

WINE Talk: February 2024

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 120

Welcome to newsletter 120, the second WINE Talk Newsletter for 2024. We hope you continue to enjoy reading them. We certainly are continuing to enjoy writing them! We didn't quite get this out in February even with the extra available day but we're so close we thought we'd publish it as February's, especially because we hope there will be a March newsletter.

We have been able to put together 6 packs to offer in this newsletter, but some of these packs have only one or two available, so we expect them to sell out quickly.

The newsletter also has:

- Information about recent arrivals from the Mosse family (Chenin Blancs), l'Octavin and Julien & Carole's Derain 2022 Allez Goutons Blanc;
- A brief summary about wines that are arriving soon;
- A story about Alice Bouvot's back labels;
- Some information about the lack of visitor centres in French vineyards and why;
- A short introduction to enzymes in grapevines and their role;
- A story about the Braquet grape variety which is used for red wines in the local Nice appellation called Bellet.
- We have also written a brief story recommending four restaurants with natural wines that are worth visiting in Nice.

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 even just a budget and your style and region preferences. 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

A release of Mosse Chenin Blancs

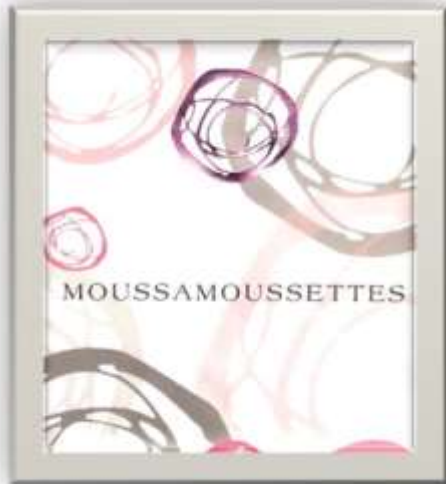
We have worked with the Mosse family for many years, importing their wines since the 2007 vintage. And it is still just as exciting a moment when we release some Mosse Chenin Blancs as it was when they first arrived. Of all the wines from the domaine it is the Chenin Blancs that that represent for us an unbroken line to its beginnings and it's a pleasure to make this small release just to highlight these wines.

René and Agnès began Domaine Mosse when they purchased 15 hectares in the Loire Valley, just south of Angers, in 1999. Their house and cellars were in Saint Lambert du Lattay and the vines in the communes of Saint-Lambert-du-Lattay, Beaulieu sur Layon and Savennières. Unsurprisingly, given the complex schist terroirs they acquired, Chenin Blanc was and continues to be its heart and soul.

In 2018 their sons Joseph and Sylvestre officially took over management of the estate. With the cellar literally a few steps from the house they grew up in Joseph and Sylvestre have known organic viticulture and minimal intervention winemaking all of their lives. It's under their fingernails and embedded in their skin. They may be young but they have had many years of experience, partly formal, and partly just by being there. It's partly from their own family's winemaking but they have also known some of France's most influential natural winemakers, like Thierry Puzelat, since they were born. As young adults Joseph also spent time with Bruno Duchêne and Yvon Métras and Sylvestre with Fred Cossard and Craig Hawkins.

With the new generation's tenure there have been some changes such as carbonic maceration of some of the joyful red Loire grapes to make lighter wines like Bisou, which is something René would not have done. They have also occasionally, in a bountiful vintage like 2020 (and with no restaurants open!), even experimented with the Chenin Blancs. Nova, which was an infusion of Chenin Blanc for 218 days from part of the harvest from the Bonnes Blanches parcel is one of our most adored wines ever from their cellars. And they now also regularly make a macerated Chenin Blanc cuvée called Overmars. More dramatically they have planted some Savagnin!

Joseph and Sylvestre have also extended the range of négoce wines, something which René and Agnès had been doing since the mid 2000s, particularly with their Moussamoussettes pet-nat, one of the first pétillant naturel wines imported to Australia (although not our first). It may come as a surprise to people who have drunk Moussamoussettes but you will not see the name Mosse on the bottle. It's a testament to the powerfulness of the design of their labels that the graphic elements are enough for people to realise it is a Mosse wine. (As an aside, we still have stocks of the 2022 vintage.)



While predominantly Loire wines, like Moussamoussettes and Bangarang, one négoce wine, Goldeneye, has even been made with Grüner Veltliner from Austria and Loin de l’Oeil from South West France.

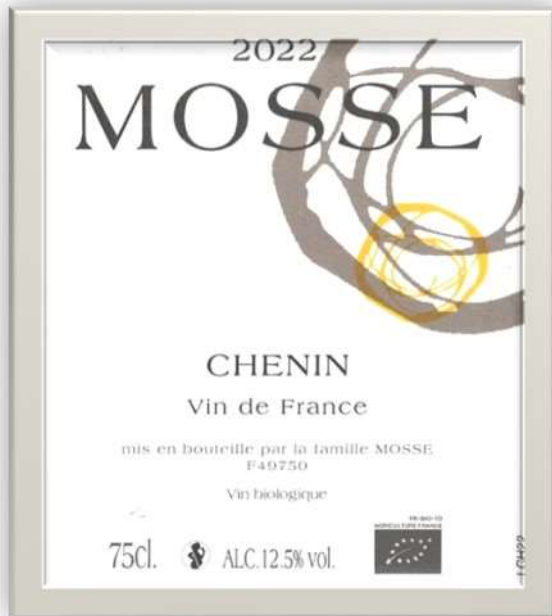
The négoce wines are made in the name of a company called SARL 4B2F. We’d always wondered what the name 4B2F meant, and always forgotten to ask. We finally learnt recently that it is an abbreviation for ‘4 Belgians, 2 French’ because the business was a partnership between Agnès and René and four Belgian friends. That will change soon as all the wines will begin to come under an umbrella “La Famille Mosse”. We’ll be pleased to see the family’s name on wines like Moussamoussettes which are so integral to their story.

There are more physical changes to come. A few years ago René and Agnès sold their house in Saint-Lambert-du-Lattay and moved to a property in the country about five kilometres to the north-west. While the wines are still being made in the original cellars the plan from the beginning was to move the cellar to the new property too. It has taken time to put the plan into action but soon some abandoned farm outbuildings will be redeveloped and become a purpose-built cellar for the next generation of wines.

