

WINE Talk: February 2026

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 142

Welcome to newsletter 142 for February 2026. We hope you continue to enjoy reading them. We certainly are continuing to enjoy writing them!

We have been able to put together **6 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 what's in the packs in this edition of the Wine Talk newsletter;
- A story about the New Arrivals;
- A brief run-down on what is coming (nothing in the short term but plenty in April!);
- The 6 packs with many really interesting new arrivals and some older wines available;
- A long edition of Bits and Pieces covering a number of topics including some news items from France.
- A story about soil bacteria and some positive effects they have on the soil.
- Another set of French words and their English equivalents.
- This month the grape variety story is about the Muscat family including four variations that are commonly found in France (world-wide there are hundreds).

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

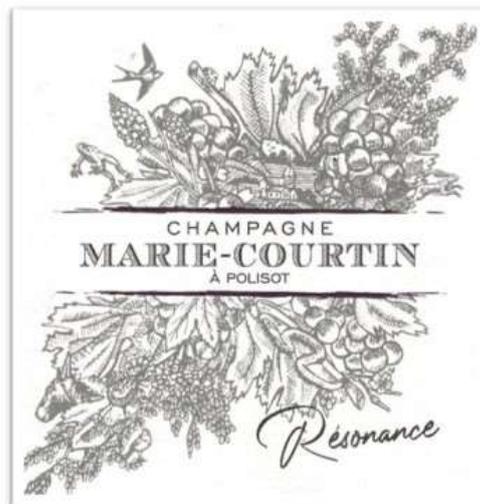
Marie-Courtin

Setting aside Mito Inoue, whose allocations are measured just in dozens, the Champagne from Marie-Courtin is always our smallest allocation. The wines always sell quickly usually to people who have asked in advance. However, there is one pack in this newsletter and we have sold a good proportion to many of the wine shops we supply, including Brisbane's wonderful new Champagne-centric Winnifreds.

Named for her great-grandmother, Marie-Courtin is Dominique Moreau's micro estate of 2.5 hectares in Polisot the Côte des Bar region of Champagne. She began in 2000, and has used biodynamic practices since 2003, partly encouraged to go down that path after her husband Roland's father was diagnosed with cancer. Roland inherited the larger 8.5 hectare Piillot estate, which has been in his family for many generations and she and Roland work together in both places. What they have learned over time on the small Marie-Courtin plots has gradually also been introduced to Piillot, which is now also organically certified.

Dominique and Roland work together to make their own biodynamic preparations and composts and think deeply about every decision they make and its impact on their vines and the planet. Base material for their compost is sourced locally – the aim is to keep as small a footprint as possible and to work the vines in such a way that they are not pushed to over-deliver and to increase the amount and biodiversity of life in the soil. Subject to some horrific attacks of mildew recently, especially in 2024, they have had to use copper sprays to contain them but also use essential oils and tisanes to fight against disease.

The recently redesigned labels for Marie-Courtin deliberately represent not just the vines but the wholistic environment in which they sit, recognising the importance of biodiversity and interactions between all elements of nature.



In the cellar her touch is equally light. Wines are fermented with native yeasts and she uses no dosage with any of her cuvées. Some (Concordance and Présence in this release) are made with no added sulphites. She uses a variety of vessels – enamel tanks for some cuvées, barrels (ranging from 228-600 litres in size) for others and, more recently, clay and sandstone amphoras.

Most of Dominique's vines are on a generous south-facing hill overlooking Polisot. The soil is predominantly Kimmeridgian limestone and clay, not dissimilar to the soils of Chablis, which is about 60 kilometres to the south-west. Individual cuvées are sourced from the same part of the vineyard each year and generally made the same way every year so the variations from one year to the next truly reflect the vintages. She also has some vines in Portlandian limestone soils, including some of the Chardonnay. Her estate is 90% Pinot Noir, with small quantities of Chardonnay and Pinot Blanc.

Her production is tiny and our allocation is very limited, although larger than it has been in the past. We had just four cuvées available with this release. Our stock is all sold out apart from Pack 1 but they should be available in small quantities in good wineshops and you will start to see them on restaurant lists.

Marie-Courtin Champagne Résonance 2022

A Blanc de Noir from 100% Pinot Noir, Résonance is aged entirely in tank prior to bottling. Disgorged in June 2025. No dosage.

Marie-Courtin Champagne Efflorescence 2019

A Blanc de Noir from 100% Pinot Noir, Efflorescence is aged entirely in oak barrel prior to bottling. Disgorged in June 2025. No dosage.

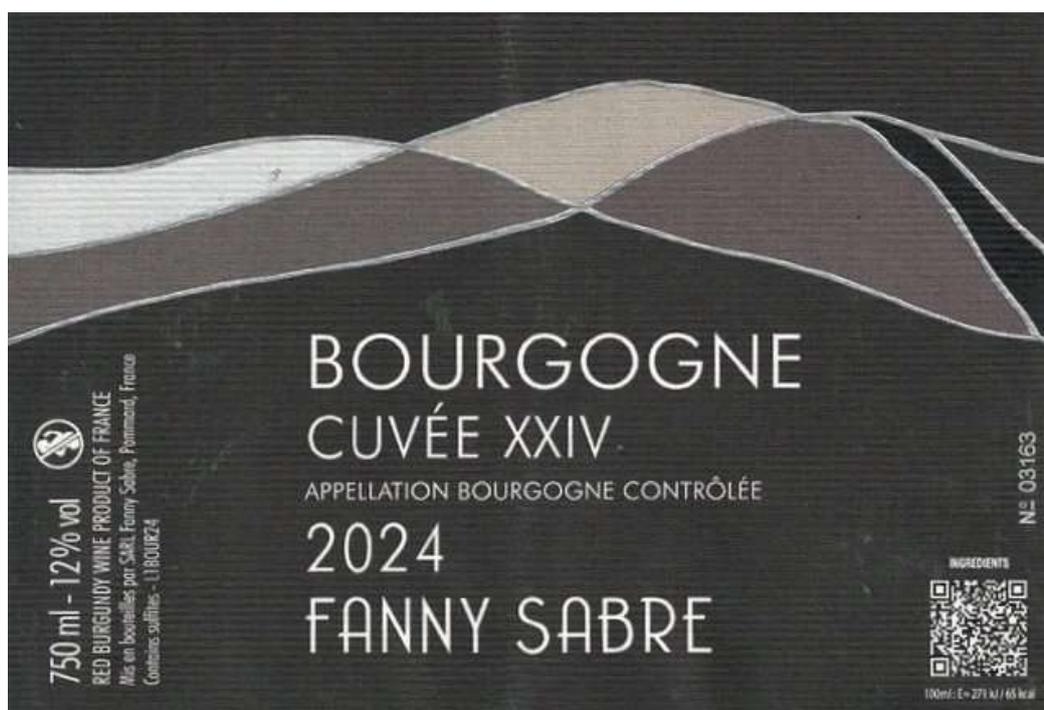
Marie-Courtin Champagne Concordance 2019

A Blanc de Noir, this wine was aged in tank prior to bottling, and made with no added sulphites at any stage of the process. Disgorged in April 2025. No dosage.

Marie-Courtin Champagne Présence 2022

This Champagne is a blend of 80% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot Blanc. It was aged in tank prior to bottling, and made with no added sulphites at any stage of the process. Disgorged in June 2025. No dosage.

Fanny Sabre



Fanny Sabre is based in Pommard in the Côte de Beaune, which is just south of Beaune. Most of her vines are in the Côte de Beaune although keeping track of some of her newer purchases and rentals is always a challenge – something like a moving target! Although she knows her winery, which she moved to some years ago, is slightly too small for the number of hectares she has (she tends approximately 8 hectares and says the winery is perfect for 6) we feel her innate inquisitiveness and constant desire to learn and push herself could at any time lead her to take on a new small plot or swap one plot for another.

