

WINE Talk: September 2021

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 101

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:

<https://livingwines.com.au/shop/>

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. Or we are always happy to put together a selection for you if you give us a rough idea of the type of wines you like and a budget. We confirm orders by return email before processing them.

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.) You must of course be over 18 years of age to order.

This Month's Packs

We're finding it hard at the moment to keep many of our wines for sale for more than a day or two at the moment, which limits our choices for the packs. By the time we process all the requests a wine can be sold out before we ever advertise it. We know that's going to be the case with the wines we explain up front we are going to allocate but it's happening more and more with others we had planned to advertise as well.

For that reason we're trying, when we do allocations and process any requests, to set aside a small number of wines for newsletter packs. They are limited but it is one way for people who haven't made an up front request prior to the arrival of a wine but subscribe to the newsletter to have a chance to buy.

You'll find a few bottles of Jean-Pierre Robinot's wines and some Mataburro and les Cigales wines in this month's packs. We knew we would never advertise Robinot but we thought there might be at least some bottles of the wines we planned to release from Mataburro and Les Cigales Dans La Fourmilière to actually advertise. This is the next best thing.

There aren't many packs this month but there are some rare wines in them for those who are quick enough!

Pack 1: Mainly New Arrivals (10% Discount)

Note: 3 packs only



This pack is headlined by three Robinot wines that are rarely offered in the newsletter (and there are only three packs available). The stunning Charme is made from old-vine Chenin Blanc and matured in very old wooden barrels. The naming of Concerto di Venezia reflects Jean-Pierre's obsession with that city (he takes the time-lapsed photos for the labels). This is a new cuvée made entirely from Pineau d'Aunis which is fresh, lively and utterly delicious. Les Années Folles is a pink pet nat made from Chenin and Pineau d'Aunis.

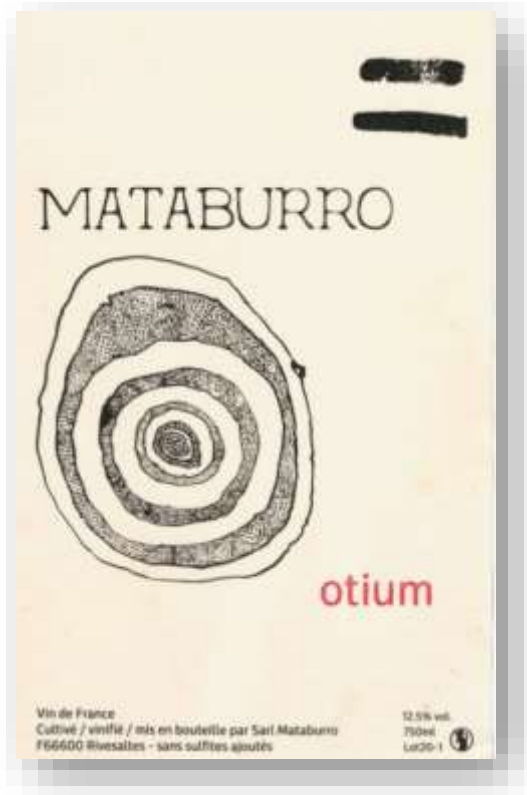
We have also included three wines that are in high demand. The Otium from Mataburro is rare and delicious – made from Grenache and lightened with some Grenache Gris and Macabeu. The Bangarang needs little explanation. We have had it for sale since July and it has made many appearances on Instagram. Sadly, we're down to our last few cases. It is a lovely light red, as is the Marée Basse from Julie and Ivo.

- Jean-Pierre Robinot Charme 2019
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Concerto di Venezia 2019
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Les Années Folles 2020
- Mataburro Otium 2020
- Mosse Bangarang 2020
- Les Cigales Dans La Fourmilière Marée Basse 2020

The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$342 but the pack price is only \$303.95 including freight to most Australian cities.

Pack 2: Partly Mataburro Pack (10% Discount)

Note: Three packs only



This pack is headlined by three rare Mataburro wines that have become incredibly popular since we first started bringing them into Australia. They are rarely offered in the newsletter and, like Pack 1, there are only three packs available. These are incredibly delicious light red wines from Roussillon in the south of France.

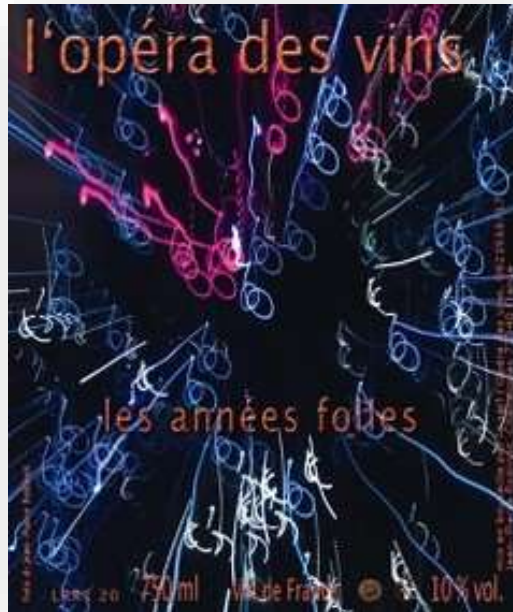
These are supplemented by a bottle of the completely delicious Bangarang from the Mosse family, the sublime La Bodice from Hervé Villemade, a blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay, and a new wine from the Garrelière family made from young vine Chenin Blanc. This wine is otherwise sold out and only available in this pack.