These Chenin Blancs we are releasing today though are estate wines and represent the next step in a lineage which René and Agnès began. They are part of the entire history of the estate and we feel René’s DNA in them.

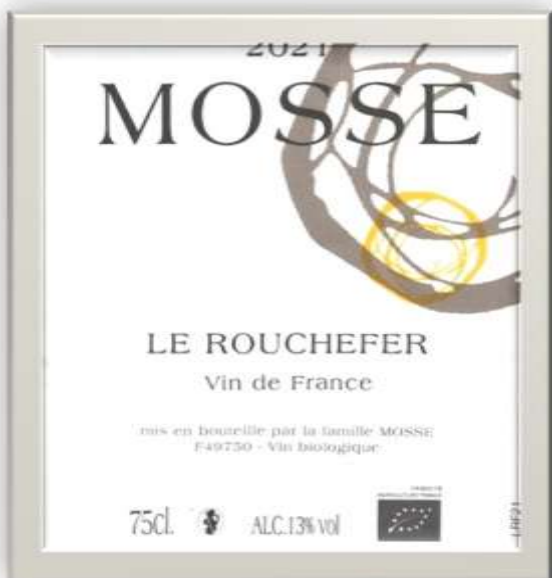
Unlike the négoce wines, the family name is front and centre for all these wines. Here is the next explication of the Mosse family’s story.

Mosse Chenin 2022



From four plots of young vines planted by René and Agnès between 2000 and 2002 in Saint-Lambert-du-Lattay and Beaulieu sur Layon. The soils are clay with gravel and schist. The grapes were slowly pressed in a pneumatic press then aged for 6 months in stainless steel tanks on fine lees. This wine is fresh and ideal to be drunk young. 12.5%ABV. \$63

Mosse Le Rouchefer 2021

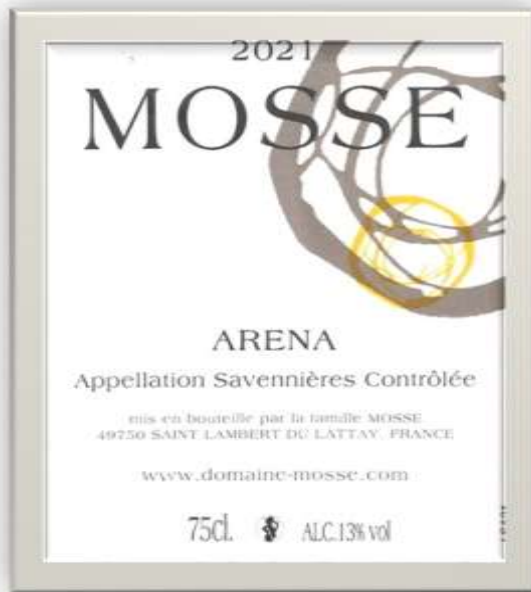


The parcel Le Rouchefer is clay and quartz soil on schist. Planted initially in 1976, the vines are now 47 years old. They have been farmed organically since René and Agnès purchased them in 1999. This vintage the wine has been treated slightly differently from in the past. After pressing,

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the juice was placed in two 25hl foudres. One contained only juice. The other contained 10% destemmed grapes and 90% juice. After 6 months the juice from both foudres was assembled prior to subsequent bottling. The Mosse family's notes are "ample and generous, balanced by a vibrant minerality, the light maceration gives it structure". They recommend aging it for up to 15 years. 13%ABV. \$84

Mosse Savennières Arena 2021



When we started working with the Mosses we would describe the Savennières planting as "younger vines" but, planted in 2004, they are now edging towards 20 years old and definitely well beyond youth and into their prime! The soil is Aeolian sand on schist. The wine was directly pressed and slowly fermented in younger barrels. It was bottled without filtration. The Mosse family's observations are that it was made with very ripe Chenins which express themselves with finesse in this fresh vintage and that it shows the bitterness and complexity characteristic of Savennières. \$104. Very limited.

Note we also had a small quantity of Bonnes Blanches but these wines sold out prior to the publication of this latest newsletter. However, there are a few bottles reserved for the first pack in this newsletter (the new arrivals pack). Bonnes Blanches is a parcel on the left bank of the River Layon. The soil is silt on an outcrop of schist with small white, pebbles, which are called 'bonnes blanches'. The grapes were directly pressed then the juice settled for 36 hours. Fermentation began in tank before the wine was transferred to old barrels to finish. It was aged for 10 months on lees without stirring. There was no filtration. This complex wine, with intense mineral characteristics, is made to drink with food, maybe roast poultry or a complex crustacean dish. It deserves a special meal and it will also reward aging. This has been released under the appellation Anjou for the first time in some years. We don't know why they have returned it to the appellation from Vin de France but will be keen to talk to Joseph and Sylvestre about this decision when we next see them.

We also still have a number of other Mosse wines on the list including Bisou and a good supply of 2022 Moussamoussettes.

Derain 2022 Allez Goutons Blanc

We've had this wine since May last year but when it arrived it was 'oily', a problem which is becoming increasingly common. We saw the same issue with the 2020 Mosse Chenin Blanc and 2021 Magic of Juju both of which eventually, once the oiliness vanished, have been wonderful wines. Like those wines it's incredibly frustrating to taste them during this troublesome period – all the flavour and complexity if there in spades but the texture makes it undrinkable. You keep tasting and then suddenly it's fine!

Like those wines Allez Goutons is made to be drunk as a young wine. We're sure Dominique Derain invented this cuvée (which originally was only made with Aligoté, but which is now also a red cuvée made with Pinot Noir) to ensure he had a new wine in bottle ready to share at the winter Loire Valley natural wine salons such as Les Pénitentes where he, and now newish owners Julien Altaber and his partner Carole Schwab, have shown wines. Even the name which you could translate as "Come on, let's taste" has a sense of urgency about it – and is something which has teased us every time we walked past it in our warehouse because we have had to be so patient with this vintage. This 2022 vintage was apparently fine early in 2023 but by the time it arrived in Australia the dreaded oiliness had arrived. Julien and Carole couldn't test it because they had long sold out of their stock. We've tried it several times since May and finally, when we last tasted it a couple of weeks ago, it's ready.

