

## WINE Talk: December 2021

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 104

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

This month we have done something unusual in sending the newsletter out between Christmas and New Year – it is the first time we have ever done this. We only have five packs, but we have slightly more of at least some of them than in previous months, so it should be easier to secure one if you are quick!

We also have information about forthcoming shipments and some articles for further reading:

- Information about wines that will be arriving soon or that have just arrived.
- Information about the 5 packs which we have made available, and unlike last month there are 10 of Pack 1 available.
- A story about the Grolleau Noir grape variety that is commonly found in the Loire Valley in the area from the city of Tours along to the Anjou region.
- Some images of the Aveyron region of France and Nicolas Carmarans whose vineyard is in this rugged and remote area, and whose recently-arrived wines are in some of this month's packs.
- Answers to questions we have been asked recently including one about natural wine claims, another about what makes a grape turn red and another on how to interpret the Mosse family's labels.
- A story about the Champagne appellation which includes the Rosé des Riceys and Coteaux Champenois appellations.

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

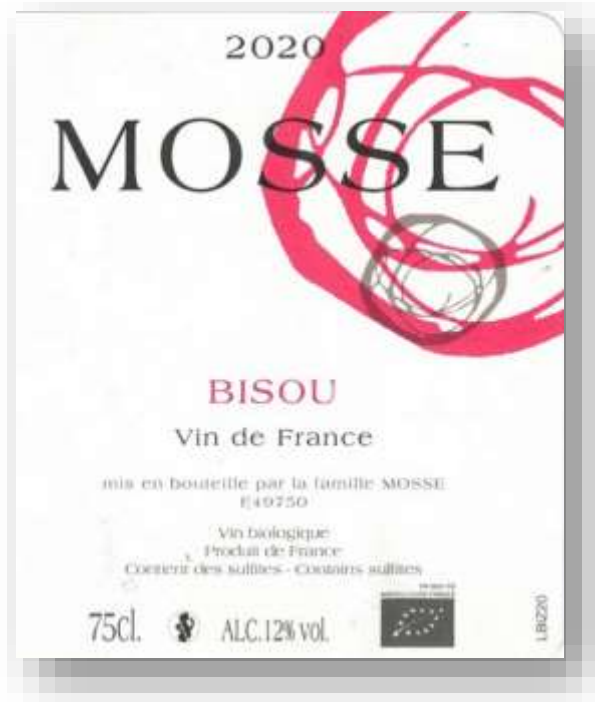
<https://livingwines.com.au/shop/>

**There's an easy way to order our wines. Just send us an email listing the wines and/or packs you would like to order. 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.**

## Pack 1: Mosse Summer Drinking Pack (15% Discount)

**Note: 10 packs only**



We saw so many Instagram photos on Christmas Day of people drinking the Mosse family's iconic Moussamoussettes pet-nat, including one of our @foodtourist photos. So, we're practicing what we preach in offering this as a summer drinking pack. It has two bottles of each of three Mosse wines which are all perfectly suited to the season.

Moussamoussettes is a blend of Grolleau Noir, Cabernet Franc, and Pineau d'Aunis. It's a rosé pet-nat unfiltered so slightly cloudy and quite irresistible on a sunny day.

Bisou, a blend of Grolleau Noir, Grolleau Gris, Gamay, and Chenin Blanc, is somewhere between a rosé and a light red and very well suited for chilling at this time of year.

Chenin is perhaps our most self-explanatory cuvée name. with plenty of minerality to balance Chenin Blanc's natural richness – it's a perfect wine to drink with richer shellfish, such as lobster and crab.

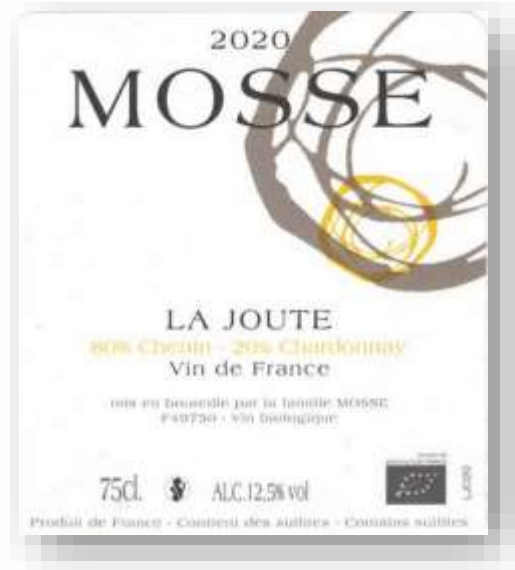
All these wines are now sold out, but we set some aside for our newsletter customers. There are several available so we hope they will last for a few days but at least for the moment the maximum is 1 pack per customer.

- Mosse Moussamoussettes 2020 (2 bottles)
- Mosse Chenin 2020 (2 bottles)
- Mosse Bisou 2020 (2 bottles)

**The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$304 but the pack price is only \$258.40 including freight to most Australian cities.**

## Pack 2: Most of the Mosse Wines Pack (15% Discount)

**Note: 3 packs only**



This pack has one bottle each of nearly all the Mosse wines we recently received. There are only three packs and it's one per order.

As well as the wines described in Pack 1 it includes a bottle of their 2019 Cabernet Franc from a vintage badly impacted by frost, which makes every bottle we have a small miracle of survival.

There is a bottle of La Joute, a very rare wine even in good vintages, which is a blend of Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay.

