

WINE Talk: July 2025

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 135

Welcome to newsletter 135 for July, the seventh WINE Talk Newsletter for 2025, even though we are a few days late again. We thought about renaming to be the August newsletter, which would have instantly meant we were actually early, but we want to try to still squeeze in an August newsletter later this month to take advantage of the cooler weather before it ends in many parts of Australia. We hope you continue to enjoy reading them. We certainly are continuing to enjoy writing them!

We have been able to put together **8** 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 packs include one we have resurrected from our own archives and two more from our “over-chilled” wine supply.

The newsletter also has:

- Details about the new Cadette arrivals from the Montanet family in northern Burgundy;
- Information about new areas covered by Anonymous deliveries;
- A brief description of the wines that are about to arrive soon;
- More French wine terms explained, this time terms relating to autolysis;
- Part 2 of a 3-part story about the process of autolysis which adds structure and flavour to wines and is a compulsory process for making Champagne;
- The Gamay d’Auvergne grape variety.

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.

Expansion of Anonymous Wines Delivery Range



Our lives have become much easier since we started doing most of our shipping with Anonymous Wines. It especially makes a difference in the warmer months when we can't trust the wine to general courier services because of the risk of it getting too hot.

Initially, when we started working with Anonymous Wines, it was just for deliveries just during those warmer months to Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane and the Gold Coast and Byron Bay area.

However, a couple of years ago we made the decision to stick with them for these routes year-round. They have virtually no breakages because all their freight is fragile and is treated as such and they are also very good to deal with. It's easy, for example, to add last minute instructions if something changes, and know that they will be implemented.

So, we're delighted that they have recently expanded their deliveries to include the **Sunshine Coast** in Queensland and **McLaren Vale** and the **Barossa Valley** in South Australia. These are all regions we normally only can ship to for a few months of the year so it's exciting to be able to now offer a year-round service.

New Arrivals

Cadette wines from the Montanet family

We have just released a small shipment of five wines made by Valentin Montanet. The Montanet family's wines include La Cadette (made with grapes from their estate vines, Montanet-Thoden (also from their own estate vines but the ownership is slightly different, hence the different name) and La Soeur Cadette (usually (including in this case) négoce wines.

Domaine de la Cadette, which was begun by Valentin's parents Jean and Catherine, released its first estate wines in 2004. Originally a physics teacher Jean initially made his wine in the local co-op, which had been frequented by US wine importer Kermit Lynch. When Kermit Lynch arrived and Jean was no longer there, he located the Montanets, tried the 2004 wines, and became their first substantial customer (a very promising way to begin!). Soon after the wines found a market in Paris at places like Le Baratin and Yves Camdeborde's neobistros. According to Valentin, most of their future importers first tried their wines in these iconic Paris restaurants and the rest is history. That is our story too. We first drank a Domaine de la Cadette Melon de Bourgogne at Le Chateaubriand (we think in 2010) and that is what led us to approach them to import their wines. We're delighted to have the 2023 Melon in this shipment. In fact it's the main reason we ordered when we did.

Based in the north of Burgundy in the Yonne department but now also with the négoce cuvées, including Pinot Noir from the Côte de Beaune and the Yonne, Chardonnay from Mâcon and Gamay from the Beaujolais, these wines have always been our most affordable Burgundy cuvées and even with rising prices caused by increases in the price of the wines and significant increases in shipping costs they are still relatively affordable.

We also think there's a small step up in the quality of the white wines particularly with the 2023 wines, with Valentin Montanet's decision not to filter them (the reds have never been filtered). The result is quite striking with the wines exhibiting much more energy. The filtering was always very gentle and light but even so it's easy to see now what it took away.

The wines from La Cadette, La Soeur Cadette and Montanet-Thoden have small additions of sulphites, usually after both alcoholic and malolactic fermentation is complete with another addition at bottling (although there is a slight diminishment to this approach in 2024).

These are the wines we released. The 2023 vintages of the two estate wines we have here are the last we will see for some time as the 2024 harvest was so bad for the estate that they made no wine. It was, says Valentin, a very sad and difficult time, because thanks to losses from frost and then catastrophic mildew attack, the grapes were not good enough to make wine with. Fortunately, in 2016 he made the decision to seriously ramp up the négoce production and it is only because of that there will be any wines from 2024. The only cuvées we are expecting, as well as more 2023 Melon, are a La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Blanc and Bourgogne Rouge.

Unfortunately, everything we have just released is sold out but there will be good supplies in most of our regular retail outlets in the coming weeks plus we have three different packs made up from these wines available in the newsletter. (And, so far, 2025 is looking like a wonderful vintage so hopefully all the regular estate cuvées will return from 2027.)

La Cadette Vézelay La Châtelaine 2023 is an estate wine, aged predominantly in tank but 20% in old barrels and a part in foudre, all on lees for 8-10 months.) The wine is a blend of grapes from different estate vineyards around Saint-Père, selected for the light, shallow clay / limestone soil. The vines are between 25 and 30 years old. The vineyards are oriented from south-east to south-west. From the relatively new Chardonnay-only Vézelay appellation, for the first time it has been bottled without filtration. Such as been the demand for this vintage of La Châtelaine that this is our third shipment. Certified organic. 13.5% ABV.