Sometimes, like with the vines she makes her Anatole cuvées from, these additions may be from outside the Côte de Beaune. (As an aside, when we first started working with Fanny she was in a tiny cellar inside the city of Beaune, one of the last working wineries inside the city. When she moved to her current cellar in Pommard, Australian Andrew Nielsen from Le Grappin moved into her Beaune cellar.)

While she does make some experimental wines (there is occasionally a pet-nat and has been an orange Aligoté and a Chardonnay) mostly her winemaking generally follows a relatively consistent approach.

Her viticulture is organic, with vineyards certified by ECOCERT, but she does not put her certifications on her labels. Grapes are picked by hand and hand sorted in the vineyard. This was a particularly important and incredibly time-consuming step during the 2024 harvest, which all the wines we have in this shipment come from. In 2024 many wine regions, including Burgundy, suffered from the serious mildew attack. Fanny lost 80% of her potential harvest, making 2024 her worst vintage ever. She is very happy with the wines she made, but there is so little, and the reason she was able to be happy with what she made was in large part because of this meticulous sorting in the vineyard to ensure that diseased fruit did not make it to the cellar.

She directly presses the juice for her white wines then lets it settle, typically for 48 hours, prior to transferring it to oak barrels (usually 500 litres for the cuvées she makes in larger quantities) where it finishes fermentation and aging. (There are occasionally other vessels – she has at least one amphora which has been used for part of Anatole Blanc and for orange wines in the past.) The barrels are assembled into stainless steel tanks and given time to recover prior bottling. At bottling the whites are lightly filtered using a lenticular filter, a deliberate decision by Fanny because she prefers not to have the aroma of the lees in the bottle. The whites we have in this shipment were bottled in July last year.

For the reds she macerates whole bunches in open tronconique oak vats with some pump overs and occasional punch downs for approximately 2 weeks before pressing. Wines are aged in a mix of oak barrels (mainly larger barrels around 500 litres) plus she also has a 20 HL tronconique oak vat. The size of the barrels used is largely dependent on the size of the harvest for the particular cuvée. She has a mix of sizes available. After assembling and resting the red wines are bottled without filtration.

For most cuvées at least one or two new barrels are part of the mix, particularly for Chardonnay, but no wine is ever predominantly made from new barrels. We have one cuvée in this release (Chorey-lès-Beaune Blanc) which was made entirely in barrels that had been used previously.

She does make very small additions of sulphites after malolactic fermentation and during aging for all her wines. For Fanny these small additions provide security and give her more control over the levels of volatile acidity.

These are the wines from 2024 that are in this new release.

Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Aligoté 2024

Fanny Sabre's Aligoté has always been one of our most prized wines. The vines, which are now approximately 50 years old, were planted by her father who loved this variety so much that he put them in prized terroir in Pommard. In that renowned red wine only appellation the wine he made would have been much more valuable had he planted Pinot Noir but fortunately he followed his heart. The wine has the strength and power for which the appellation is known coupled with great acidity and raciness, a hallmark of this variety.

The wine is aged in 500 litre barrels. ABV 12.5%. \$80

Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Blanc 2024

Fanny Sabre's Bourgogne Blanc which is 100% Chardonnay, is all about citrus, minerality and acidity. This wine is a blend from two clay and limestone parcels, both of which have beautiful terroir. One is in Meursault below the Château de Meursault and the other on the hillsides of Pommard next to Pommard terroir.

The wine was aged on lees in 500 litre barrels. It was lightly filtered before bottling in July 2025. ABV 12% \$90

Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Rouge Cuvée XXIV 2024

This is (hopefully for Fanny) a one-off cuvée, rescued from the disaster that was the 2024 vintage. Because there were so few grapes to harvest she made a decision to blend the Pinot Noir from what would normally be her Bourgogne Rouge, which comes from 3 plots which once were Pommard but were declassified after World War II, with what would normally have been the Pommard, Volnay and the Beaune Clos des Renardes Rouge cuvées. It is the first time she has done anything like this but, talking to her, a week after it was bottled last July she was very happy with it. As she described it, each vineyard has brought its best quality to the wine - structure from Pommard, prettiness from Volnay, and sweetness from Clos des Renardes. There is an elegance to this wine which makes it an outstanding Bourgogne Rouge. Its black label symbolises the bleakness which caused it to exist. ABV 12.5%. \$95.

Fanny Sabre Beaune Clos des Renardes Blanc 2024

This cuvée is 90% Chardonnay and 10% Pinot Blanc. The yields were about 1/3 what she would normally expect from this secret Beaune vineyard hidden behind huge stone walls and abutting the forested hills to the west of Beaune. Aging is in 500 litre barrels. It is highly aromatic with a tiny hint of good bitterness and minerality at the back of what is a lengthy palate. ABV 13%. \$154 (Sold out except in packs)

Fanny Sabre Chorey-lès-Beaune Blanc 2024

We rarely receive this wine, from a vineyard of Chardonnay Fanny Sabre bought in 2019, so it is a surprise to have a small allocation from the difficult 2024 vintage. For most wines, Fanny likes at least some new barrels but all of this cuvee was aged in older 500 litre barrels. The result is a softer, gentle wine which is highly approachable now, and characteristic of this appellation. She sees it, in terms of complexity, as sitting between her Bourgogne Blanc and Beaune Clos des Renardes. ABV 12%. \$140 (Sold out except in packs)

Fanny Sabre Monthélie Les Sous Roches Rouge 2024

From one of the Côte de Beaune's renowned villages for red wines, Fanny has a tiny holding in the lieu dit Les Sous-Roche. From the 2024 vintage she made only three 228 litre barrels. Coming from stony clay and limestone soils, the wine has structure and length and should cellar for many years. ABV 13%. \$150 (Sold out except in one pack)

What's Coming

The short answer is nothing! Thanks to a delay by our shipping company, we won't be releasing any new wines in March, which means either the pack options in the next newsletter will be very lean or, if we have the time to make them, there could be a few special treats of older wines.

Early in April we will have new releases from **Domaine Milan** (Provence) and **Domaine Derain** (Burgundy).

The Milan release will include our first 2025 wine – Milan Nouveau, a crunchy red wine which should be good for late summer chilled red drinking. We will also have the good value Haru

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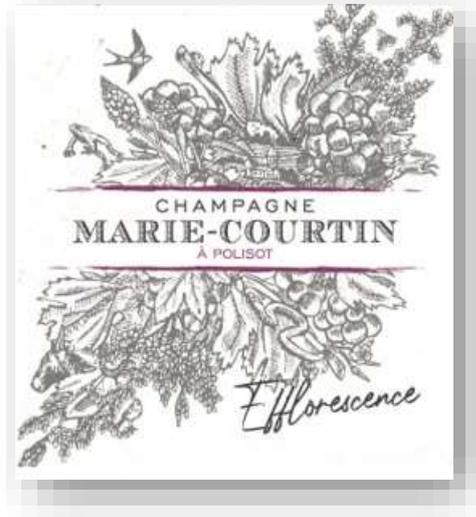
Rouge as well as Papillon Rouge, the red cuvée the Milans make which has no added sulphites. The shipment also includes the Milans' iconic white wine, Le Grand Blanc (2019 in 750ml bottles plus a few magnums of 2017), Clos Milan, Le Premier, Le Carre, and Le Jardin. These are all wines which will sit comfortably in any cellar for some time. We are particularly looking forward to having the 2019 Le Grand Blanc. When we tasted it last year with cellar master Sebastien Xavier (who has been with the family since long before we started working with them in 2010) he said "it gives me goosebumps". It is truly spectacular. There is also a little Luna and Gaia and we are particularly looking forward to two sparkling wines – a rosé pet-nat that, unlike the last one we had from the Milans, is very well behaved, and a serious white sparkling wine.