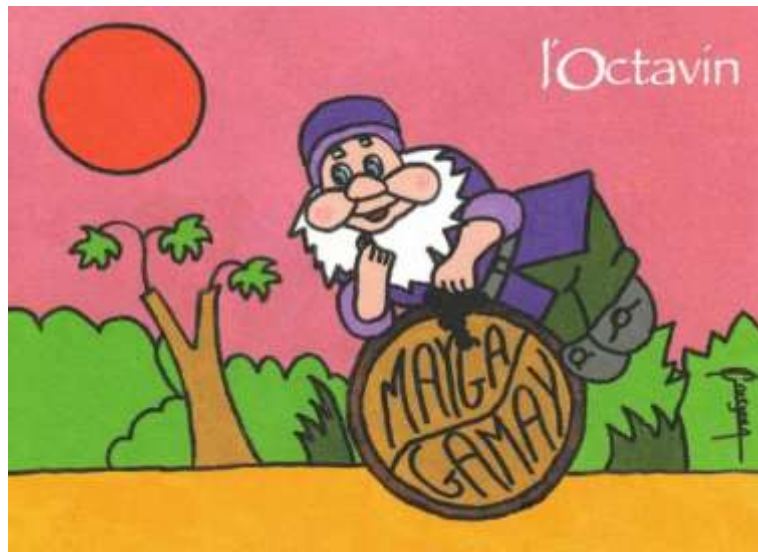
The last bottle is 2018 Bonnes Blanches, one of the Mosses' great Chenin Blancs, and from a generous vintage. When we first visited the Mosse family, over 10 years ago now, Bonnes Blanches was the first vineyard René took us to. As an example of how important it is, faced with horrific frosts this year and with only enough resources to take preventive action (lighting candles and bales of hay) in one vineyard, Bonnes Blanches is the one the family's next generation - Sylvestre, his partner Adeline, and Joseph - chose to save. If you follow their Instagram accounts (@mossewines, @a2gram and @mossedef) you will surely remember their extraordinary photos and the anguish in their faces as they fought the frost over several days.

- Mosse Moussamoussettes 2020
- Mosse La Joute 2020
- Mosse Chenin 2020
- Mosse Bisou 2020
- Mosse Les Bonnes Blanches 2018
- Mosse Cabernet Franc 2019

**The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$359 but the pack price is only \$305.15 including freight to most Australian cities.**

**Pack 3: Octavin + Geschickt Pack (15% Discount!)**

**Note: 2 Packs only**



It is a very rare thing for us to offer any of the Jura Octavin wines via our newsletter – they are in such high demand and such low quantities. However, we have held back two bottles of each of 4 cuvées from our most recent shipment to give our subscribers a chance to try these wines that come either from Alice's own vines (such as the Trou Trou) or from organic grapes she has sourced from her friends throughout France (such as the Mayga Gamay which comes from Beaujolais producer, Pierre Boyat).

The Cigogne Green is an interesting blend of Gewürztraminer and Pinot Gris sourced from a biodynamic producer in Alsace and the Elle Aime is a wine made from her own grapes from the En Arces vineyard near Arbois in the Jura.

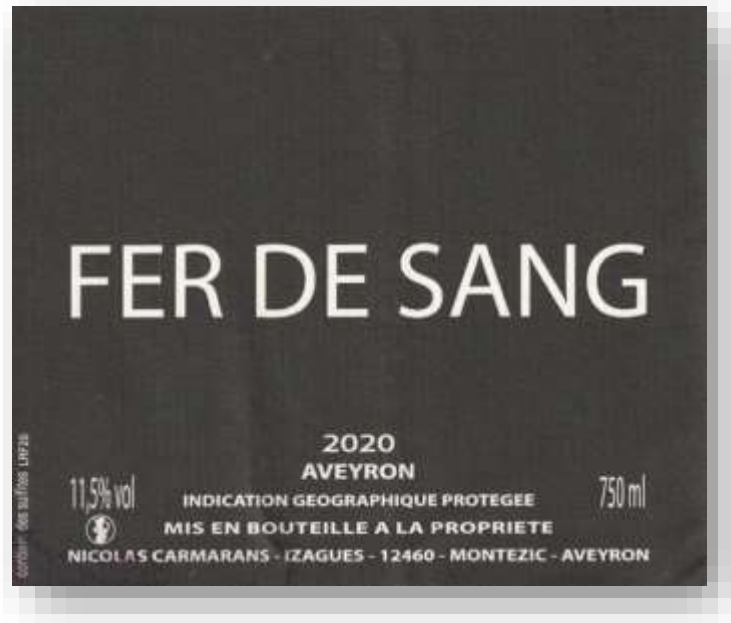
We have also included two wines from the amazing Geschickt collection including the stunning macerated Pinot Gris called Phenix which is a vibrant pink colour and the delicious Riesling from the 2018 and 2019 vintages.

- l'Octavin Mayga Gamay 2019
- l'Octavin Corvée de Trou Trou 2019
- l'Octavin La Cigogne Green 2019
- l'Octavin Elle Aime 2018
- Geschickt Vin d'Alsace Phenix 2020
- Geschickt Vin d'Alsace Riesling 18/19

**The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$419 but the pack price is only \$356.15 including freight to most Australian cities.**

**Pack 4: Octavin + Carmarans Pack (15% Discount)**

**Note: Two packs only**



This is where the Jura meets the Aveyron, metaphorically speaking! Here we have assembled three wines from Alice in the Jura and three newly arrived wines from Nicolas Carmarans who lives in the wilds of the Aveyron in Central-South Western France. The l'Octavin Hip Hip J cuvée (which is a blend of Chardonnay and Savagnin from the 2018 vintage) and Corvée de Trou Trou (made from Trousseau) come from Arbois in the Jura. Corvée de Trou Trou is from Alice's vines. The Molette comes from the Savoie, also near France's eastern border and south of the Jura.

