

WINE Talk: January 2026

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 141

Welcome to newsletter 141 for January 2026. We hope you continue to enjoy reading them. We certainly are continuing to enjoy writing them!

We have been able to put together **10 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;
- The packs with many really interesting new arrivals and some older wines available;
- Part 3 of our story about how grapes ripen;
- Some French wine terms explained;
- The Chardonnay Rose 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.

New Arrivals

La Soeur Cadette

We are delighted to have received some more La Soeur Cadette 2023 Melon and more Bourgogne Rouge 2023 as well as one new wine - La Soeur Cadette's first 2024 wine, la Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Blanc.

The new wine is one of only three 2024 wines we will be receiving from the Montanet family this year. The others (both also négoce) are a 2024 Bourgogne Rouge and 2024 Juliénas, which will come later.

It is hard to believe but the estate (which makes wines like the Vézelay cuvées La Châtelaine, Les Saulniers and Galerne) and the reds Garance, Champs-Cadet and L'Ermitage) made no wine at all in 2024. The losses from frost and then mildew were of the order of 98%, enough to ensure there was no formal harvest because to quote Valentin Montanet "everything was so awful". It is hard to imagine how difficult this is and it is going to lead to some changes, some of which we know about and some which we will learn about as time goes on.

For a start it means Valentin plans to abandon the most frost-prone parts of the estate, a decision he had been putting off for some years, until this catastrophe forced his hand. It will inevitably mean the estate has a smaller footprint and he will increasingly have to rely on négoce wines.

Fortunately, when we visited in July 2025, Valentin was mostly very happy about the state of the 2025 vintage, particularly for the estate vines. But, he already knew there will be no 2025 Juliénas because of hail damage in the Beaujolais.

More recently they sent us an update confirming there was a 2025 harvest (hooray!) although the yields were comparatively quite small. Valentin thinks the stress the vines were under in 2024 is still taking a toll. He is very happy with the quality though and we are especially pleased to hear that after a prolonged hiatus there will a 2025 Les Saulniers cuvée. We have not had this white cuvée since the 2020 vintage so that is very good news for 2027.

He's also looked more widely for négoce grapes, partly to satisfy his curiosity as a winemaker, which means next year's 2025 releases should include an Aligoté from the Mâconnais, some Sauvignon Blanc from the Coteaux du Giennois, and a Chenin Blanc, also from the Loire. Hopefully we will be able to visit mid-year and taste all these new wines.

We've included a detailed description of each wine we have just received below. Note that since 2022 Valentin has not filtered any of his white wines (the reds were never filtered), which we think has given the whites extra energy and life.

La Soeur Cadette Melon 2023

Melon de Bourgogne \$59

This wine is made from Melon de Bourgogne vines in the Yonne department (most Melon now is in the Loire Valley in Muscadet not in Burgundy, where it originated). It includes both négoce (2/3) and estate (1/3) Melon de Bourgogne. The vines are approximately 30 years old. The

grapes are directly pressed then aged on their lees prior to bottling. This release had extended time in tank, which meant more settling, and no need for any filtration. Certified organic.

La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Blanc 2024

Chardonnay \$59

The grapes from this wine came predominantly from the commune of Péronne which is in the department of Saône-et-Loire in the Mâconnais. It is the same vineyard from where the 2023 Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Blanc grapes were predominantly sourced. The vineyard was not certified organic but was in its final year of conversion to organic status. The vinification was slightly different from usual for this cuvee. Because there were no estate whites Valentin filled the three foudres he normally reserves for white estate wines with some of this wine. About 1/3 was vinified in foudres and the rest in stainless steel tanks. The wine was bottled early in July 2024 without filtration.

La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Rouge 2023

Pinot Noir \$69

This wine is made with Pinot Noir from Volnay and Vézelay, mostly 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. No filtration.

We have several packs available set aside to make sure there are some available for newsletter customers.

Mosse Family

We are sorry we didn't foreshadow this small release was imminent but we were not expecting to be in a position to release these two wines just yet. We have two Domaine Mosse wines we've been cellaring while we waited to sell the previous vintage of each of them and we have just sold out of both – a little sooner than we had predicted.

The two wines we have just released are both single vineyard Chenin Blancs - Domaine Mosse Le Rouchefer 2022 and Bonnes Blanches 2023. Bonnes Blanches 2023 arrived earlier this year but the 2022 Le Rouchefer has been resting in our warehouse for 18 months. They are remarkably different wines.

Domaine Mosse Les Bonnes Blanches 2023

Bonnes Blanches is a much-loved vineyard on the left bank of the Layon River facing north-east. The Chenin Blanc from this vineyard where the underlying rock is schist and the soil is silt with small, round pebbles called "Bonnes Blanches" is always highly complex and age worthy. 2023 was quite a challenging year with cold, windy, wet weather during spring followed by a hot, stormy summer. Flowering did not begin until mid-June which was later than usual and perhaps helps to explain the lighter alcohol level than is often the case for this wine.

For this vintage the grapes were directly pressed and the juice held in tanks for initial settling, during which time it began fermenting. After 36 hours the juice was transferred to barrels to

complete fermentation and then aged on lees for 10 months without batonnage. It was bottled in July 2024 without filtration. Its vital statistics are ABV 11%, less than <0.1g/l of residual sugar, and less than 10mg/l of sulphites. There is a salty tanginess about this wine, partly enhanced by its low alcohol level, which makes it frighteningly easy to drink – quite different from most vintages of Bonnes Blanches which are more contemplative.

Domaine Mosse Le Rouchefer 2022

The Le Rouchefer vineyard is clay and quartz soil on schist. Planted initially in 1976, the vines were 46 years old at the time of this vintage. Predominantly directly-pressed the juice was aged in two 25 hectolitre casks. In one there was just juice and in the other mainly juice but 10% was destemmed grapes which macerated for 6 months. After 6 months the contents of the vats were blended and the marc was distilled to make a gin. The wine was bottled in July 2023. The 2022 vintage was characterised by several heatwaves and very little rain. With little risk of mildew that meant minimal intervention in the vineyard but in a sign of the times it is 15% ABV. We often receive the analysis stats from the Mosses. In this wine there are 3 g/l of residual sugar and 18 mg/l of sulphites. They also recommend its aging potential is 15 years so, while it can be drunk now, it is a wine that can be cellared for many years. Unlike the 2023 Bonnes Blanches this wine demands food, particularly rich, strong-flavoured cheeses like washed rind cheeses or even sweet-leaning blue cheeses like Gorgonzola. It is strong and powerful and demands a more contemplative approach to its drinking.

Michel Gahier

We have just received some wines from Jura vigneron Michel Gahier. Some are returns of the same vintage and some are new vintages and, rarely, there is one new cuvée.

Michel lives in Montigny-lès-Arsures which is the self-claimed “world capital of trousseau”.



All of his red wines are made from Trouseau. His whites are a mix of Chardonnay and Melon Le Rouge Queue, a variant of Chardonnay found in the Jura which Michel says is more likely to form a yeast veil than vines which a more classic Chardonnay. (The Melon Le Rouge Queue has a quite distinctive stalk when it ripens, hence the name – le rouge queue literally translates as “the red tail”.