We have split our Sextant and Derain shipments in two this year and the first arrival will be entirely Domaine Derain and predominantly white wines. It includes 2024 Bourgogne Aligoté, the 2023 Bourgogne cuvées La Combe (including a few magnums) and Landre, 2023 Saint-Aubin Blanc, two vintages of Saint-Aubin 1er Cru En Remilly (2022 and 2023) and some 2022 Saint-Aubin 1er Cru "Les Meurgers Dents de Chiens. Sadly there is no 2025 Allez Goutons. The vintage, although abundant compared with 2024, was not sufficiently abundant for them to be able to spare enough Aligoté to make Allez Goutons. In red we will have the 2023 vintages of Bourgogne Les Riaux, Pommard 1er Cru Les Petit Noizons, Saint-Aubin Le Ban, and Mercurey La Plante Chassey. And, finally, there will be some Chut ... Derain, the addictive sparkling Aligoté, from the 2023 vintage.

As always please let us know if you haven't already if you would like early information about these wines. They will all be advertised so there are no allocations.

Pack 1: New Marie-Courtin Champagnes Pack

(No Discount –1 Pack Only)



Our shipments of Marie-Courtin are tiny and, even though this was the largest yet, the wines all sold very quickly to people who requested advance information about them. We set aside one pack for advertising in the newsletter though in case there is someone who would like some but didn't ask. There are three different Champagnes in this pack, all blanc de noirs made with Pinot Noir. They are quite different with one of them, Concordance, made with no added sulphites, something quite rare in Champagne (although less rare than it used to be!). Refer to the section on new arrivals for information about these wines.

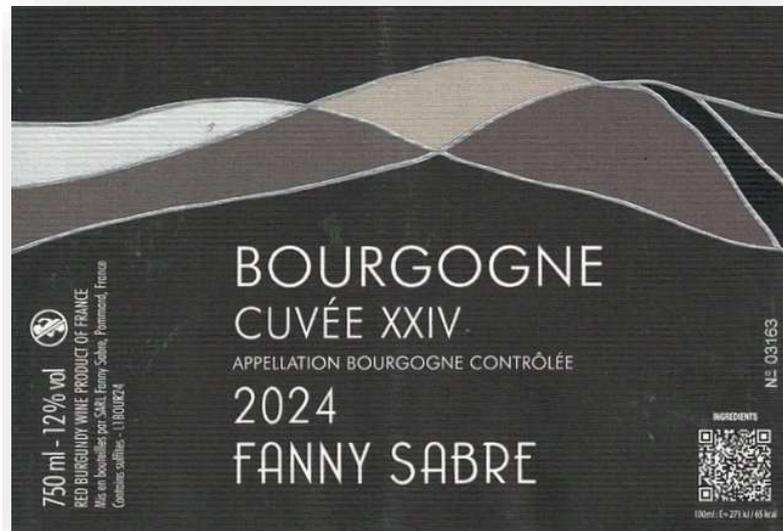
These are the wines:

- Marie-Courtin Champagne Résonance 2022
- Marie-Courtin Champagne Efflorescence 2019
- Marie-Courtin Champagne Concordance 2019

The RRP for this selection of 3 bottles is **\$545**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 2: New Fanny Sabre Wine Mixed 6 Pack

(15% Discount - 3 Packs Only)



This pack has 2 bottles of each of the three Bourgogne cuvées we have in this release.

There are two whites (Bourgogne Aligoté and Bourgogne Blanc) and one red (Bourgogne Rouge).

Some of Fanny's white cuvées have small quantities of other grapes (particularly Pinot Blanc in Clos des Renardes) but this Bourgogne Blanc is 100% Chardonnay.

The Rouge is 100% Pinot Noir. For more information about these wines refer to the New Arrivals section.

These are the wines:

- **Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Aligoté 2024 (2 bottles)**
- **Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Blanc 2024 (2 bottles)**
- **Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Rouge Cuvée XXIV 2024 (2 bottles)**

The RRP for this selection of **6 bottles** is \$530 but the pack price is only **\$450.50**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 3: New Fanny Sabre Wines – White 6 Pack

(Almost 13% Discount - 2 Packs Only)



This pack has bottles of each of the white wines from our current Fanny Sabre release. The Beaune and Chorey-lès-Beaune cuvées are now only available in packs. The rest are sold out.

Refer to the New Arrivals section for more information about these wines.

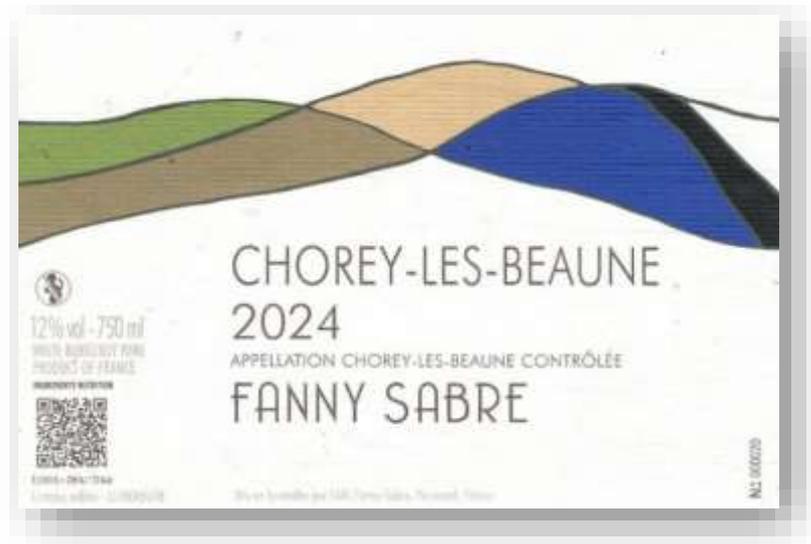
The pack has the following wines:

- **Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Aligoté 2024 (2 bottles)**
- **Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Blanc 2024 (2 bottles)**
- **Fanny Sabre Beaune Clos des Renardes Blanc 2024**
- **Fanny Sabre Chorey-lès-Beaune Blanc 2024**

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$634 but the pack price is only **\$553.60**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 4: New Fanny Sabre Arrivals Premium 3 Pack

(No Discount - 2 Packs Only)



Reflective of the 2024 vintage, our current release of Fanny Sabre’s wines has very few cuvées. We set aside two lots of the three rarest wines for this pack. All of the wines in this pack are otherwise sold out unless they are in other packs.

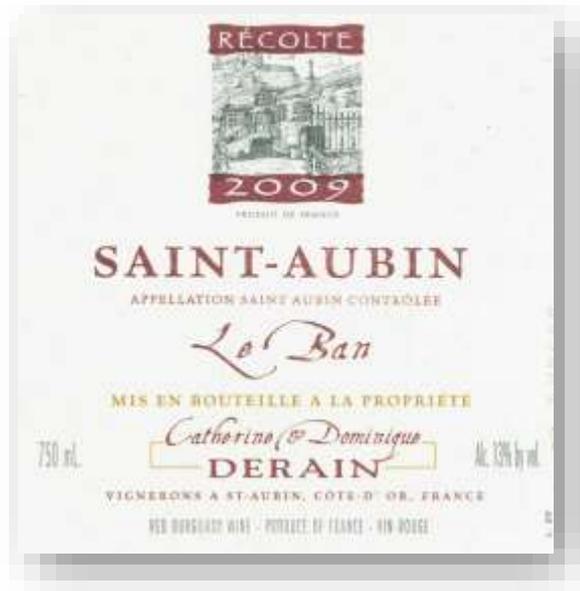
There are two whites and one red. There is a detailed description of the new wines in the New Arrivals section.