From Nicolas we have his long-running Mauvais Temps made from Fer Servadou and Cabernet Franc and the Fer de Sang which is a stunning wine made entirely from Fer Servadou – a grape variety that we like more and more as we taste more wines made from this native grape of the region. All of the wines made by Nicolas tend to be lower in alcohol and this one is only 11.5%.

We have also included a bottle of Entre les Eaux which is a white wine made from Chenin Blanc from his own vineyards in the Aveyron and Aligoté which he purchased from a friend in the Macôn in Burgundy.

- l'Octavin Clé à Molette 2020
- l'Octavin Chardonnay / Savagnin Hip Hip J 2018
- l'Octavin Corvée de Trou Trou 2019
- Nicolas Carmarans IGP Aveyron Mauvais Temps 2019
- Nicolas Carmarans IGP Aveyron Fer de Sang 2020
- Nicolas Carmarans Entre les Eaux 2020

**The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$444 but the pack price is only \$377.40 including freight to the most Australian cities.**

## Pack 5: Mainly Mixed Whites Pack (15% Discount)

**Note: 3 Packs only**



We are very pleased that we could find enough bottles to make up three packs of this collection. We have included a bottle of the Entre les Eaux from the Aveyron region which we wrote about for Pack 4 and a bottle of l'Octavin Jura Chardonnay. All Alice's Hip Hip J wines are made from grapes sourced from the same Arbois grower.

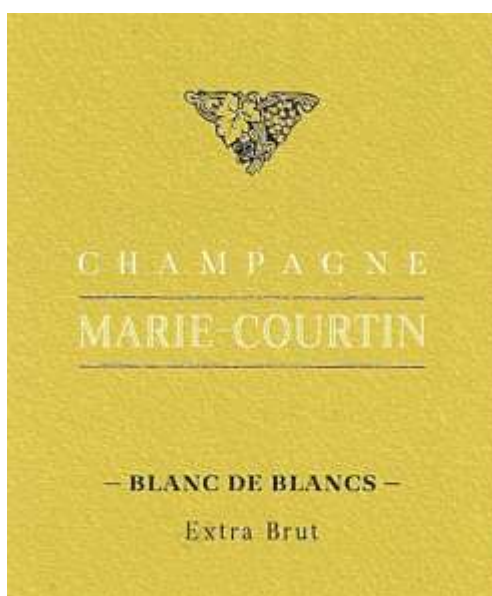
We have also included four bottles from the very clever people at Geschickt in Alsace including their delicious Riesling, Le Schlouk, which is made from Gewürztraminer with a splash of Riesling to freshen it up, and the amusingly named 6 Pieds Sur Terre (6 feet under) which also contains six different grape varieties, namely Gewürztraminer, Riesling, Muscat d'Alsace, Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir and Pinot Blanc.

And finally for each pack, we added a bottle of the incredibly popular Pet Nat made from Pinot Auxerrois, Riesling and Muscat d'Alsace. We know that you will thoroughly enjoy this pack if you are quick enough.

- Nicolas Carmarans Entre les Eaux 2020
- l'Octavin Chardonnay Hip Hip J 2020
- Geschickt Riesling 18/19
- Geschickt Le Schlouk 2018
- Geschickt 6 Pieds Sur Terre 2016
- Geschickt Pet Nat 2020

**The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$346 but the pack price is only \$294.10 including freight to most Australian cities.**

## New Arrivals and What's Coming



Some wine has finally arrived, albeit in limited quantities (a very small pallet of Champagne). Shipping is becoming more and more fraught at the moment.

We have today released a small selection of Champagnes from Roland Piillot and Dominique Moreau under both their Piillot Père et Fils and Marie Courtin labels, with single bottle limits on most cuvées. By the time you read this they should be live on our website but here is a summary of what's available.

For the wines with a 1 bottle limit, there is a 6 bottle limit of those wines in total (hopefully that makes sense!).

Please note that all the Pinot Noirs are Blanc de Blancs.

Wine	RRP	Variety	Limit
Piillot Père et Fils Champagne Cuveé de Réserve	\$84	Pinot Noir, Chardonnay	6 bottles
Piillot Père et Fils Champagne Come des Tallants 2017	\$97	Pinot Noir	1 bottle
Piillot Père et Fils Champagne Colas Robin 2015	\$100	Pinot Blanc	1 bottle
Piillot Père et Fils Champagne Chevy 2015	\$110	Chardonnay	1 bottle
Piillot Père et Fils Champagne Mepetit 2017	\$115	Pinot Meunier	1 bottle
Marie Courtin Champagne Résonance 2018	\$103	Pinot Noir	1 bottle

Wine	RRP	Variety	Limit
Marie Courtin Champagne Efflorescence 2015	\$135	Pinot Noir	1 bottle
Marie Courtin Champagne Eloquence 2016	\$153	Chardonnay	1 bottle
Marie Courtin Champagne Concordance 2016	\$167	Pinot Noir	1 bottle
Marie Courtin Champagne Blanc de Blancs 2018	\$257	Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, Arbane	1 bottle
Marie Courtin Champagne Blanc de Noirs 2018	\$257	Pinot Noir	1 bottle

We're still hopeful of releasing a selection of wines from the Montanet family and from Opi d'Aqui during January but they are not here yet. This means they could be released before the next newsletter so you may want to check in two or three weeks if you are interested.