Directly pressed and briefly aged in stainless steel it is bottled as soon as fermentation is complete. It has plenty of citrus, is very fresh and energetic, and offers the sensation that Burgundy's clay and limestone have somehow made it into the bottle, something we're sure many years of biodynamic viticulture has facilitated. It's also low in alcohol, at only 11% ABV. Ironically it is a perfect summer wine so we're not particularly disappointed to be releasing it much later than we had planned! \$64

New L'Octavin wines

These wines are not officially released on our website and to our wholesale customers – we will be doing that this week too – but we wanted to put a pack in this newsletter so thought we would publish their details now. You are welcome to order if you would like to.

As often happens with a release from Alice Bouvot, there are many cuvées and something of a Tour de France in terms of the regions she harvests.

In this release there are some estate wines as well some of her négoce wines. Because there are so many, we have made a summary, with notes about each wine, in the table which follows.

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Wine	Region	Type	Variety	Price	Notes
l'Octavin Cariboum 2021	Provence	Red	Carignan, Grenache	\$73	Made with grapes from Claude Ughetto's biodynamically-certified vineyards in Saint Pierre de Vassol. Whole bunches of Grenache were covered with the juice of directly-pressed Carignan. It was pressed then bottled in May 2022.
l'Octavin Sylvaner 2021	Alsace	Macerated	Sylvaner	\$73	We don't have a lot of information about the vinification of this wine but can say that the certified organic grapes were sourced from Alsace vigneron Guillaume Clauss (from Vins Edel Clauss), whose vineyards are to the west of Strasbourg. It is sufficiently macerated to have detectable tannins but with a soft, aromatic beginning and mineral finish. The colour is distinctly orange.
l'Octavin Joker 2021	Savoie	Macerated	Jacquère	\$73	This wine is made with Jacquère grown by Nathalie Montagnon from Le Mas des Abymes in Chapareillan. It has the freshness we've come to expect from wines Alice sources from the hinterland of the colossal French Alps.
l'Octavin La Cigogne Green 2021	Alsace	Macerated	Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris	\$73	A blend of equal parts Gewurztraminer and Pinot Gris, the grapes are sourced from Domaine Marc Humbrecht in Alsace. The vines are certified biodynamic. Whole bunches were macerated for four weeks prior to pressing.
l'Octavin Le Roi de Cepage 2021	Alsace	Macerated	Riesling	\$73	The grapes were sourced from Jerome Meyer and form a parcel in conversion to organic viticulture. She described it to us as directly pressed grapes but it drinks as a macerated wine so the press must have been very slow. it was bottled in April 2023.
l'Octavin Hip Hip J Chardonnay (macerated) 2020	Jura	Macerated	Chardonnay	\$103 (2 max)	We already have a cuvee with this same name but this small additional release of grapes from the same place (the leu dit La Mailloche, where Alice also has vines) and vintage but has had a slightly different treatment. The grapes were destemmed and then macerated in glass for eight months before pressing and bottling in September 2021.

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Wine	Region	Type	Variety	Price	Notes
l'Octavin P'titt Pousot 2021	Jura	White	Chardonnay	\$112 (2 max)	This is an estate wine from the parcel "en Pousot". The grapes were directly pressed and fermented and aged in tank. It was bottled in June 2022.
l'Octavin Mus'cat 2022	Roussillon	Macerated	Muscat d'Alexandrie	\$73	Harvested from Vincent Lafage's certified organic vines in Roussillon, the whole bunches had 4 days of maceration. It was bottled in May 2023.
l'Octavin Ganache 2022	Provence	Red	Grenache	\$78	Made with grapes from Claude Ughetto's biodynamically-certified vineyards in Saint Pierre de Vassol. For 75% of the cuvée whole bunches were macerated for one month. 25% was infused in juice for one week. It was bottled in June 2023.
l'Octavin Hip Hip J Pousard / Trousseau / Gamay 2018	Jura	Red	Pousard, Trousseau, Gamay	\$83	We don't know a lot about this wine except that we know that at least the majority of the grapes were sourced from Arbois from the vigneron who provides the certified organic grapes for the other Hip Hip wines. It's predominantly Pousard and Trousseau with a little Gamay. It's possible the small amount of Gamay was sourced elsewhere. The characteristics are similar to the 100% Pousard from the same vintage we had in 2021 and 2022. It's light but obviously unfiltered with a touch of volatile acidity balanced by red fruits, especially pomegranate.
l'Octavin Elle Aime 2021	Jura	Red	Pinot Noir, Chardonnay	\$112 (2 max)	This is an estate wine from the parcel "En Arces". It is 75% Pinot Noir and 25% Chardonnay. The whole bunches were infused in pressed juice for two months prior to pressing. It was bottled in June 2022.
l'Octavin Dorabella 2021	Jura	Red	Pousard	\$112 (2 max)	This is an estate wine from the parcel "En Curon". It is 100% Pousard. The destemmed grapes were macerated for six weeks. It was bottled in May 2022. It's a red wine but in the lightest and most delicate of ways, as only Pousard can deliver.

What's coming

We'll have some new Derain and Altaber wines later in March. Most are from the 2022 vintage and all we can do is quote Alice Feiring's most recent newsletter where, talking about the most recent Les Pénitentes salon in the Loire earlier this year she said "Highlights? Julien Altaber. Every damned cuvee in 2022. Brilliant." We'll also be allocating some Michel Gahier Jura wines, predominantly Trousseaus, Chardonnay and the beguiling La Fauquette made with Melon-le-Queue-Rouge. We probably already have most requests for an allocation but it's not too late to ask if you would like some. We are also waiting for wines Jean-Pierre Robinot and Fanny Sabre to arrive after an unusual and lengthier than usual journey via the Panama Canal.

And the last of the news is that, totally unexpectedly, we will receive mid-year, a small pallet with one wine on it – Dominique Belluard's 2019 Vin de Savoie Ayze Mont Blanc Brut Nature. We did not realise that a 2019 vintage of this glorious sparkling wine, a Méthode Traditionnelle, made from Gringet with no dosage, existed and are especially delighted that new owner Vincent Ruiz decided to hold it for an extra year before release. The 2019 Les Perles du Mont-Blanc was an extraordinary wine. We can only imagine, setting aside its emotional story, how special this sparkling wine from the same vintage but even more chiselled terroir and with no dosage is going to be.

