

## WINE Talk: April 2022

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 107

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 again have five packs, and this time they contain some very exciting wines from a shipment that has just arrived. We have reserved some of them to ensure we have some to offer to our newsletter subscribers.

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

- Information about new releases and a reminder about what will be arriving soon.
- Information about the five packs which we have available.
- A story about the Clairette grape variety that is commonly found in Provence, the Rhone Valley, the Languedoc and the Gard. This grape variety is capable of producing exciting white wines.
- A story about Axel Prüfer whose wines arrived recently and which form some of the packs this month.
- A story about recent rainfall in France and the implications for the harvest.
- A story about the famous Pommard appellation in Burgundy.

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

## New Arrivals - Le Temps des Cerises and Le Bouc à Trois Pattes

As mentioned in the last newsletter, we have a tiny release from two Languedoc friends Axel Prüfer (Le Temps des Cerises ) and Wim Wagemans (Le Bouc à Trois Pattes). The allocation from Le Bouc à Trois Pattes particularly was very limited and several wines we mentioned in our previous email have sold out to people who requested a reservation in advance and so are no longer available.

Both Axel and Wim work without any additions in their wines, including no added sulphites. The wines undergo varying lengths of carbonic maceration, even Axel’s white wine, La Peur du Rouge which had five days of carbonic maceration. They all share one characteristic – they are very lively and fresh and the reds always have a complementary hint of spice. While we’ve always been amazed, when we drink an older bottle of one of Axel’s wines, that they age so well, it’s fair to say that generally they are made to be drunk young, particularly La Capitulation. In this vintage Pas de Côté would probably be the wine to keep if you want to see how they change with age. Whether you drink them young or old these wines are just so pleasurable and drinkable. We look forward to their arrival every year and it wasn’t easy to give ourselves only a limited allocation.

They are all red wines except for La Peur du Rouge, which is a blend of Chardonnay and Clairette.

You will find some of them in packs in this month and at present, they are available to order but some will disappear within the hour.

Le Temps des Cerises Fou du Roi 2020 – a blend of equal quantities of Carignan, Grenache and Cinsault	\$44
Le Temps des Cerises La Capitulation Ne Paie Pas 2020 - <b>single bottle orders only</b> . 100% Cinsault.	\$49
Le Temps des Cerises Un Pas de Côté 2020. 100% Grenache.	\$51
Le Temps des Cerises Les Lendemain Qui Chantent 2020 .100 % Grenache.	\$70
Le Temps des Cerises La Peur du Rouge 2020 - Chardonnay & Clairette	\$51
Le Bouc à Trois Pattes Quel Âne de Course 2020 – <b>single bottle orders only</b> . Carignan, Merlot, Syrah, Figs (layered)	\$44
Le Bouc à Trois Pattes Slow Drip Black Shiraz 2020. 100% Syrah	\$44
Le Bouc à Trois Pattes Un Coup de Kuq 2020 - 100% Syrah. <b>single bottle orders only</b>	\$44

## What we'll be releasing next

We're hoping to release some new wines from Jean-Marc Dreyer and La Cadette during May. For the most part these are familiar wines but there is one new cuvée, which is only released every three years, from Jean-Marc.

The Dreyer wines we anticipate releasing are predominantly from the 2020 vintage. In the Origin series we will have Sylvaner, Riesling, Auxerrois, Pinot Gris and Muscat. These are all single variety macerated wines. We'll also have two blended macerated wines, both repeats of vintages we have had before - the 2019 Stratos (a blend of Riesling, Auxerrois and Sylvaner) and 2019 Finisterra, a blend of Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris, Muscat d'Alsace and Auxerrois. The new wine is Le Triaux, a white wine which is an assembly of three vintages of Auxerrois (2018, 2019 et 2020).

The wines from Cadette are three whites and two reds. The whites are two Chardonnays - La Cadette Vézelay Cuvée Châtelaine 2020, La Cadette Vézelay Cuvée Saulniers 2020 and some more 2020 La Soeur Cadette Melon. The reds are Montanet-Thoden Bourgogne Rouge Garance 2020 and La Soeur Cadette Juliéas 2020.

We'll also be allocating a new shipment of Octavin wines in May. We mentioned the cuvées in our last newsletter.

## And what's beyond

The answer is quite a lot. We have some new Mosse wines on the water on our side of the Suez Canal, which is always a relief, including some new cuvées which we are particularly excited about – Initial Carbo 2020, a carbonic maceration of Chenin Blanc and Nova 2020, another Chenin Blanc. For Nova, destemmed grapes, left intact for the entire time, were macerated for 218 days infused in their own juice. Both cuvées are very limited so unless you ask may not be available unless they are part of a pack. These are the sorts of experiments possible in an abundant vintage like 2020. But severe frosts decimated the 2021 vintage and there were frosts again earlier this month so we're expecting 2022 to be a reduced harvest in the Loire again this year. As well as these mystery wines we'll have the 2021 Bangarang and Magic of Juju, some more 2020 Chenin, plus Bonnes Blanches 2020 and the 2020 vintage of the family's Savennières cuvée Arena, so plenty of classic Chenin Blanc as well as the experimental wines. There's also a new Cabernet Franc cuvée from the 2018 vintage. This cuvée began life potentially as the domaine's typical Cabernet Franc with 10 months in barrel. But selected barrels were assembled and aged in foudre for an additional year.