La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Blanc 2023 is a négoce wine made with Chardonnay sourced from the same Mâcon grower as it has been for many years. The vines are in the communes of Uchizy and Peronne, in the Saône et Loire department. The soil is stony clay and limestone and the orientation is south and south-west. The vines are approximately 55 years old. It was predominantly aged in stainless steel tanks on its lees, as has been most typical for the Montanet family's white wines. However, some of the later bottlings came from wine racked to foudre in order to keep the foudre full once its initial wine (La Châtelaine) was bottled. The wine has not been filtered. 13.5% ABV.

La Soeur Cadette Melon 2023 is made from Melon de Bourgogne vines in the Yonne department. It usually includes both négoce and estate Melon de Bourgogne. (Even in years where there is enough of their own harvest to make this wine in recent years they have always bottled it as La Soeur Cadette. Typically though it is 30% estate and 70% négoce. (When we started working with them there was an estate only cuvée as well.) The vines are approximately 30 years old. The grapes are directly pressed then aged for an extended period on their lees prior to bottling in January 2025. This is a longer aging than usual and it is reflected in the development of the wine. It may be the best we have ever had from them. Certified organic 12.5% ABV.

La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Rouge 2023 is a négoce wine. It is made with Pinot Noir from Volnay and Vézelay, from vineyards with light, stony red clay soil. The vines are approximately 45 years old. Whole clusters were macerated with occasional punching down of the tank and then after lightly pressing it was aged in barrels and tanks. 12.5% ABV.

La Cadette Bourgogne Rouge Champs Cadet 2023 is an estate wine, made with a vineyard in the commune of Asquins in the Yonne Department. During the maceration the grapes (some destemmed and some whole bunch) had occasional punch downs. The free-run juice is run off and then, after pressing, the free run and press juice are blended prior to maturation in old oak barrels for almost 10 months prior to bottling without filtration. The soil is clay and limestone and very stony, and it has a southerly and south-easterly aspect. The vines are 25-30 years old. Certified organic. 13.5% ABV.

A few spare bottles of Robinot Wines

This section is a bit of a moving target but we do have a few spare bottles of Robinot wines left over from our recent allocations. It's not really enough to justify putting them on the website, although perhaps we might eventually, and because we're still waiting for a couple of responses to allocation offers the quantity could change but we're mentioning it in here in case you are interested in topping up what you have already ordered or would like a bottle or two.

These wines, like all our wines, attract a 10% discount if ordered as part of a 6-pack. We are also happy to accumulate orders for people who take a while to get to 6 bottles but would like the 10% discount. We have a few customers who order in batches of 1 or 2 bottles. We invoice them as if the wines were part of a 6 pack (i.e. with the 10% discount) and they pay as they accumulate their order. Once they get to 6 bottles which triggers the shipment we add any freight charge with the final invoice. You're welcome to ask about that as a way to order. There's no time limit on such accumulations provided each invoice is paid promptly.

At the moment, bearing in mind it is a moving target, we have:

Chenin Blanc:

1 bottle of Lumière de Silex 2022 (\$97)

3 bottles of Bistrologie 2022 (\$97)

Pineau d'Aunis

5 bottles of Regard 2022 (\$97)

5 bottles of Lumière des Sens 2022 (\$97)

5 bottles of Nocturne 2022 (\$124)

There is a detailed description of these wines in last month's newsletter.

What's Coming (in brief)

We're about to start allocating Alice and Olivier de Moor's new wines so if you requested an offer, you should have an email from us soon. There will of course also be a few packs which feature these wines in the next newsletter.



We'll also advertise La Petite Empreinte, the domaine of the de Moors' son Romain and his partner Mélissa Bazin (photographed above), during August. There will be La Petite Empreinte wines in packs too.

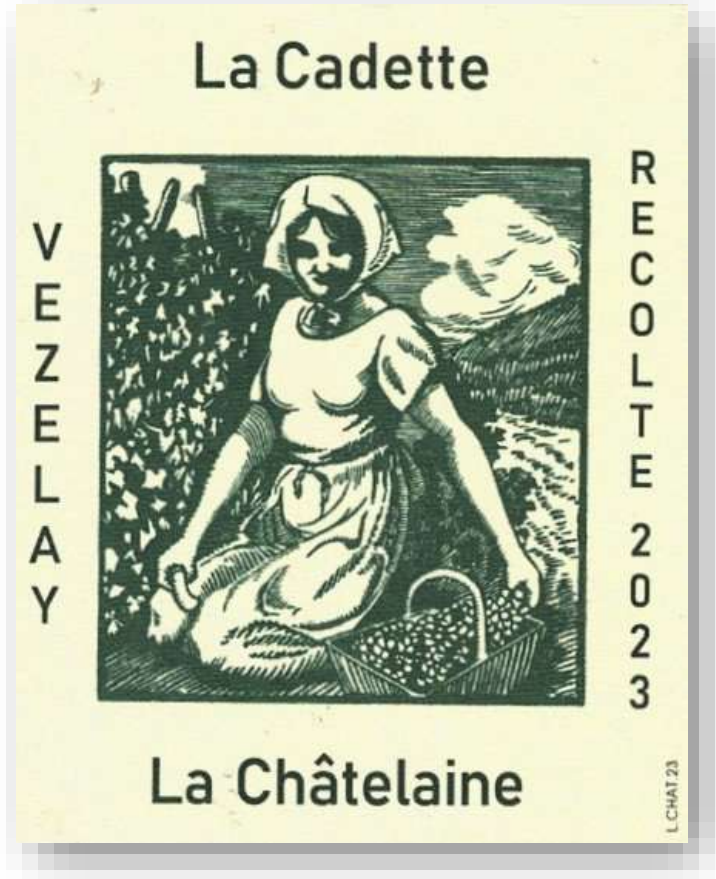
Following that we will be releasing 4 vintages of Mito Inoue's wines and offering by allocation the 2024 Mataburro wines. This won't be until September now.