Shipping information

For customers we are currently shipping to via Anonymous Wines we almost have a full pallet for shipping early this week. So it's likely most orders from this newsletter won't be shipped for a couple of weeks at least. For interstate customers in eastern states not serviced by Anonymous Wines we are holding reservations at the moment until the weather is cooler. This includes Canberra and many country locations. For Perth customers we have just sent a pallet so it will be a little while before we can ship any orders and it's still too hot to risk a general courier like we sometimes do mid winter.

Pack 1: New Mosse and Derain Releases (15% Discount)

Note: 3 Packs Only!



This pack is comprised of recent releases from Carole and Julien of Sextant and Domaine Derain and also the Mosse family. Remember that Julien and Carole both used to work for Dominique Derain and eventually bought his business as well as maintaining their own Sextant operation.

The Allez Goutons is their wonderful, lively and energetic Aligoté still wine – a wine that shows just how exciting this grape variety can be in the right hands.

From the Mosse family we have some of their signature 100% Chenin Blanc wines that are always in great demand and these will be no exception to that rule. The Mosse Chenin Blancs became famous through the painstaking work that Rene and Agnes Mosse carried out in their vineyards over many years to ensure that the vines and the soil were healthy.

They became well-known for the purity and quality of the Chenin Blanc wines that clearly reflect the different terroirs from which they are made, including their beloved Bonnes Blanches vineyard, the La Rouchefer vineyard and the Savennières Arena vineyard.

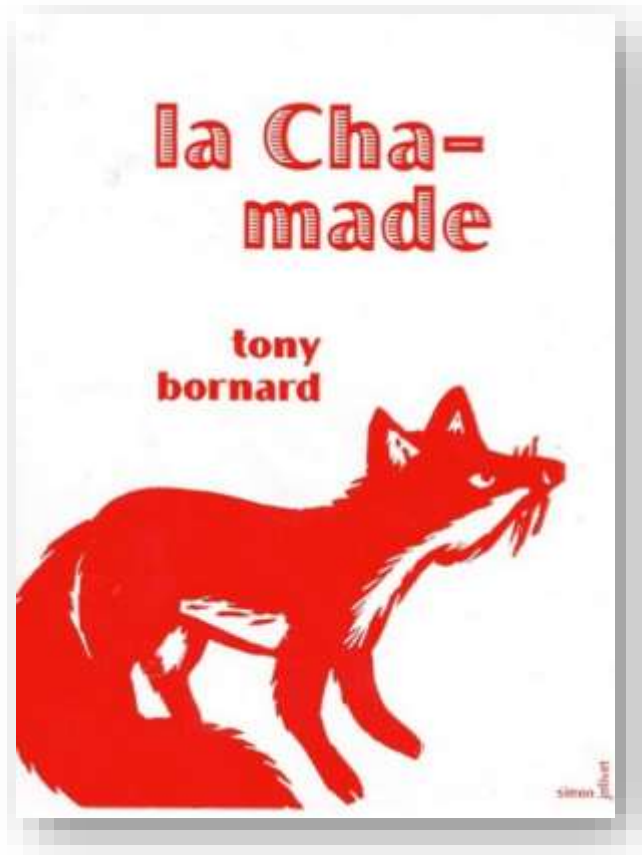
This is a very exciting selection.

- Domaine Derain Allez Goutons Blanc 2022 **(2 bottles)**
- Mosse Chenin 2022
- Mosse Anjou Les Bonnes Blanches 2021
- Mosse Le Rouchefer 2021
- Mosse Savennières Arena 2021

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$468.00 but the pack price is only \$397.80. Check with us for the subsidised summer freight charge to your location.

Pack 2: Things Left Behind or Damaged Pack (approx 19% discount)

Note: 1 Pack Only



The Mataburro wines in this pack are from our most recent allocation, a couple of wines left behind after everything was finalised. Memo is lightly-macerated Macabeu and Totem is the only true red wine Laurent Roger makes, a blend of Mourvèdre and Grenache. The 2018 Mosse Bangarang is a bit of a lucky dip. It's a wine that's made to be drunk young but somehow this bottle evaded being sold when we had the wines advertised. It had lots of energy in its youth and we suspect that's probably been retained.

The last three bottles have all been damaged in some way and are more heavily discounted. They were all victims of boxes that dropped last year by a courier and returned to us because one bottle broke and the remaining bottles sustained peripheral damage. They all have stained labels – nothing too dramatic – and the wax seal on the Bornard Le Pinot's wax has been cracked. All this happened well before summer and warm weather hit so at no time were they exposed to excessive heat.

Julien Altaber's Ecume 2022 is a quite complex pet-nat made with aligoté and pinot noir. It's one of our preferred aperitifs. The Bornard Le Pinot is from the vineyard Tony Bornard bought a few years ago when he was a separate entity from his father's estate. It's right under the famous Pupillin sign. La Chamade is one of the classic Bornard cuvées created by Philippe from the estate's earliest years. Both of these wines are aged in old wood.

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- Mataburro Memo 2022
- Mataburro Totem 2022
- Mosse Bangarang 2018
- Sextant - Julien Altaber Ecume 2022
- Domaine Bornard Le Pinot Noir 2018
- Domaine Bornard Ploussard La Chamade 2020

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$381.00 but the pack price is only \$308.50. Check with us for the subsidised summer freight charge to your location.

Pack 3: Octavin New Arrivals (15% discount)

Note: 4 Packs Only



We have just released a big collection of new l'Octavin wines (12 cuvées) and have selected six of them to make up a pack.

As always with Alice Bouvot's wines, selecting several bottles gives you a kaleidoscope of flavours, textures and aromas.

The pack has two estate wines from the 2021 vintage. P'tit Poussot is a white wine made with Chardonnay from the parcel "en Poussot". Elle Aime is made Pinot Noir (75%) and Chardonnay (25%) with from the parcel "En Arces". Whole bunches were infused in pressed juice for two months prior to pressing. Both wines were bottled in June 2022.