These are the wines:

- **Fanny Sabre Beaune Clos des Renardes Blanc 2024**
- **Fanny Sabre Choresy-lès-Beaune Blanc 2024**
- **Fanny Sabre Monthélie Les Sous Roches Rouge 2024**

The RRP for this selection of **3** bottles is **\$444**. Check with us for the freight charge to your location.

Pack 5: From the Archives 6 Pack
(Approx. 16% Discount - 1 Pack Only)



There is not really anything to link these wines to form a pack theme, except that they are old and generally unavailable. Some are older than others, and actually it's the oldest, the Derain Saint-Aubin Le Ban 2009 red Burgundy, which caused the most internal stress to part with.

It's not just its age alone that made it hard to let go, it's knowing how well this village cuvée does age. From the era when Dominique Derain owned the estate it should be a treat. (You can tell when the ownership changed because the new labels say 'Domaine Derain' not 'Catherine & Dominique Derain'.)

Its wax top has a small section missing, as does Tony Bornard's Le Pinot, a Jura Pinot Noir also made with aging in mind. Tony has another Pinot in his 'Tony Bornard' range called Le Pinot Ctambule which is made for early drinking, but this one should reward further cellaring or be good to drink now. We've slightly increased the discount on those two bottles because of the wax damage, but they are incredible value anyway at their original prices (prices which almost make us weep!).

The Villemade Bovin, which is 100% Gamay, is definitely made for early drinking though. Given it is from the 2014 vintage and so well over 10 years old it has a bigger discount than the other wines. We're unsure if it has held up but the original price was \$35 for a litre so with a 20% discount it is at least not a big financial risk.

There is also a red and a white from the Milan family in Provence. Two of their prestige cuvées, Le Jardin is Merlot and Le Carrée is Roussanne. Le Jardin particularly could cellar for many more years. Some new wines from the Milans are due soon, which makes it easier to let go.

And, finally, there is a bottle of Alsace fizz. Our inventory control has not been good on this, but we believe it's the 2020 vintage and made from Pinot Blanc and Pinot Auxerrois.

These are the wines:

- **Geschickt Crémant d'Alsace 2020**
- **Tony Bornard Pinot Noir 2015**
- **Derain Saint-Aubin Le Ban 2009**
- **Villemade (Domaine du Moulin) Bovin 2014 1 litre**
- **Milan Le Jardin 2018**
- **Milan Le Carrée 2019**

The RRP for this selection of **6** bottles is \$414 but the discounted price is **\$346.97**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Pack 6: Mainly 2020 Reds Pack (but not quite)
(1 Pack Only – 15% Discount)



This is another pack from our archives which does not have an overriding theme, although all the wines are shades of red. There is one similarity for three of the wines – they are all red wines from the 2020 vintage. There is a Jura Trousseau from Domaine des Cavarodes, a Burgundy Pinot Noir from Montanet-Thoden and Beaujolais Gamay from La Soeur Cadette. The second Burgundy is Fanny Sabre’s Aloxe-Corton from the 2017 vintage.

While the first four wines are red wines made with ageability in mind, the other two are quite different.

One is a rare release of Le Temps des Cerises La Capitulation Ne Paie Pas from the 2019 vintage (we did keep quite a lot of this for ourselves hence our willingness to part with a couple of bottles over the last few months once we rediscovered them). This is Cinsault that is only 9.7% alcohol and barely red. For us it is a thirst-quenching wine we always enjoy but we’re reminded of an observation by a friend who said about a similar light red low alcohol wine from Alice Bouvot that while he enjoyed it, he wouldn’t really classify it as a wine. It has no added sulphites and even though it is nearly seven years old there will still be a slight prickle from CO₂.

There’s also likely to be a prickle in the 2018 Sextant Métisse. It’s Gamay from Beaujolais made by Julien Altaber in Saint-Aubin, just south of Beaune. This is also an early drinking cuvée – a blend of lightly macerated Gamay and some direct press juice. While not as light as the Le Temps des Cerises wine it was still made for early drinking and hopefully will still be rewarding.

These are the wines:

- **Fanny Sabre Aloxe-Corton 2017**
- **Domaine des Cavarodes AOP Côtes du Jura Trousseau Lumachelles 2020**
- **Montanet-Thoden Bourgogne Rouge Garance 2020**

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- La Soeur Cadette Julié纳斯 2020
- Sextant - Julien Altaber Métisse 2018
- Le Temps des Cerises La Capitulation Ne Paie Pas 2019

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$394 but the discounted price is **\$334.90**. Check with us for the subsidised freight charge to your location.

Bits and Pieces

Wines from Fanny Sabre's beautiful vineyard in Beaune – Clos des Renardes

We have often written about the vineyards that Fanny Sabre has in the Pommard area where her father planted both Pinot Noir (because that is the only red variety allowed by the appellation – small amounts of Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris can be interspersed through the vineyard and used in the wine) and Aligoté (which is not allowed by the appellation, but that is the variety he preferred to drink).

Recently, she has bought a second vineyard closer to the city of Beaune called Clos des Renardes which sits high on a hill overlooking both Pommard and Beaune and is partly surrounded by a very, very thick stone wall.

We had a wonderful afternoon on a recent visit driving up to the “clos” and admiring the stone wall and walking through the vineyards planted to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

We have just received a wine from this vineyard from Fanny called **Fanny Sabre Beaune Clos des Renardes Blanc 2024**.

Notice that it is from the Beaune appellation, from the Clos des Renardes vineyard and is a white wine from the 2024 vintage. The varieties in the wine are Chardonnay (90%) and Pinot Blanc (10%). It is a beautiful wine from a beautiful vineyard!

Rue de la Glacière

Rue de la Glacière is the ice cream shop and restaurant in the Languedoc town of Bedarieux run by Ute Zwanzig. We have got to know Ute over the years of our working with wine as she is the partner of one of our producers, Axel Prüfer, who we have been importing into Australia for a long time now.

We have now visited this venue twice since it opened and we have been regaled with stunning ice creams made from fruit grown by Ute and her friends.

On some summer visits we also stay for dinner and enjoy a meal of organic produce sitting outside in the warm night air accompanied by one of Axel's delicious wines and then of course more ice cream.

Look for the large ice cream cone in the Place aux Fruits.

France stopping copper sprays as fungicides

There has been a worrying development in Europe and particularly in France where the use of copper sprays (there are about 19 different types available on the market at present) which are used by natural wine vigneron to control such diseases as downy mildew and powdery mildew is going to be banned in about a year's time.

The reason for the vagueness is that they are now banned, but vigneron can use up their current stocks of the spray, but they cannot be purchased any more.

This particularly will cause problems for vigneron who work in wet areas such as Bordeaux where these diseases are the most damaging.

The copper creates a protective barrier on the leaves and protects the leaves from the fungal spores thus stopping the spores from germinating.

The downside of using copper is that much of the spray eventually gets into the top layer of soil where it accumulates over time and disrupts beneficial microbial communities that otherwise would have provided benefits to the vines.

At present there are no alternatives which are equally effective that are not poisonous, so vignerons will have to rely on the less effective plant-based sprays that are still on the market.