Then in time for summer we will have a big shipment from the Mosses. It will include the 2024 vintages of Bangarang, Bisou, Moussamoussettes and Magic of Juju, all with spectacular new labels, and some new wines including **la Pirie**, an estate wine which is a blend of Cabernet Franc and Grolleau, and **Nakatomi**, which is a completely unexpected Brut Nature made from Colombard. There is a new white Vermouth and our first shipment of the Cabernet Franc cuvée for a while.

Pack 1 – Mixed Recently-Arrived Cadette Wines

(15% Discount - 2 Packs Only)



This pack has two bottles of La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Blanc 2023 and one bottle of each of the other recently-arrived wines. There are four whites and two reds.

There is a detailed description of all the wines, which are no longer available to buy individually, in the New Arrivals section of the newsletter above.

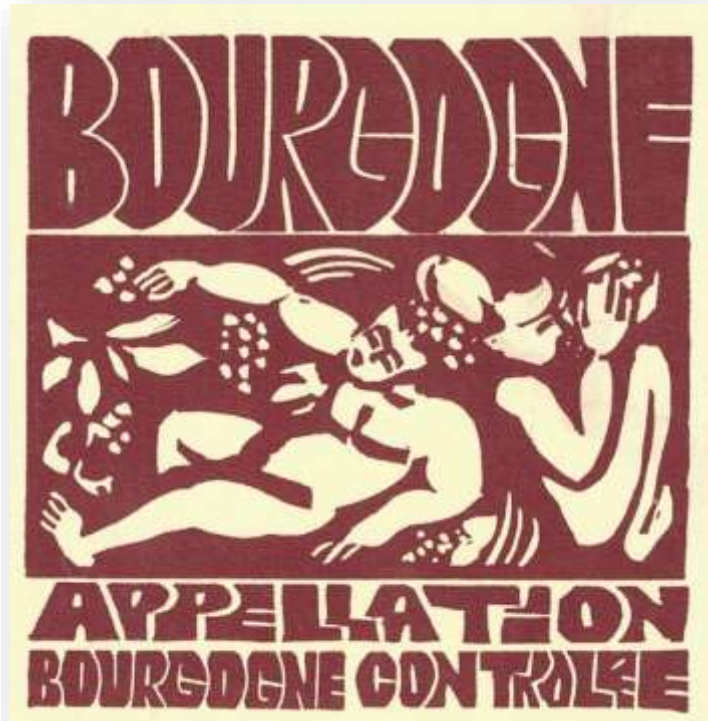
These are the wines:

- **La Cadette Vézelay La Châtelaine 2023**
- **La Soeur Cadette Melon 2023**
- **La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Blanc 2023 (2 bottles)**
- **La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Rouge 2023**
- **La Cadette Bourgogne Rouge Champs Cadet 2023**

The RRP for this selection of **6** bottles is \$382 but the pack price is only **\$324.70**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 2: New Cadette Reds

(15% Discount - 1 Pack Only)



This pack has three bottles of each of the two new red wines from the Montanet family. Both are Pinot Noir. La Cadette Bourgogne Rouge Champs Cadet 2023 is an estate wine from the north of Burgundy. La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Rouge 2023 is a négoce wine with grapes sourced from around Volnay, Mercurey and Vézelay.

There is a detailed description of all the wines, which are no longer available to buy individually, in the New Arrivals section of the newsletter.

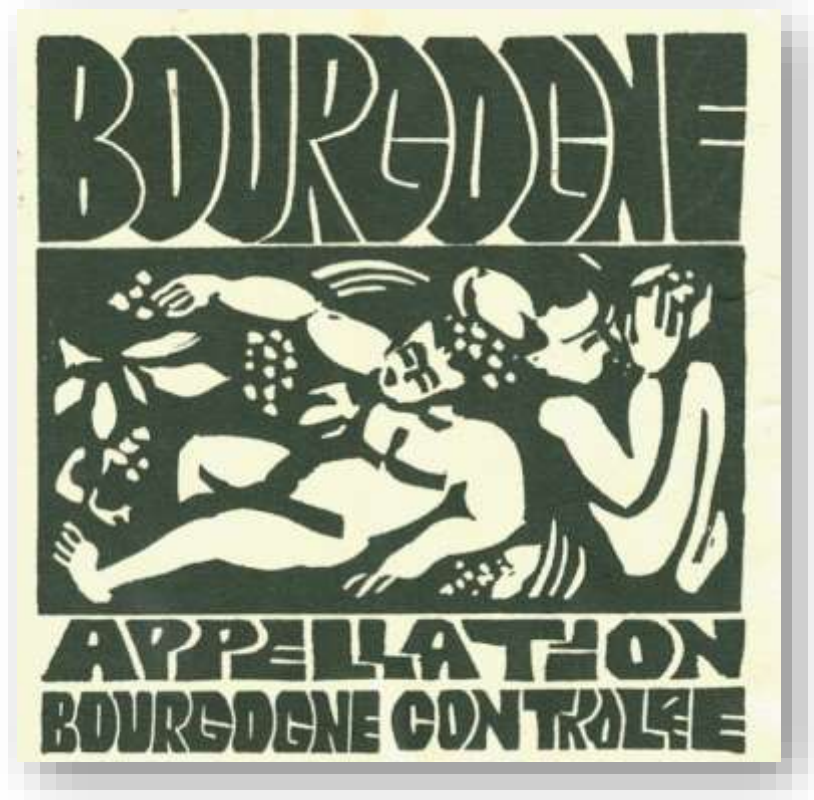
The wines are:

- **La Cadette Bourgogne Rouge Champs Cadet 2023 (3 bottles)**
- **La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Rouge 2023 (3 bottles)**

The price for this selection of **6** bottles is \$423 but with the 15% discount it becomes **\$359.55**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 3: – New Cadette Whites

(15% Discount - 1 Pack Only)



You can find descriptions of each of these wines in the New arrivals story earlier in this newsletter. These are no longer available to buy individually.

These are the wines:

- **La Cadette Vézelay La Châtelaine 2023 (2 bottles)**
- **La Soeur Cadette Melon 2023 (2 bottles)**
- **La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Blanc 2023 (2 bottles)**

The price for this selection of **6** bottles is \$366 but the pack price is only **\$311.10**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 4: Overly-Chilled Wines including a Bornard Vin Jaune Pack

(20% Discount – 1 Pack Only)



We told a long story about these wines, which travelled to Perth at too low a temperature, in last month's newsletter. It's available on our website if you didn't read it and would like to. In summary, after experimenting with several bottles at a little wine party at Hobart's Scholé we decided they were most likely all ok (everything we tasted was). We want to sell the wines directly though and with a 20% discount so that whoever drinks them knows the risk and the story.

If we had to predict anything though it's that the bottle of Bornard Vin Jaune in this pack will be perfect. Vin Jaune has years in a barrel without any protection and should have withstood this shock without any issues.

The other wines include a Geschickt Crémant d'Alsace (a blend of Pinot Blanc and Pinot Auxerrois) and two bottles of Sextant Aligoté, both wines we tried at the party, and both of

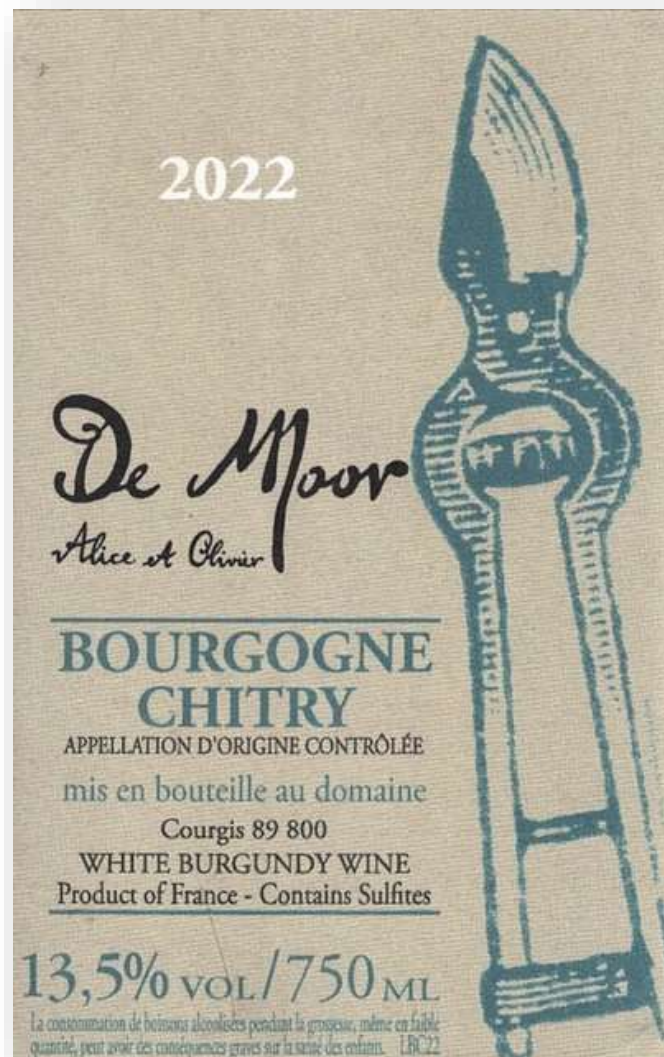
which were tasting great. The final two are a macerated Chenin Blanc from the Mosses (Overmars 2022) and an Alsace Pinot Noir, also from Geschickt.

This is the list:

- **Domaine Bornard Savagnin Arbois Pupillin Vin Jaune 2015**
- **Sextant - Julien Altaber Bourgogne Aligoté 2022 (2 bottles)**
- **Geschickt Vin d'Alsace Pinot Noir 2022**
- **Mosse Overmars 2022**
- **Geschickt Crémant d'Alsace Brut Nature 2019**

The price for this selection of 6 bottles is \$549 but the pack price is only **\$439.20**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 5: Overly-chilled wines including some de Moor Pack
(20% Discount - 1 Pack Only)



This pack is also from the overly-chilled collection. It includes two of our allocation-only wines made by Alice and Olivier de Moor. Their 2022 Chitry is an estate wine and the Le Vendangeur Masqué Bourgogne Blanc 2022 is also theirs but a négoce wine from grapes they purchase from another grower (Le Vendangeur Masqué translates as the Masked Harvester). The grapes for this négoce cuvée are from two different sources. Half is from Vaux près Auxerre, which is where it has come from every other year, and the other half is from a young grower in Mâcon from a vineyard that it is its third year of conversion to organic. Because of that the wine was not certified organic for this vintage. Both wines are 100% Chardonnay.