He has approximately 8 hectares of vines, all of which are close to Montigny-lès-Arsures but quite separate from one another. He generally makes separate wines from each vineyard and most wines are named for the vineyard where they come from. He speaks passionately about the different terroir he works with and how it impacts the style of the wine – especially the blue, grey and red marls. In his cellar the walls are lined with the same rocks that are in the vines and a description of each wine always includes a reminder as he points out a rock behind him which is the same as what you would find in the vineyard where the wine you are drinking came from. You can see some of the different colours in the photo below.



He believes firmly that wines are made in the vineyard – it is the work he does outside which is the most important determinant of what ends up in the bottle. Like quite a few of the people we work with he seemed younger when we met him mid summer in 2025 compared with the previous year. 2025 was being kind and he was hopeful of a good harvest. 2024, as for many people, was very difficult and he made no white wines.



He inherited much of his estate, with the oldest vines in Le Grand Vergers planted by his grandfather. It's where the photo above was taken. He had a mixed farm which included cows and the vines were for home use. His father increased the plantings but it was Michel who became a full-time vigneron in the late 1980s, returning the family's vines to organic viticulture.

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He ages all his wines in wood, almost entirely a mixture of very old foudre and 400 litre oak barrels. The whites are directly-pressed and either topped up or, in the case of Vin Jaune and La Fauquette, left to form a veil of yeast and become oxidative. The reds are destemmed, macerated briefly and then aged in foudre.

The reds tend to be slightly weightier than many red wines made in the Jura. They are more obviously “red wines” than say the Trousseau cuvées Alice Bouvet makes or even Tony Barnard. It means they are more suited to matching with food, including red meats, than some more delicate Jura reds. The whites range from the infinitely-flexible Les Follasses and Lou Blanc which have a mineral tension that makes them appealing just to drink or to match with seafood, roast chicken and much more. All of the whites go well with most cheeses and for us, La Fauquette, his oxidative Melon Le Rouge Queue which has a freshness that you don’t find in most Vin Jaunes, is one of the world’s great cheese wines.

Below is a list of the wines we have for sale, all of which have maximum order quantities. It’s possible some may have sold out between when we wrote this and when we send the newsletter out as we are sending out information to the people who requested early advice some time between now and then. It’s a fine balancing act this month as the wines were very delayed. We also have a small amount of Vin Jaune, not listed here, which is fully allocated but that includes the bottles available in Pack 8.

There are two different Gahier packs in the newsletter but only two of each available.

WINES MADE FROM WHITE GRAPES

Wine	Variety	Price	Notes
Michel Gahier Arbois Chardonnay Les Follasses 2023	Chardonnay	\$82	The Les Follasses vineyard, which is about 2 kilometres from the village, is planted in two different directions. Michel refers to them as Les Follasses A and Les Follasses B. Sometimes he makes one wine and sometimes he keeps them separate. Les Follasses A, which is white marl, runs from north-west to south-east. Les Follasses B runs at right angles to the other vines, from north-east to south-west and has much more red marl mixed with white marl. This wine is from Les Follasses A. The wine from B is not bottled yet. The vines in Les Follasses are just over 46 years old. The wine is all about mineral salinity. It is topped up during its aging and is the freshest of Michel's white wines, the one most suited to early drinking. Limit 2 bottles.
Michel Gahier Arbois Chardonnay Lou Blanc 2022	Chardonnay	\$90	This is a relatively new vineyard for Michel which he took over from a family member. It's 300 metres down the hill from Les Follasses with very complex soils that change every 50 metres or so - a mix of limestone and different types of marl but mainly grey. The 40+ year old vines are a massale selection of old Jura

Wine	Variety	Price	Notes
			Chardonnay. It is, says Michel, difficult to work because it is hard when dry and sticky when wet. The wine is intensely savoury with a leanness rather than the opulent richness of Les Crêts. This wine is topped up during its aging. This is a new shipment of a wine we first had in 2024 and again last year. Limit 1 bottle – almost sold out.
Michel Gahier Arbois Melon La Fauquette 2020	Melon Le Queue Rouge	\$100	The soil is blue marl, which Michel says contributes to its spiciness and freshness. Initially this wine spends time in a 25 hectolitre foudre without topping up. It forms a veil of yeast during that time. Then, after he has bottled the previous vintage of this cuvée, it is transferred into 400 litre tonneaus (made from Jura oak) for the rest of its aging. This process ensures he never has to wash the barrels. It was bottled in May 2025. The vines are 60 years old, the same age as Michel. Limit 2 bottles.
Michel Gahier Montibulles	Chardonnay	\$76	Made with Chardonnay, Montibulles is a méthode champenoise style sparkling wine and one of our absolute favourite sparkling wines. We have a little more than usual this year so there is an opportunity to buy slightly more if you like it as much as we do. Limit 2 bottles.

RED WINES

Wine	Variety	Price	Notes
Michel Gahier Arbois Trousseau Mademoiselle D 2023	Trousseau	\$100	This is a new cuvée for us. Michel rents the vineyard from the daughter of a local winemaker who died recently. On the cadastre (the official register of land in France) the variety grown in the plot is listed as Trousseau Noir, which is an old type of Trousseau. The vines are up to 80 years old. Made similarly to Michel's other red wines this wine is denser and more structured. Limit 1 bottle – almost sold out
Michel Gahier Arbois Trousseau Le Clousot 2023	Trousseau	\$82	From a vineyard of Michel's youngest Trousseau vines this maybe our favourite Le Clousot ever, It is light, fresh but still with the structure that comes from organic viticulture, and very easy to drink now. It was bottled in August 2024. This is a new

Wine	Variety	Price	Notes
			shipment of the same vintage we had last year. Limit 1 bottle – almost sold out.
Michel Gahier Arbois Trousseau La Vigne de Louis 2023	Trousseau	\$92	The vines for la Vigne de Louis are nearly 60 years old now, with deep roots. According to Michel the age of the vines is the main explanation for the distinctions between it and Le Clousot. It's much more obviously a red wine with power and some tannin. The vineyard itself is mainly limestone gravel with very little clay. Limit 2 bottles.
Michel Gahier Arbois Trousseau Les Grands Vergers 2023	Trousseau	\$100	This wine comes from a vineyard at the back of Michel's house on the edge of the village. Due to the soil - gravel with blue marl - it produces a wine which is powerful but with a silky lightness and fruitiness. Michel says this is a unique part of Montigny-les-Azures - no other trousseau has the same silkiness. The first three rows were planted by Michel's grandfather in 1929 for making wine for his drinking. In 1931 he planted an extra two rows to mark the year Michel's father was born. The rest of the vineyard was planted subsequently by Michel's father. It is a wine to cellar if you can. Limit 1 bottle – almost sold out
Michel Gahier Rouge du Max 2023	Trousseau	\$76	This wine is made from a family plot near Cramans Michel recently took responsibility for. Max is the name of his nephew who helped make the wine. The plot is only .25 hectares and also has a tiny amount of Mondeuse (1%) and Pinot Noir (9%) as well as the Trousseau. The soil is light with lots of pebbles. It was matured in foudre. This is a new shipment of the same vintage we had last year. Limit 1 bottle – almost sold out

What's Coming

Just a reminder, without any mention of new wines, over the next few months we will be advertising Marie-Courtin Champagne later this month, Fanny Sabre (Burgundy) wines in February, then Domaine Derain (also Burgundy) and Domaine Milan (Provence) in April. We hope to have Julien Fremont's Normandy ciders and Calvados and l'Octavin (mainly Jura) soon after.