The cuvées from the Montanet family are La Cadette Vézelay Châtelaine 2019 and Vézelay Piècette (a first for us, and the only white wine from the domaine aged in old barrels), La Soeur Cadette Melon 2020, Mâcon Chardonnay and Juliéna 2019, and Montanet-Thoden Bourgogne Rouge Garance 2019.

The wines from Opi d'Aqui are predominantly familiar cuvées including Les Cliquets 2020, l'abricotier 2019, Massale 2019, L'Orangeade 2020, and Poupoule 2020 but we also have a new cuvée Les Canons, which is a blend of 60% Syrah in carbonic maceration and 40% destemmed Cinsault. It's only 12% alcohol so we're hoping it will fit the chilled summer reds vibes nicely. These wines have no added sulphites so are a little more fragile. We'll see how they have travelled before deciding when to release them but hopefully at least some will be good to release in January.

After that, certainties are Domaine Milan, including some Milan Nouveau, which is one of two new 2021 wines we have in transit, some wines from Fanny Sabre, including Bourgogne Rouge and Aligoté from the 2020 vintage, Bangarang Primeur 2021 and Bonnes Blanches 2019 from the Mosse family, and a Jura shipment which we expect will be all allocated, about which there is more information in our November newsletter.

Also on the water, which is a good start(!), is a shipment of new wines from Vincent Carême, which, as well as improving our supplies of Chenin Blanc, we will also have some of the delicious and very popular 2020 Fizzy Pink.



## Our solution to the shortage of key ingredients for Australian winemakers??

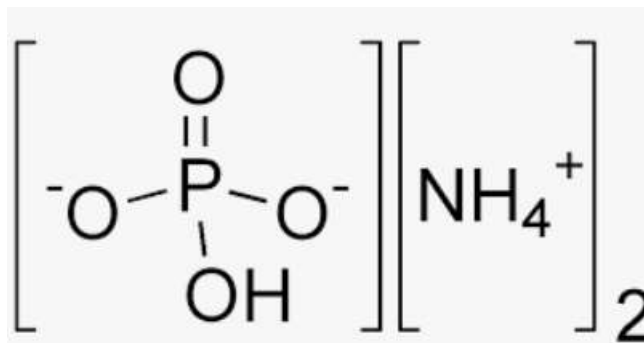
We were interested to read a recent ABC Rural article bemoaning the shortage of a key ingredient for Australian winemakers due to restriction in supply by China. These restrictions have also had the effect of increasing the price of the ingredient by a factor of 5.

The specific product that was the main one mentioned in the article was diammonium phosphate, known in the industry as DAP.



[Diammonium phosphate - Wikipedia](#)

The chemical formula for DAP is  $(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{HPO}_4$  meaning that it contains both Nitrogen and Phosphorous. In cases of poor fermentation by commercial yeasts added to wines the yeasts can feed on the Nitrogen in the DAP (which is water soluble).



[The chemical structure of DAP - Wikipedia](#)

The problem here is that there are now 2 additives in the wine at a minimum, plus the residue from the DAP derivatives.

We have written before about the many additives used by the Australian wine industry and this is yet another example.

Our solution? We have over 60 producers in France who never add yeasts to their wine, but instead rely on the yeasts in and on the grapes to ferment the wines each year. This means that the mix of yeast types that carry out the fermentation are uniquely those sourced from the vineyard and hence far more reflective of the terroir rather than a commercial, derived yeast that comes to the vineyard in a bag!

## Nicolas Carmarans and the Aveyron Region

The remote and rugged Aveyron region is home to Aubrac beef, colourful cutlery, Cantal cheese, aligot (that's a potato dish not a nearly-similarly named grape variety) and some very interesting wines. It is also home to ski fields, a popular part of one of the many walking routes to Santiago de Compostela, one of France's most revered restaurants (Le Suquet run by the Bras family) as well as one of the most stunning bridges in the world, namely the Millau Viaduct.

If we are driving from the south we like to take the A75 through the northern part of the Languedoc through ancient hills proudly displaying their complex rock formations and covered with the inevitable vineyards.

This allows us to cross into the Aveyron via the spectacular viaduct with the village of Millau crouching below at the bottom of the valley cut through by the Tarn River. This also is a compulsory stop as on the northern side of the viaduct there is a rest stop where Michel Bras established a café for travellers and serves delicious savoury and sweet cornets called *capucin*.



Approaching the viaduct



On the viaduct



The Milau Viaduct – wide view



### Savoury Capucin with Aligot and Truffle

Sometimes we have to pinch ourselves that we are actually working. When we finally reach Antrenas we leave the A75 and head east towards a confusing number of villages, all with Aubrac as part of their name, a nod to the famous breed of cattle from this region, high in the snow covered hills of the popular ski area.

Our destination is the tiny village just called Aubrac, within the commune of Saint Chély d’Aubrac, which has a restaurant called Chez Germaine. One of the walking routes to Santiago de Compostela passes through here so there is usually a gaggle of backpackers resting from their travails in this little village.

Chez Germaine specialises in the local delicacy called aligot. It is claimed that this stretchy potato dish was invented by monks to feed hungry pilgrims on the Compostela route.

It is made from local potatoes and a fresh cheese, created just for the purpose of making aligot, which of course also comes from this region.

