

WINE Talk: December 2025

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 140

Welcome to newsletter 140 for December 2025. We hope you continue to enjoy reading them. We certainly are continuing to enjoy writing them!

We have been able to put together **11 packs** to offer in this newsletter, but most of these packs have only one or two available, so we expect them to sell out quickly.

The newsletter also has:

- An Introduction which explains a bit about the packs in this edition of the Wine Talk newsletter;
- A story about the New Arrivals;
- A brief run-down on what is coming;
- 11 packs with many really interesting older wines available;
- Part 2 of our story about how grapes ripen;
- Some French wine terms explained;
- The Piquepoul Blanc grape variety explained.

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.

Introduction



In our last newsletter we wished everyone a joyful holiday expecting it to be the last newsletter for the year. But we hadn't missed a single month this year and we suddenly realised we had the opportunity to reach a goal we'd never achieved before ... 12 newsletters in 12 months. It was too tempting to ignore. So here it is, issue number 12 for 2025.

It is full of packs, also we think a record number. There are 11 packs littered with cellared treats. It takes some time to put these together – to reach the decision to part with them, to verify they exist and to document and to come up with the packs themselves, so it's rare for us to have time to get this many ready from one newsletter to the next. One advantage of not being able to do any shipping in the second part of December was the time to create these.

Quite a few of the packs are just three bottles, especially those with the older wines. While we only sell the older wines in packs we wanted to make as many as possible as affordable as possible. Most of the three bottle packs come with no discount and with no subsidised freight but they can be turned into our normal discount and subsidised freight by adding 3 more bottles

to them if you want. If not then, because these prices are our original prices, even without a discount they are very good value.

If you would like to order, please give us your preferences if you're thinking 'I'd like x but if I can't have it I'd like y'. We often have many requests for our packs, all of which we deal with in the order we receive them. If we reply to say a pack is not available and you reply with a request for an alternative by the time we read your reply it might be sold. If you give us a list of preferences we'll look at them in your requested order and hopefully, because there are so many this month, still have something.

New Arrivals

Le Temps des Cerises and Le Bouc à Trois Pattes

Axel Prufer, the owner of Le Temps des Cerises, was born and raised in East Germany but moved to France when young and began wine making, eventually buying his own vines in perhaps the wildest part of France where we work. Last year he celebrated 20 years of his estate.

North of Béziers in the Haut-Languedoc much of the area surrounding his vines is part of the Parc Naturel Régional du Haut-Languedoc. Many of his vines are on a gravelly wind-swept limestone plateau (or *causse*) well beyond the villages and towns. To arrive means driving along narrow roads, via chasms and gorges. There's a sense of freedom and escape, a little like the way Axel's life has evolved.

Axel works with the lightest of touches – several picks through the vineyard to ensure optimal ripeness, gentle carbonic macerations, minimal extraction and of course no additions, including no added sulphites. He also works with a curious mind, always willing to experiment and learn. Sometimes that can have unexpected consequences like the 2024 Avanti Popolo described here.

His friend Wim Wagemans who owns Le Bouc à Trois Pattes lives about 20 minutes away in a tiny almost-carless hamlet called Les Claps (an outpost of the village of Colombières sur Orb) which hugs a wild hillside and where the roads are lined with fairytale-like stone walls. Wim is Belgian and something of an enigma. He has a deep interest in fries and coffee but also has been making tiny quantities of wine in the Languedoc since 2009. He has the lowest of profiles. We only know of him because of his friendship with Axel. He produces such a small amount of wine he has no real need to attend wine salons and other events because of the volumes.

He has a small vineyard in Mons planted with some very old bush vines (classic Languedoc varieties like Carignan) which somehow he keeps alive – the vines are gnarled and hardly visible. When he loses one vine he replaces it. When he loses four or five together he plants a tree instead, mainly to add future shade in the vineyard to confront the intense summer heat. He has also planted young vines of Alicante Bouschet, Muscat Rose à Petits Grains, and hybrid varieties and recently added a small rented parcel of Chardonnay to his collection, making it about 2.5 hectares. His goal is for his intervention in his vineyards to involve not much more than mowing and was able, for example, in 2025 to get by with no need to spray with copper to combat mildew at all, quite a feat given how pervasive it has been in recent years.

Like Axel he does not follow a simple, straight forward path. As an example, just last month he posted on Instagram (translated) "The autumn coplantings continue. Last year I planted Aligoté

in my Chardonnay plot and Pinot Meunier in my little square of Alicante Bouschet. This year there are Syrah, Coliris and Sauvignac.” The last two are hybrids. It makes it hard to keep up with! His winemaking is experimental and intuitive, a bit like the harvesting. In 2024 he had to harvest a night with torches because there were so many hornets in the vineyard during the day it was not safe to venture there. Like Axel, he is a deep thinker and not in any way constrained by conventional thinking.

Speaking of Axel Prufer, of whom he has written on several occasions, Aaron Ayscough from *Not Drinking Poison* wrote:

If his methods remain ill-understood, it's because he's a questing tinkerer when it comes to winemaking, playing with under-ripeness as well as over-ripeness, long macerations as well as very short ones, involving direct-press wine and all manner of ripasso techniques.

We feel like “questing tinker” is a perfect description for both Axel and Wim.

We have a small number of wines from both of them. They are mostly reds and some are very rustic. For us, they have a strong sense of the wild places from where they come. We suggest you read the attached notes where we have tried to capture their spirit.

Le Temps des Cerises Avanti Popolo 2024

Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Alicante Bouschet, Grenache, Cinsault

Since Axel Prüfer added 7 hectares to his estate late in 2022, Avanti Popolo is now from his new vineyards. They are currently in conversion to organic and each year he adds a little more colour back into the label to signify progress in the vineyard. Once the vineyard is fully organic the label will revert to the original colour. It is at 60% for this vintage.

It is a quite a different blend of grapes from previous wines we have had with this name apart from the 2023 we released a few weeks ago, which is from the same new vineyards (with a more faded label) and is similar. The 2024 vintage includes Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Alicante Bouschet, and Grenache Noir.

The Alicante Bouschet (red juice), Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon were directly-pressed and used to infuse most of the Syrah, which was destemmed. A subsequent pick of Syrah was fermented using carbonic maceration.

After pressing aging was in two large tanks - one fibreglass and one wooden - but there is a strange twist in this cuvée, a legacy from an experiment Axel made in 2022.

In 2022 Axel experimented by leaving 4 demi-muid (400 litre) barrels filled with Grenache, Cinsault, Syrah, and Cabernet Sauvignon (one for each variety) outside. These were grapes not juice! He removed the heads of the barrels, filled them with grapes, then put the heads back on the barrels. They spent 12 months outside. The juice from subsequently pressing these grapes spent two years in stainless steel tanks and was then added to this 2024 vintage (12 hectolitres in 85 hectolitres). If you taste some wood in this wine that is the reason. It is also the reason why there are far more tannins than is usual in one of Axel's wines. It is a rustic wine that will be better enjoyed with food.

\$47 (750 ml) \$85 (magnum)

Le Temps des Cerises La Capitulation Ne Paie Pas 2024

Cinsault

This light red wine is made each year from the first pass through Axel's Cinsault vines, from the side of the vineyard with the most soil. It also has the shortest maceration (5 days of carbonic maceration). The cuvée began life as a Brutal but he changed the name when he realised it was going to be made each year (the Brutal project is all about exceptions not typical wines). The ABV is an amazingly-low 9.6% and as usual there is a noticeable amount of dissolved CO₂. It is a joy to drink as usual!

\$56 (maximum one bottle and now only 2 left)

Le Temps des Cerises Jalava 2024

Cinsault

Jalava is the cuvée made from the final pass through the Cinsault vines, about 20 days after La Capitulation and from the stoniest part of the vineyard. It then has a longer maceration (approximately 2 weeks). It's dark enough to just call it a red wine and, even though Cinsault is thin-skinned and does not have a lot of tannin, it has quite a lot of structure at the back of the palate. The flavours are savoury and restrained. It would be beautiful with grilled lamb. It is much lighter in colour than the 2023 vintage we sold recently but has slightly more alcohol (11.2% ABV compared with 10.8%). The flavours are more blackcurrant than the pomegranate in La Capitulation.