Pack 1: New and Newish Mosse Pack

(10% Discount – No freight subsidy - 2 Packs Only)



This is a rare chance to order just a 3 pack of wine with a 10% discount. The 3 wines are all from the Mosse family. We've included a bottle of each of the two new serious Mosse Chenin Blancs we have just released – two remarkably different wines – and also a fun bottle of Mosse Bangarang, the chillable light red we released a couple of months ago.

These two Chenin Blancs are a lesson in the impact of vintage variation and vinification. They are from separate parcels (the names of the wines Bonnes Blanches and Le Rouchefer are the names of the respective vineyards). They are quite near to one another and although not dissimilar in their soil composition Bonnes Blanches is much more dominated by schist. In Le Rouchefer there is more clay. The exposition is also different. Bonnes Blanches faces north-east and Le Rouchefer south-west.

But we expect it is the vintage and vinification that has made these wines dramatically different. Bonnes Blanches is from the 2023 vintage. It was directly pressed and settled for 36 hours before being racked to a tank to begin fermentation. Before fermentation was complete it was transferred to barrels where it aged for 10 months. It is saline and fresh, with an ABV of only 11%. This is unusually low for this cuvée and an indication of perhaps unexpected rapid ripening during a very hot July after a cool spring.

Le Rouchefer is from the 2022 vintage, a vintage with several spikes of heat and very little relief from rain. (Like everyone we work with there is no irrigation in the vineyards and 2022 was particularly dry.) The vinification is also quite different. Predominantly directly-pressed, the juice was aged in two 25 hectolitre wooden casks. In one there was just juice and in the other mainly

juice but 10% was destemmed grapes which macerated for 6 months. After 6 months the contents of the vats were blended and the marc was distilled to make a gin. The wine was bottled in July 2023. And extraordinarily, the ABV is 15%, a level that in many wines would be uncomfortable but which is in balance in this wine.

We often receive the analysis stats from the Mosses. In Le Rouchefer there is 3 g/l of residual sugar and 18 mg/l of sulphites. The 2023 Bonnes Blanches is completely dry with less than .1 g/l of residual sugar and less than 10 mg/litre of sulphites.

Le Rouchefer demands food – something to offset its power. When he tried the wine, our friend Anthony Femia from Maker and Monger suggested Époisses, a very complex, aromatic washed-rind cheese from Burgundy. It's a cheese that needs a wine that won't be overpowered by it and Le Rouchefer fits that bill. It is definitely a great cheese wine and would be fun to try with a mixed plate of cheeses to see which works best. Bangarang is some of the most joyful drinking we have. It is a blend of directly-pressed Pineau d'Aunis and Grolleau Noir, blended with Cabernet Franc which was briefly macerated before pressing and accounts for the colour. Drunk chilled it is a perfect BBQ or picnic wine. Bonnes Blanches is traditionally also a wine we recommend with food. But this year because of its lower-than-usual level of alcohol and absence of any detectable sulphites is possible to enjoy it at any time, with or without food. However, it would be a lovely, lighter wine to start a meal with. We can imagine it with a bucket of prawns and some aioli for example.

These are the wines:

- **Mosse Bangarang 2024**
- **Mosse Le Rouchefer 2022**
- **Mosse Les Bonnes Blanches 2023**

The RRP for this selection of 3 bottles is \$237 but the pack price is only \$213.30. Check with us for the freight charge to your location.

Pack 2: New and Returning Mixed Soeur Cadette Pack

(15% Discount - 3 Packs Only)



This pack has two bottles of each of the three wines we have just received from la Soeur Cadette.

There is a detailed description of each of the wines in the newsletter but in summary there is one red, which is 100% Pinot Noir and two whites. One white is made from Melon de Bourgogne, a grape rarely found now in Burgundy despite it originating from there. It is now mainly grown in the Loire Valley to make Muscadet. The other white is Chardonnay, predominantly sourced from the Maçon.

All three are négoce wines, although the 2023 Melon has both purchased and estate Melon de Bourgogne in it. Some years ago, the family decided to only make one cuvée of Melon de Bourgogne and combine what they buy with what they grow.

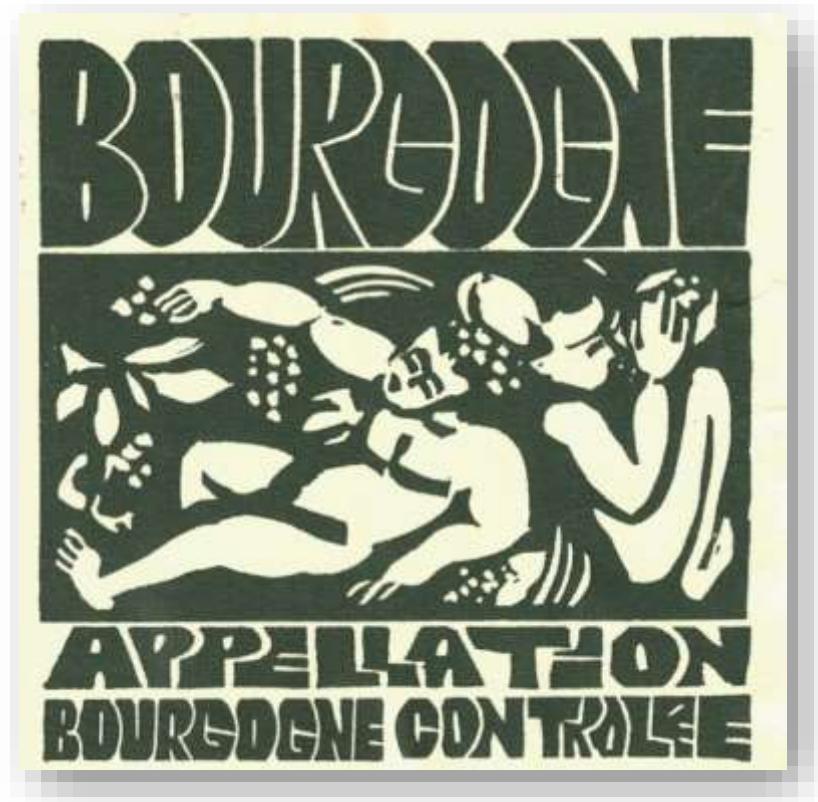
These are the wines:

- **La Soeur Cadette Melon 2023 (2 bottles)**
- **La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Blanc 2024 (2 bottles)**
- **La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Rouge 2023 (2 bottles)**

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$374 but the pack price is only \$317.90. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 3: La Soeur Cadette White Pack

(15% Discount - 3 Packs Only – Subsidised Freight)



We know many people particularly enjoy the white La Soeur Cadette wines, so we have created a pack with 3 bottles of each of the white wines we have just received.