The result is a stretchy elastic dish that is quite delicious. We should add a warning here! The chef and owner here is a slightly stern lady who is a 40 year veteran of the hospitality industry and is very proud of her ability to cook this dish properly.



#### Serving the Aligot at Chez Germaine

When we ate at Chez Germaine (which only serves lunch) there was a slightly difficult moment, as we watched other tables being served. When the aligot was served a strange “ceremony” commenced. She brought a large pot of aligot into the restaurant and started placing a “halo” of the potato concoction on the hair of each of the males in the room. At this stage Roger went into a catatonic state and was looking around for escape options! However, there was no escaping this formidable chef who swooped on our table and applied the halo accordingly.

She then kindly explained that the purpose of this unusual activity was that if the aligot had been cooked perfectly the recipients should be able to lift the aligot off their hair with none of the substance remaining. She was right. It lifted off perfectly! There are no known photos of that moment.

After that scary experience we proceeded to enjoy the dish very much, with Roger hoping that there were no other surprises in store! The meal ends with a delicious berry tart and other sweet options.

As we get closer to chez Carmarans we encounter Le Suquet, the restaurant established by Michel Bras and now run by his son Sébastien, perched high on a hill overlooking the village of Laguiole which is famous for its knives and, more recently, ubiquitous brightly coloured cutlery (not always made here).

Only once we’ve succeeded in making a reservation at Bras as it tends to fill up for the season as soon as it begins so usually it is just admiration from a distance (which is quite good for our wallets). And we are meant to be working after all!

We then continue through fields where the herds of cows that provide the milk for the local cheeses graze contentedly on the thriving pastures, while the younger Limousine and Blonde d’Aquitaine calves provide high quality veal that is highly sought after throughout the country.

The topography becomes more extreme with deep gorges and steep hills as we approach the village of Campouriez where Nicolas used to live before moving down towards the Truyère river a few kilometres away.

The short drive is along a winding road through thick forest which gives way to dramatic views over his vineyards and river in front of the house and winery that Nicolas has established in this remote location.



**The Carmarans vineyard and Truyère River**

Here, between his imposing house with the proprietorial cat and nearby modern winemaking facility, a table nestles under a shady tree where the generous hospitality of Nicolas is dispensed.



**The cat surveys the domaine**

The format usually entails a tasting of his latest wines followed by a lunch of delicious food that he seems to effortlessly conjure up in his well-appointed kitchen, using skills gained in his many years running the iconic Café de la Nouvelle Mairie in Paris. It was about this venue that wine writer Aaron Ayscough wrote while Nicolas was still the owner:

*Café de la Nouvelle Mairie's leather-bound wine list is a living history of natural wine in France, and a guide to the winemakers who've been instrumental in articulating the ideals of natural wine worldwide.*



**Inside the winery with a large wooden foudre for l'Olto**

The upright foudre in the above photo can hold a few thousand litres of wine as compared with a barrel which holds around 225 litres. This means there is less contact between the wine and the wood and hence less oak flavour in the wine. The thicker staves in a foudre also makes it more difficult for oxygen to penetrate the wood and hence enter the wine. This means that the wine does not oxidise as much.

However, it also means that the oxygen does not carry out as much softening of the tannins in the wine, hence restraining the tannins from carrying out their preservation function as efficiently.

The following photos show Nicolas at the outside table where we have enjoyed some delightful tastings, with very limited spitting apart from by Roger, who drives, and meals.



Nicolas during our tasting



Lunch with a tomato salad picked from the garden



## Answers to readers' questions

Here we answer questions we have been asked recently.

### Is that wine natural?

Twice in the past month we have heard winemakers describing their wine as natural because it hadn't been filtered or fined. Obviously, they were trying to squeeze their wines into the space occupied by natural wines without telling the whole story! They obviously have fallen for the rather silly argument that all natural wines are cloudy. They are not.

This is not the only attempt we have seen or read about over the past year. We have seen the totally clumsy "clean wine" fiasco in the United States where an importer seeking publicity attempted to convince buyers that provided there was a lot number on the label then the wine could be traced back to its origin and hence was somehow "clean".

Of course, a lot number does not necessarily say anything about the origin of the grapes that were used to make the wine or about the processes in the vineyard that were used to grow the grapes. A lot number is usually used to identify a "batch" – it does not imply anything about whether the grapes have been sprayed or anything else.

The only glimmer of truth we can extract from this is that natural wines are not fined or filtered. But they are much more than that.

For a wine to be natural they must not be sprayed with systemic sprays. That is, they must be made from grapes that have been tended either organically or biodynamically in the vineyard without the use of systemic sprays such as glyphosates. This also applies to the many vineyards where there is "under-vine" spraying of weedkillers to remove weeds. These chemicals and their derivatives can still end up in the grapes.

The other key requirement here is that no commercial yeasts are used to ferment the grapes. This means that the wine should not be made in a winery where commercial yeasts are used as they are difficult to eradicate from the inside of the winery and hence will get into any wine made within the winery.

Finally, there is another area of confusion that can cloud the issue here and that is the claim to "sustainable agriculture" or "regenerative agriculture" in the vineyard. These are both becoming very popular throughout many countries and, in some ways are to be applauded as they are movements that try to reduce the level of spraying and the level of tillage in the vineyard.

However, more and more farmers and vigneronns are turning to a more rigorous approach to regenerative agriculture which is defined as Regenerative Organic Agriculture where regenerative practices are built on certified organic practices.