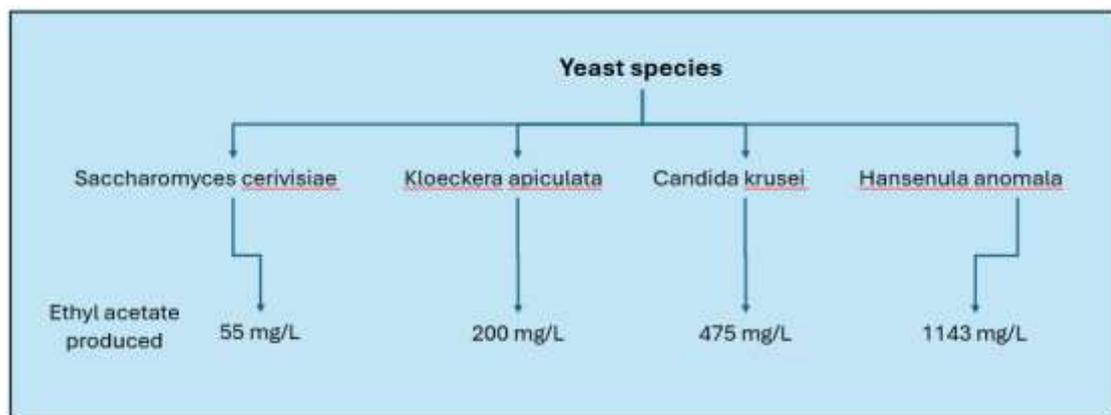
Were they to use the poisonous alternatives they would lose their organic certification so they are between a rock and a hard place. Hopefully 2026 will not be like 2024 when many growers had to rely on these types of sprays to be able to make a vintage. We will be more than interested to talk to growers about what their plans are if we visit France again this year.

What is ethyl acetate and what is its role in winemaking?

We are currently writing a story for the March or April newsletter about spoilage in wine and the agents of that spoilage. One of the causes is a chemical called ethyl acetate which can be involved. As we are running out of space in the main article we thought we would write a brief introduction to this chemical here.

Ethyl acetate is well known for its role in causing a “nail polish remover” aroma to wine. It is a very common aroma compound produced by yeasts during fermentation or by acetic acid bacteria. This is particularly important for natural wine as the winemakers rely on natural yeasts, some of which produce more ethyl acetate than commercial yeasts.

For example, a table produced by one paper we read for this story showed the following differences between four different yeast types and the quantity of ethyl acetate commonly produced.



The yeast on the left of the above diagram is a very common commercial yeast (although variants of it can be found in nature) which would not be used by a natural winemaker. The other three are all usually found in nature although natural yeasts can vary dramatically from one side of a valley to another and from one vineyard to another.

However, it can be seen from the above diagram that natural yeasts can, under some circumstances, produce a far greater amount of ethyl acetate than commercial yeasts.

Paris restaurants and wine bars

We are guilty of not providing as much information about dining and drinking in Paris recently. We know from the emails we receive that many of you travel to Paris and are interested in seeking out places to experience good food and natural wine.

Here are ten places to visit ranging from reasonably-priced to expensive.

La Buvette – this wine bar in the 11th arrondissement (like most of our recommendations) is run by Camille Fourmont, an experienced operator who has created a wonderful bar with tasty snacks (try the white beans) and an excellent selection of natural wines.

67 rue Saint Maur, Paris, 75011

Septime La Cave – Here they serve a short, but nicely conceived list of wines by the glass at very reasonable prices, or you can buy a bottle from the shelves that line two walls and they will open it for you at a very modest mark-up. They also serve small snacks which are delicious. It is a very good place to have a drink while waiting for a meal at nearby Clamato (especially on Sunday night) which is part of the Septime empire and has the special advantage, as well as being open seven days a week, that it does not take reservations.

3 Rue Basfroi, Paris, 75011

Delicatessen Place - Delicatessen Place and their Cave next door is a small space where you can get some excellent food and also peruse the amazing natural wine collection they have for you to drink on the premises or to take away.

136 Rue Amelot, Paris 75011

Mokonuts – Mokonuts is certainly one of our favourite Parisian venues. The cooking has a special clarity – sometimes I think we can look at a photo on Instagram and guess it's from Mokonuts – and the quality of the produce is excellent. The wine selections are appropriate to enhance the food. The owners are always present and are very friendly. They also have two other venues.

5 Rue Saint-Bernard, Paris, 75011

Le Verre Vole – This is both a wine shop and a restaurant serving great food and a wine selection of natural wines, which sits close to the Canal Saint Martin. It's one of Paris's iconic natural wine bars, as is its boudin noir with pommes purée.

67 rue de Lancry, Paris, 75010

Le Bistrot Paul Bert - Le Bistrot Paul Bert is a very lively, buzzy place to go for delicious, classic bistro food matched with a deep wine list of natural wine classics (think Foillard for example) in an atmosphere that is typical Parisian bistro. The food sits somewhere between the studied traditionalism of many Parisian bistros and the modernists such as Le Chateaubriand. The main problem here is what to eliminate – there are so many choices and you know they are all iconic versions of each dish. The steak with pepper sauce and frites is especially popular for a good reason and the seasonal egg dishe with truffles in winter and morels in spring is a great entrée. But if it was spring asparagus would also call ... and so it goes on. Desserts are substantial. You need to call in or telephone to make a reservation.

18 Rue Paul Bert, Paris, 75011

Le Baratin – The same chef, Argentinian-born Raquel Carena, who is also the owner, has been cooking here for over twenty years. She is an exemplary, influential chef who has earned the praises of many of the world’s leading chefs. Her food is always interesting and often surprisingly light but always with deep statement-making flavours. She is especially renowned for her offal dishes including brilliant sweetbreads (riz de veau) and brains (cervelle). Finding a way to gain access to the depths of the cellar can be a challenge, especially if you have no French. .

3, rue Jouye-Rouve, Paris, 75020

Le Cheval d’Or – Cheval d’Or is somewhat different to the other “French” restaurants we have listed here for you to enjoy. The food is Asian without being an Asian restaurant (e.g. soupe wonton au tomate or croque madame (a sort of prawn toast). The service is great and most of the wines are at the more classic end of the natural wine spectrum. Bookings are essential as it is insanely popular.

21 Rue de la Villette, 75019 Paris

Septime – Septime is a long-time favourite of ours. The space at Septime is relaxing, and almost rustic. We especially like it during the day when its front windows flood light into the room – it’s great for taking photos if that’s your thing. The wine list is a compilation of the most interesting natural wines from France and Italy (and beyond). The waiting staff are efficient, friendly, knowledgeable and very welcoming. And the food under the direction of part-owner Bertrand Grebaut is “worth a journey”. Every meal we have had here has been stunning. The menus are beautifully-balanced tasting menus (slightly fewer courses at lunch) so you don’t have to make many decisions either.

80 rue de Charonne, Paris, 75011

Le Doyenné – Le Doyenné is in a breathtaking setting amid a beautiful, substantial vegetable garden and orchard in a stunning restored space in Saint-Vrain, one of the dormitory villages of Paris. This is where Australians James Henry and Shaun Kelly create wonderful meals based on what is perfect in the garden at the time. Much of the meat is also raised on premises. If you are lucky they will have recently sent a pig to slaughter and pork will feature but, if not, meals usually begin with some of their hand-made charcuterie. It is a world-class restaurant that we try to visit every time we are in France. It takes about an hour by train (and then a long walk or a taxi) or Uber to reach the restaurant from the centre of Paris. The ultimate way to eat here though is to stay the night so you can enjoy what is one of the world’s best breakfast.

5 Rue Saint-Antoine, 91770 Saint-Vrain

Another new French word

If you follow the French wine scene you will definitely come across the word “arrachage” this year!

The word arrachage translates as “uprooting” in English and refers to a massive program being implemented by the French Government to reduce the amount of unprofitable vineyards in that country. The program being implemented will see 30,000 hectares of vines removed as announced by President Emmanuel Macron.

WINE Talk – the newsletter of Living Wines

The arrachage will mainly occur in Bordeaux and Languedoc, but all regions will be involved to some extent.

There are many reasons why this is occurring, but the main one is that French people are drinking less wine.

In fact, wine consumption on a per capita basis has dropped by 50% per person since 1980 according to one source. This is partly due to younger generations being more health conscious and also switching to other beverages with beer being a clear example.