The four wines from her négoce include one Jura wine (from the Hip Hip range it's a blend of Ploussard and Trousseau with a tiny amount of Gamay). The others, all also from the 2021 vintage, are Cariboum (juicy Carignan and Grenache from Provence), Joker (macerated Jacquère from the Savoie) and Le Roi de Cepage (macerated Riesling from Alsace).

- l'Octavin Cariboum 2021
- l'Octavin Le Roi de Cepage 2021
- l'Octavin Joker 2021
- l'Octavin P'titt Poussot 2021
- l'Octavin Elle Aime 2021
- l'Octavin Hip Hip J Ploussard / Trousseau 2018

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$526.00 but the pack price is only \$447.10. Check with us for the subsidised summer freight charge to your location.

Pack 4: More Things Left Behind or Damaged (15% Discount)

Note: 1 Pack Only



This is another pack with wines that somehow got left behind or, in the case of the Guignier rosé, have had their label damaged as a result of being in a box with a bottle that broke.

The discounts are variable. It's 20% for the Guignier with the damaged label and also the Carême Ancestrale which is also looking a little worse for wear and may be past its best – it's another lucky dip. Served chilled it should still be delicious though. It's 10% for the allocation-only Mataburro, Robinot and Bornard wines and 15% for the Mosse Chenin which was left behind and which would normally have a 15% discount in a pack.

It's also quite a mixed bag – five different types of wine. There is one white (the Mosse Chenin Blanc which is still drinking beautifully), one macerated white wine (Mataburro Memo, which is macerated Macabeu), one red (Tony Bornard's Pinot Noir), Michel Guignier's seductive rosé, made with Beaujolais Gamay, and two sparkling pet-nats made with Chenin Blanc.

- Mosse Chenin 2020
- Mataburro Memo 2022
- Vincent Carême AOC Vouvray Ancestrale 2014
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Fêtebulles 2018
- Tony Bornard Le Pinot Noir 2015
- Michel Guignier Mystère de Rosée 2021

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$319.00 but the pack price is only \$274.25. Check with us for the subsidised summer freight charge to your location.

Pack 5: Two Things Left Behind and Some Current Wines (Approx 14% Discount)

Note: 1 Pack Only



The first wine in this pack is one of Dominique Derain's rare Pinot Noirs made in Chile after he retired and sold his vineyards to Carole and Julien from Sextant.

Next we have the lovely sparkling pet nat from Jean-Pierre Robinot which is always very popular (a blend of Chenin Blanc and Pineau d'aunis) as is the time-honoured Gamay Sans Tra La La also from the Loire Valley, which, like the rest of the wines in the pack, is from our current stock.

From the wilds of the Languedoc comes a Syrah red from Wim Wagemans who makes beautiful red and white wines that just keep getting better all the time.

We have also included a bottle of Alice's wonderful Ivre de Vivre. For this cuvée, Vermentino was pressed directly, while Roussanne and Marsanne were macerated for 10 days as whole clusters. After fermentation was complete the juice from each was joined together.

And the lovely Bisou from the Mosse brothers is a light wine perfect for late summer drinking.

- Dominique Derain Las Nubes 2019 (Chile)
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Années Folles 2018
- Domaine de la Garrelière Gamay Sans Tra La La 2022
- Le Bouc à Trois Pattes Vin de France 2021
- l'Octavin Ivre de Vivre 2021
- Mosse Bisou 2022

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$351.00 but the pack price is only \$300.90. Check with us for the subsidised summer freight charge to your location.

Pack 6: Summer's Last Hurrah Shades of Pink Pack (Approx 16% Discount)

Note: 2 Packs Only



All these wines are shades of pink – variously classifiable as rosés, light reds or even ‘very light reds’. The Guignier rosé is discounted by 20% because the labels are stained as a result of another bottle in a box they were in being broken. The others are our standard 15% pack discount.

They are all quite different. The l'Octavin Grenabar, made from Vermentino and Carignan, is quite ethereal – a wine it feels you should drink with tiny, mythical creatures at the bottom of a flower-filled verdant garden. Bisou, from the Mosse family, is a highly gulpable light red made with classic Loire Valley fun red grapes, so we thought two bottles would be helpful and the Noah, a blend of Grenache and Syrah, which was aged in foudre for a year, is very gastronomic. It's officially a rosé, lifted by its acidity, but with enough depth from the combination of the grapes and the vinification to make it well-suited to eat with some serious food. It would be really good with any sort of spicy pork-based dish.

- Michel Guignier Mystère de Rosée 2021
- Mosse Bisou 2022 **(2 bottles)**
- l'Octavin Grenabar 2021
- Milan Noah Rosé 2020 **(2 bottles)**

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$362.00 but the pack price is only \$304.90. Check with us for the subsidised summer freight charge to your location.

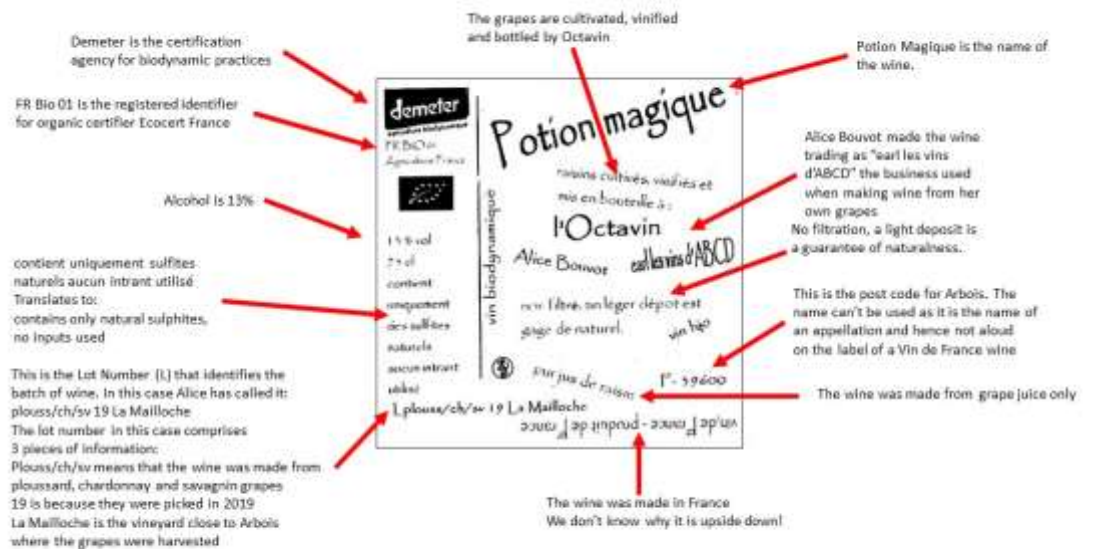
Back Labels – Contra Etiquettes

The back labels on French wine bottles can be quite informative at times so we always examine them minutely to ensure that when we write about the wines on our web site, the words we write accord with the information from the producer via the back labels.