Also on the water from the Loire is a new shipment of Robinot wines, which we will be allocating, and some Piollot and Marie Courtin Champagne. We may end up allocating some of the rarer Champagnes too so if you're interested in an allocation let us know.

And still in France but about to depart are the remainder of our 2020 Domaine Derain and Sextant allocations and the first of 2021. The 2020s include Sextant's 2020 Bourgogne Rouge, Bourgogne Blanc, Coteaux Bourguignons, and Po à Po and Domaine Derain 2020 Bourgogne Aligoté. Sadly there will be no Allez Goutons from the 2021 vintage, one of the casualties of 2021's frosts. We will have some 2021 Ecume and 2021 Foufou'nette, the first 2021 releases,

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and will have more early release 2021 wines from them later in the year. This shipment also includes two of Dominique Derain's retirement cuvées – 2020 Las Nubes Pinot Noir from Chile and 2021 Entre Peaux, macerated muscat à petit grains from the south of France – another new experiment!

Further into the future there will be some new de Moor wines. We're either past or almost reaching the limit of who we can accommodate for this shipment so if your name is not on a list for this shipment you need to add it now (with no guarantees unfortunately). We won't be mentioning them again.

And we also have finalised orders from Sylvain Bock, Julien Fremont, Domaine de la Garrèriere, Julien Peyras, Mataburro, la Guinelle vinegars, and Tony Bornard.

We may not have made it back to France yet but we're doing our best to bring as much of it as we can here.

## Pack 1: Languedoc Special Pack (15% Discount)

**Note: 6 packs available**



This pack is a compilation of wines that have arrived recently. It is very unusual as it contains one of the very rare wines from Wim Wageman whose wines only arrives in tiny, tiny quantities. This pack has his intriguing Slow Drip Black Shiraz which he has named after a hipster friend who is a coffee addict. Like many of our producers in this area, Wim likes to make red wines that are not overly aggressive. This one is a deep purple colour but is quite light on the palate and weighs in at only 11.5% alcohol.

We have added in an orange wine of some complexity from Ivo Ferreira made from macerated Grenache Blanc, Chardonnay and Muscat á Petit Grains. This is a great food wine. We have also included 2 bottles of the delightful La Peur du Rouge white wine from Axel Prüfer which is usually pure Chardonnay, however due to the yield in 2020 he has rounded it out with the lovely Clairette variety, which we have featured at the end of this newsletter.

And, in keeping with the theme of light reds we have included a bottle the 2020 Fou du Roi which features three common Languedoc grapes, namely Carignan, Grenache Noir and Cinsault in equal percentages, as well as Les Canons from Opi d'Aqui which is made from Syrah and Cinsault.

The complete pack is:

- Les Cigales Dans La Fourmilière Escarpolette Le Blanc 2020
- Le Temps des Cerises Fou du Roi 2020
- Le Temps des Cerises La Peur du Rouge 2020 (2 bottles)
- Le Bouc à Trois Pattes Slow Drip Black Shiraz 2020
- Opi d'Aqui Les Canons 2019

**The RRP for this selection of 5 different wines is \$303 but the pack price is only \$257.55. It normally includes freight to most Australian cities but, depending on the destination we may have to add a small freight charge to account for warm weather shipping in a time of Covid-19.**

**Pack 2: Rare New Arrivals Pack (10% Discount)**

**Note: 2 packs only**



This is a very rare offering as it combines some of the best of Axel Prüfer's amazing wines with another from his friend Wim Wageman and two Jura wines from one of our long term suppliers, Michel Gahier who is well-known for both his white and red wines.

Axel's Capitulation is a beautiful, light red wine made from 100% Cinsault. Then we have included a bottle of his Un Pas de Côté and a bottle of his premium Les Lendemain Qui Chantent, both of which are made from Grenache Noir.

The white wine from Michel is a typical Jura white which has had oxidative treatment and is made from the fascinating Melon à Queue Rouge grape variety which is understood to be a mutant variety which has stemmed from Chardonnay over the centuries.

The other, Les Grands Vergers. is Michel's premium red wine from vines right behind his house in the village of Montigny les Arsures which is famous for the quality of Trousseau-based wines.