The other wines include 2 bottles of each of Geschickt Crémant d'Alsace Brut Nature 2019 (a blend of Pinot Blanc and Pinot Auxerrois) and 2 bottles of Sextant - Julien Altaber Bourgogne Aligoté 2022. As mentioned in the description of the previous pack we sampled these wines at our little research wine party and both were tasting fine.

The wines are:

- Alice and Olivier de Moor Bourgogne Chitry 2022
- Sextant - Julien Altaber Bourgogne Aligoté 2022 (2 bottles)
- Geschickt Crémant d'Alsace Brut Nature 2019 (2 bottles)
- Le Vendangeur Masqué Bourgogne Blanc 2022

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$417 but the pack price is only **\$336.60**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 6: Cellar Pack

(Just over 14% Discount - 1 Pack Only)



Some of the wines in these packs, particularly Michel Gahier's Vin Jaune, the two Mosse wines (one is Cabernet Franc and the other Chenin Blanc from older vines from the Mosses' most beloved parcel Bonnes Blanches) and the Domaine Derain Bourgogne Rouge will handle the aging they have had in our cellar with ease.

Axel Prüfer's Lendemains Qui Chantent comes from what was a very beautiful vineyard of Grenache, one which, however, sadly no longer exists. There's a good chance it will also still be a delicious and joyful wine. We may have pushed things a bit by keeping Charles Dagand's 2016 Charpindo (which is predominantly Jura Chardonnay with a little direct press Pinot Noir) for this long but who knows? It may surprise. If you buy this pack, you will find out.

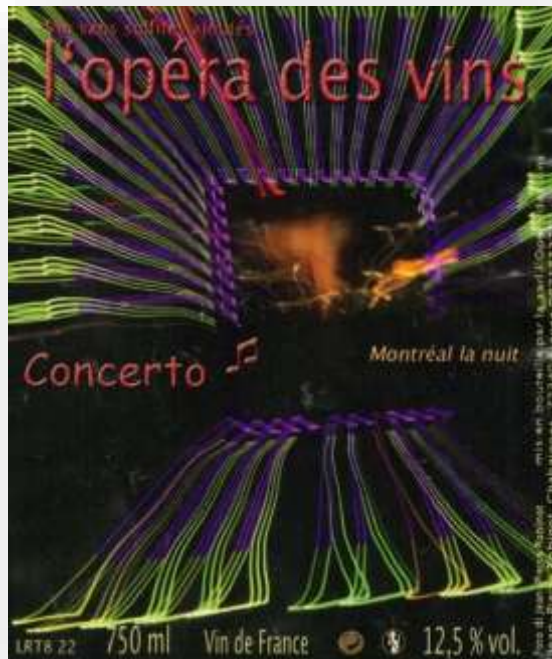
The wines are:

- **Mosse Cabernet Franc 2019**
- **Mosse Les Bonnes Blanches 2018**
- **Michel Gahier Arbois Vin Jaune 2009**
- **Domaine Derain Bourgogne Les Riaux 2019**
- **Charles Dagand Carlito Charpindo 2016**
- **Le Temps des Cerises Les Lendemains Qui Chantent 2019**

The RRP for this selection of **6** bottles is \$532 but the pack price is only **\$455.85**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 7: Robinot 3 Pack

(10% Discount – 2 Packs Only)



We have a few spare bottles of Robinot wines from our recent allocations, so we decided to create a couple of extra packs. These are three packs so a chance to acquire a pack without having to buy 6 bottles.

There are two bottles of Chenin Blanc. One is a négoce wine – the 2022 vintage of Lumière de Silex 2022. The grapes are from Chenin Blanc vines planted on schist in Anjou. Pressed directly then aged in barrel for just over a year prior to bottling it has purity and beautiful acidity which means it should age well.

The second Chenin Blanc is an estate wine, the 2020 vintage of l'Iris. This is a new bottling of this wine after spending 3 years in barrel. It is quite rich at 13.5% ABV but, despite the extended aging, still a touch of gas which provides a freshness that beautifully balances the acidity.

The third wine is a négoce Cabernet Franc, also from the same Anjou grower. The vines are approximately 30 years old. It is fresh, perfumed, fruit-forward, spicy, and energetic.

The wines are:

- **Jean-Pierre Robinot Lumière de Silex 2022**
- **Jean-Pierre Robinot Concerto 2022**
- **Jean-Pierre Robinot l'Iris 2020**

The RRP for this selection of **3** bottles is \$323 but the pack price is only **\$290.70**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 8: Things We Found Pack

(15% Discount – 1 Pack Only)



A trawl through all our allocation spreadsheets found a few bottles that had somehow become stranded or, in the case of the vinegar, is the last bottle of a previous shipment and we're keen to move on to the new one.

The end result is a pack with some very special wines. There's a 1er Cru Pinot Noir from Fanny Sabre (2019 vintage so with some age now), a bottle of her 2023 Bourgogne Blanc from a recent shipment, and, also from Burgundy, a bottle of La Cadette Vézelay La Châtelaine 2023. We received this three times and this bottle is somehow stranded from the second shipment.