\$64 (but there is also a magnum in Pack 2)

Le Temps des Cerises Un Pas de Côté 2024

Grenache

Made from the same vineyard each year (not from the newest acquisitions), on the wild, gravelly caille, this wine is considerably more alcoholic than most wines Axel makes. It is 15.8% ABV. Picked in mid-October, it did not finish fermenting before winter and then stopped with still 25g/l of residual sugar. It continued fermenting again when the weather warmed producing more alcohol. It is, says Axel, more like a traditional Roussillon wine. The alcohol is of course detectable but balanced. Somehow its joyful juiciness keeps it in check. It too is quite different from most of Axel's wines though. We would recommend pairing it with food, possibly meat from a grill. This is definitely a red wine, which you can't really say about most of Axel's reds!

\$64

La Bouc à Trois Pattes Miss Piggy Blues 2024

Muscat Rose à Petits Grains, Alicante Bouschet

The Muscat used to make this rosé-like wine was picked over five nights (with head torches) a little earlier than Wim hoped but to try to escape the Asian wasps. Because of the wasps it was impossible to pick during the day. Even so the wasps did some damage, possibly leading to him losing 30%. It and the Alicante Bouschet (which is only 1% of the total) were directly pressed. Alicante Bouschet is a teinturier grape, with red flesh that produces red juice without the need

to macerate. Even though it is only 1% it contributes substantially to the colour, making it almost rosé-like but, because of the Muscat, very aromatic. The wine was aged in fibreglass. 11% ABV.

\$53

La Bouc à Trois Pattes Sous le Tilleul 2023

Carignan, Muscat Rose à Petits Grains, Cinsault

The grapes for this wine were picked during a heatwave which increased the ripeness quickly, hence the 14% ABV. It is predominantly Carignan (40%) and Muscat à Petits Grains Rose (40%) with 20% Cinsault. The grapes were destemmed and macerated together, with the fibreglass tank filled over a week. Aging was in fibreglass after pressing.

\$53

La Bouc à Trois Pattes Dernier Voyage Au Mal Pais 2023

Muscat de Hambourg (Black Muscat), Syrah, Merlot

This is a one-off cuvée with a dramatically-different and rather grim-looking label, nothing like the colourful three-legged animals Wim usually prefers. The "mal país" (bad lands) where the vines grow is an abandoned hamlet near Montpellier which is not easy to find. It is a mix of Syrah, Muscat de Hambourg (Black Muscat, which is a table grape) and very ripe Merlot. The Merlot had very little juice thanks to the thankless drought and heat and the juice / skin ratio of Syrah and Muscat de Hambourg are worlds apart. It makes it hard to predict the % of each in the final wine. The Syrah and Muscat de Hambourg were directly-pressed and the bunches of Merlot were added to the juice. After three weeks of maceration it was pressed. A translation of Wim's description is "This keg is the fruit of a sweltering summer, a deadly drought symbolized by hungry stray dogs and a thirsty wandering writer, a bloody heroic harvest accident, and a Biblical cellar work." It's fairly wild but somehow he's created something intense but still deliciously-juicy! 14% ABV.

\$43

What's Coming

There is no new news here so if you read this section of the newsletter last month and let us know what you were interested in you can ignore this. For anyone who did not read it last month and wants to make sure they do not miss out on new wines we've included a summary.

We will be advertising Michel Gahier (Jura), Marie-Courtin (Champagne) and La Soeur Cadette (Burgundy) in January. None of these will be allocated so if you would like early warning of their arrival let us know.

Soon after that we will have some Fanny Sabre (Burgundy) wines, then Domaine Derain (also Burgundy), l'Octavin (mainly Jura), Domaine Milan (Provence) and Julien Fremont's Normandy ciders and Calvados. We will also be advertising these.

WINE Talk – the newsletter of Living Wines

For wines we advertise everyone has a chance to buy and we always have a pack or two in the newsletter but we also give early warning to anyone who wants to make sure of an order. Once again – tell us if you would like to be told in advance about any of these if you haven't already.

We anticipate offering allocations of Jura wines from two of our Pupillin-based Jura producers Renaud Bruyère and Adeline Houillon and also Tony Bornard in April or May. We will only be selling these on allocation. If you don't ask for an allocation you will not be able to directly buy from us. If you have already asked after the last newsletter don't worry. It is recorded.

Pack 1: Mixed 3 Pack with some age

(No Discount – No freight subsidy - 1 Pack Only)



This pack has three of our cellared wines – two reds and a white. The Domaine des Cavarodes trousseau is from the Messagelin vineyard near Montigny-lès-Arsures where iron rich, red marl soils add to the complexity of the wines produced from this vineyard. It's Etienne's cuvée which is made for aging.

The Sextant Monthélie 1er Cru Sur La Velle Rouge is from the rich 2018 vintage. In the Côte de Beaune and close to the better-known Volnay appellation Monthélie wines are also known for the complexity and floral notes. By now the wine should also have developed some spicy notes. The grapes Julien uses to make this wine come from the renowned Chateau de Monthélie, where the vines have been tended biodynamically for many years.

Until they acquired two parcels of 1er cru Chardonnay "Coteau de Rosettes" was the de Moors top of the range Chablis. From another rich vintage we have done whoever ends up drinking this a favour by giving the wine time to evolve.

This pack has no discount and no subsidised freight unless it is shipped with other wines. Ask us for the freight details when you order.

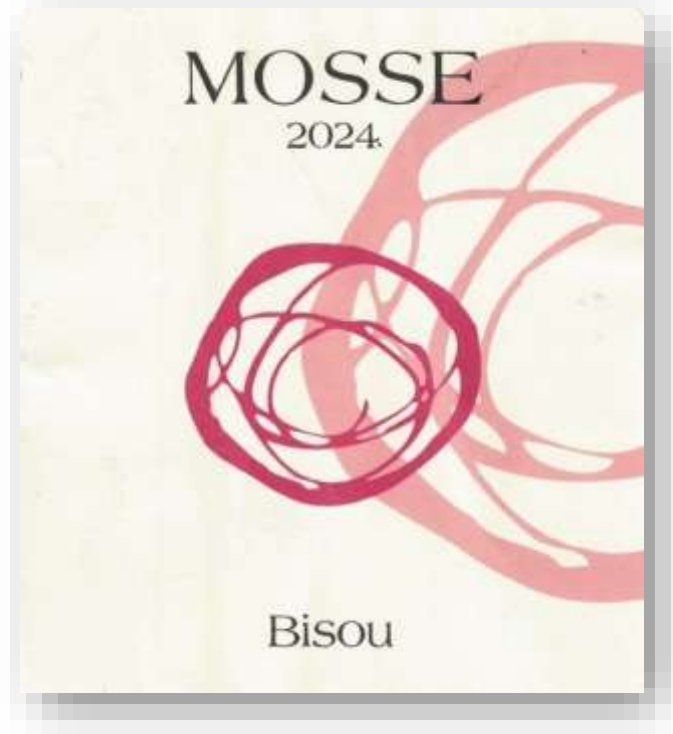
These are the wines:

- **Domaine des Cavarodes AOP Arbois Trousseau Messagelin 2017**
- **Sextant - Julien Altaber Monthélie 1er Cru Sur La Velle Rouge 2018**
- **De Moor AOC Chablis "Coteau de Rosettes" 2015**

The RRP for this selection of **3** bottles is **\$267.00**. Check with us for the freight charge to your location.

Pack 2: 3 Magnum Pack

(15% Discount - 1 Pack Only)



We received a few magnums with the recent new arrival Le Temps des Cerises wines, so it seemed like a good excuse to make a magnum pack. There are descriptions of the Le Temps des Cerises wines in the New Arrivals section. We added a Mosse Bisou magnum to round it out to a three pack.