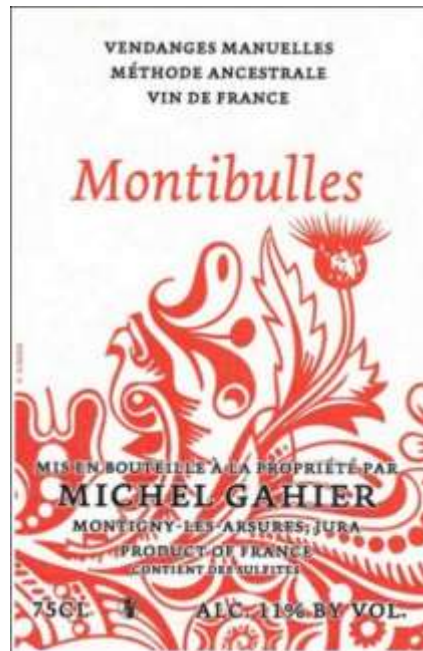
The complete pack is:

- Le Temps des Cerises La Capitulation Ne Paie Pas 2020
- Le Temps des Cerises Un Pas de Côté 2020
- Le Temps des Cerises Les Lendemain Qui Chantent 2020
- Le Bouc à Trois Pattes Un Coup de Kuq 2020
- Michel Gahier Arbois Melon La Fauquette 2016
- Michel Gahier Arbois Trousseau Les Grands Vergers 2019

**The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$366 but the pack price is only \$329.40. It normally includes freight to most Australian cities but, depending on the destination we may have to add a small freight charge to account for warm weather shipping in a time of Covid-19.**

### Pack 3: Michel Gahier Pack (10% Discount!)

**Note: 6 packs available**



This month we are delighted to be able to offer an entire pack of the very recently arrived Gahier Jura wines. We have one bottle of his delicious sparkling wine called Montibulles which is made from 100% Chardonnay.

We then have included the three white wines that he makes in addition to La Fauquette which is in Pack 2. Les Crêts and Les Follasses are both made from Chardonnay and the grapes are sourced from the vineyards of the same name. Lou Blanc, which is his newest cuvée, is made with Melon à Queue Rouge as described above.

The final two bottles are his fabulous red Trousseau wines from the Vigne de Louis and Le Clousot vineyards which are also quite close to Montigny les Arsures.

- Michel Gahier Montibulles
- Michel Gahier Arbois Chardonnay Les Crêts 2018
- Michel Gahier Arbois Lou Blanc 2018
- Michel Gahier Arbois Les Follasses 2019
- Michel Gahier Arbois Trousseau La Vigne de Louis 2019
- Michel Gahier Arbois Trousseau Le Clousot 2019

**The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$402 but the pack price is only \$361.80. It normally includes freight to most Australian cities but, depending on the destination we may have to add a small freight charge to account for warm weather shipping in a time of Covid-19.**

**Pack 4: Last Bottle Pack (20% Discount)**

**Note: 1 pack only**



There is a theme in this pack for lovers of Chenin Blanc with half of the wines/vinegars being entirely made from this famous Loire Valley grape variety. There are two wines from the Vouvray region (near the city of Tours) from one of that region's finest winemakers, Vincent Carême.

And, just across the river, but outside the Vouvray appellation, Lise et Bertrand Jousset make wonderful wines, also from Chenin Blanc. In this case the wine didn't make it so they send the barrel to La Guinelle to weave their natural magic to produce this exciting vinegar.

There is also the Rouge aux Levres from long-time suppliers Julie and Toby Bainbridge from further along the Loire in the Anjou region. This red wine is made from 100% Groslot Noir which is a common local grape variety.

From the far southern reaches of France in the Pyrenees we have the last bottle of a Mourvèdre that has matured nicely in our cellar.

And, finally, the last bottle is a Jura pet nat from Domaine de la Loue which is made from 100 Pinot Noir

- Julie and Toby Bainbridge Rouge Aux Levres 2020
- Le Temps Retrouvé Mourvèdre 2015
- Vincent Carême Vouvray Tendre 2014
- Vincent Carême AOC Vouvray l'Ancestrale 2017
- La Guinelle Vinaigre de Chenin Lise et Bertrand Jousset 50 cl
- Domaine de la Loue PetNat Rosé 2018

**The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$275 but the pack price is only \$220. It normally includes freight to most Australian cities but, depending on the destination we may have to add a small freight charge to account for warm weather shipping in a time of Covid-19.**



**Pack 5: Plan B Pack (15% Discount)**

**Note: 1 Pack only**



Sometimes original plans go awry. The wines in the pack are no longer available on the website (although we will have a new supply of Mosse 2020 Chenin mid year). They were reserved for a customer but the order didn't eventuate. We've decided to sell them in a pack instead. It's a mix of most styles of wine – 2 whites, two reds, a rosé and something very rare in our list of available wines at the moment, one very beautiful, complex sparkling wine (made in méthode traditionnelle style, not a pet nat). It's predominantly a pack of wines from Provence but there is also one wine from the Loire, the Aveyron and Burgundy, so quite a mix!