## In some of your recent newsletters there has been mention of Rose varieties of some grapes. How do they come about?

This is a very good question, and the answer is complicated. And it is important to distinguish between the words “rose” and “rosé” here. We are not talking about light coloured wines called rosé wines, we are talking about grapes that have a pink colour on the skins.

Now to the answer! It is believed that thousands of years ago there were only red/black grapes on *Vitis Vinifera* vines.

The colour is the result of molecules in the outer layers of the grape (in the skin) called anthocyanins which reflect colours from light falling on the grapes in such a way for them to appear various shades in the red to black spectrum depending on the grape<sup>1</sup>.

At this time there were no white grapes – or at least none that have yet been found in early civilisations.

The pathway which leads to the accumulation of anthocyanins in the skin of grapes is quite complex and involves action by enzymes that are created as a result of genetic material in the vines.

These enzymatic pathways are quite common in nature and one is particularly famous (infamous?), namely the 7-stage shikimate pathway which is the enzymatic pathway that is disrupted by glyphosates in GMO plants.

The reason we put in the “infamous” is that a major problem that is rarely talked about with GMO foods is that they can be sprayed with glyphosate which is then ingested by the plant. However, we are told that this does not affect humans because we don’t have a shikimate pathway – which is true. However, our gut bacteria do have this pathway, therefore they are also killed by the glyphosates ingested by the plants that we eat.

An important paper by Walker<sup>2</sup> et al (2007) helps us understand how white grapes appeared from the red/black grape *Vitis Vinifera*. This paper suggests that the scarily titled *Vitis vinifera* *UDP-glucose 3-O-flavonoid:glucosyltransferase* gene is necessary to create the enzyme that is responsible for the processes that create the red anthocyanins in grapes.

Walker and his colleagues found that genes developed in vines that disrupted the development of the enzyme pathway that creates this red anthocyanin and hence the result was that grapes without colour, namely white grapes, started to develop.

Once white grapes became common, they started to mutate to other forms. Therefore “grey” grapes started to appear such as Pinot Gris, for example. More recently (over the past couple of hundred years) there have appeared through mutation, a number of grapes with pink flecks in the skin and these have been called Rose grapes.

Examples of grapes that have been created through natural mutation include Mauzac Rose, Sauvignon Rose, Savagnin Rose and Chardonnay Rose as just a few examples.

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<sup>1</sup> There will be a deeper discussion of anthocyanins in the January 2022 edition of the newsletter next month.

<sup>2</sup> Walker A.R. et al (2007) White grapes arose through the mutation of two similar and adjacent regulatory genes. *The Plant Journal*. February 2007.

We will follow this up in January with a discussion about anthocyanins and how they affect the colour of the grapes – even to the extent that these molecules can now be manipulated in such a way that they reflect only blue light, hence producing a wine that is blue! Naturally, such a wine could never be called a natural wine.

### Why do some of the labels of Domaine Mosse wines have Mosse on them and others do not?

If you look at the two labels below you will see that, even though the graphics are almost identical, one has the name MOSSE in big letters and the other does not have MOSSE anywhere.

Like several producers we work with, the Mosse family has two business entities. One is for wines made from their own grapes and the other is for wines made with purchased grapes. Bisou, on the left, is made with the family's grapes. Bangarang Primeur, on the right, is made with purchased grapes. The name SARL 4B2F, which is owned by the Mosse family, is the name of the business entity (company) which makes wines from purchased grapes. (Of course all of them are made by the same hands!) In France the term used if you buy grapes and make wine with them is called *négoce*. Producers are required to clearly distinguish between wines that are made using their own grapes and wines made with purchased grapes.



So, if you don't see the word Mosse and you do see SARL 4B2F then the wine is made from purchased grapes and if you see the word MOSSE displayed prominently then it is their own grapes that have been used. Only the graphics provide the link that makes it easy to identify that the wines come from the same family.

Although, of course, like many things in France there are exceptions. Occasionally, when the vintage is particularly terrible, usually as a result of a devastating spring frost, the authorities will issue a dispensation allowing a domaine to buy some grapes (a proportion will be specified) to add to their own diminished harvest. The Mosses did this for their 2016 Cabernet Franc so,

even though it was bottled as MOSSE, approximately 30% of the grapes were purchased from another vigneron working organically. Nothing is ever 100% straightforward!

The Mosse family has always made some négoce wines. We have bought Moussamoussettes and Magic of Juju, both négoce wines, since we first started working with them.

But as climate change has begun to have a more significant impact on their vineyards, with many more and sometimes consecutive vintages seriously impacted by spring frosts, and their own harvest slashed sometimes to only 20% or 30% of what it would be in a typical vintage, they have made the decision to make more and more wines with purchased grapes in order to save their business. Frost, for example, was the reason behind the decision to make Travel, a négoce rosé made with grapes purchased from Tavel. Since then, other cuvées have been added, including Bangarang. It's an insurance policy that we expect will continue even in good vintages.

## Appellation: Champagne, Rosé des Riceys and Coteau Champenois

We have written about the Champagne appellation before many years ago. We have updated it to include the two other sub-appellations where still wines are permitted as well as further information not included in the original article.

The Champagne region, which lies to the east of Paris, produces a huge amount of wine but it is covered by only one main appellation.

The entire region of Champagne which extends from Reims in the north, down through Epernay and on to just south of Troyes is covered by this appellation.



Champagne region shown in blue

Wines from this region can be either still or sparkling. If the wine is sparkling it can be issued under the Champagne appellation if it conforms to the rules.

If the wine is a still wine it must be labelled as either Coteaux Champenois (which can be red, white or rosé) or Rosé des Riceys (which as the name implies can only be rosé).