- Mataburro Otium 2020
- Mataburro Idoine 2020
- Mataburro Mura Mura 2020
- Mosse Bangarang 2020
- Hervé Villemade Cheverny Blanc La Bodice 2019
- Domaine de la Garrelière AOC Touraine Le Ptit Chnin 2020

The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$280 but the pack price is only \$252 including freight to most Australian cities.

Pack 3: Sparkling Pack (10% - 15% Discount!)

Note: Three packs only



This pack is another eclectic selection with some real treasures and old favourites in the mix. All of the wines are sparkling and the first two are pet nats from the very sparkling Jean-Pierre Robinot. The “Girl on Fire” from Julie and Toby Bainbridge is a lightly petillant sparkling wine made from Cabernet Franc.

We needn't praise the Moussamoussettes from the Mosse family as it has been a staple in Australia for many years. It is one of the most delicious pet nats that is produced in France. We could say the same about the Pet Sec from Les Capriades. Pascal and Moses think that a pet nat can be just as complex and delicious as a Champagne and the Pet Sec is their attempt to make a pet nat that meets this goal. To help you decide, we have also included a bottle of the ultra-delicious Champs Rayés from Roland Piollot so that you can try them side by side and make your own decision about whether they have succeeded. The Mosse Moussamoussettes and Les Capriades Pet Sec are otherwise sold out although we will have some more of this vintage of Moussamoussettes later in the year.

This pack represents excellent value for money!

- Jean-Pierre Robinot Fêtembulles 2020
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Les Années Folles 2020
- Julie and Toby Bainbridge Girl on Fire 2020
- Mosse Moussamoussettes 2020
- Les Capriades Pet Sec 2019
- Piollot Champagne Champs Rayés 2014

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The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$361 but the pack price is only **\$312.55 including freight to most Australian cities.**

Pack 4: Robinot + Orange Pack (10% - 15% Discount)

Note: One pack only



And continuing the trend started with Packs 1 & 2 we have three wines from Alsace natural superstar (no additions of any sort, ever) Jean-Marc Dreyer. Jean-Marc is particularly keen on macerated white wines. The Sylvaner and Auxerrois are macerated and bear the Origin brand because they are both made from a single variety. The Finisterra, on the other hand is also macerated but is a blend of Gewürztraminer, Pinot Gris, Muscat d'Alsace and Auxerrois.

The pack then has two Robinot specials namely the Bistrologie made from old vine Chenin Blanc and the Regard which is 100% very fresh and delicious Pineau d'Aunis. Finally, La Polonaise is a new wine from Julie and Ivo from Chardonnay and Muscat à Petits Grains which have been macerated for a short time to make a delicious wine.

- Jean-Marc Dreyer Vin d'Alsace Finisterra 2019
- Jean-Marc Dreyer Vin d'Alsace Sylvaner Origin 2019
- Jean-Marc Dreyer Vin d'Alsace Auxerrois Origin 2019
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Bistrologie 2019
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Regard 2018
- Les Cigales Dans La Fourmilière La Polonaise 2020

The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$358 but the pack price is only \$311.85 including freight to the most Australian cities.

Pack 5: New and Old Mixed Pack (15% Discount)

Note: Two packs only



This pack contains a diverse range of wines – all of which are totally delicious, and some of which were buried in our warehouse. The Rita from Mylène Bru has had some time to age gracefully so the Carignan is really shining!

The Come des Tallants Champagne comes from one of Roland Piollot's best vineyards and displays both intense minerality and lovely texture being a Blanc de Noir (where the Pinot Noir grapes have been pressed quickly to ensure that the juice is white).

Dominique Derain was given the opportunity to make a wine from his favourite grape variety (Pinot Noir), but from Chile this time. The result is Las Nubes a light-as-air style Pinot that is truly excellent.

The Sextant Ma Ma Mia is a classic orange wine where the Pinot Gris has had twelve days of maceration. The Les Capriades Poire is a delicious pear cider that shows that Pascal and Moses are not only experts at producing pet nats but cider as well. And finally, the venerable La Bodice from Hervé Villemade. This blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay is a quintessential Loire Valley wine. Great minerality and tension and a long, lingering finish.