- Mosse Chenin 2020
- Nicolas Carmarans IGP Aveyron Fer de Sang 2020
- Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Blanc 2020
- Milan Milan Nouveau 2021
- Milan Haru Rosé 2020
- Milan Brut Nature Blanc 2019

**The RRP for this selection of 6 wines is \$340 but the pack price is only \$289.00 It normally includes freight to most Australian cities but, depending on the destination we may have to add a small freight charge to account for warm weather shipping in a time of Covid-19.**

## The wines of the Axel Prüfer

This month you will have noticed that we have a few of Axel Prüfer's wines available in the packs. And, as at the time of the newsletter's release, we also had individual bottles available. We always look forward to his wines arriving because they are exactly the type of wines we like to drink on a regular basis.

The whites are complex and flavoursome, the reds are light and spicy and without the high alcoholic content so often experienced in the Languedoc. In fact, his top-of-the-range wine this year, the Lendemains, is only 11.1%.

In order to understand Axel, it is useful to consider where he lives because the area around his home is a rugged and remote area of southern France where he chose to live in order to be able to separate his vineyards from both vineyards and farms so that they would not be subjected to the inevitable spray drift that occurs in rural areas.

Axel lives near the village of Bédarieux on the edge of the Haut-Languedoc Regional Nature Park. When we visit his vineyards, it often involves a drive up into the park area along twisting unsealed roads until we then have to walk to the vineyard itself.



Axel and Roger heading for the vineyard



The floor of one of Axel's vineyards, covered with plants, herbs and rocks as well as the ever-present spiderwebs



Axel pouring a wine from one of his large fibreglass tanks



Another of Axel's vineyard overlooking the national park



Axel in his winery during one of our tastings at his forklift table

## France rain report

We like to keep you informed of the weather in France so that you have a better understanding of what our producers are going through with extremes of weather conditions now being the norm and not an aberration.

The weather this March 2022 (which we will elaborate on in a moment) is similar to a short period of extreme weather we experienced in the Languedoc-Roussillon in the autumn of 2019. We will tell you about that first.

We were in Roussillon to visit our new producers Melissa and Laurent Roger and we were excited to try their wines following finding an exceptional wine of theirs in Marseille about a week before.

We drove down through the Languedoc and on to Roussillon near the Spanish border as we had done many times before. As we approached the city of Perpignan, however, the rain began to fall. And oh, did it fall!

In fact, it fell so hard that we had to huddle inside their winery and it became impossible to even think about heading for their vineyard. At the time of writing, we still haven't managed the visit due to the intervention of Covid.

That night we were booked into a restaurant in Perpignan that we had been looking forward to for some time. It specialised in natural wines and the food has a good reputation as well. Luckily, we had booked a hotel immediately across the road from the Via del Vi restaurant so we only got mildly soaked running across to the restaurant and back.

The meal was very good and the next morning we headed off early heading for one of our favourite locations in France – the remote Auberge de Chassignolles in the hills to the east of Clermont-Ferrand in the Auvergne. Every trip, we always end up here at some stage due to the exceptional food and wine selection and the hospitality of the owners. It is truly a wonderful place for a few days of rest and restoration.

And we always enjoy the beautiful drive up through the Languedoc then onto the A76 and the journey through the centre of France, across the breathtaking Viaduc de Millau and on to the volcanic terrain of the Auvergne where you wouldn't be surprised if Vercingetorix jumped out from behind a tree.

By the time we left Perpignan the rain had eased somewhat, however within 20 minutes of driving north, towards Narbonne the heavens had opened up again. At Narbonne there were already cars floating down the river!