Refer to the description of Pack 2 for more information and there are also more detailed descriptions of the wines in the newsletter.

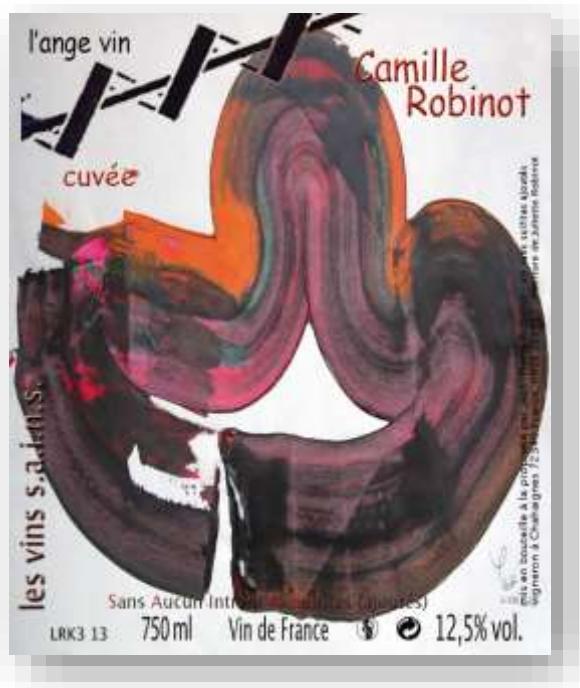
The pack has the following wines:

- La Soeur Cadette Melon 2023 **(3 bottles)**
- La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Blanc 2024 **(3 bottles)**

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$354 but the pack price is only \$300.90. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 4: Three Serious Reds Pack

(5% Discount - 1 Pack Only)



The Derain Mercurey has an interesting twist. It is not 100% Pinot Noir. It includes a little Pinot Beurot (Malvoisie, Pinot Gris) which is permitted in this appellation. La Plante Chassey is a south-east slope with clay and marl soil. The vines in this plot are over 100 years old.

Clos Milan is from a plot in front of Henri Milan's house, which has gravelly soil with blue marl on subsoil with large amounts of limestone. One of the estate's signature cuvées, it is a blend of 2/3 Grenache and 1/3 Syrah. Henri Milan has always had an artist create the label for Clos Milan and this vintage was painted by an Australian, Louisa Chircop.

Jean-Pierre Robinot's Camille is his premium Pineau d'Aunis cuvée, made from the estate's oldest vines, which are more than 100 years old. The wine spent several years in barrel (we think nearly 3 years) before bottling and should be beautiful drinking now almost 10 years later. It would also be fine to cellar for longer. This wine may have a near-infinite life! As with all his wines there are no added sulphites and the wine is not fined or filtered.

These are the wines:

- **Domaine Derain Mercurey La Plante Chassey 2019**
- **Henri Milan Clos Milan 2018**
- **Jean-Pierre Robinot Les Vignes de l'Ange Vin Camille 2013**

The RRP for this selection of 3 bottles is \$380 but the pack price is only \$361. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 5: Robinot 3 Pack

(No Discount - 1 Pack Only)



These three wines are from last year's Robinot release. They are wines which originally we'd included in our perhaps overly-generous personal allocation.

There are two Chenin Blancs. The early-drinking Lumière de Silex is a négoce wine made from grapes purchased from highly-respected vigneron Damien Bureau. The 2022 Charme is perhaps our favourite vintage ever of this estate-grown Chenin Blanc (and the reason why we over-extended our personal allocation). Concerto is a relatively new cuvée. It was originally mainly Pineau d'Aunis but is now 100% Cabernet Franc.

We don't as general practice advertise Jean-Pierre's wines. They are all sold by allocation. So, this is a rare chance, usually only available once a year when we release the wines and have a few packs.

There is no discount but if you add three other wines we would discount everything by 10% and subsidise the freight

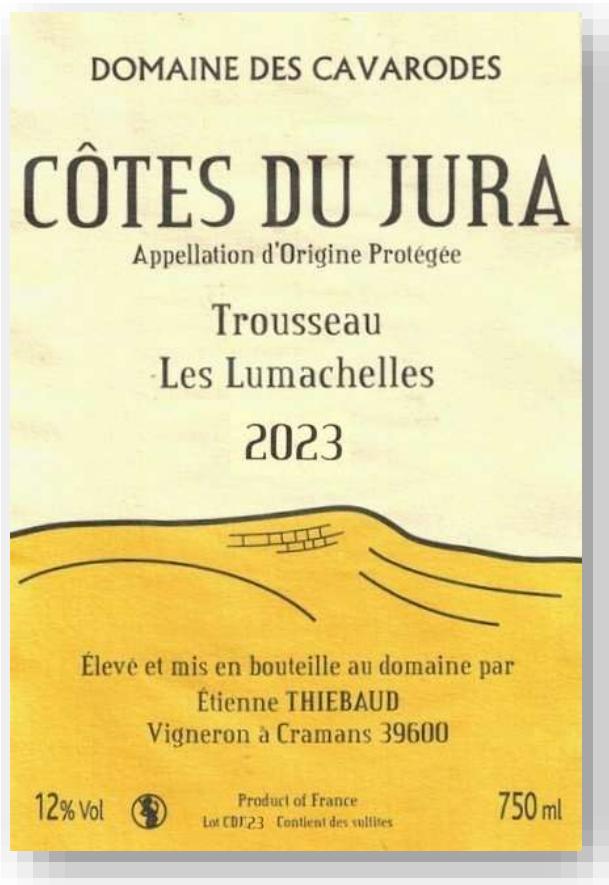
These are the wines:

- **Jean-Pierre Robinot Lumière de Silex 2022**
- **Jean-Pierre Robinot Concerto 2022**
- **Jean-Pierre Robinot Charme 2022**

The RRP for this selection of 3 bottles is \$291. Check with us for the freight charge to your location.

Pack 6: Jura 3 Pack

(1 Pack Only –No Discount – No Freight Subsidy)



Rarer than hen's teeth these wines don't need much explanation if you are a Jura aficionado. There are two whites. One is a Chardonnay from Tony Barnard from one of the recent frost-affected vintages where he used all his Chardonnay to make one wine rather than bottling wines from individual vineyards as separate cuvées. The other is a field blend from Domaine des Cavarodes, mainly of Chardonnay and Savagnin but with other old varieties as well. It is one of our favourite cuvées of Étienne's. The red is a Trousseau, also from Étienne Thiébaud, from the vineyards he has close to his cellars in Cramans.

There is no discount or subsidised freight for this pack but if you add three other wines we would discount everything by 10% and provide subsidised freight.