- Mylène Bru Rita 2014
- Piollot Champagne Come des Tallants 2017
- Dominique Derain Las Nubes 2019
- Sextant - Julien Altaber Ma Ma Mia 2017
- Les Capriades Poire 2019
- Hervé Villemade Cheverny Blanc La Bodice 2019

The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$382 but the pack price is only **\$324.70 including freight to most Australian cities.**

Pack 6: Vinegar Pack (15% Discount)

Note: Two packs only



This pack is very different to our normal offerings as it contains 6 small bottles of the amazing “plein air” vinegars created by the highly talented Nathalie Lefort out of natural wines from friends she has made around France and Italy. These are all exceptional vinegars that are made in open barrels to allow the natural bacteria to access the wines. After spending time for the vinegars to develop in the barrels she uses the same technique as many winemakers in Roussillon use for their fortified sweet wines which is to move the wine/vinegar to glass demijohns and place them in the sun for several months.

- La Guinelle Vinaigre de Banyuls 50 cl
- La Guinelle Vinaigre de Banyuls Blanc 25 cl
- La Guinelle Vinaigre de Chenin Lise et Bertrand Jousset 50 cl
- La Guinelle Vinaigre de Mauzac La Famille Plageoles 50 cl
- La Guinelle Vinaigre de Savagnin Bornard 25 cl
- La Guinelle Vinaigre de Le Rina de Iuli 50 cl

The RRP for this selection of 6 vinegars is \$170.35 but the pack price is only **\$144.80 including freight to most Australian cities.**

A new newsletter about French Natural Wine

We have recently subscribed to a new newsletter from France that has some very good articles on topics relating to natural wine.

The author, Aaron Ayscough, is an American living in Paris. We have met him on a few occasions in bars in that city. For quite a number of years (since 2010) he has been publishing articles about natural wines on his own Web site with the appropriate name of “Not Drinking Poison”.

He is quite forthright and very knowledgeable about the French natural wine scene. He also has a particular interest in the wines of Beaujolais and has reported on many of the producers in this region.

We should point out that the newsletter of the same name does not restrict itself to Beaujolais but includes regions throughout France and further afield. For example, Edition No 3 included a detailed report of a trip to Lorraine (in north-east France) and Mosel (in southern Germany).

In this edition he reports on a visit to Mosel superstars Rudolf Trossen and Thorsten Melsheimer as well as Jan Matthias Klein and Philip Lardot (we hadn't heard of the last two before we received the newsletter).

It also included a story on one of our favourite restaurants and wine shops in the region, namely L'Echanson in Nancy which we have visited on a number of occasions and always enjoyed both the food and the wine offerings which include a number of quite obscure producers.

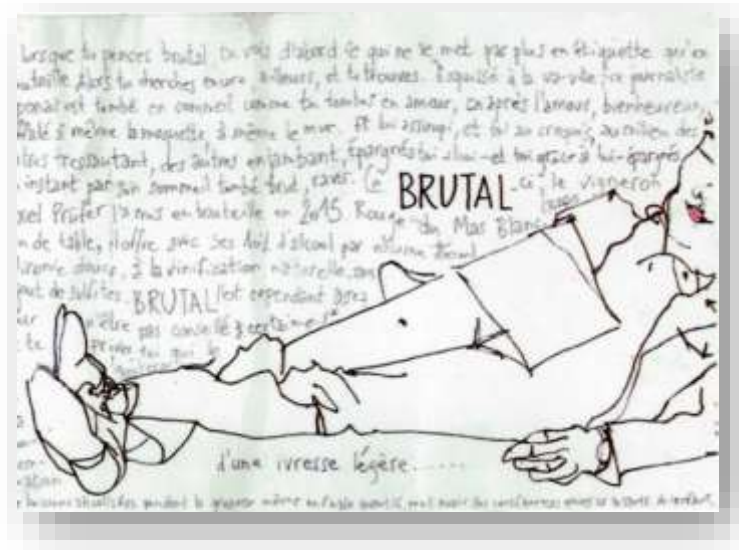
So far he has published 4 issues but there have been some bonuses as well. If he has too much text he sends out a bonus newsletter in between the main editions.

So far we have enjoyed:

- Issue 1: Unknown Beaujolais
- Issue 2: Anjou Milestones
- Issue 2.5: Postcards from Ardèche
- Issue 3: Lorraine to the Mosel
- Issue 4: The Avant Gard
- Issue 4.5: From Arles to Uzès

In this latest edition (4.5) there are a number of fascinating stories but the one that fascinated us most was his story about the Brutal!!! phenomenon entitled “The Golden Age of Brutal!!!”. It's the best explanation we've read yet of the history of use of the Brutal!!! label, which has been used by many winemakers, and also explains why it's about to undergo a slight change.

In the article he talks with Antony Tortul about how it came about and who were the five original winemakers who embarked on the project. One of the originals was Axel Prufer, who to complicate things, as Tortul explained to Aaron and Axel has explained to us, never used the Brutal!!! label, always preferring his own designs.



