spraying vines using elemental sulphur or volcanic sulphur in the pure crystalline form then we can say that we are spraying with sulphur.

However, if the sulphur has been combined with oxygen, for example then it has formed, in the case of SO₂, a gas which can be added to wine. In many countries up to 250 milligrams can be added to a litre of wine and in Australia we would expect to see something like “Contains added sulphites” on the label.

There are many sulphites but a common one is sodium sulphite which has the chemical formula Na₂SO₃.

For natural wine, however, much, much lower levels are expected with anything over 30 milligrams per litre heading into a bad place. Anyone who has been drinking wines with no added sulphites for any length of time will be able to discern the sulphites at a fairly low level, even down to 20 or 30 milligrams.

Sulphur in the vineyard

And now we turn to winemaking and grape growing. Both pure sulphur and compounds of sulphur are commonly used both in the vines and during and after the wine is made.

One of the biggest problems in vineyards world wide is the onset of a disease called powdery mildew. This takes the form of white powdery substance on the leaves of the vine which is, in fact, a fungus called *Uncinula necator*.

This fungus invades the vine causing grey or black spots on the leaves and eventually it covers the grapes with white powder and causes the grapes to shrivel and crack, making them impossible to harvest.

In 2018 France was particularly hit with this disease with it appearing even as far south as the Languedoc.

The solution is to either use a systemic spray which no natural vigneron would want to do or to spray with either elemental sulphur or a tisane of selected herbs. The use of elemental sulphur has the advantage of keeping the fungi under control as sulphur has fungicidal properties, however it is usually avoided in the last month while the grapes are ripening because it kills the yeasts that are accumulating on and in the grapes during this time.

The advantage of sulphur and tisanes is that they are considered to be organic sprays and, unlike chemical systemic sprays, they do not end up in the wine.

Another application for sulphur in the vineyard is to douse freshly picked grapes with sulphur powder to kill the yeasts on the grapes so that they don't start fermenting until they are safely in the tanks and the commercial yeasts have been added.

A couple of years ago we took a young natural winemaker from France to a vineyard in western Victoria during the harvest. When he saw a large container of grapes arriving at the winery he gasped at the grey foam visible in its corners. He had never seen sulphur used in this way because they only use natural fermentation!

Sulphur in the winery

In many commercial wineries the addition of sulphur is an article of faith that is never questioned. It is added for surety to make sure there are no bacterial effects or oxidative notes in the finished wine. It is also added to ensure that effects such as "mousiness" (which we will address in future newsletter) do not creep into the wine. Some add sulphites to the wine thinking that it will prolong the life of the wine.

In fact there is a strong belief in the commercial wine world that a wine without added sulphites can't last longer than a year or two. We found the following statement in an article called The Use of Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂) in Wine by Richard Gawel on a site called AromaDictionary.com:

It is very difficult to make wines that have an aging potential beyond a few months if sulfur dioxide is not used during winemaking.

Well that is news to us. We have over the past ten years been lucky enough to enjoy a common ritual among our French winemakers where after we have finished tasting their current wines, they will disappear into their cellar and bring out an older wine from their collection that has never had any added sulphur. We have had dozens of wines that are more than twenty years old and they have all been in perfect condition and still showing fruit characteristics.

We can also talk about experiences that we have had in the cellars of Jean-Pierre Robinot where he won't release his wines for sale until they are ready. This meant he bottled most of his 2009 white whites at the end of 2015 / early 2016, seven years after they were made. We drank one of those wines, for perhaps only the third time, just over a week ago – the Jean-Pierre Robinot Juliette Cuvée S 2009 (known colloquially as 'Super Juliette') and it remains, three years after it was bottled, mind-blowingly electric or, as Jean-Pierre, would say full of 'énergie'. One of our favourite cellar moments ever is when he put his arms around the small fibreglass tank where the barrels of this wine were held prior to bottling, closed his eyes and simply said 'énergie, énergie'.

We mention Jean-Pierre because he is a good example of a winemaker who knows exactly what to do to ensure longevity in a wine and that never involves the addition of sulphites at any stage of the process. As with some of the most revered winemakers in the Jura and Burgundy he is not afraid to let some oxygen into his wines. He does this in a semi-controlled way by using very old barrels, many of them being over ten years old, where oxygen can enter the wine through the pores in the barrels.



A very old barrel in Robinot's cave

When oxygen combines with the natural tannins in the wines the tightly wound molecules (tannin is a polyphenol) begin to unwind and form a natural preservative.

When SO₂ is added to the wine or to the bottled wine, some of it combines with compounds in the wine and becomes “bound”. This means that some of the sulphur that has been added to the bottle no longer has any antioxidant or antimicrobial effect in the wine.

Some combines with water molecules to form sulphites² or bisulphites³. These are regarded as “free” sulphur compounds which do have the antioxidant or antimicrobial effect. However, as the wine ages more and more of the free sulphur becomes bound and after a few years there is rarely any active free sulphur left in a bottle of wine.

So, much of the discussions about sulphur is based on an imperfect understanding of how sulphur works in wine. Similarly, many of our winemakers have clearly demonstrated that there is no need to add sulphur to wines in order to preserve them and that the need for sulphur/sulphite additions arises from the fear of oxygen, whereas often a good dose of oxygen can provide the ideal way to protect the wine for a long time.

One final point. We have been lucky enough to have been able to try exactly the same wine with a tiny amount of added sulphites and no sulphites. The result was amazing. The one without any sulphites added just tasted so much livelier and the fruit was so much more evident in the wine. This was remarkable because the amount of added sulphur was only 2 milligrams per litre!

² Sulphites are depicted as the SO_3^{2-} ion

³ Bisulphites are depicted by the HSO_3^- ion

Grape variety: Verdanel

Our thoughts turned to the Verdanel grape variety over the Christmas break as the beautiful Causse Marines Grain de Folie 2018 was such a hit with rich liver dishes such as terrines or foie gras. This wine has 60 grams of residual sugar balanced by great acidity and is made from Petit Manseng which is planted widely in South West France and Verdanel which was on the point of extinction until recently.

Patrice from Causse Marines has been working with his friends the Plageoles to restore many of the ancient grape varieties of the Gaillac region to their former glory and Verdanel is one of those grapes that had almost become extinct.

It is interesting to note that one of the parents of Verdanel is Savagnin while the other parent is currently unknown.



Verdanel vine

We have had to omit our normal trend graph showing the area planted over the last fifty years because it is only in the last three or four years that there have been any vines which are commercially exploited.

The Verdanel grapes are quite small and the bunches are conical in shape. We will provide more details after our next visit to Patrice and get more details about this intriguing variety.

WARNING

Under the *Liquor Licensing Act 1990* it is an offence:

for liquor to be delivered to a person under the age of 18 years.

Penalty: Fine not exceeding 20 penalty units

for a person under the age of 18 years to purchase liquor.

Penalty: Fine not exceeding 10 penalty units

Because of the above penalties we are now required by the Tasmanian Government to collect your date of birth in order from you to order via the Internet. We apologise for this imposition. In the past we have been able to accept a declaration that you are over 18.