The Bisou, an estate wine, is a blend of Grolleau Noir, Grolleau Gris, Cabernet Franc, Côt, and Chenin Blanc. It is 30% Grolleau Noir, 30% Grolleau Gris, 15% Cabernet Franc, 15% Côt and 15% Chenin Blanc. Each variety was vinified separately with short whole-bunch macerations between 7 and 10 days. After pressing it was aged in a mix of foudres and barrels before assembling prior to bottling. The wine is light, fruity and tangy.

The Mosse tasting notes are "Raspberry colour. An expressive nose of cherry and cranberry, and white pepper." The Mosses recommend a perfect serving temperature is about 12 degrees but if it's a choice between room temperature and refrigerated choose refrigerated every time! This wine is not filtered and is only 10.5% ABV.

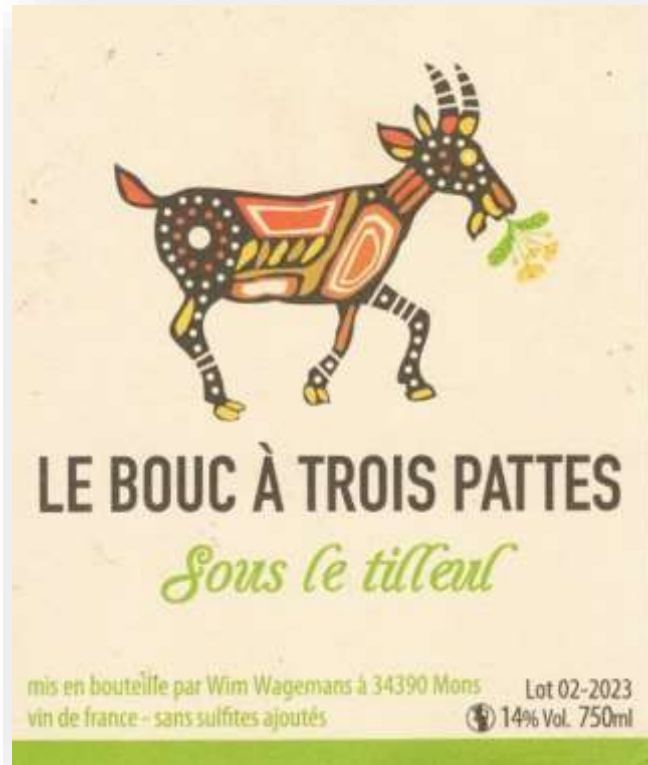
These are the wines:

- **Le Temps des Cerises Avanti Popolo 2024 Magnum**
- **Le Temps des Cerises Jalava 2024 Magnum**
- **Mosse Bisou 2024 Magnum**

The RRP for this selection of **3 Magnums** is \$323 but the pack price is only **\$274.55**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 3: New Arrivals Pack

(15% Discount - 2 Packs Only)



This pack has six bottles of newly-arrived wines, all of which are described in the new arrivals section. Five are red and Miss Piggy is a hybrid. It's a blend of Muscat Rose à Petits Grains and Alicante Bouschet.

With no added sulphites these wines are some of the most energetic in our portfolio. Some would say they are a little wild. We encourage you to read the descriptions but if you like juicy, lively wines – the sort of wine that makes you feel you should be grilling meat outside over an open flame (even if you aren't!) then these should appeal.

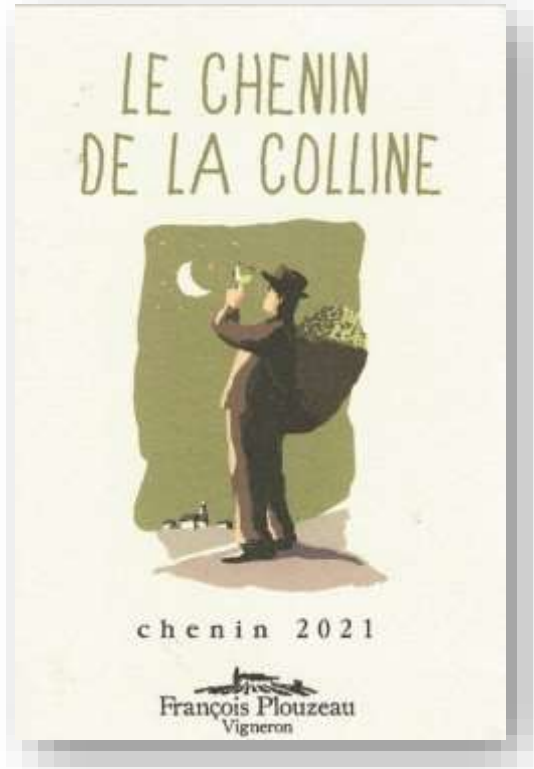
The pack has the following wines:

- **Le Temps des Cerises Avanti Popolo 2024**
- **Le Temps des Cerises Jalava 2024**
- **Le Temps des Cerises Un Pas de Côté 2024**
- **La Bouc à Trois Pattes Miss Piggy Blues 2024**
- **La Bouc à Trois Pattes Sous le Tilleul 2023**
- **La Bouc à Trois Pattes Dernier Voyage Au Mal Pais 2023**

The RRP for this selection of **6** bottles is \$324 but the pack price is only **\$275.40**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 4: Big Loire Sale Pack

(40% Discount – 8 Packs Available)



This is a combination of wines from two of the Loire producers we have worked with for the longest time – Domaine Mosse and Domaine de la Garrelière. With the 40% discount this pack is incredible value.

The two Domaine de la Garrelière wines are from their finest plots of Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc respectively and are both wines designed to develop complexity with age. We have been getting wonderful feedback about Cinabre, particularly, recently. From the 2018 vintage it is possibly in its prime. There are two bottles of each of these wines.

The rest of the pack is single bottles of two quite different Mosse wines. The Mosse Les Bonnes Blanches 2022 Chenin Blanc is from the Bonnes Blanches vineyard in the commune of Saint-Lambert-du-Lattay. Its schist and quartz soil is some of the best terroir for Chenin in Anjou.

As an example of its importance to the Mosse family, it is the first (and only so far we think) vineyard where they have installed expensive technology to help them fight the inevitable frosts which plague them most years in April. Some things will inevitably be sacrificed when the frost is hard but they will always try to save Bonnes Blanches. We know from his words to us that Bonnes Blanches is, of all the Mosses vines, the vineyard closest to Sylvestre and Joseph's father René's heart.

The Mosse Combo is a quirky, unique cuvée. It is a blend of Muscat à Petits Gains (80%) from Roussillon in the south of France and Loire Valley Cabernet Franc (20%). The Muscat was

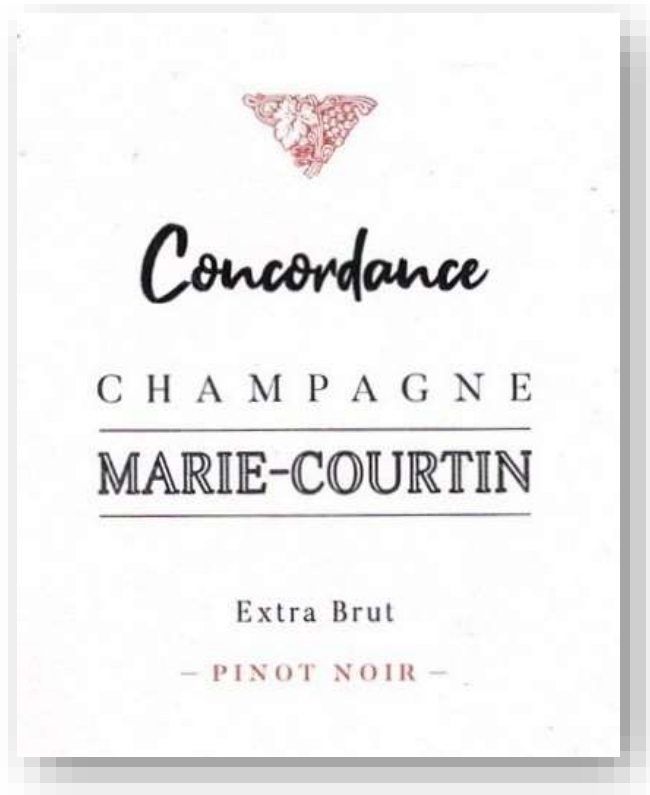
macerated for approximately 12 days before pressing and then aged in old barrels for about 5 months. The Cabernet Franc was directly pressed then aged in a stainless steel tank. The two separately-aged components were then assembled prior to bottling to make this wine. The Mosses description of Combo is “The Muscat's lychee and mango aromas, supported by a gentle tannic structure, blend beautifully with the Cabernet Franc's violet and grapefruit notes. A meeting of southern and northern influences in a fruity and floral array.”