Axel's 2015 Brutal – never with the original Brutal!!! label

Since the original five, others have also made Brutal!!! wines, some with the blessing of the originators and others, without it. The end result of all these developments is that there's been a slight change to the label (involving embossed gold!) which we're looking forward to one day receiving from some of our Brutal!!! blessed producers who use the label (Alice Bouvot and Wim Wagemans).



The Brutal!!! label used by most producers including Alice and Wim

Somehow we imagine Axel will still go his own way now. There are far more gory details in Aaron's article so if you want to dive deep into this story you'll have to subscribe to his newsletter.

To subscribe to this excellent bi-monthly newsletter, go to the following web address:

<https://notdrinkingpoison.substack.com/>

Dramatic 2021 grape harvest in France

A recent report out of France published on the Agreste website of the Département of Agriculture and Food and republished in the Vinex newsletter shows that the 2021 harvest has been worse than 2020 and dramatically so in the Jura.

Regions that were hit the hardest were Champagne with the harvest being reduced by 36%, Burgundy down 47%, the Loire Valley down 39% and, worst of all, the Jura suffering a dramatic 82% drop in production.

The following map will show you where the best and worst areas are. The names of the wine regions are displayed in red and the figure near some of them show the estimated loss compared with the previous year.

The figures for some regions have been combined in the original article. For example there is only one figure for Burgundy, but this includes Beaujolais and Chablis as well. Similarly, the figure for Provence includes the Rhone region.



Books we're Buying

We're suckers for a title. Twice this month have been online shopping for wine books, both written by women and one specifically about women winemakers, and both with titles that completely sucked us in.

These are not reviews – the books haven't arrived yet – but we are very much looking forward to reading them.

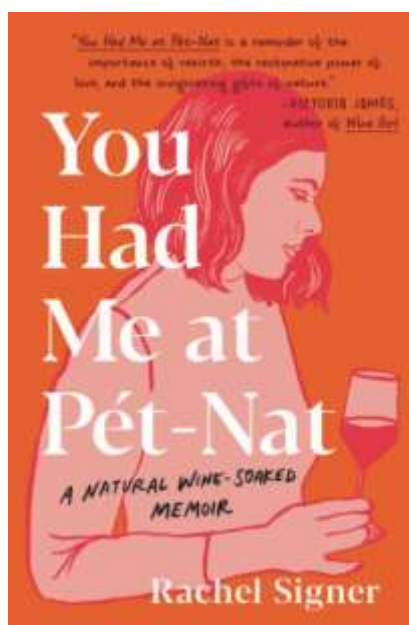
We Don't Want Any Crap in Our Wine - The women behind the bottle is written by Danish author



Camilla Gjerde with glorious portraits and other photos by Cecilia Magnusson. Camilla Gjerde has immersed herself in the stories of nine women winemakers in France, Italy and Austria. The nine include Jura winemakers Alice Bouvot from L'Octavin and Catherine Hannoun from Domaine de la Loue, so we were always going to buy it for its promise of new insights into people who we work with. The other seven profiles are of Elena Pantaleoni, Francesca and Margherita Padovani, Jutta Ambrositsch, Stefanie and Susanne Renner and Arianna Occhipinti.

Her book, which is self-published and printed by a small Danish printer, Narayana Press, is for sale directly via her website and until 21 October she is offering free international shipping, including to Australia. She's packing and dispatching the books herself so a substantial proportion of your purchase would go directly to the woman who brought the words to the paper.

If you are interested start here with her [Instagram profile](#), read her post about the book, which has a beautiful photo of Alice Bouvot on the cover, then click through to her website where you can buy it.



The other title that seduced us this month was Rachel Signer's *You had me at Pét-Nat*, a title we can strongly relate to. And the pét-nats that first won her over included the Mosse family's Moussamoussettes, from the domaine where she did her first stage, and Les Capriades Piège à Filles (now called Piège à ...). We're not sure if Rachel delves into the reason for the name change. We'll have to wait to see.

The book is a memoir of Rachel's eventful life up to now, all through the prism of what happens once you go down the natural wine rabbit hole. She is an American who, by virtue of falling in love with Australian winemaker Anton von Klopper (we're sure that life changing moment is going to be a chapter) now lives in the Adelaide Hills in Australia.

They have since married and have a charming child called Simone. She is also publisher of *Pipette* magazine, which we've written about before, makes Persephone Wines, and

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if there was no covid would probably currently be leading one of her wine tours through vineyards in France, Georgia or some other part of Europe – quite a resumé. We're expecting this to be a joyful, insightful read where we're going to come across lots of familiar faces.

Rachel's [Instagram profile page](#) is also a good place to start for information about where to pre-order her book.

An Update on What's Coming and Newly Arrived wines



La Guinelle vinegar maturing in barrels

New Arrivals

The Mataburro wines we mentioned in the last newsletter all ended up being allocated to people who requested them in advance. There were too few wines for the number of requests.