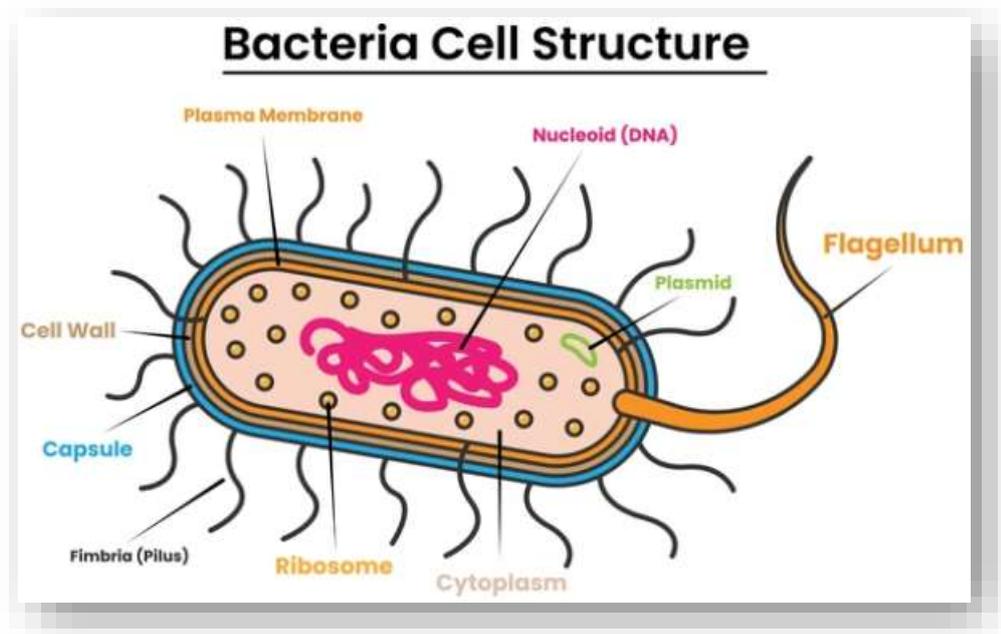
Another reason is that wine used to be an almost compulsory accompaniment to lunch. However, with a rise in office work and similar, wine is less of a daily lunch ritual than it used to be.

Soil bacteria

Soil bacteria are often under-represented when discussing what makes soil productive and how to improve soil fertility. Yet, they are vital if you want the soil to provide plants (including grapevines) with the best chance of growing well.

We will start by explaining what bacteria are. They are microorganisms that inhabit the soil and in healthy soil a gram of that soil will hold approximately 1 billion bacteria. This helps an understanding of just how small a single bacterium is.

Here is a simple diagram of a bacterium showing the main components of these tiny, tiny creatures.



Notice that the central component of the bacterium is DNA around which there are ribosomes and plasmids all sitting in the cytoplasm which is surrounded by layers of membranes.

Bacteria provide a number of benefits to soil and therefore for plants grown in that soil. Among the main benefits are:

- Nutrient cycling such as releasing nitrogen, sulphur and phosphorous back into the soil;
- Helping to break down organic matter in the soil;
- Improving soil structure;
- Converting atmospheric nitrogen into ammonia in a form that is able to be used by plants;
- Bacteria such as *bacillus* can convert insoluble chemicals such as phosphates and potassium into soluble form making them available to plants;
- Some bacteria secrete sticky, glue-like polysaccharides which can help bind soil particles such as silt and clay together to make the soil denser;

- Bacteria are responsible for breaking down organic matter such as leaves, grass and plants into hummus which, in turn, increases nutrient storage and improves water retention by the soil;
- Through increasing soil structure bacteria are responsible for improving the porosity of the soil leading to better oxygen and water intake;
- Amazingly, bacteria such as *bacillus subtilis* and *streptomyces* release antibiotics and enzymes that inhibit the growth of pathogens;
- Another similar process is initiated by some bacteria that can cause an increase in a plant's immune system to help them fight pathogens;
- Bacteria can degrade pollutants in the soil;
- Some bacteria can even metabolise heavy metals causing them to become inert.

We have mentioned a number of the benefits to the soil that bacteria can provide, but there are some other benefits that can help things that grow in the soil:

- For example, Sabater et al (2025) include the likelihood that “soil bacteria may possess potent enzymes systems for breaking down complex carbohydrates, so that the simpler sugars can be used to nourish plants¹”;
- They also raise the prospect of bacteria being harnessed to protect plants from diseases, which would be quite amazing;
- They also propose, that given the ever-increasing cost of fertilisers for soils, these costs may be ameliorated by harnessing nitrogen-fixing bacteria to provide part of this role.

The other theme that is addressed in the Sabater et al paper is replacing chemical fertilisers and pesticides with suitable bacteria colonies. In the paper mentioned above they say:

“Chemicals employed in agricultural practices, however, can be harmful to the environment and may cause widespread soil and water pollution. Moreover, to respond to the increasing food demands of a growing global population under climate change and pesticide limitations, biological pest control is a highly desirable alternative to conventional pesticides.”

These ideas incorporate some of the similar ideas proposed in an earlier paper by Tudi et al² where, among other warnings, they talk about the negative aspects of the use of pesticides and the need for alternatives:

Pesticides are used to kill pests and control weeds using chemical ingredients; hence, they can also be toxic to other organisms, including birds, fish, beneficial insects, and non-target plants, as well as air, water, soil, and crops. Moreover, pesticide contamination moves away from the target plants,

¹ Sabater C et al (2025) Harnessing beneficial soil bacteria to promote sustainable agriculture and food security: a one health perspective. *Front. Microbiology*.

² Tudi, M. et al (2021) Agriculture Development, Pesticide Application and Its Impact on the Environment. *Int Journal Environ Res Public Health*. Vol 18 (3):1112.

resulting in environmental pollution. Such chemical residues impact human health through environmental and food contamination.

One particularly interesting part of this paper is the section on pesticide migration where they break the migration effects of applied pesticides into 5 categories and describe the dangers of each. The five areas they discuss are:

- **Absorption by the soil** – in this section they demonstrate how only a small amount of the pesticides sprayed on the plants are absorbed by those plants and the rest goes into the soil, thereby degrading the fertility of the soil.
- **Leaching** – Since many insecticides are soluble in water these can become part of the groundwater which, in turn, can enter creeks and rivers and damage wildlife that live in those rivers and creeks or that drink from them.
- **Spray drift** – In this section they particularly talk about aerial spraying which is dramatically increasing due to the use of drones. They particularly discuss how a percentage of the sprays from drones (or unmanned aerial vehicles UAV in their terms) “could raise environmental and regulatory concerns”.
- **Volatilization** – They define this as “the conversion of a solid or a liquid into a gas” which can then be carried on air currents away from the intended area of the spraying. They also raised concerns about the inability to control the amount of spray that reaches a given area once it is volatilized³.
- **Surface runoff** – While some of the above end up in surface runoff, in the paper they discussed this problem separately and defined it as “the movement of pesticides in water over a sloping surface”. They also say that runoff occurs when the speed of the pesticide laden water moves relatively quickly over the surface soil so that little of it is absorbed by the soil. They conclude that as a result “pesticide runoff results in pesticide pollution in streams, ponds, lakes, and wells, and pesticide contamination could negatively impact plants, animals, and humans.”

While these five issues are not all about bacteria, it does give us an understanding of why people on the land need to be extra careful about the use of pesticides and insecticides not just because of their impact on the crops they are growing but to ensure that all of their helpers in the soil are not killed off by these poisons.

³ Here they referenced a paper by Lisouza et al (2020) and the use of the spray chlorpyrifos.

French wine terms

This month we will concentrate on a relatively minor topic, but one where there is a significant difference between French vineyards and Australian vineyards. The subject area is irrigation and the rules the French have to follow, as outlined in the appellation documents.