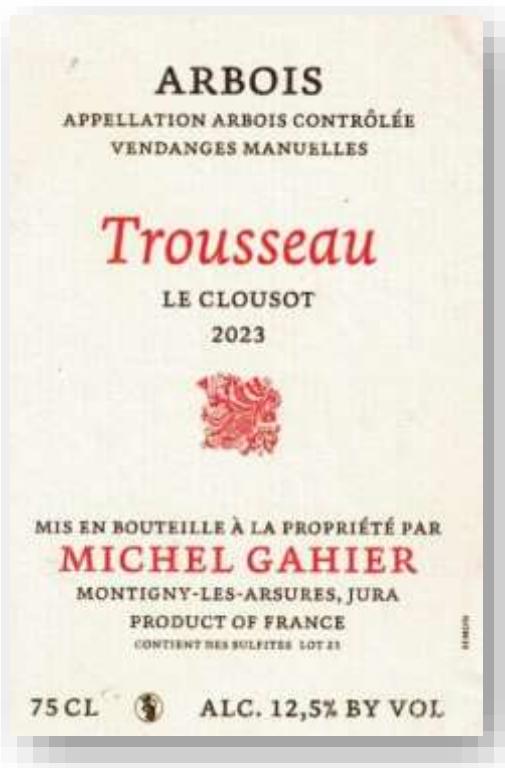
These are the wines:

- **Domaine des Cavarodes Vin de Pays Franche Comté Blanc 2023**
- **Domaine des Cavarodes Côtes du Jura Trousseau Lumachelles 2023**
- **Domaine Barnard Chardonnay Au Fil des Générations 2021**

The RRP for this selection of 3 bottles is \$286. Check with us for the freight charge to your location.

Pack 7: Michel Gahier Pack

(10% Discount - Subsidised Freight - 3 Packs)



This is a mixed pack with three newly-received white wines from Michel Gahier, one of the Jura vignerons we have been working with for many years. He lives in Montigny-lès-Arsures, a village a few kilometres from Arbois, which is particularly renowned for its trousseaus.

This pack has two red wines (both Trousseau), three white wines (all Chardonnay), and one bottle of Michel Gahier's beloved Montibulles sparkling wine, which, although not within the appellation, is made in the style of a Crémant du Jura using Chardonnay.

The individual wines are described in detail in the New Arrivals section of this newsletter.

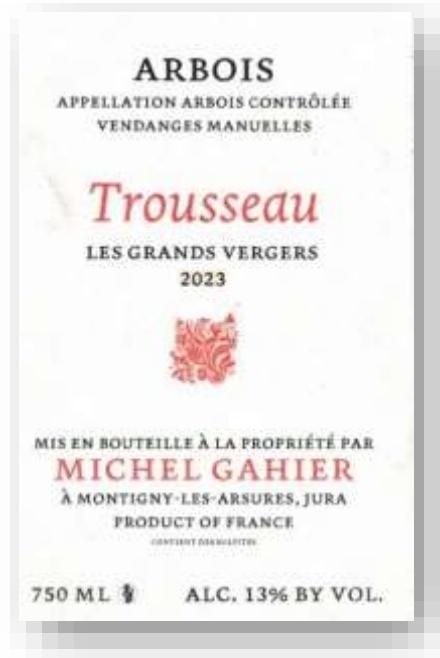
These are the wines:

- Michel Gahier Arbois Chardonnay Les Follasses 2023 (2 bottles)
- Michel Gahier Arbois Trousseau Le Clousot 2023
- Michel Gahier Arbois Trousseau La Vigne de Louis 2023
- Michel Gahier Montibulles
- Michel Gahier Arbois Chardonnay Lou Blanc 2022

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$504 but the pack price is only \$453.60. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 8: Mainly Oxidative Gahier Arrivals Pack

(No Discount – 2 Packs Available – No freight subsidy)



This pack has three of Michel Gahier's newly-arrived wines. Two are oxidative white wines and one is a red. One is a Vin Jaune, the iconic Jura wine made from Savagnin which must be aged for at least six years and three months in barrels without topping up, during which time it forms a flor which protects it. It is then bottled in a distinctive 620ml bottle (called a clavelin) which can only be used for this purpose. It is perhaps the ultimate wine to drink with semi-hard cheeses such as Comté which also comes from the same region.

This is our third small shipment of the 2015 vintage, which we first received early in 2024, so it has been in bottle for at least two years. The 2020 Les Fauquettes, is made in a similar way but not with such extended aging and with Melon Le Queue Rouge, a variant of Chardonnay. The third wine is a Trousseau made from Michel's oldest Trousseau vines from a vineyard behind his house, first planted in 1929.

There is no discount for this pack of three bottles but because of the value of the wines we can offer discounted freight. **If they are purchased with three other wines, we will discount all the wines, including these, by 10%.**

These are the wines:

- **Michel Gahier Arbois Trousseau Les Grands Vergers 2023**
- **Michel Gahier Vin Jaune 2015**
- **Michel Gahier Arbois Melon La Fauquette 2020**

The RRP for this selection of 3 bottles is \$453. Check with us for the freight charge to your location.

Pack 9: Octavin 3 Pack

(No Discount - No Freight Subsidy - 1 Pack Available)



This pack carried over from the December newsletter because it didn't sell – just in case anyone has a change of mind! It includes wines Alice made in two very different ways with Jura Poulsard. One is a white which is very 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 bottle 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 3 more bottles we will subsidise the freight and discount the wine by 10%.

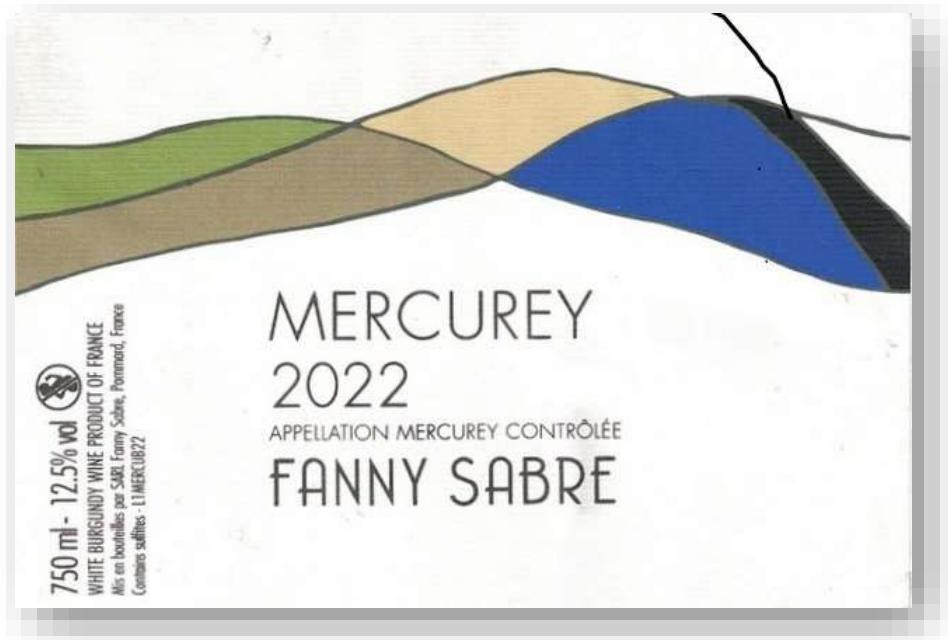
These are the wines:

- **I'Octavin Poulsard Blanc Hip Hip J 2020 - (direct press Poulsard)**
- **I'Octavin Poulsard Hip Hip J 2018**
- **I'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 10: Premium White 3 Pack

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



This pack is also carried over from the December newsletter in case anyone needs to top up their serious whites collection.