Unfortunately with many of the people we work with our allocation is very limited and it is hard to satisfy everyone. But anyone who asked in advance about some of this 2020 vintage of Mataburro wines was offered some.

We didn't release all the Les Cigales Dans La Fourmilière wines we were planning to but have sold out of the ones we did - Marée Basse, La Polonaise, and Rue de la Peste. There will be another release for Le Blanc and a small amount of La Petite Pépée later in the year.

There are a few bottles of all the wines we sort of released in this month's packs.

But we do have a few vinegars from La Guinelle available (see image above). We described them in the last newsletter and have also put more information about them on our website. There is also a pack available which is a mix of six of them (two packs only).

These are the available vinegars. The maximum order of any cuvée is one per customer. A bottle of vinegar is considered the same as a bottle of wine for the purpose of receiving a 10% discount on orders of 6 bottles and (for most Australian addresses) free freight.

Vinegar	Wine base	Price
La Guinelle Vinaigre de Banyuls 50 cl	Mainly Grenache Noir	\$26
La Guinelle Vinaigre de Banyuls Blanc 25 cl	Grenache Blanc, Grenache Gris	\$25
La Guinelle Vinaigre de Mauzac La Famille Plageoles 50 cl	Mauzac	\$34
La Guinelle Vinaigre de Chenin Lise et Bertrand Jousset 50 cl	Chenin Blanc	\$30
La Guinelle Vinaigre de Savagnin Bornard 25 cl	Savagnin	\$27
La Guinelle Vinaigre de Le Rina de Iuli 50 cl	Rina (Slarina)	\$27
La Guinelle Vinaigre de Vieux Banyuls 50 cl	Mainly Grenache Noir	\$35
La Guinelle Vinaigre de Muscat 25 cl	Muscat à Petit Grains	\$25

And what's after that!

Probably in the next week, and definitely before we publish the next newsletter, we will be releasing a tiny number of wines from Yann Durieux and another shipment from Sextant (some early release 2020 wines that we didn't want to miss out on and a top up of some of the wines we received a couple of months ago.)



We have had a lot of interest in Durieux's wines, with many people having expressed their interest since midway through last year, but given the prices we'll unfortunately have to charge that may not all translate into sales.

There will be some 2018 Love and Pif (Aligoté) and a few bottles of 2018 Les Grands Ponts Blancs (macerated Aligoté) and 2017 Manon (Chardonnay). All the remaining wines are Pinot Noir from the 2018 vintage (Les Fleurs des BT, LDX, CR, PV, La Gouzotte and Black Pinot - a cuvée name Yann last used many years ago).

There is some more information about some of these obtusely named Pinot Noirs on our website now. Any of these cuvées will only be available as single bottle orders and we will be limiting the overall number of wines for any one order.

The new wines we are releasing next week from Julien Altaber are Métisse 2020, Bourgogne Aligoté 2020, MaMaMia 2020, Po à Po 2020, Fougounette 2020, and Skin Bull 2020. The repeats from earlier this year will be Coteaux Bourguignons 2019, Bourgogne Blanc 2019, and Saint-

Aubin 1er Cru Blanc 2018. There is also some more 2018 Bourgogne Blanc, which we last received in 2020.

What's coming after that

It's a little difficult to predict when we might release our next wines. We'd hoped to have some new wines available later in October but their arrival date has already slipped a little thanks to shipping delays so that is looking less likely. It won't be far off though.

We will finalise the releases once the wines arrive but we are expecting to have some cuvées from Tony Bornard, which will be allocated / offered, and some Geschickt wines. For Geschickt we hope most of the wines will make the list.

The Bornard shipment is tiny, with very few cuvées available in any quantity, and many (repeats) of which are only 12 or 24 bottles. Requests are essential and even then, unusually, we may not be able to be able to find something for everyone. We'll try though.

The volumes for Geschickt are much better for some wines, including a Riesling, which is from the 2018 and 2019 vintage, the Pino 2017, Phenix 2020 and two sparkling wines (some 2018 Crémant and the 2020 pet-nat).

We have some new (for us) cuvées, including Le Schlouk 2018 and 6 Pieds sur Terre, and a repeat shipment of the wonderful 2016 Grand Cru Kaefferkopf wine, which is a blend of Gewurztraminer, Riesling, and Pinot Gris. There are other cuvées from the wonderful terroir of Kaefferkopf as well, some quite unexpected. Hopefully these will be released at the time of the next newsletter.

All we can say is we're very excited about what's coming.

And also on the water ...

Before the end of the year, we will also have some new l'Octavin wines and a small selection from Karnage, which is also based in the Jura. Karnage is a joint project between Stéphane Planche, of the renowned Les Jardins de St-Vincent wineshop and occasional unofficial bar in the middle of Arbois and Charles Dagand, former husband of Alice Bouvot from l'Octavin and once her business partner. When you drink one of Alice's wines, if it is made with grapes from her own vineyards, the back label has the business name 'Les Vins d'ABCD'. Charles is the CD in that name. (Her négoce wines have the business name l'Octavin.) The Karnage wines we are receiving are négoce grapes purchased from outside the Jura.