There are two other very special wines – the 2022 vintage of Vincent Carême's single vineyard Vouvray Peu Morier, which arrived early this year and, almost from the archives, Jean Ginglinger's Vin d'Alsace Gewurztraminer Maceration Steiner 2019. This is a very powerful wine, which now it has some age, and should be a joy to drink. The grapes are from a vineyard in the limestone-rich Steinert Grand Cru, which lies above the village of Pfaffenheim.

The wines are:

- **Vincent Carême Vouvray Peu Morier 2022**
- **La Cadette Vézelay La Châtelaine 2023**
- **Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Blanc 2023**
- **La Guinelle Vinaigre de Banyuls 50 cl**
- **Jean Ginglinger Vin d'Alsace Gewurztraminer Maceration Steiner 2019**
- **Fanny Sabre Beaune 1er Cru Les Chouacheux Rouge 2021**

The RRP for this selection of **6** bottles is \$561 but the pack price is only **\$476.85**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

French wine terms

Here are some more French wine terms we accumulated this month. These terms are all related to the story we have written about autolysis which occurs through the agency of dead yeast forming lees at the bottom of a tank/barrel of ageing wine.

Bâtonnage

Stirring the lees. The French term can apply to any form of stirring, however when used in the context of winemaking it is always used to represent the stirring of the lees.

Soutirage

The French term for racking which is the process of moving wine from one container to another and, in the process, leaving either both fine and coarse lees behind or just the coarse lees if the winemaker wants autolysis to continue via the fine lees.

Dégorgement

The word in French for disgorging which is a stage in the Champagne vinification process (as well as for some sparkling wines) which involves forcing the expulsion of the concentrated yeast deposit present in the neck of the bottle under the effect of internal pressure.

Remuage

The word remuage is the French word for riddling where bottles (the process usually refers to Champagne) are placed in a rack slightly tilted. A riddler will then turn the bottle by either 1/8th or ¼ of a turn each day and increase the tilt slightly to ensure that gradually the fine lees in the bottle will gradually slide towards the neck of the bottle.

In Champagne the larger outfits often now use mechanical riddling machines.

Remueur

A human riddler – some of whom can riddle up to 35,000 bottles a day!

Pupitres

Pupitre is the term used for a riddling rack where the bottles are stored for riddling (remuage) as above.

Sur pointe

Sur pointe is a term to describe how the riddled bottles end up neck-down before disgorgement - . (It's also a term to describe ballet dancers dancing on the tips of their toes.

Velouté

A wine which has a velvety texture, often gained through extended autolysis.

The Magic of Autolysis – Part 2

In our June newsletter we introduced the concept of Autolysis and how it effects the flavour, texture and aroma of a wine. What we didn't do was talk about the actual chemicals that make these "improvements" in the wine. We also didn't talk about some of the later processes that occur as a result of extended periods on lees.

The key takeaway from the previous article was that autolysis occurs after the fermentation has finished with the dead yeasts falling to the bottom of the container. From here, enzymes from the lees, start breaking down the cells walls of the dead yeasts and either releasing chemicals that effect the characteristics of the wine or that combine with other chemicals to do the same.

As an aside, since writing the first part of the article we have discovered a paper published by E. Salkowski in 1889 which is the first time (we think) that the process of autolysis has appeared in scientific literature. The paper was entitled "Ueber Zuckerbildung und andere Fermentationen in der Hefe" which translated into English means "On sugar formation and other fermentations in yeast".

However, we should also mention that a writer in ancient Rome, the famous Marcus Porcius Cato writing in approximately 160 BCE did mention that leaving wine on its sediment produced a more interesting wine than one that was removed from its sediment. He was certainly on the right track!

Fine and Coarse lees

One complexity that we didn't address in the first part is the difference between coarse lees and fine lees. As we explained in the previous article, lees are mainly formed from yeasts which have carried out the fermentation process then falling to the bottom of the tank/barrel/quevri where the enzymes in the cells further break down the walls of the cells and release compounds into the wine.

The added complication is that winemakers generally refer to "coarse" or "gross" lees (usually bad) and "fine" lees (good). The gross lees are larger particles such as pieces of grape skins, grape seeds and pieces of the stems of grape bunches. Each of these contain chemicals that can have a negative impact on the quality of the wine. The gross lees can also increase the likelihood of reduction increasing in the wine.

We should add here that in the European Union there are formal regulations about what constitutes wine lees:

*"the residue that forms at the bottom of recipients containing wine, after fermentation, during storage or after authorized treatments, as well as the residue obtained following the filtration or centrifugation of this product."*¹

The regulations of the EEC also prevent the pressing of wine lees due to the fact that any wine produced by this process is likely to be harsh.

¹ EEC regulation n°337/79

Many of the bad effects of gross lees in the wine can be overcome by removing them through a process of racking out the larger pieces and also by performing bâtonnage – which is the process of stirring the lees to ensure that all parts of the precipitated lees come in contact with the wine.

Some winemakers do bâtonnage just before racking as the bâtonnage puts all size particles into suspension but the larger particles (gross lees) precipitate out quicker than the fine lees and hence will stay in the vessel when racking is carried out.

The device which is usually used for bâtonnage is shown in the photo below. As can be seen it is quite small bit is able to fit through the hole in the barrel and can reach the bottom of the barrel where the lees can be “scraped” into suspension.



Conditions for Autolysis

One of the areas we didn't get around to in Part 1 of this story are the conditions under which autolysis is carried out.