These are the wines:

- **Domaine de la Garrelière Le Chenin de la Colline 2021 (2 bottles)**
- **Domaine de la Garrelière Touraine Cinabre 2018 (2 bottles)**
- **Mosse Combo 2022**
- **Mosse Anjou Blanc Les Bonnes Blanches 2022**

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$409 but the pack price is only \$245.40. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 5: One Off Special Mixed Pack
(Approx 12.5% Discount - 1 Pack Only)



There are some special cellared wines in this pack including a bottle of a 2017 Bruyère-Houillon Arbois Chardonnay Savagnin blend. This is not the 2017 wine we received last year. We have had it since mid 2021. The blend is 95% Chardonnay and 5% Savagnin sourced from Tourillons and Croix-Rouge. Renaud and Adeline would normally make separate cuvées from each vineyard with Croix-Rouge being 100% Chardonnay and Tourillons a blend of Chardonnay and Savagnin but because of the frosts and substantially reduced yields they were vinified as a single wine. The yield across the two vineyards was 6 hl/Ha.

Most of the wines arrived in 2021 including the 2016 Marie-Courtin Blanc de Noir Concordance, made from 100% Pinot Noir, which is the first cuvée Dominique Moreau created with no added sulphites, the 2019 Sextant Bourgogne Rouge, the 2020 Allez Goutons Blanc and Dominique Derain's juicy 2019 D'rain D'rain Grenache from the south of France.

Allez Goutons is a bit of a risk – it's a wine made for early drinking – but the others should be singing. We've drunk the 2021 Mosse Le Rouchefer Chenin Blanc recently and it was in a wonderful place, with surprising herbal savoury undertones to complement the more typical aromas of Chenin Blanc.

These are the 6 wines:

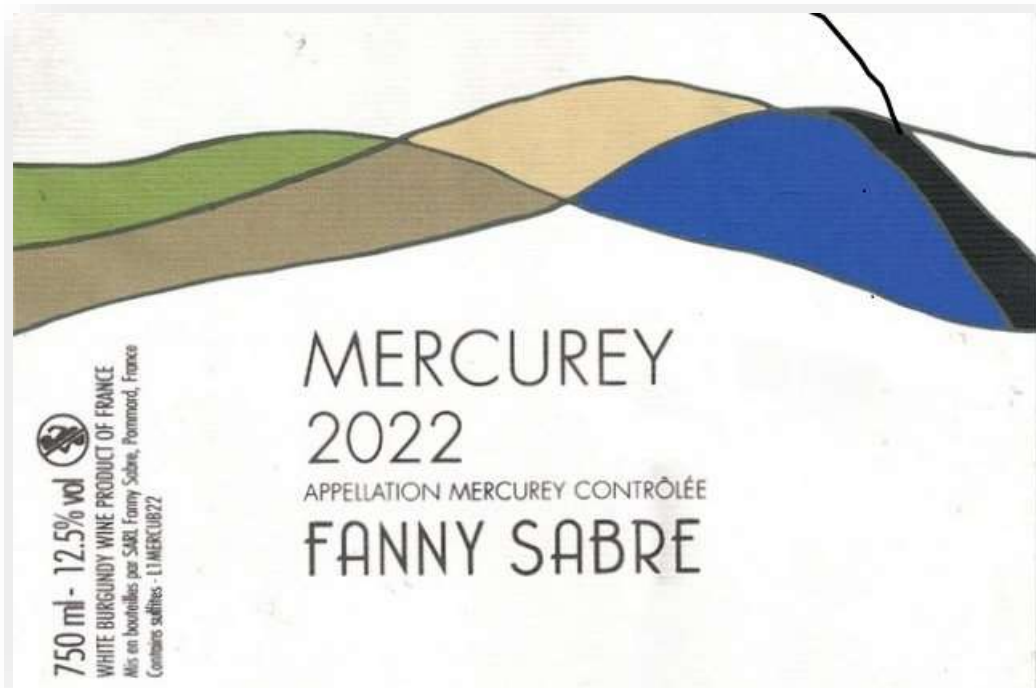
- **Domaine Derain Allez Goutons Blanc 2020**
- **Marie Courtin Champagne Concordance 2016**

- Sextant - Julien Altaber Bourgogne Rouge 2019
- Tutti Frutti Ananas - Dominique Derain D'rain D'rain 2019
- Renaud Bruyère and Adeline Houillon Arbois Chardonnay/Savagnin 2017
- Mosse Le Rouchefer 2021

The RRP for this selection of **6** bottles is \$543 but the pack price is only **\$475.50**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 6: Premium White 3 Pack

(3 bottles – 1 only – No discount and no subsidised freight)



Sabre, Belluard, Careme ... three great winemakers each working with a different white grape. Fanny Sabre's Mercurey is Chardonnay, the Belluard is Altesse and the Carême is Chenin Blanc from one of Vincent's two prime Vouvray plots.

Unless they are hidden away and we don't know about them we do not have any other Vincent Carême Chenin Blancs in our warehouse at the moment so this may be the last bottle we ever sell. He is working to find a new Australian importer who can buy larger quantities of his wines, which will hopefully mean they are more widely available but at the moment this is the last one.

This 3-pack of premium whites has no discount (unless the buyer purchases another 3 bottles of something else in which case we will apply our usual 10% discount) but whoever buys this will still get a very good deal because these prices are the prices we originally sold the wines at. We have had the Belluard since 2020.

These are the wines:

- **Vincent Careme Vouvray Peu Morier 2022**
- **Fanny Sabre Mercurey Blanc 2022**
- **Belluard Vin de Savoie AOP Blanc Grand Jorasses 2018**

The RRP for this selection of 3 bottles is **\$298**. Check with us for the freight charge to your location.

Pack 7: Partly a Deep-Dive Pack

(No Discount - Subsidised Freight - 1 Pack Only)



We had to wait to be in the right mood to put one of our final bottles of Jean-Pierre Robinot's Enuaj into a pack, but it's done! And as a bonus we also found a 10 year old Bruyère-Houillon white.

Enuaj (which is Jaune spelled backwards) is a unique Chenin Blanc which was aged without topping up for several years, during which time it formed a flor, in the same way as a Jura Vin Jaune. It is a brilliant wine with a special cheese course or just to enjoy for its uniqueness. Like other oxidative wines it can potentially stay open for some time without deteriorating. If you like Vin Jaune then drinking this should be a special experience.

Croix-Rouge is generally the cuvée Adeline and Renaud recommend drinking as a younger wine but we are sure this would still be rewarding. It's been safely cellared by us since 2018.

The final wine is from our current stocks, Dominique Belluard's Ayse Mont Blanc Brut Nature 2019, a sparkling wine made in the method of Champagne, from the Gringet grape. It's a great substitute for Champagne and a wine we always like to introduce people to.

There is no discount for this pack unless you would like to add 3 more bottles, in which case we will discount everything except the Bruyère-Houillon. However, because of the value of the Robinot wine we will ship it with our normal 6 pack subsidised freight for your location even if you just take the 3 bottles in this pack and don't add to the order.