At the same time we have another big shipment from the Mosse family and, for the first time since the 2016 vintage, some wines from Nicolas Carmarans. So, lots to come before Christmas.

Answers to readers' questions

Here we answer questions we have been asked recently.

What is “grower Champagne”?

A couple of people have mentioned the term grower Champagne and how it is appearing in more and more articles these days, but that the articles don't clearly explain what the term means.

We will have a go at explaining it simply!

To understand why the term has emerged recently (over the last twenty years) it is necessary to explore what happens in the Champagne region in order for the iconic sparkling wine to be made.

Remember that much of the Champagne is made by just a few major Champagne “houses” such as Moët & Chandon, Veuve Clicquot, Ruinart, Taittinger and Lanson. These houses buy grapes from many growers throughout the Champagne region and hence produce a wine that has a “house style” rather than reflecting the terroir of a particular part of the Champagne region.

On the other hand, a “grower Champagne” is produced by a winery that doesn't buy grapes in, but rather makes the wine from grapes they have grown themselves. Hence the Champagne is made by the “grower” of the grapes. These wines therefore reflect the terroir of the vineyard from which the grapes were picked.

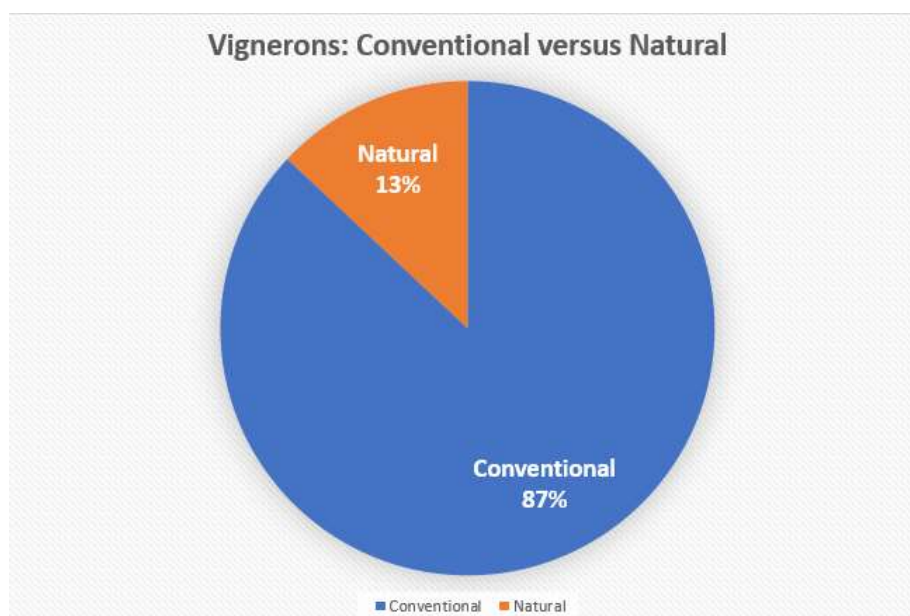
Are many French winemakers producing natural wine?

In France there are 792,000 hectares of land given over to grapevines. This area is farmed by some 110,000 people who tend the vines (called vigneron in France). Many of these farmers simply pick their grapes and send them off to a local co-op who make local wines using grapes from many vignerons.

It is estimated that there are 27,000 farmers who both tend the vines and make their own wine in their own winery.

The answer to the question then depends on how many of these vignerons are truly making natural wines. This means that they are not using any systemic sprays in the vineyard and they are fermenting their wines naturally using only the yeasts that are on or in the grapes, along with other requirements for a wine to be natural such as no additions, no fining and only minimal sulphites to be used, if any.

We have for many years maintained a database of natural vignerons in France, adding to it whenever we come across someone we haven't heard of before. Currently, we have almost 3,500 entries in our database which means roughly 13% of vignerons are producing natural wines.



This would be a far higher figure than for Australia where there are very few natural wine producers.

One of the interesting facts that these figures reveal is how, in France, the natural winemakers have seen their businesses improve over the past decade or so as more and more wine shops, bars and restaurants throughout France are dedicated to serving natural wines only. As we have been driving constantly throughout the length and breadth of France over the past fifteen years we have found it easier and easier to stop for the night in a town where there is easy access to natural wines. It's also incredibly pleasing to see that trend emerging here. It's been exciting in the last few years to see more and more places opening outside major centres. We'll feature one of the newest and most exciting in our next newsletter.

We often see the term “yield” mentioned in wine reviews along with a figure in hl/ha. What does this mean, and should the figure be high or low?

The term yield is one that got hijacked amongst farmers soon after the second world war when the United States industrial complex was trying to figure out what to do with all the chemicals they had created during the war to create explosives.