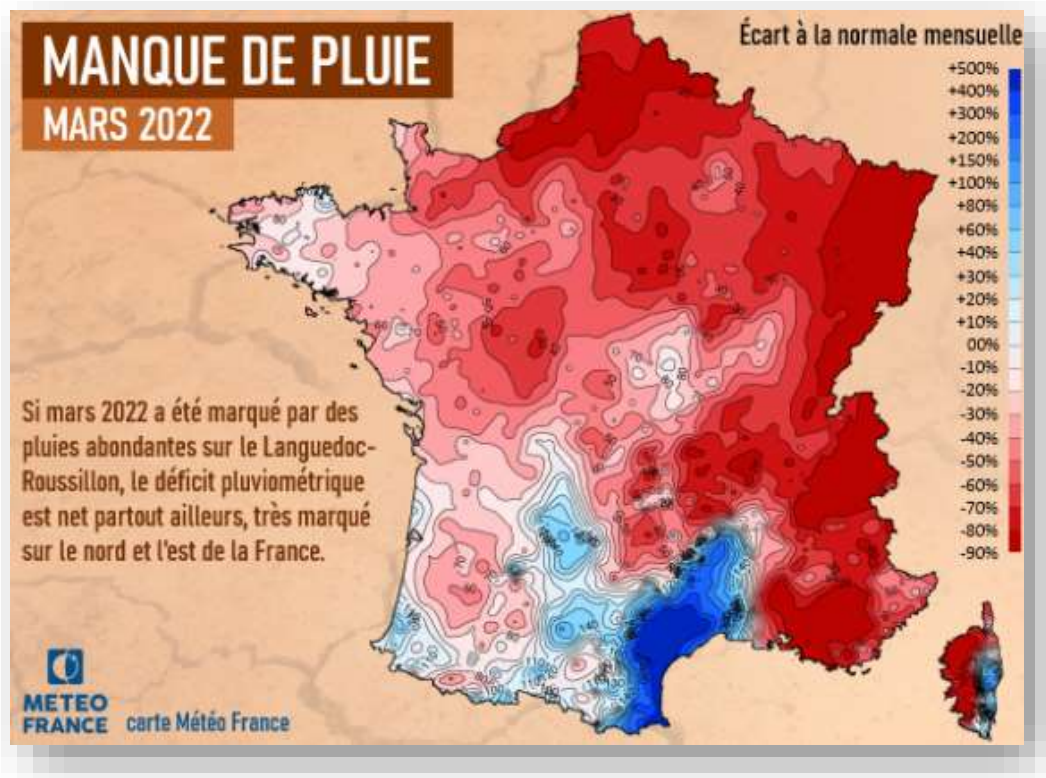
Our normally pleasant drive along the A75 became a nightmare. Visibility was minimal, water flooded the normally clear roads and rocks were tumbling down from the cliffs. It was one of the most tiring drives we have ever had.

After many incidents avoiding rocks on the road and missing cars straying on to the wrong side, we finally arrived at the peace and quiet of Chassignolles. And, as always when we arrive, we immediately headed for the bar and ordered the delightful pink pet nat from local producer Patrick Bouju called Festejar – it hardly touched the sides!

So, all that was a lead-in to an article we read last week from France about the strange weather conditions being experienced in the Languedoc in March.

The article caught our attention because it followed the pattern of our trips around France in 2019, where one area would be pelting rain and another, not too far away, would be experiencing drought.

The map from the article is shown below.



#### Manque de Pluie means “lack of rain” in March 2022

The French “écart à la normale mensuelle” means “deviation from monthly normal” rainfall, with monthly normal displayed as 0%. From the map you can see in the south there is a lot of blue. This means that the Languedoc-Roussillon and parts of the Rhone Valley were considerably above normal rainfall, in fact up to 500% above! With most of the rest of France coloured in red hues this means that the rest of France was considerably below the normal rainfall – with the eastern parts being at up to 90% below normal.

This has particularly affected Alsace and the Jura with both having little to no rain in March (only 3mm in Strasbourg for the entire month), which is particularly problematic coming into a long, hot summer.

What this also shows is the wisdom of talking about “climate change” because overheating in one area can cause excessive rain or even snow in another due to the complexity of the currents that form in the atmosphere during such events.

## Appellation: Pommard



Pommard village around the Chateau above

Pommard is one of the best-known appellations in Burgundy and is famous for the high-quality red wines made primarily from Pinot Noir. No white wines or rosé wines are permitted under the appellation rules.

Pommard has been known as a producer of good wine dating back almost to Roman times and there are certainly mentions of the quality of the wine from here in books from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In the 13th century the area was owned by Alix de Vergy, duchess of Burgundy, and then the land was transferred into the hands of the Archbishops of Lyon.

In his book published in 1833 about his wine tour of France, Australian James Busby mentioned this town in the chapter he wrote on the city of Beaune. Pommard is literally only a couple of kilometres from the outskirts.

Busby, who wasn't very good at the spelling of French words wrote the name of this area as Pornard, not Pommard. He also described walking through mud and pouring rain to reach the vineyards of Pornard. He says that he found someone to "conduct me in the direction of Pornard, the nearest vineyard to Beaune, which has any celebrity".

Here there is an obvious implication that by this time the vineyards of Pommard were well-known.

Over the years the appellation has become more and more well-known, with the red soils now famous for producing some of the best Pinot Noir-based wines in Burgundy.

The following photos that we took in Fanny Sabre's Pommard vineyards show both a close-up and a longer view of the area.



Roger and Fanny walking through Pommard vineyards





[A long view across the Pommard appellation](#)

There are some strict rules for vineyards in the Pommard appellation. The vines must be planted at a minimum density of 9000 vines per hectare. The rows must be less than 1.5 metres apart and each vine has to be planted less than .5 metres from the adjacent vines in the same row.

Some white grapes can be used in the red wines produced here, and only red wines can use the appellation on the label. The white grapes can be a mix of Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris, however they must be less than 15% of the vines in each plot.

The vines must be pruned according to fairly strict rules using pruning regimes such as Guyot or Cordon or Gobelet and there cannot be more than five “eyes” per vine left after pruning.