Coteaux Champenois can be made from any of the same grapes as in the Champagne appellation (see below) whereas those in the Rosé des Riceys appellation can only be made from Pinot Noir.

If they are sparkling wines they are labelled as Champagne (the letters AOC are not required) provided they abide by the many rules imposed by the appellation. Unlike Burgundy which has over 100 separate appellations (in a much smaller area), Champagne

is a single appellation although some regions produce Grand Cru or Premier Cru or village level wines.

Champagne can be a single grape variety, or a blend of grape varieties chosen from Arbane, Chardonnay, Meunier (Pinot Meunier), Petit Meslier, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir. The following picture is taken from the official document of the appellation where the allowed grape varieties are listed.

**V - Encépagement**

Les vins sont issus exclusivement des cépages arbane B, chardonnay B, meunier N, petit meslier B, pinot blanc B, pinot gris G et pinot noir N.

Arbane, Chardonnay, Petit Meslier and Pinot Blanc are all white grapes (hence B for blanc), Pinot Gris is a grey grape (hence G for gris) and the Pinot Meunier and Pinot Noir are red grapes (hence N for noir, as the French call red grapes black).

You will often see the terms Blanc de Blancs or Blanc de Noirs on a label of Champagne. In the first case this means that it is a white Champagne made from white grapes. In the second case it refers to a white Champagne made from red grapes.

The current annual production exceeds 300 million bottles, most of which is produced by a small number of "houses" such as the famous Moët & Chandon (they produce around 26,000,000 bottles). The owners of Moët also own some of the other leading houses such as Veuve Cliquot and Krug.

Similarly, the giant Pernod Ricard owns some of the other large houses such as Perrier-Jouët and Mumm. The vast majority of the grapes they use are bought from vignerons throughout the Champagne region. Companies that make wine using bought-in grapes are called "négoçant-manipulant" (NM).

The production of Champagne on such a massive scale has meant that it has become highly industrialised and the blending process they use ensures that each cuvée tastes very similar and according to the 'house-style' every year.

In reaction to this increasing industrialisation, many small vignerons have decided to stop selling their grapes to the négoçiants and have started making Champagne themselves. Wines created by these small producers have been given the collective name of "grower Champagnes" - in other words Champagnes produced by the people who grew the grapes.

A significant number of these grower Champagnes have been produced organically or biodynamically and the wines have been made naturally, eschewing the widespread practices of chaptalisation, acidification, enzyme manipulation and addition of commercial yeast among others.



We should here introduce the term "récoltant-manipulant" (RM) which is used by grower Champagne producers. There are two rules governing the display of this term on a Champagne label. The first is that the person who grows the grapes makes the wine. And the second is that a maximum of 5% of the grapes used in any vintage can be bought from other growers.

You will see this displayed in very small type on both Roland Piollet and Dominique Moreau's wines. On the back label for Roland's Chevry, you can see RM25532-01 displayed. This is the registration number allocated by the Comité Champagne, and an equivalent number appears on all Champagnes.. The first two characters of this registration number indicate that the producer

is a récoltant-manipulant.



The second back label is from a new Marie Courtin cuvée called very literally Blanc de Blancs, which is from the 2018 vintage. Notice that the RM number for Marie Courtin is RM25532-04 (you can just spot it in the bottom left hand corner of the label to the left).

Piollet and Marie Courtin share the same primary registration number, which actually belongs to the family company SCEV du Tremble, under which auspices all of the wines are made.

Notice that SCEV du Tremble appears on both labels. The Piollet wines have the sub-section '01' and Marie Courtin

wines have the sub-section '04'.

Often, you also see a region within Champagne mentioned on the label. There are five distinct sub-regions running roughly from north to south. These are:

- Montagne de Reims;
- Vallée de la Marne;
- Côte des Blancs;
- Côte de Sézanne;
- Côte des Bar a.k.a Aube.

Our producers, Roland Piollet and Dominique Moreau, whose vineyards are in the Aube region grows all their own grapes and make their own Champagne..

**Endnote:** On the Living Wines web site we mention that some of Roland and Dominique's wines are either Brut or Extra Brut or Brut Nature.

For example, the Piollet MePetit label shown below is labelled as Brut Nature.



Exactly what distinguishes a Brut from an Extra Brut or a Brut Nature and from a Demi-Sec for that matter? It is all about the residual sugar in the wine. The rules for Champagne are as follows:

*Brut Nature* – The driest of all with 3 grams per litre of sugar or less. Champagnes with sugar levels within this range can either be labelled Brut Nature or Extra Brut.

*Extra Brut* – The term Extra Brut can only be displayed on a Champagne label if it has a very low level of residual sugar in the range 0-6 grams of sugar per litre.

*Brut* – A Brut wine should finish quite dry on the palate with the residual sugar in the range 0 grams per litre to 15 grams per litre.

*Extra Sec* – The sugar level must be between 12 grams per litre and 20 grams per litre.

*Sec* – Here is where you might be fooled by the translation. Sec means dry but the amount of sugar allowed is reasonably high at 17 to 35 grams per litre.

*Demi-sec* – The term demi-sec translates literally as half dry, but a demi-sec Champagne can have between 33 and 50 grams of sugar per litre.

*Doux* – It is very rare to see a Champagne with Doux on the label. This is the sweetest one of all clocking in at over 50 grams of sugar per litre.