Two areas that stood out were to use some of the chemicals for various sprays such as pesticides, fungicides and herbicides to kill insects, fungus infections and weeds in that order. They also had various products that contained phosphates and nitrates that they were able to turn into fertilisers.

Now fertilisers are both good and bad for farmers, however they were strongly encouraged during the 1950s and 1960s to use more and more of these products so that the crops they were growing would grow even quicker and bigger.

Therefore, in agriculture, big became beautiful. Who hasn't seen a photo of the local winner at various agricultural shows around Australia of the biggest pumpkin or the largest potato?

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The one thing that was then overlooked was flavour. Plants that grow too quickly don't develop flavour which is why the cool climate berries grown in Tasmania and not fertilised have such superior flavour.

It is also a problem with climate change upon us as plants grow faster with increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and plants with less flavour are the result.

So it is with grapes. The term hl/ha stands for hectolitres per hectare and refers to the amount of grape juice produced by one hectare of vines. One hectolitre is 100 litres which is enough to fill around 130 bottles of 750ml bottles of wine.

In the 1950s and 1960s and beyond, grape growers in Australia were judged on high yields just like all other farmers. Why aim for 60 hectolitres of grape juice per hectare when you can add more fertiliser (and more water) and obtain a yield of 100 hectolitres per hectare?



A low yielding 100 year old vine in Wim Wageman's Languedoc vineyard

The actual answer to the question is slightly complicated. If the grapes have been forced by the addition of too much water and by the liberal addition of chemical fertilisers, then the juice will not have as much flavour even though the farmer gets to sell more bottles.

Natural winemakers don't add chemical fertilisers to their soil, however they do add organic and biodynamic compost which helps the soil produce the bacteria, yeast, mycorrhizal fungi, worms and other essential creatures that provide living soil for the vines.

They then accept what the soil delivers, whether the result is high (which it usually isn't) or low (which it often is) but figures that are less than 40 hectolitres per hectare are common.

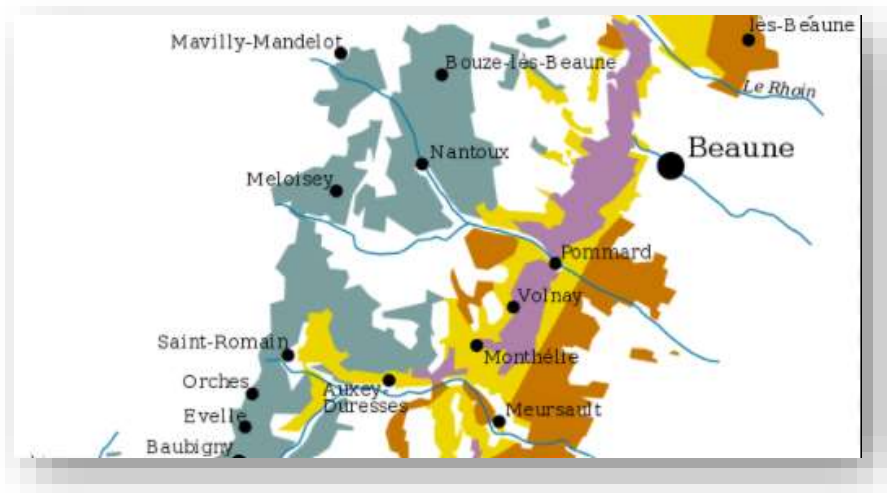
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Some of our producers have vineyards with extremely old vines where the yield is sometimes less than 10 hectolitres per hectares! The positive side is that these wines mostly taste delicious!

Appellation: Saint Romain – Burgundy

Burgundy has way more appellations than any other wine region in France. There are literally hundreds of them! From Romanee-Conti which covers less than one hectare to the vast Coteaux Bourguignons which runs from the south of Beaujolais just above the city of Lyon up to the area around Dijon and beyond towards Chablis.

This month we have chosen one of these appellations to look at in a little bit more detail. The appellation we have chosen is Saint-Romain which is for still, dry, white or red wines and which lies in the area known as the Côte de Beaune (in fact it is directly south-west of the city of Beaune as you can see in the map below).



Wines produced under this appellation must be harvested, fermented, vinified and matured within the boundaries of the Saint Romain commune (the municipal boundary surrounding the village).

The grapes that are authorised for white wines are Chardonnay and Pinot Blanc. The grapes that are authorised for red wines are divided into principal grapes of which Pinot Noir is the only variety permitted and accessory grapes which are Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris.

There are different rules for every appellation about what happens to the accessory grape varieties. In this case the ruling is that each parcel (vineyard) from which red wine is to be made can have no more than 15% of accessory vines planted.

With white wines, however, a vigneron could make a 100% Chardonnay or a 100% Pinot Blanc or any combination thereof.