At harvest, the maximum yield allowed per hectare is 9000 kilograms of grapes. This is enforced to ensure that the grapes haven’t been artificially “pumped-up” with fertilisers to make them grow quicker and bigger and thus reduce the flavour. This also involves a maximum allowance of 5000 litres per hectare of juice.

There are even rules about how high the grass in the vineyard can be!

As with most appellations in France, irrigation is specifically forbidden.

There are even rules about when to pick the grapes. For wines to display the appellation “Pommard” on the label the grapes are not allowed to be harvested until they have reached a maturity signified by the presence of 180 grams per litre of sugar. For wines that are rated as Pommard Premier Cru the figure has to be 189 grams per litre of sugar.

The % alcohol in the resultant wine must be a minimum of 11%. This is becoming much easier to achieve with the increased temperatures associated with climate change.

There are 28 official “*climats*” that are classified as Premier Cru vineyards. These are:

Clos Blanc , Clos de la Commaraine, Clos de Verger, Clos des Epeneaux, Derrière Saint-Jean, En Largillière, La Chanière, La Platière, La Refène, Le Clos Micot, Le Village, Les Arvelets, Les Bertins, Les Boucherottes, Les Chanlins-Bas, Les Chaponnières, **Les Charmots**, Les Combes Dessus, Les Croix Noires, Les Fremiers, Les Grands Epenots, Les Jarolières, Les Petits Epenots, Les Pézerolles, Les Poutures, Les Rugiens Bas, Les Rugiens Hauts, Les Saussilles.

There are also a number of Lieux Dits which can be included on the label as special areas that are not rated at Premier Cru level.

Chaffaud, Clos Beauder, Derrière Saint-Jean, En Boeuf, En Brescul, En Chiveau, En Mareau, En Moigelot, La Chanière, La Combotte, La Croix Blanche, La Croix Planet, La Levrière, La Plante aux Chèvres, La Vache, Le Bas des Saussilles, Le Poisot, Les Chanlins-Bas, Les Chanlins-Hauts, Les Combes Dessous, Les Cras, Les Lambots, Les Noizons, Les Perrières, **Les Petits Noizons**, Les Riottes, Les Tavannes, Les Vaumuriens-Bas, Les Vaumuriens-Hauts, Les Vignots, Rue au Porc, Trois Follots.

In the above lists, the one in orange (Les Charmots) is where Fanny Sabre produces her Pommard Premier Cru. There is also a Premier Cru “Lieux Dit” called Les Petits Noizons where Julien Altaber has vines to make a Domaine Derain Pommard.

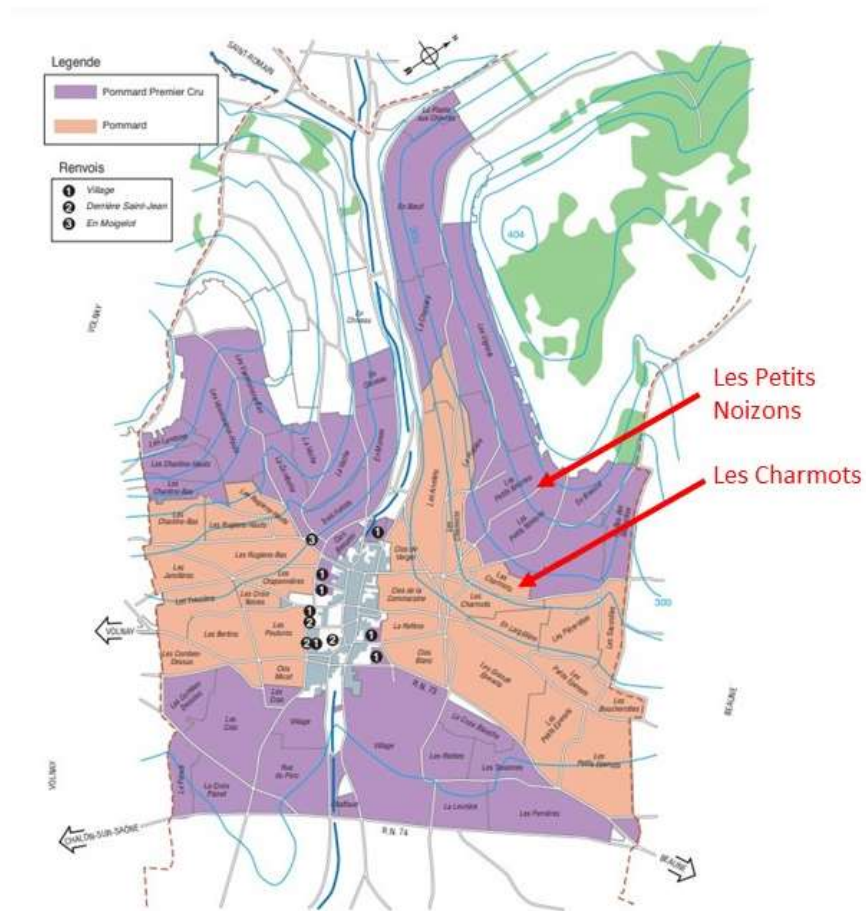
Two wine labels are shown below for these.