## Grape variety: Grolleau Noir

After thoroughly enjoying the recently arrived (and sold out except for the currently-advertised packs) Bisou from Domaine Mosse we thought it was time to tell the story of Grolleau Noir, which is an important component of this wine. It is also used in the about-to-arrive Mosse wine called Bangarang Primeur which is currently on a boat heading to Australia.

Grolleau Noir (aka Groslot) sometimes gets bad publicity particularly from traditional wine critics who are quick to arrive at negative judgements. They often blame the grape for a bad wine they have tasted rather than blaming the vigneron or the place where the vine has been planted.

This also allows them to create artificial hierarchies and assign classifications such as “noble” to some grapes but not others.

However, the mistake they consistently make is that nearly every grape will make an interesting wine in the right hands. Equally, we have sampled really terrible wines made from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir which are supposed to be “noble” grapes.

Back to Grolleau Noir. The Mosse family recently created the 2020 version of their Bisou cuvée using about 40% of Grolleau Noir. The result was a light, bright and totally delicious red wine that could be drunk slightly chilled and was very low in tannins. It was a perfect wine which sold out incredibly quickly in Australia.

DNA analysis has not been able to locate one of the parents of this grape variety, however it is likely to have Gouais Blanc (the parent of so many varieties) as one parent.

It is mostly found these days in the Loire Valley although it is possible that it was first planted in the Charentes which is the region centred on the town of Angoulême which lies not too far north of Bordeaux.

There are two main areas in the Loire Valley where it is (or has been) an important grape variety. The first is in the area immediately to the East of the city of Tours in the Touraine Azay-le-Rideau appellation where Grolleau has been recorded as far back as 1808. Here, rosé is made using Grolleau which must be at least 60% of the blend.

The second area is that of Anjou which lies to the south of the city of Angers. For many years Grolleau Noir has been an important component of Rosé d’Anjou which is a famous sweetish rosé made in significant quantities under the appellation of the same name in the Loire Valley.

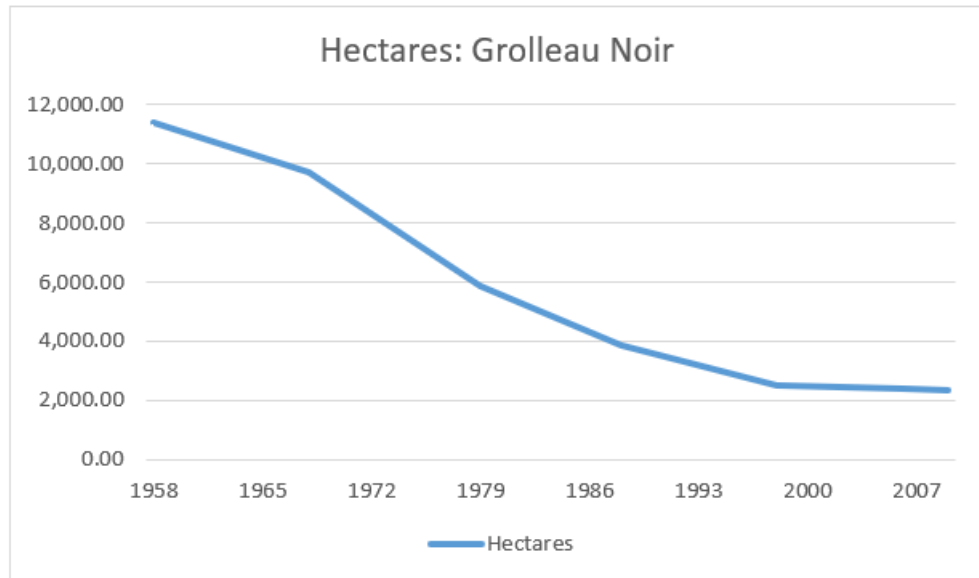
As you can see from the snippet from the official rules for the appellation shown below, Grolleau N(oir) is one of the approved grape varieties for this wine.

AOC « Rosé d’Anjou »	
Vins tranquilles rosés	cabernet franc N, cabernet-sauvignon N, cot N, gamay N, grolleau N, grolleau gris G, pineau d’Aunis N

One feature of the Grolleau vine is that it is very productive. This means it is capable of producing a large number of bunches, but this leads to a decrease in quality. Therefore, to produce wines such as those created by the Mosse family it is necessary to prune the vines to

reduce the number of bunches so that the grapes receive sufficient nutrients, rather than those nutrients having to be shared among many bunches.

The area planted to Grolleau Noir has decreased from nearly 12,000 hectares to just over 2,000 due to vineyards being pulled out during the 1960s and 1970s and being replaced with supposedly more commercial varieties.



Hectares in France, courtesy of Vitis International Variety Catalogue

The leaves of the Grolleau Noir grape variety have a distinct central “lobe” with the remainder of the leaf being almost semi-circular. This is an interesting shape because when the leaves are young they are much more distinctly serrated with five lobes clearly present.



Photo courtesy of Vitis International Variety Catalogue

The deep red grapes are tightly packed leaving them somewhat susceptible to mildew and fungal diseases as air movement which can help in reducing these problems is difficult among the tight bunches.



Photo courtesy of [foodtourist.com](http://foodtourist.com)

We are sure that the Mosse family will continue use this grape again in future versions of Bisou and both Bangarang and Bangarang Primeur! And we also hope to have more of Toby and Julie Bainbridge's 100% Groslot Noir, Rouge aux Levres before too long. (Toby and Julie prefer the synonym "Groslot Noir". They are of course all of 16km away from the Mosses so it's not unusual to find regional differences!

## **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.