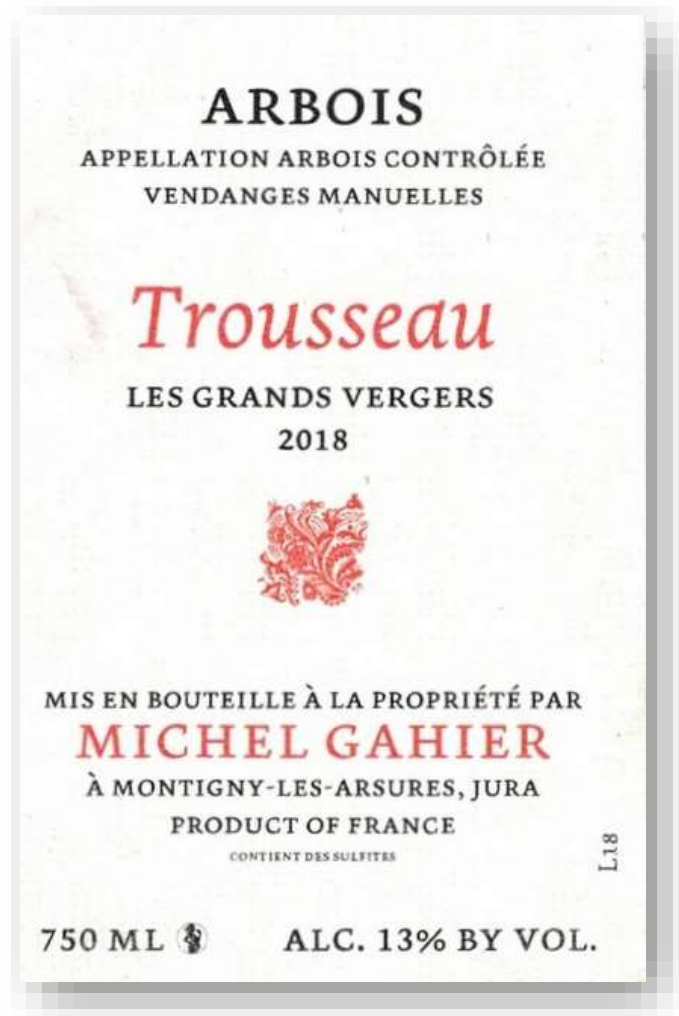
These are the wines:

- Renaud Bruyère and Adeline Houillon Arbois Blanc Chardonnay Croix-Rouge 2015
- Jean-Pierre Robinot Les Vignes de l'Ange Vin Enuaj 2010
- Belluard Vin de Savoie Ayse Mont Blanc Brut Nature 2019

The RRP for this selection of **3** bottles is **\$564**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 8: Gahier is Arriving Pack

(No Discount – 1 Pack Available – No freight subsidy)



Our new shipment from Jura vigneron Michel Gahier is almost here which makes it easier to let go of a few bottles from the cellar.

This pack includes Michel's iconic La Fauquette, a wine made from Melon-le-Queue-Rouge (a Jura variant of Chardonnay) in the style of Vin Jaune. It is aged in 400 litre barrels for approximately 3 years, for most of the time without topping up. The vines for La Fauquette are now approximately 60 years old (the same age as Michel!). The soil is blue marl which Michel says assists in freshness, acidity, spiciness and even in forming the veil. We have drunk much older vintages of this wine including from 1992. You could open this or you could keep it a lot longer.

The pack also includes a bottle of his most complex Trousseau, from the ancient vines in front of his cellar (Les Grands Vergers), and Les Follasses, a topped up Chardonnay from younger vines.

There is no discount or freight subsidy for this pack but if you were to add three more bottles of other wines we can discount it by 10% and ship it with subsidised freight.

These are the wines:

- Michel Gahier Arbois Trousseau Les Grands Vergers 2018
- Michel Gahier Arbois Melon La Fauquette 2014
- Michel Gahier Arbois Chardonnay Les Follasses 2018

The RRP for this selection of **3** bottles is **\$208**. Check with us for the freight charge to your location.

Pack 9: The 2018 Pack

(No Discount and no freight subsidy – 1 Pack Available)



There are three wines, all from the generous, hot 2018 vintage. The two reds are a delightful Tony Bornard Ploussard 'Vivre d'Amour' and Fanny Sabre's more serious red, a Beaune Rouge from Clos des Renardes. The one white is one of the de Moor's most loved Chablis cuvée L'Humeur du Temps.

There is no discount or subsidised freight for this pack, but it does have the advantage of prices that we can only now dream of. If you add more bottles we will subsidise the freight and discount the wine by 10%.

These are the wines:

- De Moor AOC Chablis L'Humeur du Temps 2018
- Domaine Bornard Vivre d'Amour et de Plouplou 2018
- Fanny Sabre Beaune Village Rouge Clos Des Renardes 2018

The RRP for this selection of **3** bottles is **\$233**. Check with us for the freight charge to your location.

Pack 10: l'Octavin 3 Pack

(3 bottles - No Discount or subsidised freight – 1 Pack Available



This pack includes wines Alice made in two different ways with Jura Poulsard. One is a white which is rare directly-pressed Poulsard, a wine Alice has only made a couple of times since we have been buying her wine. The other is a more typical red wine, although as always in her hands the wine, with only gentle extraction, is only just red.. The final pack is a blend of 50% Gewurztraminer and 50% Pinot Gris with the grapes sourced from Marc Humbrecht in Alsace. These were macerated to make an orange wine so the pack has three quite different wines – one white, one red and one macerated white.

There is no discount or subsidised freight for this pack but it also has the advantage of prices that we can only now dream of. If you add more bottles we will subsidise the freight and discount the wine by 10%.

These are the wines:

- l'Octavin Poulsard Blanc Hip Hip J 2020 - (direct press Poulsard)
- l'Octavin Poulsard Hip Hip J 2018
- l'Octavin La Cigogne Green 2019

The RRP for this selection of **3** bottles is **\$215**. Check with us for the freight charge to your location.

Pack 11: Cellared Temps des Cerises Pack

(3 Bottles - No Discount or subsidised freight – 1 Pack Available)



This pack has three bottles from the 2019 vintage of Axel Prüfer's le Temps des Cerises wines including a bottle of the very rare La Capitulation Ne Paie Pas.

La Capitulation Ne Paie Pas is a very light red made with early-picked Cinsault. Fou du Roi is a red wine (just) made with Carignan, Grenache and Cinsault. La Peur du Rouge is sort of white. It's macerated briefly prior to pressing and in its youth took on a quite golden hue.

In our experience Axel's wines, even though they give the impression of lightness and a vitality suited to early drinking actually age very well. No doubt all the dissolved CO2 helps as a preservative.

This pack should be a special treat for whoever buys it and if you add three more bottles we will subsidise the freight and discount the wine by 10%.

These are the wines:

- **Le Temps des Cerises La Capitulation Ne Paie Pas 2019**
- **Le Temps des Cerises La Peur du Rouge 2019**
- **Le Temps des Cerises Fou du Roi 2019**

The RRP for this selection of **3** bottles is **\$141**. Check with us for the freight charge to your location.

How do grapes ripen? – Part 2

In the November 2025 issue of this newsletter, we published Part 1 of the story “How do grapes ripen?”. In this story we discussed the differences between climacteric fruits and non-climacteric fruits, with grapes being classified as non-climacteric fruits.

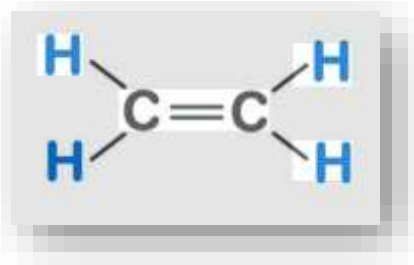
We also discussed the three sections of the grapes namely:

- the exocarp which mainly comprises the sections of the skin;
- the mesocarp which is the part containing most of the “flesh” of the grape;
- the endocarp which contains the seeds and the pulp surrounding them.

In this story we are going to briefly discuss the two chemicals that have the most impact during the ripening process on climacteric fruits and non-climacteric fruits.