The appellations documents have in the title:

‘Cahier des charges’ which translates as “Specifications” followed by the name of the appellation of which there are hundreds throughout France.

In every one of these documents, section 6 (VI in France) has the rules for how to manage the vineyards in that appellation.

We will concentrate on the broad Alsace appellation called simple Alsace or Vin d’Alsace.

The first entry in section VI is:

a) – Densité de plantation

This section sets out the rules for how many vines per hectare are allowed and how far apart the vines must be planted and also the distance between rows. In the Alsace appellation the minimum number of vines is 4000 pieds (translates as ‘feet’ referring to the foot of the vine).

The rows (rangs in French) must have a minimum distance between them of 0.75 meters and a maximum distance of 1.50 meters.

But now back to the main topic of irrigation.

To find the rules about irrigation we must move down past:

b) – Règles de taille which are the pruning rules.

c) – Règles de palissage et de hauteur de feuillage which are the trellising and canopy height rules.

d) Charge maximale moyenne à la parcelle where the density of planting for each grape variety are outlined.

e) Seuil de manquants which defines the maximum number of dead vines allowable.

Until eventually we arrive at the rules for irrigation in one of the final rules in this section.

Here it is:



Very simply – no irrigation is allowed (interdite) in Alsace and most other appellations in France, until you get right down to some of the hottest areas such as Roussillon where there are some exceptions.

Grape Varieties – The Muscat family

We have written about some of the Muscat grape family in previous newsletters⁴ but haven't really talked about the similarities and differences between the various members of the family.

So, we thought we would rectify this by providing a brief overview of each of the more common members of the family found in France (with the occasional reference to some other countries) and to some of the vignerons who make wines from these grapes.

The first thing we should mention is that the Muscat grape variety is very old and possibly one of the first to be found in the Mediterranean basin.

Since the probable origin of this grape variety in Greece, it has mutated many times.

When we began this story, we consulted the Vitis International Variety Catalogue and there are 659 variations of Muscat documented there and many of these varieties have mutated from the original Greek variety.

Some Common Muscat varieties

Here is a list of the most common varieties of Muscat grapes:

Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains (White Muscat)

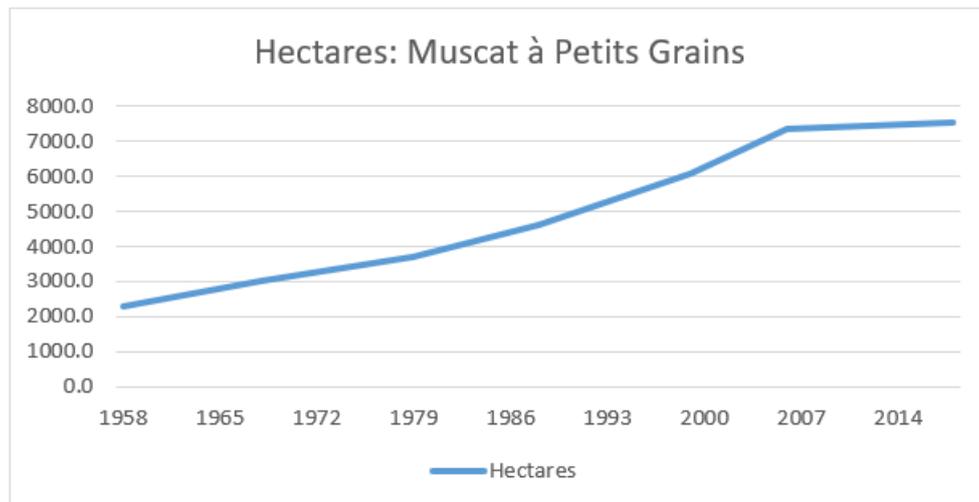
If you read about a grape variety and it is just called Muscat, then you can probably assume that it is this variety. It is considered the highest quality and oldest member of the family.

There is strong evidence that it originated in Greece. It has small berries and is known by many different names outside France, including **Moscato Bianco** (Italy), **Muscat de Frontignan** (France), **Frontignac** (Australia), **Muskateller** (Germany), and **Sárgamuskotály** (Hungary) to provide just a few examples.

Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains has a number of direct variations, including the Blanc variety mentioned here as well as Rose for a variety with pink grapes and Rouge for a red to black variety.

The graph below shows that this variety of Muscat is becoming more popular every year.

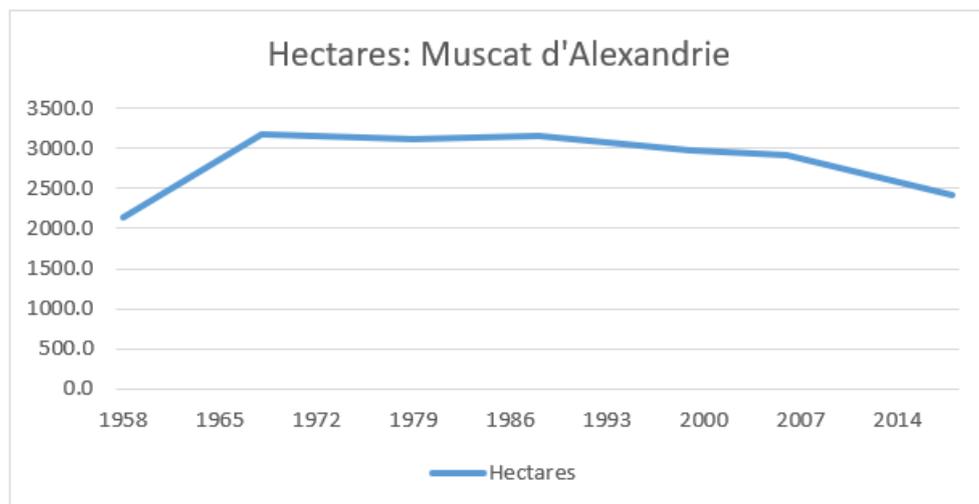
⁴ *Muscat de Hambourg – April 2025, Muscat a Petit Grains – May 2015 and October 2022, Muscat d'Alexandrie – October 2024*



Muscat of Alexandria

An ancient, hardy, and highly productive variety with large berries, often used for raisins, table grapes, and fortified wines like **Moscatel** in Spain, **Zibibbo** in Sicily, and **Hanepoot** in South Africa.

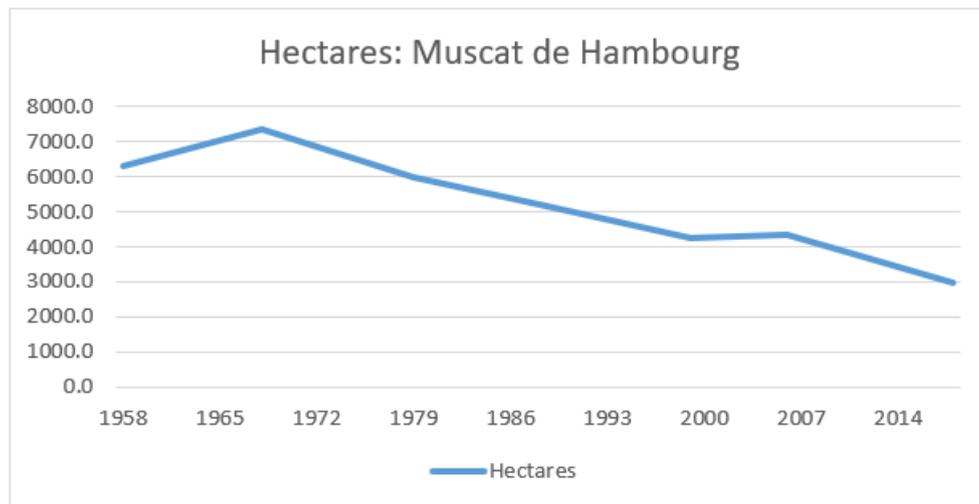
However, it is relatively popular in France as can be seen from the graph below.