The back labels in French are “contre-etiquettes” and we thought it might be useful to explain some of the informative examples from Alice Bouvot from Octavin. Her front labels are very colourful and her back labels are packed with information. We’ve described her back labels before, but with a big new shipment of Alice’s wines being released, it seemed a good time to revisit it.

We have used two quite different back labels below. The first is for a wine she made using grapes of her own from the La Mailloche vineyard which is quite close to her winery just outside the town of Arbois. The second one is from a wine she made from grapes bought from a friend of hers in Alsace. You will note that it is a requirement in France that when making wine with purchased grapes then a different business is used – called a négoce.

The first one is the back label for her wine made from the Jura red wine varieties that she calls Potion Magique.

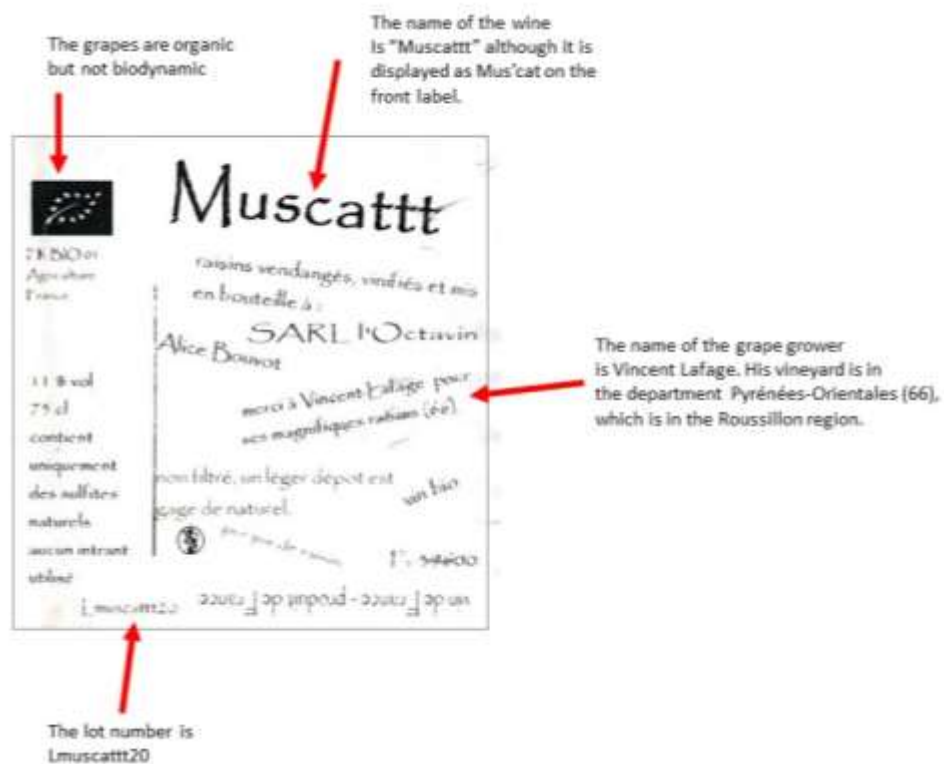


We will not repeat all the text on the second label, we will just highlight the things that are different.

This wine was made from grapes purchased from Jérôme Meyer in Alsace, therefore Alice has used a different business name (SAS l'Octavin) which is the business she uses for all her “négoce” wines.



Notice that Alice uses exactly the same words on this label for how the grapes were picked and turned into wine “raisins vendanges, vinifiés et mis en bouteille á SAS l’Octavin”. This says that operating as her négoce business (SAS l’Octavin) Alice drove to Alsace in her van, picked the grapes herself, loaded them into her vehicle, drove back to her winery in Arbois and then pressed the grapes, fermented the wine, matured it in her vessels and bottled the resultant wine. She does this for each of the grape growers from whom she purchases grapes.



In the label above Alice also thanks Vincent for his magnificent grapes “magnifique raisins”.

Vineyard visits in France

One of the most common questions we are asked is for us to smooth the way for visits to our producers in France.

Here in Australia, wine lovers have a huge number of vineyards that are set up for visitors right throughout the country. Even here in little old Tasmania there are literally dozens of vineyards that open on most days of the week and many weeks of the year.

And that is because there is an expectation that vineyards are a place where you can both taste and buy wine, and this leads to vineyard owners either carrying out this task themselves or hiring somebody to do odd jobs and to sell wine and tell stories when visitors drop in.

There are four important things to remember about vineyard visits in Australia:

- Generally there is a visitors' centre;
- Someone will be there to greet any visitors who turn up;
- The winery will have wines to taste and stories to tell;
- The winery will have wines to sell.

Well, what about France? The answer is that it varies. There are many large wineries that do have visitor centres especially in Bordeaux and Burgundy. And they have plenty of wine to sell to visitors. The problem for us is that we don't want to drink most of these wines because they are usually mass produced and have been sprayed with damaging and toxic substances.

When it comes to our producers, out of the dozens that we work with only one has a visitors' centre which is open as a matter of course. Domaine Milan in the picturesque St Remy de Provence does have a visitor facility and will provide a tasting in English if requested.