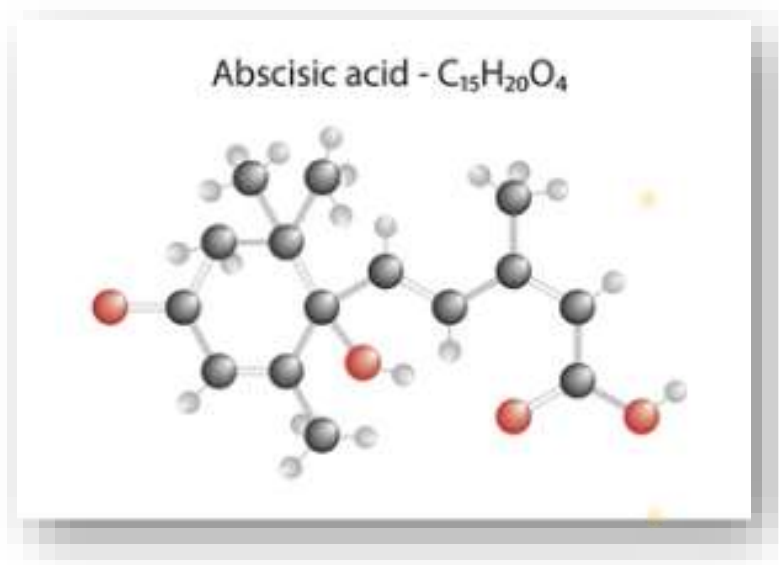
These chemicals are Ethylene (for climacteric fruits such as apples and peaches) and Absciscic acid (for non-climacteric fruits such as grapes and oranges).

The chemical formula for Ethylene is quite simple C_2H_4 as we mentioned in Part 1.



The chemical formula for Absciscic acid, which is a phytohormone, is slightly more complex $C_{15}H_{20}O_4$. Its name is often written using the shortcut ABA.

Here is a small representation of the ABA molecule with the red atoms being oxygen, the dark atoms being carbon and the small atoms being hydrogen:



Ethylene in climacteric fruits triggers a sharp rise in respiration, initiating ripening changes and aroma development and activating ripening-related genes, allowing them to ripen significantly after harvest. This is why climacteric fruits such as bananas, avocados and tomatoes can still ripen after being picked by placing them in an ethylene environment.

It is interesting to note that in ancient China they had a practice of burning incense in closed rooms with stored pears because ethylene is released as an incense combustion by-product hence leading to the ripening of the fruit.

Non-climacteric fruit ripening is very different. Once non-climacteric fruits are picked they stop ripening. This means that, for grapes, it is important to understand when the optimum time to pick the fruit has arrived.

Abscisic acid (ABA) regulates growth including:

- ripening following veraison;
- changes in berry quality (including colour and flavour)¹;
- reaction to stress during droughts, by controlling water loss in leaves;
- regulation of dormancy;

Additionally, the levels of ABA in the fruits such as grapes increase dramatically as the berries ripen.

The concentration of ABA is an important factor in the ripening of grapes, however the measurement of how much acid is present in the grape needs to be treated with caution.

For example, it depends on which measurement is used. If the concentration of this acid is measured against the size of the grape, then this measurement will give the wrong result just after veraison, because that is the time when the grape is growing the fastest and hence the percentage of the acid versus the size of the fruit will actually go down even though more acid is present.

This is supported in a document by Susan Wheeler in her PhD thesis entitled “Role of growth substances in berry development”².

We have shown over three seasons that ABA levels in Cabernet Sauvignon berries increase dramatically at veraison, consistent with it being involved either as a trigger for ripening or as a response to the increase in sugars that occurs at this time. Net ABA accumulation doesn't occur until veraison, the decrease in ABA concentration in the first phase of berry development being due to berry expansion.

¹ Pilati, S et al (2017) *Abscisic Acid Is a Major Regulator of Grape Berry Ripening Onset: New Insights into ABA Signalling Network*. *Frontiers of Plant Science*; 8:1093.

² Wheeler, Susan (2010) *Role of growth substances in berry development*. PhD Thesis University of Adelaide.

Of course, it is always difficult to make irrefutable assertions about scientific matters and this is shown in a paper by Sun and others in China which suggests that Ethylene also does play some role relating to ripening in non-climacteric fruits at veraison:

The ripening of grape berry is generally regulated by abscisic acid (ABA), and has no relationship with ethylene function. However, functional interaction and synergism between ABA and ethylene during the beginning of grape berry ripening (véraison) has been found recently³.

Nevertheless, the ripening process is a complex cascade of molecular events where ABA acts as a primary signalling molecule to set off other events.

So, let's look further into the complex transitions that take place between veraison and the point where a grape is ready to pick.

Absciscic acid accumulation at veraison

The sharp increase in ABA levels at veraison mainly occurs in the exocarp (the skin as we discussed in Part 1) and the phloem of the plant.

Some features of this phase are:

- ABA levels rise without any noticeable colour changes or sugar build-up in the grapes;
- ABA begins to act as a “signal” for ripening to occur rather than acting as the agent of ripening;
- ABA initiates a series of enzymatic reactions that create more complex organic compounds within the grape that become responsible for the ripening process.

In summary, the hormone ABA is acting, at this stage, as a developmental switch which initiates the processes that cause the visible signs of ripening.

Sugar import into the berry

Following veraison, ABA plays an important role in the beginning of the import of sugars into the grape, which is one of the most important processes in grape ripening. This is confirmed in a 2006 paper by Susan Wheeler from the Auckland University entitled "The Role of Absciscic Acid in Grape Berry Development".

In the introduction to the detailed document she comments:

ABA levels in Cabernet Sauvignon berries increase dramatically at veraison, consistent with it being involved either as a trigger for ripening or as a response to the increase in sugars that occurs at this time. Net ABA accumulation doesn't occur until veraison, the decrease in ABA concentration in the first phase of berry development being due to berry expansion.

³ Sun, Liang et al (2010) Reciprocity between abscisic acid and ethylene at the onset of berry ripening and after harvest. *BMC Plant Biol.* 2010 Nov 22;10:257

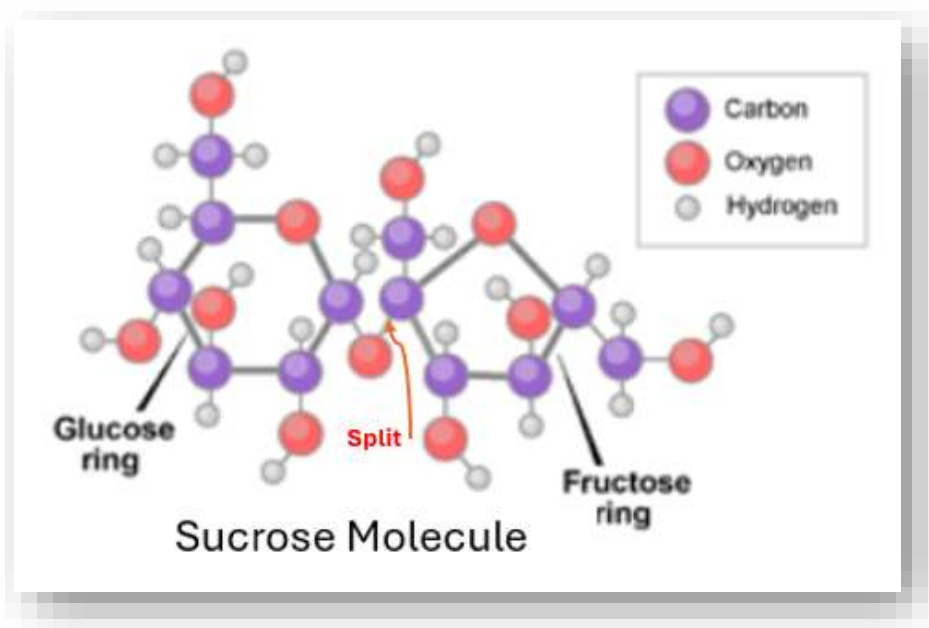
This confirms that there could be a relationship between ABA levels increasing and sugar import commencing, a process we have seen described in a number of other papers as well. She was also able to increase the rate of sugar imports by spraying vines with ABA, which once again, demonstrates the relationship between the two processes.