Notice that the one on the left from Fanny bears the title Premier Cru because Les Charmots is an official premier cru site in Pommard. She can also display the words Appellation Pommard 1er Cru Contrôlée on the label.

The Derain label, on the other hand, has the name of the Lieux Dit and the appellation Pommard, but is not able to call it a premier cru.

Below you can see a map of the appellation with the village in the centre in grey. The two areas from the labels above are indicated.



The village of Pommard (in grey) surrounded by various vineyards

When you look at the map above and look to the north-east and the north-west you can see that the Premier Cru sites (in purple) tend to follow the slopes of the hills that you can discern from the contours.

## Grape variety: Clairette

Clairette is a white grape that is widely dispersed geographically in southern France despite the overall area devoted to this interesting grape declining over the past fifty years (as shown in the graph later in the article). It is often blended with other varieties such as Grenache Blanc or Bourboulenc to give the wines delicacy and finesse.

The main areas of production for this slightly oblong grape are Provence, the Rhone Valley, the Gard and Languedoc. Some appellations even carry the name of this grape (unusually for France) as you can read about below.

Clairette is also a variety that produces a rose mutant with pink flecks on the skin. There is also a black/red variety found originally in Spain which the French call Clairette Noir which may be the same grape as the one found in Australia and California called Mataro.

The grape has been mentioned in literature as far back as 1575 as Clarette, Clerete and other minor variations. However, some attributions may not be correct because the word Clerete was also common at the time to describe a “clear” wine, which was a way of describing white wines.

A recent survey<sup>1</sup> of grape pips found in ancient sites shows that there were grapes that were morphologically similar (a similar shape) to Clairette thousands of years ago.

Clairette was a particular favourite of a number of French kings including Louis XI in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, Francois I in the 16<sup>th</sup>, and then Louis XII in the 17<sup>th</sup>. It was also a popular grape variety in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries in the wine (as opposed to the grape variety) which used to be called Picardin.

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, it was a favourite grape variety for the manufacture of Vermouth.

On page 21 of the book “*French Wines and Vineyards; and The Way to Find Them*” by Cyrus Redding which was published in London in MDCCCLX (1860), Clairette is clearly well-established in the Languedoc in the Herault department.

*The Clairette de Limousin produces good white wine, and with a variety of others of a nature somewhat similar, is grown in the département of the Herault.*

Redding also mentions it in relation to the sparkling wine called Blanquette de Limoux just to the south of the Hérault and to Clairette de Die produced around the village of Die in the stunningly beautiful area to the west of Valence in the Rhone Valley.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century however, many of the Clairette vineyards in the Languedoc were wiped out by the phylloxera virus.

It was also mentioned in the 1902 publication “*Ampélographie*” by Viala and Vermorel.

We mentioned above the wide distribution of this variety in Southern France.

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<sup>1</sup>Jean-Frédéric Terral et al (2010) *Evolution and history of grapevine (Vitis vinifera) under domestication: new morphometric perspectives to understand seed domestication syndrome and reveal origins of ancient European cultivars. Annals of Botany. 2010 Mar; 105(3): 443–455.*

Locations include Clairette de Die near Lyon and Clairette de Bellegarde and Clairette de Languedoc in the Languedoc. Clairette is also one of the permitted grape varieties for the Côtes du Ventoux (where Clairette, Bourboulenc, Grenache Blanc and Roussanne are permitted), Côtes du Rhône (where the Ventoux varieties plus Marsanne, Viognier, Ugni Blanc and Picpoul Blanc are also allowed) and Côtes du Luberon (which has the same white varieties as the Côtes du Rhône plus the addition of Vermentino or Rolle as it is known locally).