The reasons it's only possible to visit one are many:

- Most don't have a designated visitors' centre;
- Usually there would be no one available to talk to visitors because the owners are working in the vineyards or cellars, often late into the night, and they don't employ additional staff for tastings or other types of marketing activities;
- There is very little wine available to taste – we are extremely conscious of that when we visit with our producers just what a commitment it is to open a bottle or dip into a barrel;
- There is very little or no wine for sale because mostly it is allocated;

Even when we travel to France, when we contact our winemakers, we ask them if they have a tasting with other importers or sellers of their wine around the time that we are planning to visit them and then adjust our itinerary accordingly to reduce the number of times they have to be interrupted. Unfortunately it also means that it's not possible to ask them to organise tastings for other people.

Enzymes and grapevines

In recent newsletters we have discussed the complex processes that occur in plants including grapevines to manufacture the sugar needed to provide energy for the plant in order to grow. We also discussed the role played by plants in extracting carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and converting it to oxygen during the photosynthesis process and expelling it so that we can breathe.

But this is only part of the story. Photosynthesis can provide energy to the plant by creating sugars that can then be broken down into energy by the plant. But building the cells for the plant and other processes that are required for growth is the domain of tiny molecules called enzymes (we use them too!).

Enzymes are easy to understand as they are simply protein molecules and they are found in all living organisms whether they are simple plants like grasses, complex plants like grapevines, tiny creatures like bacteria or more complex creatures like cats, dogs and humans.

Enzymes are used in nearly all processes including chemical reactions that occur in plants and animals. They are also used in mundane activities such as cleaning and health-related activities such as purifying our blood.

Here are some enzymes that help with plant growth including, of course, grapevines.

Enzymes help in conditioning the soil in vineyards including releasing nitrogen in the soil so that it is available for the grapevines to absorb.

Some key enzymes that are particularly beneficial in vineyards are amylase, lipase, cellulase, phosphatase, urease, phytase and chitinases. Some of these enzymes are created by bacterial activity in the soil and others by chemical reactions.

Of course, it is possible to buy enzymes commercially and add them – but that is just as bad as buying yeasts and using commercial yeasts for fermentation as it completely overrides the terroir in which the grapevines developed and took on their vital characteristics.

What are some of the most important enzymes and what do they help develop.

Amylase

Amylases are widely found in soil and are essential for a range of activities. Amylases break down complex polysaccharides like starch into simpler forms of sugar or glucose that are readily absorbed by the plants and help them to grow by providing energy.

Amylases also help humans break down the starch we ingest from many foods and convert it to energy that we use for all our activities. Starches are a key part of many of the foods we eat including potatoes, bread, rice, pasta, and cereals, for example.

Phosphatase

The phosphatase enzymes hydrolyze organic phosphorus compounds to inorganic phosphorus compounds. The latter is essential for enriching phosphorus in soils that lead to better fertility.

Phosphatase can work in a broad range of pH and temperature and work both in acidic and alkaline soils. These enzymes are crucial for the metabolism of phosphate in tissues.

Lipase

Lipases are enzymes that break down lipids and fats, animal or vegetable sources into simpler forms making it easier for plants to absorb them. They also assist in the seed germination process by hydrolysing the triacylglycerols into fatty acids. These fatty acids are in turn converted to simple sugars that provide the nascent plant embryo with sufficient nutrition.

Phytase

Phytase enzymes hydrolyze phytic acid into inorganic usable phosphorus. It also releases soluble zinc, iron and other nutrients beneficial to plant life like Myo-inositol, Myo-inositol phosphate, and inorganic monophosphate.

Urease

Urease is considered a very important enzyme for plant nutrition. It hydrolyzes urea into carbon dioxide and ammonia, both of which are essential for plant nutrition.

Cellulase

Cellulase hydrolyzes cellulose present in the form of crop residue into simpler forms and sugars that are readily absorbed by the soil. Cellulose is abundantly found in the soil and its breakdown provides the much-needed nutrients to the soil.

Chitinases

Chitinases have a whole other way of working as enzymes for plant growth along with promoting plant growth. These enzymes work on fungus species that are detrimental to plant health. These enzymes destroy the fungus and protect the host plant from attack by breaking down the fungal cell wall made of chitin.

Conclusion

In future newsletters we will explain in more detail how enzymes work at a molecular level to show more clearly how they help the grapevines grow. We will also explain why we are concerned about climate change because each of these enzymes which are vital for plant growth react to increasing temperatures and a “denatured by” temperature in the 40 – 47 degrees Centigrade range, meaning they no longer carry out their intended functions.

This is one of the reasons why we have a Sahara Desert, an Atacama Desert and a Simpson Desert. The average temperature in these areas is often above 50 degrees C and therefore the enzymes in plants become denatured thus meaning that the plants cannot grow.

Grape variety - Braquet Noir

Normally when we write about a grape variety it is because we import a wine made from that grape. The same normally applies to an appellation, although many of our winemakers either have left the appellation process or only submit a limited number of their wines to the appellation authorities. Traditionally many customers in France would order a wine based entirely on its appellation but with natural wines people, especially customers in export markets, are much more interested in who made the wine and which grape variety it is made from.

This month we are going to talk about a city, their main grape variety and the appellation that provides the rules for wines made in the area.

The city is Nice on the southern coast of France, quite close to the Italian border and Monaco. We often visit this lovely city as the restaurants and bars here are some of the best outside Paris and Marseille (see story below).

It is also of interest to wine tragics, as there is an appellation actually within the city boundaries. The appellation is called Bellet and was created on the 11th November, 1941 and caters for red, white and rosé wines.

The main red grape is our grape of the month and is called Braquet or Brachet. There is a second main red grape called Fuella Noir (also called Folle Noir) and these two are supported by two other varieties (Cinsault and Grenache Noir) that are better known in areas such as the Languedoc.

The rules about how much of the principal varieties and how much of the supporting varieties are allowed are an interesting example of how the French communicate rules and regulations, particularly the logic involved. We saw above that there are four grape varieties permitted – 2 principal and two supporting.

In the Cahier des Charges which is the official set of rules, the red wines must conform to the following:

COULEUR DES VINS	REGLES DE PROPORTION A L'EXPLOITATION
Vins rouges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- La proportion des cépages principaux est supérieure ou égale à 60 % de l'encépagement ;- La proportion du cépage cinsaut N est inférieure ou égale à 15 % de l'encépagement.