Some features of this phase are:

- An increase in crucial proteins in grape ripening such as sucrose and hexose transporters in berry tissues which are responsible for the import and storage of fructose and glucose;
- Absciscic acid also acting to assist the sugars move from the phloem of the plant into the cell walls of the grapes;
- Enzymes which the absciscic acid has helped create (such as invertase) then take a role in splitting sucrose into the smaller sugar molecules of glucose and fructose.

The formula for sucrose is $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$. The formula for the hexose transporters such as glucose and fructose is $C_6H_{12}O_6$ – even though they have the same formula they have different structures.

The diagram below is a representation of the sucrose molecule and you can see that it is made up of a glucose molecule of the left side and a fructose molecule on the right side.



You can also see a red arrow showing where the ABA and the invertase enzyme splits the sucrose molecule to create glucose and fructose.

Berry softening and cell wall modification

Berry softening is another indicator of ripening, and ABA contributes by regulating enzymes involved in the softening of cell walls in the grapes.

ABA is responsible for the creation of important enzymes such as pectins and expansins which are responsible for softening the tissues.

These enzymes weaken the primary cell walls in the grapes which leads to reduced firmness in the grapes which is an indicator of approaching ripeness. The downside is that as the cell walls become weaker, they are more prone to splitting.

This is further confirmed in a recent paper by Oida⁴ et al in the journal *Scientia Horticulturae* where they referenced changes particularly caused by pectin, the content of which increases significantly 49 days after veraison.

And while we are talking about pectin, an interesting paper by Prasad et al in *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* examined the role that pectin plays in strengthening the cell walls of grapes and hence lessening the likelihood of the skin splitting.

*Splitting was found to be unrelated to epidermal cell density and cuticle thickness. However, resistant cultivars exhibited higher cell wall pectin content at ripeness, suggesting its role in mitigating splitting.*⁵

While we were researching this topic, we came across a paper by Perotti et al⁶ which addresses this topic. In their description of cell wall modifications, they introduce a term which is totally new to us! Here is what they said with respect to physiological changes that occur with fruit ripening:

Fleshy fruit ripening is a complex and tightly regulated process that involves biochemical and physiological changes including (ii) changes in texture as a result of cell wall degradation and loss of cell turgor.

Turgor is the new term for us. "Loss of turgor" in fruit cells is the **decrease in internal water pressure** (hydrostatic pressure) against the cell walls, leading to the fruit becoming soft, limp, or wilted.

However, in the same paper they do reinforce the fact that ABA is the key hormone regulating the process of ripening in non-climacteric fruits which as we have mentioned includes grapes.

Control of colour and phenol development

The chemicals that control the increase in colouration of the grapes are anthocyanins. In a paper by Chen, H et al⁷ they provide an outline of the main anthocyanins found in grapes.

*The synthesis of anthocyanins in grape skins begins at the veraison stage. In *Vitis vinifera* grapes, the primary anthocyanins are: delphinidin, cyanidin, petunidin, peonidin, and malvidin, along with their derivatives.*

⁴ Oida, K et al (2025) Changes in cell wall components on berry texture and adhesion strength of table grape 'Shine muscat' at different ripening stages. *Scientia Horticulturae*. Volume 347.

⁵ Prasad, A et al (2025) Grape Berry Splitting Is Correlated with Cell Wall Pectin Content and Cutin Composition. *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*. Vol 73, Issue 47

⁶ Perotti et al (2023) Non-climacteric fruit development and ripening regulation: 'the phytohormones show'. *Journal of Experimental Botany*. Volume 74, Issue 20. Pages 6237-6253.

⁷ Chen, H et al (2024) Anthocyanin profiles and color parameters of fourteen grapes and wines from the eastern foot of Helan Mountain in Ningxia. *Food Chemistry*. Volume 24.

So, the colouring of the skins starts after veraison and depends on the generation of anthocyanins in the grapes and particularly malvidin which is a key phenolic in both grapes and wine.

As an aside, anthocyanins are generally found in grape skins and are responsible for the grape skins in red grapes changing colour as ripening proceeds. However in teinturier grapes anthocyanins are also found in the flesh.

ABA influences colour development by:

- Facilitating anthocyanin accumulation in the skin of the grapes. These chemicals are responsible for the red, purple and blue hues in the grapes;
- Facilitating development of glycols which stabilise the colours;
- Enhancing phenolics in the grapes such as flavonols which play a role in enhancing the colour intensity.

In white grapes, ABA still regulates flavonols and tannin composition, even though anthocyanins are absent.

Decline in acidity

ABA contributes to the decline in acidity in the vine observed after veraison, particularly a lowering of malic acid in the vine. The main two acids which account for about 90% of acids in grapes are tartaric acid and malic acid⁸.

This is an important change caused in part by ABA because of the following effects:

- The lowering of the acid levels restores the sugar levels;
- Initiation of respiratory metabolism in the grape mesocarp;
- Increase in mitochondrial respiration.

Tartaric acid remains largely unaffected but ABA-mediated changes in metabolism shift the sugar–acid balance toward ripeness.

Ripeness maturity

Once the grapes have reached full ripeness, ABA levels level off, but its earlier actions have already established:

- High sugar concentration;
- Reduced acidity;
- Increased colour and phenolic complexity;
- Softened berry texture.

At this stage, ABA's influence is more indirect, maintaining metabolic stability rather than producing new changes.

⁸ Carbonneau A. et al (2015). *Traité de la vigne: Physiologie, terroir, culture*.

The important issue here is the complex ability of hormones such as ABA to bring about changes in plants, animals and humans.

Conclusion

As you can see from the above discussion about how grapes ripen, it should be clear that there are a number of tactile and visual indicators of the stage of ripeness of grapes such as the strength of the colour and the softening of the skin of the grape as just two examples that provide an indication of the level of ripeness of the grapes.

Bits and Pieces

Nossa in Sète, Languedoc

We love the seaside city of Sète. It is sliced in two by a wine canal which sees boats passing to and fro constantly throughout the day. It clings to the coast at the northern edge of the Etang de Thau.

Our first stop in the seaside town was the small but exciting shop called **La Crèmerie** where we always head for to restock our cheese supplies. The quality of the offerings here is very high and the cheeses are always treated with care by owner Marie-Anne Gros.

Another place that we can recommend is a restaurant called **Nossa Bar à Vins** which is an easy 10 minute stroll from the centre of town. Here they churn out delicious pizzas (as you can see from the photo below) and as an added bonus they have a good selection of natural wine.



And below is a photo of one of the pizzas we enjoyed that night at Nossa along with a bottle of 2024 Ribières, a direct press Cinsault, made by the Vin des Potes project with grapes from Provence couple Fanny et Marc Kemlin. At 11% ABV it was a perfect pizza wine.



After visiting Axel Prufer and Wim Wagemans in the town of Bédarieux the next day to discuss the wines that were likely to be available soon, we returned to Sète for a glass of wine at one of our favourite bars namely **Cave au Vin Vivant**. They have a very good selection of natural wine on display along the left-hand wall as you walk in, and also interesting wines available by the glass. We drank a Julien Peyras pet-nat. Because it's France they also have a few tables outside for the smokers.

For dinner that night we repeated a meal that we have eaten on every visit to this town, the famous octopus "pie" called a tielle which has been a feature in Sète for over 100 years having been bought by migrants from southern Italy. Paradiso is our favoured place for buying tielles.

(We also love the bar that our friend Marie-Sophie Canto (who managed the wine programme at the Dolphin hotel in Sydney for several years) owns called **Pimpant**, but it was closed on the two nights we were there this year, namely Tuesday and Wednesday. That was bad planning on our part.)

Pimpant, Grande Rue Mario Roustan.

Paradiso, 1 Quai de la Résistance.

La Crèmerie, 3 Grand, Gd Rue Mario Roustan.

Nossa Bar à Vins, 25 rue Pierre Semard.

Cave Au Vin Vivant, 6 Rue André Portes.