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.

Bits and Pieces

Flavescence dorée

Flavescence dorée is one of the diseases that are causing so much concern throughout France. It is just one of a number of diseases that are causing problems to the vines, but this one is particularly nasty!

The disease is spread by an insect called *Scaphoideus titanus* which causes a number of problems in vines that it has populated. It was first noticed in France in 1958 in the Gironde¹ but it could have been present prior to that time and not recognised.

Once the flavescence dorée sets in to the vascular system then the vines suffer in a number of ways including:

- Delayed or lack of bud break leading to poor fruit development and quality.
- Leaf curling resulting in leaves turning yellowish or reddish depending on the type of vine.
- Reduced photosynthesis activity in the affected leaves resulting in lower grape quality and up to 50% reduction in yields.
- Reduced production of young wood which can lead to insufficient young wood for pruning, affecting the health of the vine.
- Damage to the shape and structure of phloem cells which is the “pipe” in the vine for moving water to the incipient grapes.



Flavescence dorée in a vine

¹ The Gironde area is named after the Gironde River which flows through the centre of the Bordeaux region and out to the Atlantic Ocean.

What can be done once Flavescence dorée is found in a vineyard? For organic vines the treatment involves spraying the vines two or three times before the fruit emerges with an acceptable, non-poisonous substance such as kaolin.

The need for more than one insecticide application derives from the prolonged egg-hatching period, which lasts for over 45 days.

Proper hygiene in the vineyard must also be rigorously adopted such as removing any affected parts of the vine and taking them out of the vineyard for disposal. This includes when pruning the vines, all prunings should be taken out of the vineyard and preferably burned.

If planting new vines, a good strategy is to treat them with hot water for 45 minutes to kill any bugs that may be residing on the vines.

An emerging possibility is the use of endophytes in the vineyard which will kill any bugs on the vines.

We noted the following piece in a French newspaper which we have translated to show that it has even become a problem for the Champagne region:

*"One concern in Champagne is the spread of **flavescence dorée**, a bacterial disease that can kill vines. A leafhopper (insect) transmits it. In Champagne, nearly 20 hectares of vines had to be uprooted in 2024, and a little more than 18 hectares in 2025, to contain the disease. Vigilance is high. It is crucial to identify infected vines in time and remove them."*

Just imaging the foregone costs of having to uproot 20 hectares of vines in the Champagne district!!

The Colour of Gamay

Quite often, especially in French stories about Beaujolais you can see Gamay referred to as Gamay Noir à Jus Blanc (black Gamay with white juice) instead of just Gamay or maybe Gamay Noir to signify that the skin is black/purple.

When people in Burgundy refer to Pinot Noir, for example they never refer to it as "Pinot Noir à jus blanc" despite the fact that Pinot Noir also has "white" juice.

The reason for this is that not all Gamay has white juice. There are a number of close relatives which have red juice. These are known as "teinturier grapes" – red grapes with red juice where the anthocyanin pigments that cause the red colour accumulate in the flesh of the grape.

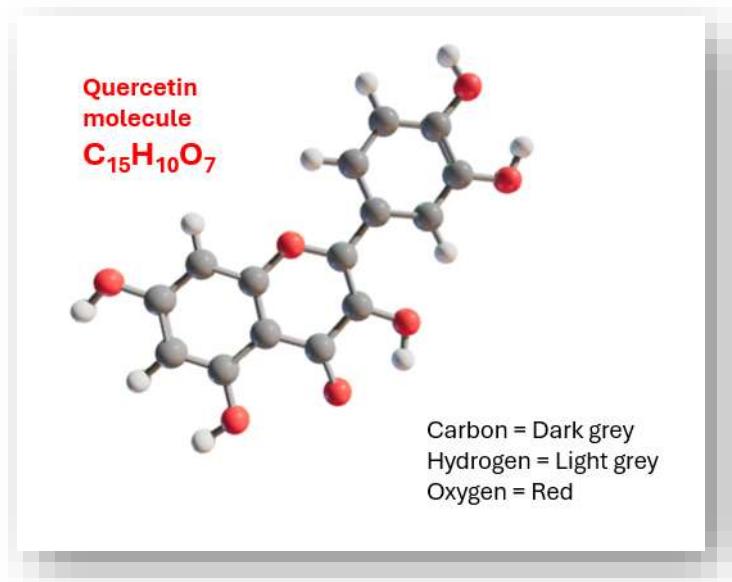
This means that if you crush the grapes of Gamay Noir without previously macerating you will get white juice. If you leave the skins in with the juice it will gradually take on the red colour from the skins.

But if you crush the grapes of Gamay Fréaux, Gamay de Bouze and Gamay de Chaudenay then you will get red juice without having to wait for the skins to give up their colour.

Quercetin in wine – headaches?

Maybe sulphites have taken the blame for headaches for too long. We have some preliminary information about recent publications from studies into the issue.

Quercetin is produced in grapes as a natural sunblock, especially in sunny regions like the Languedoc in France and the Napa Valley in the USA, and is extracted into wine from grape skins during fermentation as soluble quercetin glycosides. Later acid hydrolysis and aging break these down into insoluble free quercetin, which can form a haze or sediment in the juice/wine, with factors like sunlight exposure, grape variety, and pH influencing final levels and precipitation risk.



As you can see in the molecular diagram above, a quercetin molecule has 15 atoms of carbon (the dark grey atoms), 10 atoms of hydrogen (the light grey atoms) and 7 atoms of oxygen (red atoms).

Where does Quercetin come from?

- Sunlight Stimulates Production:** Grapes produce quercetin (primarily as quercetin-3-glucoside) as a defence mechanism against UV light, similar to a natural sunscreen, so sun-exposed grapes have much higher levels.
- Extraction During Fermentation:** During red winemaking, the must (juice, skins, seeds) ferments. The skins, rich in flavonols, release quercetin glycosides into the wine.
- Hydrolysis in Wine:** In the acidic environment of wine, especially during aging, these soluble glycosides break down (hydrolyze) to form free quercetin.

Factors Influencing Quercetin Levels

- Sun Exposure:** Higher exposure (e.g., leaf removal) dramatically increases glycoside content in grapes, leading to more quercetin in wine.
- Grape Variety:** Different grapes naturally have different flavonol levels.
- Winemaking:** Practices like skin contact, fining, and yeast strains affect extraction and stability.
- Aging:** Hydrolysis continues, increasing free quercetin over time.
- Insolubility:** Free quercetin is not very soluble in wine, especially as it ages.

- **Haze/Sediment:** When quercetin exceeds the solubility level of the wine, it forms harmless yellow-green crystals or haze, particularly in wines with lower anthocyanins.

Now the problem!!

It has now been discovered that it is probably not always sulphites that cause people to have a headache after drinking red wine, but often it is caused by a derivative of quercetin.

In a paper published by the University of California at Davis in the journal *Scientific Reports* it is claimed that the culprit may be the subject of this story, namely the flavanol, quercetin.