This says that the principal grape varieties (Braquet and Fuella Noir¹) must together comprise 60% or more of the mix for the wine. In addition, supporting variety Cinsault must comprise 15%

or less (inférieure ou égale à 15%). There is no mention in this section regarding how much Grenache is allowed/required.

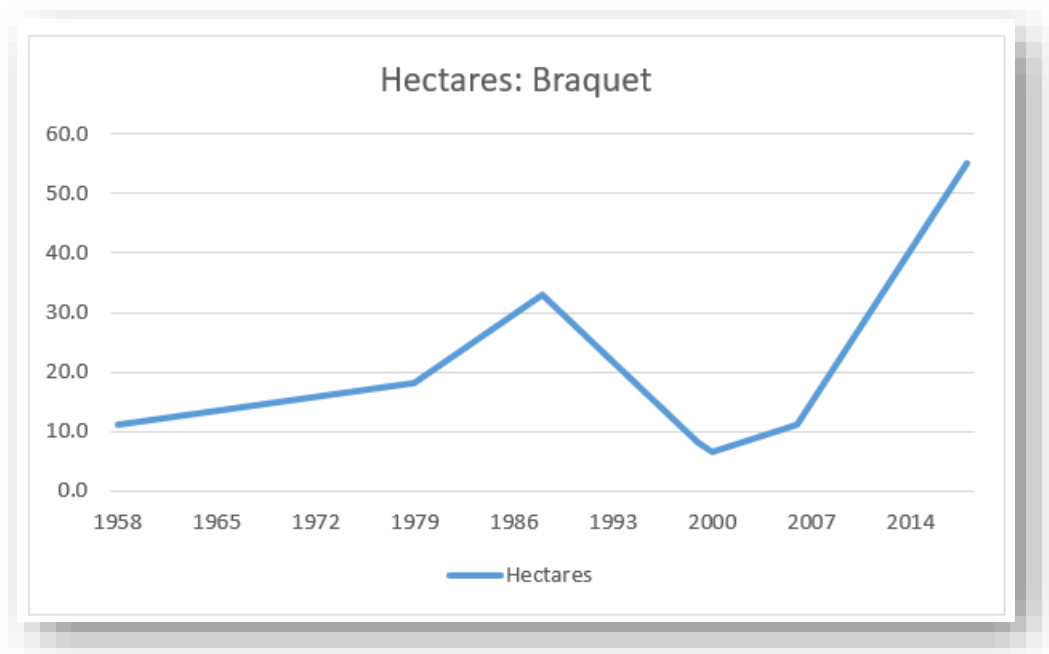
And now to the logic. The first rule allows the wine to comprise 100% of the principal varieties as it states “supérieure ou égale” (greater than or equal). This can be combined or either one.

However, let us say that a winemaker decided to use 40% of Braquet and 35% of Fuella Noir, the remainder cannot be made up entirely of Cinsault because the maximum must not be greater than 15%.

However, the difference could be made up entirely of Grenache as there is no limit except for the implied limit of 40% if the winemaker chooses to use the minimum of the principal varieties.

Braquet, being the main grape for red wines in the Bellet appellation, has undergone a decline as the suburbs of Nice expanded and then a resurgence as it was realised how valuable the vineyards and wines were in gaining tourism revenue for the city.

Here is a graph of the rise, fall and rise of the area given over to Braquet – all of it in Nice.



Notice that the area planted to Braquet has increased significantly, but from a very low base.



The above photo shows the structure of the Braquet leaves with their deep sinuses and serrated edges.



As you can see from the grape bunch shown above, the bunches are fairly tight thus making them susceptible to diseases as the wind cannot penetrate the bunch to keep out rusts and funguses such as powdery mildew and downy mildew.

We also found a drawing of the Braquet grapes in a book by P Viala and V Vermorel, called *Ampélographie* from 1903 (page 237) which also clearly depicts the tight bunches formed by this grape variety as shown below.



Eating and drinking in Nice

Having talked about the wines of Nice, we thought we would share with you some of our favourite places to eat and drink if you visit. You may struggle to find natural Braquet though!

First a hint. If you are obsessed with food experiences it is a good idea to locate a book written by the former (corrupt) mayor of Nice Jacques Médecin who wrote a (very) polemical book about Niçoise cuisine in which he decried what has become of one of the famous dishes of Nice, Nicoise salad. In this book he despairs of what it has become and in strong terms makes it clear what should be used and what should not be.

However, there is one restaurant in particular which is true to the dictums in Médecin's book and where the Niçoise dishes are extraordinary. One of our favourite restaurants in the world and in the very centre of Nice, tiny **La Merenda** also has some strict rules of its own. You can book, but only on Instagram direct message or by walking in – there is no phone. It is cash only. There is a blackboard menu with dishes that will sound familiar to anyone who has read Médecin's book such as Pissaladière, Tripes Nicoise, and if you are lucky, the dessert will be the famous local dish of La Tourte de Blette which is a dessert of Swiss Chard (silver beet) made as a pie.

You can read more about this restaurant on our foodtourist Web site where we also have photos of many of the dishes we enjoy so much there:

<https://foodtourist.com/la-merenda-authentic-cuisine-nicoise/>

Another venue that we have enjoyed very much which has now moved to a new location and expanded into two separate venues is **Pure & V** run by renowned sommelier, Vanessa Massé. This is a more serious venue with exceptional, refined dishes and an extraordinary wine list. Vanessa is very well connected to some of France's greatest natural wine makers, many of whose wines are hard to find elsewhere.

<https://www.pureandvrestaurant.com/>

There is another place in town that we return to often due to their careful selection of produce from organic suppliers and their fish selection which is always fresh and delicious. This is a centrally-located venue called **Le Canon**. They have an extensive selection of wines which you can peruse in their walk-in wine room or ask the owner to choose something for you – he is very obliging. If you remember wines you have enjoyed more by their labels than by their names this is a great place to visit.

<http://www.lecanon.fr>

And finally, there is an excellent wine bar that has been part of the natural wine scene since the very early days called **Les Parts des Anges**.

It has a bounteous menu of snacks and larger dishes and a very strong wine selection. It is a great place just to drop in for a glass of wine or to settle in for an evening exploring their wine treasures.

<https://lapartdesanges-nice.com/>

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.