The Colour of Wine

One of the exciting things about the natural wine movement is that we have seen a gradual change in the types of wine that have emerged from the clever winemakers involved in this movement who want to do more than just make wines from grapes that have not been subjected to damaging poisons and who want to reduce or eliminate the use of sulphites.

One of the ways that this has manifested itself is in the colour of wines and their relationship with the grapes that were used to produce the wine.

Many years ago, virtually the only area where the colour of the wine had been divorced from the colour of the grapes was Champagne. This is where terms such as "Blanc de Noirs" emerged for a white wine made from red grapes. The only red grapes allowable in Champagne are Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier and they are often used to make white Champagne. And, yes we know that it translates as "White from Black" and not red, but it is close enough.

Now we see many complex procedures followed with mixes of grapes and mixes of treatments to produce wines that the winemaker thinks will be enjoyable.

One of the approaches that some of our winemakers adopt is to crush their red grapes immediately after picking and separate the white juice from the skins. The juice then has some of the texture of a red wine but not the colour.

They might then if they want a light red (which is very popular at present) take this white juice and pour it over red grapes that have been crushed and leave it to extract some of the colour.

And, of course, we all know the result of leaving crushed white juice in a container with the white skins to extract the compounds in the skins to produce an "orange" wine.

French wine terms

Une feuille

The term for a leaf. We have often heard this term used when asking how to identify if a vine is of a particular variety and we will be told to check “la feuille” because it is often the case that the variety can be easily identified.

Un bourgeon

This refers to when the buds appear on the vine which will eventually turn into clusters of grapes.

Cracher

Not something we are disposed to do but wise advice! The term “cracher” is the term used to spit the wine out.

Clos

A clos is a vineyard which is traditionally surrounded by a stone wall. Last year we were privileged to visit Fanny Sabre’s newest Beaune vineyard, Clos des Renardes, which is surrounded by a rock wall that is incredibly thick due to the number of rocks that had to be cleared from the area before the vines could be planted.

Boisé

An oaky wine which has taken on the flavour of new oak from the barrel it matured in. We must say that we avoid such wines as a general rule as it is an added flavour which masks the flavour of the grapes that made the wine.

Amer

Bitter. A term you might use to describe a wine that has a bitter flavour.

Chêne

And speaking of oak, chêne is the word in French.

Assemblage

A term used to describe the process of blending different components together.. Many people we work with create vinify individual varieties or parcels separately with the subsequent intent of creating an assemblage. Sometimes they already have a plan when they pick and vinify the grapes. Sometimes they make the plan further down the tracks, with all the components becoming a type of jigsaw puzzle which they will put together to make a wine. But, unlike a jigsaw puzzle, the answer is not known in advance.

Piquepoul Blanc Grape Variety

Piquepoul has been known since time immemorial in the South of France; they seem to have always belonged to the vineyards of Provence and Lower Languedoc, not because they ever played a dominant role or held a prominent place there, but because they offer, from various points of view, a set of qualities that have always made them appreciated and sought after in particular situations.

Below is a beautiful drawing of the grape bunch and leaf from Volume II of the series Ampelographie which was published in 1902.



The grapes form loose bunches which is positive as this allows the wind to penetrate the grape bunch to blow away any lurking diseases. The grapes are a light golden colour and are slightly elongated rather than being perfectly round.

The 1902 Ampelographie publication where we found the above picture of the Piquepoule Blanc also has a good introduction to this grape variety.

Piquepouls have been known since time immemorial in the South of France: they seem to have always belonged to the vineyards of Provence and Lower Languedoc, not because they ever played a leading role or held a major place there, but because they offer, from various points of view, a set of qualities that have always made them appreciated and sought after in certain particular situations.

Olivier de Serres⁹ speaks highly of Piquepouls, which he spells Piquepoule. The spelling adopted by Mr. Henri Mares¹⁰ seems to us the best, because it is the most common in the region, where the majority of winegrowers write Piquepoul rather than Picpoule or Picpoul; it is the one that most closely resembles that of Olivier de Serres, characteristic of the possible reasons for the determination of the grape variety.

The Piquepouls form a small family that includes three varieties: black, grey or pink, and white.

In this story we are going to concentrate on Piquepoul Blanc mentioned above as it is the most common of the various types of Piquepoul grapes that are available.

In another book that we have in our digital library from 1896 entitled “A Treatise on Wines” by J.L.W. Thudichum he writes about both the places certain grapes are planted and his views on the suitability of the wines.

Here is what he had to say about Picpoule (his spelling):

VINES CULTIVATED IN LANGUEDOC. The vines prevalent in this province are the Carignane, the Terret noir, the Grenache, the Mourastel, the Aspiran, the Oeillade and its variety the Sinsaon, the black Picpoule, the white Picpoule, and the Clairette. These yield the wines of commerce.

So, the lesson here is that although Piquepoul has never been a major grape variety in France it has been a useful variety in the Languedoc especially as a “wine of commerce”, in areas where the soils are somewhat sandy.

Now we get to the description of the grape which is a white mutation of the Piquepoul Noir variety.

It favours limestone and sandy soils and in previous generations has been planted in sand where it also thrives.

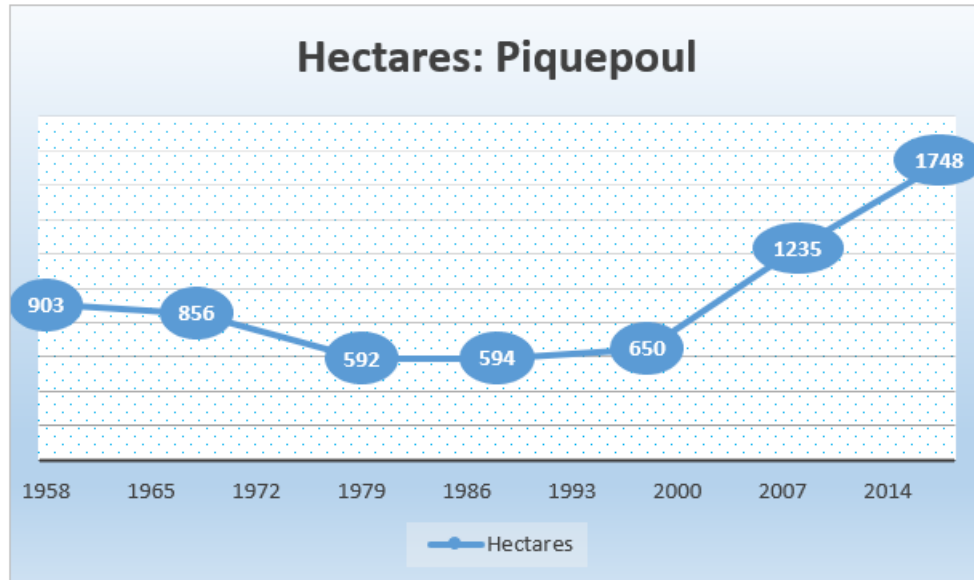
⁹ Olivier de Serres was a famous agronomist who lived in southern France from 1539 to 1619 and wrote extensively about agriculture and particularly about grapes.

¹⁰ Henri Marès (1820 – 1901) played an important role in France during the phylloxera crisis.

Our experience is that once a vigneron plants Piquepoul Blanc or purchases a plot containing this grape they tend to grow to like it and enjoy producing crisp white wines that complement fish dishes – even those made using oily sea fish.

It is fascinating to see the growth in the area planted to Piquepoul over the past 50 years or so.

In the graph below you can see that the area planted to this grape has increased from 903 hectares in 1958 to 1748 hectares in 2018 as shown below.



The budburst of Piquepoul comes about 6 days later than Chardonnay under normal conditions and grape maturity is reached between 3 and 4 days later than Chardonnay.

And now to how the vines can be recognised, although this is quite difficult with Piquepoul as it is very similar to a number of other grapevines.

First to the leaves:



As you can see in the photo of the Piquepoul leaf above there are three deep U-shaped sinuses, two of which sit on either side of the terminal lobe.

The grape bunches as shown below are relatively “loose” and the colour of the grape is quite light unlike the slight orange colour in the drawing at the beginning of this story.



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.