We were reminded by reading a paper by Hervé Alexandre and Michèle Guilloux-Benatier (2006) who listed the important conditions for autolysis as:

The principal factors that may affect autolysis are pH, temperature, the presence of ethanol and the nature of the yeast strain.

Other papers introduce other factors such as the bâtonnage mentioned above and the frequency with which it is done.

This gives us a list of factors effecting autolysis:

- The ambient temperature of the wine;
- The amount of fine lees in the container;
- The type of fine lees derived from the yeast strain;
- The frequency of stirring (bâtonnage);

- The alcoholic content of the wine.

In a paper by Feuillat et al (1982)² they monitored the amount of nitrogen released over time and found that the higher the temperature the more nitrogen was released in the form of amino acids and peptides, among others. As you will see in the next newsletter, these nitrogen compounds have a significant impact on the aroma, flavour and mouthfeel of the wine.

Molnar et al (1980)³ found that rate of autolysis was linear between 4C and 40C in acid conditions and that a 10 degree C increase in temperature led to a 6 to 7 percent increase in the rate of autolysis.

One paper that we read while researching this article examined the chemical processes in Champagne bottles over a five-year period. Their findings were interesting:

After the excretion of amino acids by yeasts at the end of the bottle fermentation the concentration of amino acids remains stable for several months. Then it begins to rise again slowly but continuously. This second phase of enrichment with amino acids corresponds to the autolysis of the yeast cells⁴.

This was the superficial discovery, but then they dug deeper:

Autolysis proceeds only if the wine is aged for several months in contact with the yeast. Indeed, the yeasts are the seat of intracellular proteolytic activity which causes the degradation of cytoplasmic constituents and the enrichment of the wine in amino acids. Autolysis has truly a great influence on the organoleptic properties of Champagne, particularly on its aromatic properties.

Let's look at this statement in more detail. It appears that the authors decided to throw every complex term at the reader in one paragraph!

- *"Autolysis proceeds only if the wine is aged for several months in contact with the yeast."* – this reinforces what we wrote about last month in the first part of this story. The fine lees need to be left for a long time in the wine to give the enzymes from within the yeast walls time to break down the yeast walls and release the chemicals inside the walls;
- *"the organoleptic properties of Champagne"* – these are the aspects of wine that an individual experiences via the senses—including taste, colour, aroma and texture;
- *"the yeasts are the seat of intracellular proteolytic activity"* – when the yeasts die, they sink to the bottom of the container where the enzymes in the yeast walls become active. The enzymes assist in the breakdown of proteins into smaller molecules which is a proteolytic activity.

² Feuillat M. and Charpentier C. (1982) Autolysis of yeasts in champagne. *Am. J. Enol. Vitic.*, 1, 6-13

³ Molnar I, et al, (1980) Determination of the autolysis of champagne yeast by using 14C-labelled yeast. *Acta Aliment.*, 4, 305-312.

- *“Causes the degradation of cytoplasmic constituents”* the degradation of the membrane surrounding each yeast cell is carried out by the enzymes mentioned above, which allows components within the cells to escape into the wine where they can combine with other chemicals.
- *The enrichment of the wine in amino acids* which Khalafyan et al (2023) ⁵say *“the composition of amino acids as the wine ages significantly influence its body, taste, and aromatic characteristics, especially evident in sparkling wine.”*

Now we have set the scene for what is happening during autolysis. We have explained fine lees and coarse lees, we have briefly mentioned bâtonnage and racking and how these can be used to keep the fine lees in contact with the wine while leaving the coarse lees behind by racking the wine to another container which will take the fine lees with it. But, more than anything, autolysis is a waiting game, as the longer the wait the more likely the wine will change for the better if everything has been carried out correctly.

We have also reached the point where the autolytic activity in the wine is creating chemicals which are effecting the aromas, the umami, the mouthfeel, the colour, the sweetness and the texture of the wine. In our third and last article on this topic next month we will discuss what chemicals are created in the wine and how these make changes to the wine.

⁵ Khalafyan, A (2023) *Multidimensional analysis of the interaction of volatile compounds and amino acids in the formation of sensory properties of natural wine*. Heliyon – Published by Elsevier.

Grape variety: Gamay d'Auvergne

This month we have decided to write about the Auvergne region and about one of the selected grape varieties from that region and why it is different.

First, we will discuss the Auvergne and then turn to the grape which dominates the wines in this region. We will also change slightly from our normal format for this section to concentrate more on what makes a grape variety different when it moves to markedly different terroir.

The Auvergne was an administrative region consisting of four départements namely Allier, Puy-de-Dôme, Cantal and Haute-Loire as can be seen in the two maps below. A



As part of major administrative changes which came into effect in January 2016, the Auvergne was merged to become part of a larger region called the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes. (The same changes created a new region called Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, which merged the Franche-Comté region with its neighbour Burgundy. They are not changes we feel are enthusiastically embraced by many of the people who live in these regions, with the old terms continuing to be used.)

The region is dominated by a large number of mountains (over 300 of them) which were once active volcanoes. These mountains are scattered around the capital city of the region Clermont-Ferrand which was once the centre of production of tyres by the famous Michelin company, and is still the company's base.

The terroir for grapes in this region is therefore dominated by volcanic rocks. There is some granite which is derived from volcanic larva which cools very slowly deep under the earth's crust. It also has lots of basalt which cools quickly near the surface of the earth and particularly when the magma spills out of the volcanoes and down the sides where it quickly cools.