One of the authors, Andrew Waterhouse, professor emeritus with the UC Davis Department of Viticulture and Enology explains:

“When it gets in your bloodstream, your body converts it to a different form called quercetin glucuronide. In that form, it blocks the metabolism of alcohol.”

So, the body is prevented from breaking down the alcohol due to the presence of the quercetin glucuronide. The article goes on to say:

“Acetaldehyde is a well-known toxin, irritant and inflammatory substance. Researchers know that high levels of acetaldehyde can cause facial flushing, headache and nausea.”

Another of the authors, Morris Levin, professor of neurology and director of the Headache Center at the University of California, San Francisco, also puts his weight behind the theory:

“We postulate that when susceptible people consume wine with even modest amounts of quercetin, they develop headaches, particularly if they have a preexisting migraine or another primary headache condition.”²

We will watch with interest as other authors follow this trail to see if quercetin is really the problem here. It is interesting that natural wines are generally much lower in quercetin than other wines, so we will be interested in finding out more about this issue.

² Apramita Devi, Morris Levin, Andrew L Waterhouse. (2023) *Inhibition of ALDH2 by quercetin glucuronide suggests a new hypothesis to explain red wine headaches*. *Sci Rep*, Nov 20;13(1):19503.

How do grapes ripen? – Part 3

In the December 2025 issue of this newsletter, we published Part 2 of the story “How do grapes ripen?”.

In this final story we are going to simply mention a few other compounds that are created in wine that have specific effects on the wine such as changing the aroma, changing the colour, softening the cell walls, modifying the pectin structure or other chemical characteristic of the wine.

Chemicals in wine and their effect on aspects of the wine

In part 2 of this series, we talked about the effect of Abscisic acid on the ripening of the grapes, but, as you will soon see, there are many other chemicals created during the ripening process which have other effects on the ripening grapes.

Here are some of the chemicals that also play a part during the ripening process.

Pectinases

In grape ripening, pectinases play a primary role in breaking down the pectic substances in the cell walls and middle lamellae ((including polygalacturonase, pectin methylesterase, and pectin lyase), which leads to fruit softening and increased juice and colour extraction.

In a paper published by Deytieux-Belleau et al (2008)³ they stress the importance of pectinases in the softening of the fruit such as grapes which occurs in parallel with other process such as colour changes and aroma changes among others.

Grape softening is thought to result from extensive cell wall modifications that occur during ripening. These modifications result from the activity of different cell wall-modifying enzymes. Some of the key functions carried out are:

- **Fruit Softening:** The primary function is to break down insoluble protopectin into smaller, more soluble pectin molecules. This degradation of pectic polysaccharides loosens the cell wall structure and reduces cell-to-cell adhesion, which is the main factor causing the grape to soften.
- **Juice and Colour Release:** The breakdown of cell wall integrity during ripening helps release intracellular sugars, water, and other compounds. In red grapes, this process facilitates the release of polyphenolic compounds, like anthocyanins (colour), which are trapped within the skin cells and are then released into the flesh and juice.
- **Modifying Pectin Structure:** Pectin methylesterase (PME), a type of pectinase, removes methyl ester groups from the pectin chains, making them a suitable substrate for other

³ Deytieux-Belleau, Christelle et al (2008), Pectin methylesterase and polygalacturonase in the developing grape skin. Plant Physiology and Biochemistry. Vol 46, Issue 7, Pages 638-646.

pectinases like polygalacturonase (PG). This change in pectin structure is crucial for the controlled degradation of the cell wall during ripening.

The pectinases considered most important for ripening and softening in grapes are Pectin Methyl esterase (PME), Polygalacturonase (PG), and Pectin Lyase (PL). These enzymes work in concert to break down pectic substances in the grape cell walls.

The process involves the following key actions:

- Pectin Methyl esterase (PME) removes methyl groups from the pectin polymer, transforming highly esterified pectin into pectic acid (polygalacturonic acid) and methanol.
- Polygalacturonase (PG) then hydrolytically cleaves the de-esterified pectic acid chains into smaller fragments (oligogalacturonates).
- Pectin Lyase (PL) non-hydrolytically breaks down methylated pectin chains by trans-elimination, also contributing to cell wall degradation and fruit softening.

Research has identified specific genes, such as VvPL15 and VvPG1, as key players in grape berry softening during ripening⁴, though the specific important family members might differ slightly between grape varieties. The activity of these enzymes results in the degradation of the cell wall structure and the solubilization of insoluble protopectin, which leads to the desired softening of the fruit.

Cellulases

Cellulases degrade cellulose and hemicellulose, the structural components of the plant cell wall that form a reinforcing network with pectin.

- **Minor Role in Softening:** While cellulase activity is present during ripening, the degree of cellulose degradation is generally less significant in grapes compared to the role of pectinases. In many fruits, cellulose microfibrils remain largely intact, except in certain cases like avocados or specific grape varieties.
- **Enhanced Maceration:** In the context of winemaking, the activity of endogenous or commercially added cellulases and hemicellulases (not done for natural wines) can help break down the entire cell wall structure more completely. This enhanced maceration improves press yields, aids in clarification and filtration processes, and helps release additional flavour/aroma compounds and tannins from the grape skins into the must or wine.

In summary, pectinases are the key drivers of the softening process during grape ripening by dissolving the middle lamella, while cellulases contribute to the overall disassembly of the cell wall network, which becomes particularly relevant for maximizing the extraction of quality components during winemaking.

⁴ Yuying Ma et al (2023) VvPL15 Is the Core Member of the Pectate Lyase Gene Family Involved in Grape Berries Ripening and Softening. International Journal of Molecular Science. Vol 24, No 11.

Aromas

There are a few different chemicals which are responsible for developing aromas in grapes which individually come from completely different classes of compounds.

The major players in developing aromas are:

- **Terpenes (monoterpenes):** These compounds are largely responsible for the floral, fruity, and citrus aromas found in aromatic varieties like Muscat and Riesling. Some of the specific compounds are *linalool* (hyacinth/Muscat aroma), *geraniol* (rose/citrus), *nerol* (rose/citrus) and α -*terpineol* (lilac aroma). Terpenes typically increase during ripening, though some can be present as flavourless precursors (glycosides) that are released during winemaking.
- **Norisoprenoids:** These are derived from the breakdown of carotenoids, which contribute to a wide range of complex fruity and floral aromas, even at very low concentrations due to their low odour thresholds. Examples are β -*damascenone* (which have the aromas of plums or cooked apples) and β -*ionone* (intense lilac aroma) which tends to accumulate in grapes in the later stages of maturation and with sun exposure.
- **Methopyrazines:** These compounds are associated with green or vegetal characteristics. A common example is the compound 3-isobutyl-2-methoxypyrazine which is associated with aromas such as bell peppers, asparagus and green beans. Unlike terpenes and norisoprenoids, the concentration of methoxypyrazines *decreases* significantly as grapes ripen and are exposed to sunlight. High levels in ripe fruit are often considered a sign of underripeness or excessive vine vigour.
- **Rotundone:** This is a sesquiterpene which we mention separately as it is somewhat rare in the skins of most grapes, however it is the compound that gives Shiraz the black pepper aroma and it also increases as ripening progresses.