Muscat de Hambourg

A popular red/black table grape that is also used for wine, especially in France, Eastern Europe and China. The berries are a purple to black colour and have a relatively thick skin and, naturally, muscat flavoured pulp. It is quite sensitive to both powdery and downy mildew.

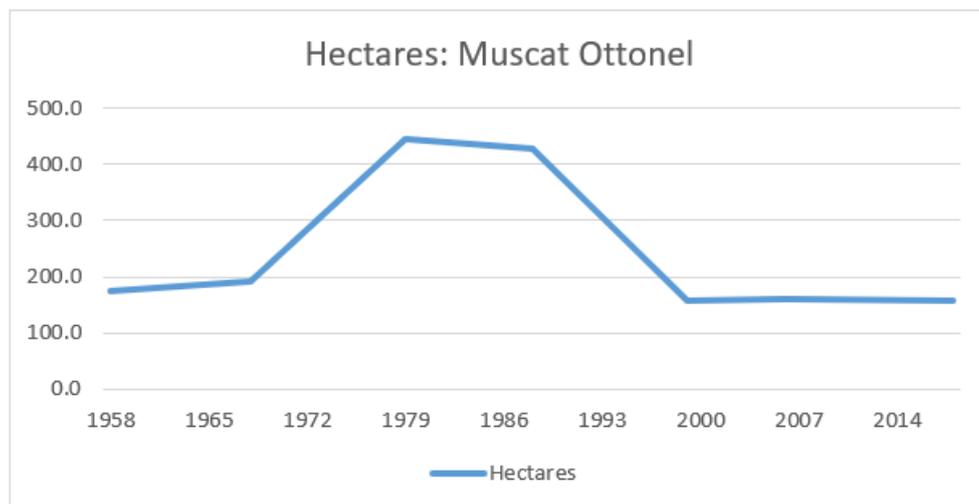
As you can see from the graph below, the total area planted in France is slowly diminishing, but is still quite widespread.



Muscat Ottonel

A lighter-coloured, early-ripening variety developed in the 19th century. It is popular in Alsace and Central Europe (Austria, Romania, Bulgaria) for producing fragrant dry or off-dry white wines.

Muscat Ottonel was first developed by Moreau-Robert in the 19th Century (although this claim is sometimes questioned with Jean-Pierre Vibert given the honour) by crossing the common grape Chasselas with a rarer variety of Muscat called Muscat d'Eisenstadt. The mature leaves are relatively circular with distinctive lobes and no anthocyanin coloration of the veins. (Quite often the veins of the leaves are a shade of red as a result of the presence of anthocyanin.)



As can be seen clearly in this graph, the extent of the plantings is much lower than other Muscat varieties, with a slight increase from the early seventies through to the late eighties and then a relatively stable lower area from then on.

Muscat grapes and leaves

Here are the grapes for the varieties mentioned above. Three of the varieties shown below are variations of white hues while the Muscat de Hambourg is definitely black!



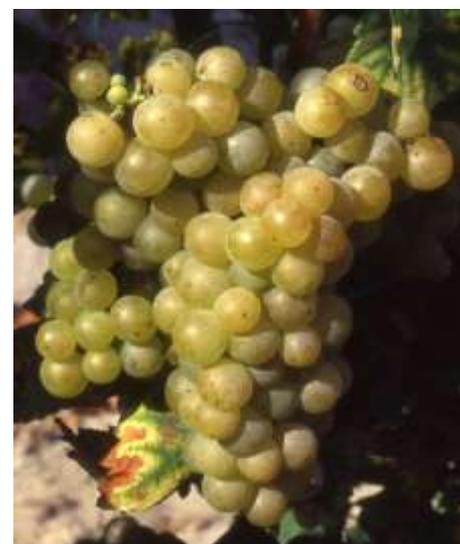
Muscat Blanc á Petit Grains



Muscat d'Alexandrie



Muscat de Hambourg



Muscat Ottonel

As can be seen below, the leaves are quite different with some having pronounced lobes (Muscat Blanc á Petit Grains and Muscat de Hambourg) while others have narrow sinuses (Muscat d'Alexandrie and Muscat Ottonel)



Muscat Blanc á Petit Grains



Muscat d'Alexandrie



Muscat de Hambourg



Muscat Ottonel

Muscat wines not Muscat varieties

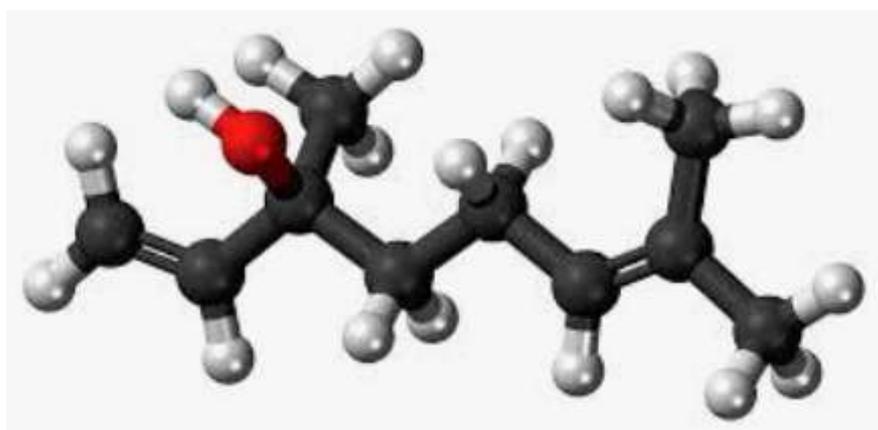
Care needs to be taken in distinguishing between wines made from Muscat and the individual varieties of Muscat.

For example, consider Muscat d'Alsace which you often see on the label of Alsace wines.

There is no Muscat d'Alsace variety. Instead, it has been common practice for a long time in the Alsace region to produce a white wine from a blend of two Muscat varieties, namely Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains and Muscat Ottonel. This combination of varieties has been given the name Muscat d'Alsace.

Muscat grape chemicals

Muscat grapes of almost all varieties have strong and distinctive aromas which are usually based on chemicals called monoterpenes. The main terpene chemical in Muscat varieties is linalool which has the chemical formula $C_{10}H_{18}O$.



The black items are hydrogen, grey represent carbon atoms and the lone red one is oxygen.

While the main terpene is linalool, they also contain geraniol, nerol, citronellol and alpha-terpineol, which combine to provide the intense aromatic signature of Muscat grapes. The linalool concentration actually increases during the ripening process.

In a paper by Hardy (referenced below) he confirms this increase in the percentage of linalool in the Muscat grapes:

Linalool was first detected 2 weeks after the onset of sugar accumulation and increased steadily for as long as fruit was left on the vine. Other volatiles of possible significance in the aroma of the ripe grape appeared 2–4 weeks after linalool was first observed and then increased sharply.

During the ripening process Muscat grapes also develop aldehydes such as hexanal and hexenal which contribute the characteristic herbaceous aromas.⁵

Another paper by Park et al published in 1991 takes the issue further and confirms the claims by Hardy about the presence of linalool, geraniol and nerol but adds to the complexity of the processes by claiming that between 4.6% to 5.9% of the monoterpenes exist as free terpenes which are located in the skin and mesocarp whereas a significantly greater amount occur bound as glycosides, although the amount varied with ambient temperature⁶.

⁵ Hardy, P.J. (1970) Changes in volatiles of muscat grapes during ripening. *Phytochemistry*. Volume 9, Issue 4, Pages 709-715.

⁶ Park, SK et al (1991) Distribution of Free and Glycosidically Bound Monoterpenes in the Skin and Mesocarp of Muscat of Alexandria Grapes during Development. *Journal of Agric. Food Chem.*, 30, 514-518.

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.