Now we will consider how the Auvergne became a wine producing area and why it is dominated by the Gamay grape and why Gamay has a different name in this region.

In 1395, the Duke of Burgundy, Philippe the Bold, banned the cultivation of Gamay in Burgundy because he felt it was inferior to Pinot Noir, saying that Gamay wine was full "of a very great and horrible harshness."

He insisted that Gamay vines be destroyed and the space be used for Pinot Noir, declaring that it produced a more elegant wine in Burgundy.

However, outside Burgundy there were patches of Gamay which benefitted from other soil types of which Beaujolais was one and the volcanic soils of the Auvergne was another.

However, this is only the start of the complications as within the Gamay “family” there are a number of different types of Gamay.

We will briefly describe some of them. We have also included some varieties of Gamay mentioned in the book *Ampélographie Tome III* by Viala and Valmorel which they published in 1902.

- Gamay Noir á Jus Blanc, which is the main variety found in the Beaujolais and which has white juice but is turned red with contact with the red skin of the grapes;
- Gamay de Bouze which is a teinturier variety which means it has red juice even if it is pressed directly;
- Gamay de Chaudenay which is also a teinturier variety;
- Gamay Fréaux which is also a teinturier variety;
- Gamay d’Auvergne which thrives in the volcanic soils of the Auvergne and comprises 85% of the red wines produced in that region according to one account⁶;
- Petit Gamay Noir (Viala and Valmorel, 1902);
- Gamay Picard (Viala and Valmorel, 1902);
- Gamay Hatif des Vosges (E. et B. Salomon, 1901);
- Gamay Saint Romain which is championed by Domaine Pothiers and Domaine Sérol in the Côte Roannaise. It is a cross between Pinot Noir Précoce and Gouais Blanc.

We found more information about Gamay being planted in the Auvergne in the writings of Dr Jules Guyot⁷ in 1868 where he discussed Gamay d’Auvergne as a variety with “loose” bunches (unlike normal Gamay which has quite tight bunches) and late budburst.

There is also quite a strange departure in the formal Cahier des Charges document defining the rules for compliance with the Côtes de Auvergne AOC appellation.

In the definition of the allowable grapes for red wines Gamay (without qualification) is the only principal grape variety allowed, with the supporting grape variety being Pinot Noir. And, as can be seen in the extract from the rules shown below, the principal variety (Gamay) must comprise at least 50% of the total.

⁶ *Gamay en Auvergne : chronique d’un rouge volcanique devenu roi, 14/07/2025*

⁷ *Dr Jules Guyot who was born in 1807 and died in 1872 wrote extensively about the wines of France even though his training was as a medical doctor.*

V. - Encépagement

1°- Encépagement

- a) - Les vins blancs sont issus du seul cépage chardonnay B.
- b) - Les vins rouges et rosés sont issus des cépages suivants :
 - cépage principal : gamay N ;
 - cépage accessoire : pinot noir N.

2°- Règles de proportion à l'exploitation

- a) - La proportion du cépage principal est supérieure ou égale à 50 % de l'encépagement.

However, on page 7 of the same document they, unusually, refer to the Gamay d'Auvergne variety and also hark back to the words of Dr Guyot which we have referenced above:

This is the page 7 reference in the Cahier des Charges:

En abolissant les entraves à la circulation des vins, la Révolution permet à un très grand nombre de paysans d'accéder à la propriété et de cultiver la vigne. Ainsi, de 1789 à 1804, le nombre de petites propriétés est multiplié par quatre, et de 1789 à 1850 la surface plantée dans le département du Puy-de-Dôme passe de 21000 hectares à 34000 hectares. Le cépage gamay N s'impose dans l'encépagement en respectant les usages de taille. Le docteur J. GUYOT note en effet que « *Les vignes sont cultivées avec une intelligence* ». Une sélection du cépage gamay N, appelé « *gamay d'Auvergne* » aux grappes « lâches », et au débourrement tardif est identifiée.

The translation (albeit a bit rough) is shown below:

By abolishing barriers to the circulation of wine, the Revolution allowed a very large number of peasants to access property and cultivate vines. Thus, from 1789 to 1804, the number of small estates quadrupled, and from 1789 to 1850 the planted area in the Puy-de-Dôme department increased from 21,000 hectares to 34,000 hectares. The Gamay N grape variety became established in the vine planting, respecting pruning practices. Dr. J. Guyot noted that "The vines are cultivated with intelligence." A selection of the Gamay N⁸ grape variety, called "Gamay d'Auvergne," with "loose" bunches and late bud burst, was identified.

Victor Pulliat, a 19th-century French ampelographer, in descriptions of regional grape varieties, also noted "Gamay d'Auvergne" as a local variation of Gamay Noir à Jus Blanc adapted to the volcanic soils of Auvergne, particularly the soils around Boudes (Puy-de-Dôme), Saint-Pourçain (in the Allier department – see above), and Madargue (a small sub-appellation near Riom just north of Clermont-Ferrand).

⁸ N is the shortcut they use in the various Cahier des Charges documents to refer to the Black version of a grape variety. Thus Gamay N is the short version of Gamay Noir and Chardonnay R is the Rose version of Chardonnay and Aramon G is the Gris version of Aramon, for example.

So, we think it is fair to say that while Gamay d’Auvergne may not be considered by everyone as a separate variety, the effect of the volcanic soil in the Auvergne region probably does impart different flavours to the wines than those in Beaujolais.

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.