The rule for the density of vine plantings is interesting as there is a requirement for a minimum density of 9000 vines per hectare. This is quite high by Australian standards.

There are detailed rules for how the vines can be pruned which we will not go into now because they are quite complicated. Irrigation, as with most areas of France, is forbidden.

The yield (see story in the story above) must not exceed 40 hectolitres per hectare for red wines and 45 hectolitres per hectare for white wines.

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There are many extra rules such as the records that must be kept which include the temperature of the juice at various stages of the winemaking process to ensure that no “traumatic” processes such as pasteurisation are carried out.

The picture below shows the label from the 2018 Saint-Romain Chardonnay from Fanny Sabre (sorry – all sold out!).



Grape variety: Pinot Meunier

Pinot Meunier is not often mentioned as a grape of any significance, however it is a very important grape in Champagne where it comprises over thirty per cent of the annual crop!

Pinot Meunier generally produces wines that are lighter in colour than those made with Pinot Noir (although this depends very much on the winemaking) and also tends to produce wines that are higher in acid.

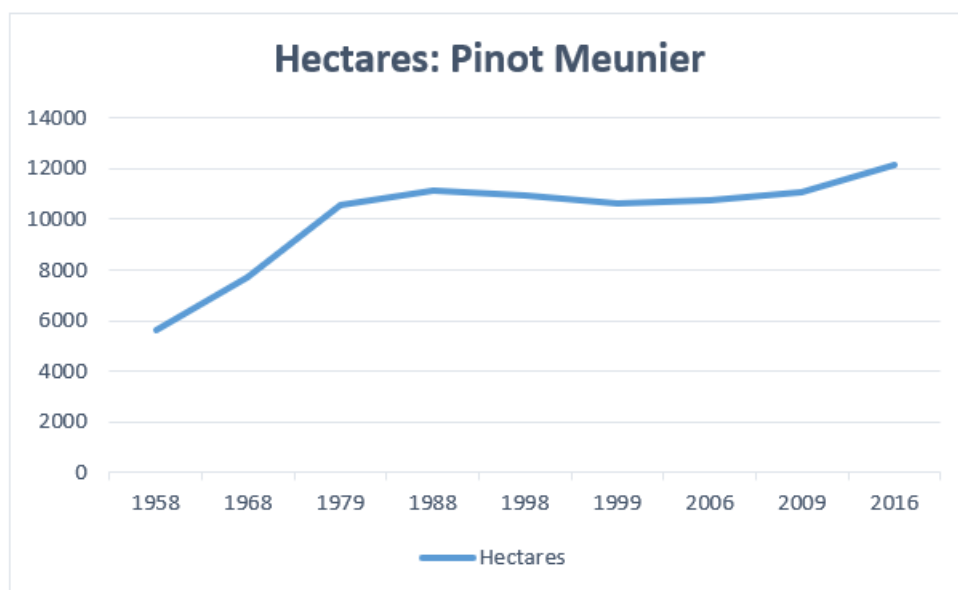
It is one of the seven allowed grape varieties used in Champagne wines. The others are Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, Arbane, Petit Meslier and Pinot Gris.

The Meunier grapes tend to bud later than Chardonnay and Pinot Noir but ripen at the same time thus being an excellent variety to blend with these grapes.

And what about the name? The word “meunier” in French translates as miller. It has been given this name because of the flour-like white down mainly on the underside of the leaves of this variety (but with some on the top side).

There is confusion about the parentage of this variety. It is thought however to be a parent of the wonderful Romorantin grape variety that we discussed in a recent newsletter. It is possible that it is a complicated mutation of Pinot Noir.

The conventional wisdom in Champagne (conventional wisdom is not always correct) is that Pinot Meunier does not have the aging potential of Pinot Noir. Although in recent years more and more Champagne makers are returning to this variety for the added richness it provides.



Hectares in France, courtesy of Vitis International Variety Catalogue

As can be seen from the graph above, Pinot Meunier has had a slow, steady growth over the past 50 years or so. This is especially the case in northern France where it is an important grape in Champagne and also common in nearby Moselle (bordering Germany and Luxembourg) and

The leaves of the Pinot Meunier grape vine are quite distinctive as shown below. You can quite clearly see the “flour” on the underside and some on the upper side of the 7 point leaves.



Photo courtesy of Vitis International Variety Catalogue

The bunches of Pinot Meunier have large, deep-blue grapes that are tightly packed as is shown clearly in the photo below:



Photo courtesy of Vitis International Variety Catalogue

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Our Champagne producer Roland Piollot has a substantial planting of Pinot Meunier and he uses it mainly in his white Champagnes. His newish Cuvée Chevry is a blend of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier and is an absolutely delicious Blanc de Noir (well two of the varieties are Noir anyway!).

However, his equally delicious MePetit 2016 is composed of 100% Pinot Meunier, but has been direct pressed so that the juice is white and hence is named as a Blanc de Noir (white from black).

We have a small number of each of these bottles available.

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