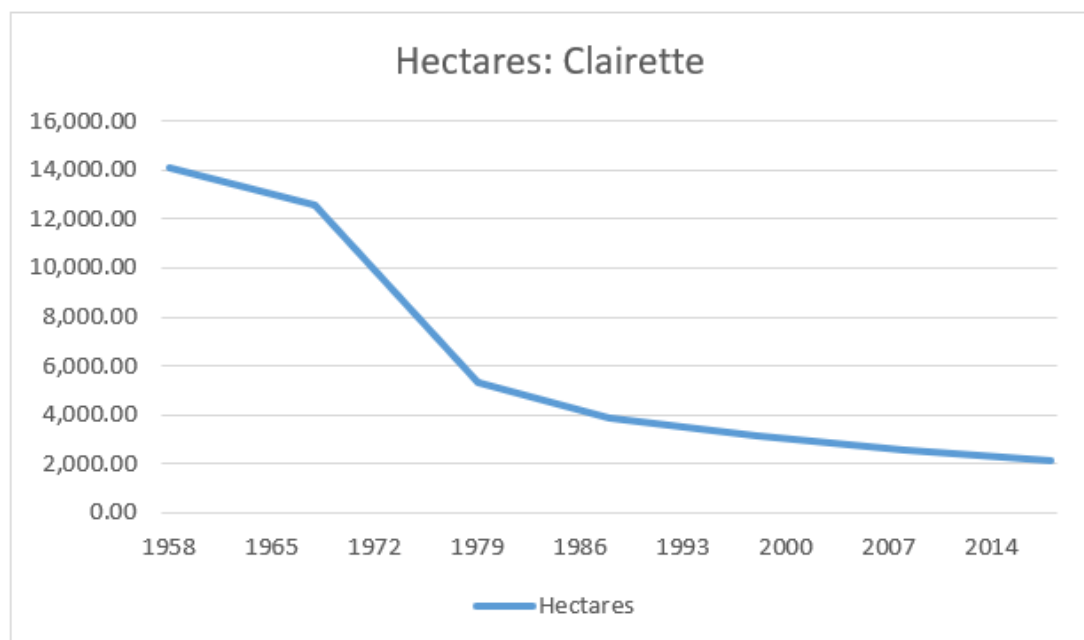
The locations are not surprising as the variety is suitable for warm climates and is likely to be increasingly attractive as temperatures soar in these regions. It is also able to withstand strong winds.

Curiously, the sparkling wines of this the Clairette de Die appellation can only contain a maximum of 25% of Clairette, the rest being necessarily Muscat à Petits Grains, so this seems to be a bit of a misnomer. However, the INAO established the appellation Clairette de Die in 1942.

There is also, in the Gard near Nîmes, the Clairette de Bellegarde appellation which is dedicated to the variety, but which has shrunk to a mere 8 hectares, so one wonders about its durability.

Clairette is also second most popular of the noble white wines of Chateauneuf-du-Pape. The Clairette produces the lively, lemony, fruity flavour whereas the Roussanne and Bourboulenc provide complexity, longevity and length.

From the graph below it is clear that Clairette suffered a marked decline in the 1970s when the world was becoming excited about the potential of Chardonnay to the exclusion of all other white grapes! The rate of decline has slowed down as more and more producers are coming to appreciate the flavours and aromas of some of these rarer grape varieties.



Hectares in France, courtesy of Vitis International Variety Catalogue

As can be seen below, the leaves have a pronounced central lobe and then two clearly marked lobes on either side of the central lobe. The underside has fine white hairs which give a whitish appearance hence the name “clear”.

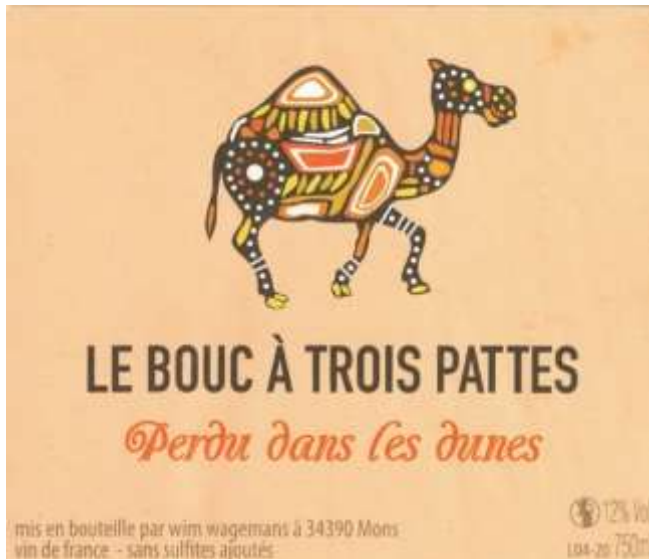


Photo courtesy of [Vitis International Variety Catalogue](#)

The grapes are reasonably loose in the bunches which is very good for allowing the air to circulate and thus reduce the likelihood of some of the fungal diseases such as powdery mildew occurring.



Photo courtesy of [foodtourist.com](#)



Perdu dans les Dunes, an orange wine from our supplier in the Languedoc, Wim Wagemans, is made from 100% Clairette and is an excellent example of the use of this grape variety. Unfortunately our allocation was 6 bottles! The wine is made from Clairette, which underwent carbonic maceration for a few days, before being pressed and bottled. It is a fresh just-macerated orange wine.

Axel Prüfer often has Clairette as a component of his delicious Le Temps des Cerises La Peur du Rouge to freshen up the Chardonnay that he uses, including in this current vintage. We actually have some of that right at the moment.

Another of our producers who likes this variety is Philippe Formentin from Opi d'Aqui who used it in one of the vintages of his appealing Orangeade.

It is also a grape variety that has cropped up occasionally in the négoce wines of Alice and Olivier de Moor when they have had to buy grapes from the south of France in years when the frosts have been unkind in Burgundy.

**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.