Tannins

As grapes ripen, tannins change from harsh and bitter to softer and smoother, a process called phenolic ripeness, through chemical modifications like polymerization (linking smaller units) and interactions with other compounds, making the fruit palatable for animals and improving the texture of the resulting wine.

The seeds in grapes also have initially harsh tannins which oxidise and decrease in size during ripening and when the grapes are ripe these have very little effect on the subsequent wine.

The other tannins (skin tannins) in the grape undergo structural changes as ripening progresses and they often get bigger through joining with other compounds such as pectins and anthocyanins.

Skin Colour

The colour of the grape skins is provided by a number of anthocyanin monoglucosides and some of their derivatives.

The most common anthocyanidins which form the core structure of the anthocyanins found most commonly in *Vitis Vinifera* grapes are:

- **Malvidin-3-O-glucoside** this compound is the most abundant in the majority of red grape varieties and provides a purple/darker red colour;
- **Peonidin-3-O-glucoside** provides a magenta/reddish colour;
- **Petunidin-3-O-glucoside** provides a dark red or purple colour;
- **Delphinidin-3-O-glucoside** provides a blueish/purple colour;
- **Cyanidin-3-O-glucoside** provides an orange/reddish colour.

Sometimes these molecules join with other organic acids such as caffeic acid or acetic acid and contribute to colour stability in the wine.

Sugars

We have discussed sugars before especially when writing about photosynthesis in grapevines (October and December 2023). If you read those articles, you will remember that sugar concentrates in the leaves of the grapevines. Mostly simple sugars in grapevines are derived from starches which are broken down by enzymes such as amylase or invertase. However, grapes do not accumulate very much starch so only small amounts of sugar such as maltose and glucose are created in the grapes themselves.

However, when required, the sucrose in the leaves can be moved into the grapes. Once in the grape the invertase converts sucrose into glucose and fructose.

Conclusion

The conclusion is that there is a lot happening in the grapes during the ripening processes. All the winemakers have to do is determine the best time to pick the grapes so that all the compounds that provide the chemicals for the wine that is to be made have been generated in the grapes.

French wine terms

Octroi

An ancient tax on wine levied on anyone entering a town in France and carrying wine – in the 19th Century this tax led to many wine bars being set up outside the town boundaries.

Vin Doux Naturel

These wines are fortified during fermentation, resulting in sweet dessert wines like Muscat de Beaumes-de-Venise which is beloved by people in Provence especially around the village Beaumes-de-Venise.

Vin de France

We haven't written about this commonly used appellation for a long time because we mistakenly thought it was self-evident.

It is an official European denomination that since 2009 has designated wines from a specific country (e.g. Vin de France) without indicating the precise geographical area where it was produced. These wines are subject to a set of quality criteria and the vintage and grape variety may be mentioned on the label but it requires extra bureaucratic processes with the certifying body to provide traceability.

In terms of production and winemaking, wines in the Vin de France category are subject to no further requirements beyond those established by European regulations for wines in general. These regulations primarily concern the permitted grape varieties, the minimum and maximum alcohol content of the wines, and winemaking practices.

One example of a practice that is not permitted is dilution, which is a technique that involves adding water to wine. This is not permitted under the Vin de France rules. Dilution of wine can be considered a form of food adulteration.

Le mouillage

This is the process of dilution which means adding water to the wine. This is illegal and is a European-wide law that bans adding water to all wines even those labelled as Vin de France.

Vin bio

In this case this is a shortcut for the slightly longer vin biologique which refers to organic wine.

Vignoble

A vineyard.

Vieillissement

Vieillissement is the term used for aging wine in barrels or tanks to take on aged characters.

Chardonnay Rose Grape Variety

There are many Rose varieties of white grapes throughout the world. These are not to be confused with rosé wines or grapes that make rosé wines.

Instead, these are grapes that mutate slightly from their white cousins and develop pink “splotches” on the skin. When the skins of these grapes are left in contact with the white juice the colour from the skin makes the juice turn a light pink colour.

Discovered in Champagne in the early 20th century, Chardonnay Rose is a pink-skinned mutation of Chardonnay. It was officially recognised as a permitted grape variety in July 2025. The wines it produces are similar to Chardonnay Blanc, though often slightly fruitier.

The addition of Chardonnay Rose (which is also called Pink Chardonnay), to the Champagne appellation specifications brings the total number of approved grapes to eight. Chardonnay Rose joins Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, Petit Meslier and Arbane on the list of authorized varieties.

Note that in a previous newsletter we also talked about a grape variety called Voltis which a couple of Champagne producers are trialling, but this is not a fully authorised variety – it is just available temporarily to trial its performance in the rapidly changing climate being experienced in the Champagne region.

Normally, we include a graph showing the increase or decrease of the variety since the early 1950s, however the Champagne Rose variety has only an almost vanishingly small presence and almost entirely in the Champagne district where there is a total extent of 0.1 hectares.

It is very rare to find a change to the rules for growing grapes and making wine in the Champagne region.

Those who read this newsletter regularly will know that the rules for each appellation are embodied in a document called the Cahier des Charges (Specifications in English) and there is one for each of the hundreds of appellations in France.

So, recently we have seen the inclusion of this extra grape variety for Champagne added to the Cahier des Charges for that region. The decision was announced by the Comité Champagne (the committee that controls the rules) in July 2025.

The rule that was changed is V.1 – Encépagement which is the rule that specifies which grape varieties can be used.

V. — Encépagement

1° - Encépagement

Les vins sont exclusivement issus des cépages suivants :

- les cépages principaux : Arbane B, Chardonnay B, Chardonnay rose Rs, Meunier N, Petit meslier B, Pinot blanc B, Pinot gris G, Pinot noir N.

This rule, as you can see above, specifies which varieties can be used, but there are other rules as well. Essentially the grape varieties are divided into two types. The rule we have shown above simply says which varieties can be used.

We should also explain about the meaning of the capital letters B, R, N and G. This refers to the colour of the grapes namely Blanc (white), Rose (pink), Noir (black) and Gris (grey).

To find out what restrictions there are on the use of these varieties the further rules that matter here are also in Section V but in the second part which is 2 - Règle de proportion à l'exploitation.

This refers to the proportion of each grape that can be used in a Champagne wine.

The two main rules are:

- a) La proportion des cépages principaux est supérieure ou égale à 95% de l'encépage.
- b) La proportion de la variété « d'intérêt à fin d'adaptation » est inférieure ou égale à 5% de l'encépage.

The rule labelled a) discusses “cépages principaux” which, together, must be greater than or equal to 95% of the grapes.

The rule labelled b) discusses « d'intérêt à fin d'adaptation », which refers to Chardonnay Rose which has been adopted for adaptation purposes and must be less than or equal to 5% of the grapes used.

Now to the leaves:



As you can see in the photo of the Chardonnay Rose leaf above there is one deep U-shaped sinus only whereas many leaves have three. It also has a sharply pointed terminal lobe.

The grape bunches as shown below are relatively “loose” and the colour of the grape is quite clearly “pink”.



You can also see that the bunches are fairly loose thus allowing the wind to get in among the grapes and blow out any diseases that settle in among them.

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.