

Wine Talk: February 2014

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 42

Welcome to 2014 and to the 42nd Edition of our regular newsletter! It seems only yesterday that we started importing natural wines from France, but it is now more than seven years!

More and more of our wines are sulphite-free as we try to find those dedicated winemakers who will not compromise by adding sulphites to preserve the wine. Something happens once you start to drink these wines. Admittedly not everyone gets the taste but if you do then, once you start to drink well-made wines without sulphites, its presence becomes a barrier in other wines. Our winemakers rely on the quality of the fruit, the structure of the tannins and their understanding of what is in the wine to ensure that these wines remain fresh and lively in the bottle. Try the wines from Le Petite Gimios, Domaine Milan (an increasing number of their wines are free of sulphites) and Michel Guignier to see just how vibrant sulphur-free wines can be.

We only have five packs for you this month as we have decided to cut back on shipping our sulphite-free range until the weather cools down a little.

We have a special pack of the delightful Champagnes of Roland Piillot from the Côtes des Bar in the south of the Champagne region (see separate story about this region and these wines) including the rare 100% Pinot Blanc cuvée.

We also have a special pack of the widely acclaimed Domaine de la Cadette, La Soeur Cadette and Domaine Montanet-Thoden wines from Vézelay which are now back in stock, including the amazing Melon de Bourgogne. The third pack is a selection of the best of the wines from Languedoc supplier Mylène Bru. These are gorgeous wines that show elegance and depth. Her Lady Chasselas has low levels of sulphites (27 mg/litre, with 2 g/hectolitre added at the time of bottling), Far Ouest has 9 mg/litre, with 1 g/hl added at the time of bottling, and Rita has 11 mg/litre with no added sulphites. These levels are very low so if you order this pack we will work with you to find a good time to ship it.

We have also assembled a white wine pack and a red wine pack consisting of new arrivals from the last two shipments. These packs represent very good value for money and are a good way to sample a selection of the new wines.

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We recently attended a number of natural wine trade shows in the Loire Valley and were able to sample the recently bottled wines of many of our producers. The quality is high but the terrible weather in 2012 and 2013 means that the yields are very low so many wines will be in short supply this year. Unfortunately some producers have had to increase their prices to stay afloat, which coupled with the fall in the Australian dollar means our prices are rising too. However, we don't make retrospective adjustments to the prices of older vintages so there are now some real bargains among the wines we have had in stock for some time.

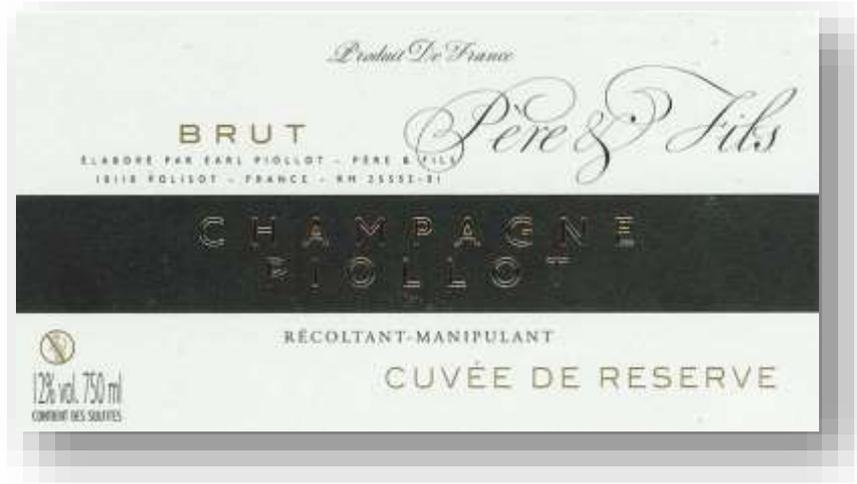
For a full list of wines currently in stock and their prices see:

http://www.livingwines.com.au/Catalogue/Buy_wines.htm

There is a link to our order form for these packs and any other wines at the end of this newsletter. But there's no need to use the order form. Just send us an email listing the wines and/or packs you would like to order if that suits you better. We'll confirm the price by return email before processing your order.

Affordable and unusual Champagne available

Roland Piollet Côtes des Bars Champagnes in stock



If you look carefully at the Champagne label above you will notice the words "récoltant-manipulant" displayed proudly. To understand the meaning of the term and why we think it is important to identify those who are able to display either "récoltant-manipulant" or the abbreviated RM on their labels we need to explain some background about the Champagne region.

Wine can only be called Champagne if it is made from grapes grown within a region in north east France extending from Reims in the north, down through Epernay and on to just south of Troyes.



Champagne region shown in blue

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Wines from this region can be either still or sparkling. If the wine is a still wine and meets the appellation rules it is labelled as Coteaux Champenois. It can be red, white or rosé and must be made from the same grape varieties as for Champagne.

If they are sparkling wines they are labelled as Champagne (the letters AOC are not required) provided they abide by the many rules imposed by the appellation. Unlike Burgundy which has over 100 separate appellations (in a much smaller area), Champagne is a single appellation although some regions produce Grand Cru or Premier Cru or village level wines.

Champagne can be a single grape variety or a blend of grape varieties chosen from Arbane, Chardonnay, Meunier (Pinot Meunier), Petit Meslier, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir.

The current annual production exceeds 300 million bottles, most of which is produced by a small number of "houses" such as the famous Moët & Chandon (they produce around 26,000,000 bottles). The owners of Moët also own some of the other leading houses such as Veuve Clicquot and Krug. Similarly the giant Pernod Ricard owns some of the other large houses such as Perrier-Jouët and Mumm. The vast majority of the grapes they use are bought from vignerons throughout the Champagne region. Companies that make wine using bought-in grapes are called "négoçant-manipulant" (NM).

The production of Champagne on such a massive scale has meant that it has become highly industrialised and the blending process they use ensures that each cuvée tastes very similar and according to the 'house-style' every year.

In reaction to this increasing industrialisation, many small vignerons have decided to stop selling their grapes to the négociants and have started making Champagne themselves. Wines created by these small producers have been given the collective name of "grower Champagnes" - in other words Champagnes produced by the person who grew the grapes.

A significant number of these grower Champagnes have been produced organically or biodynamically and the wines have been made naturally, eschewing the widespread practices of chaptalisation, acidification, enzyme manipulation and addition of commercial yeast among others.

And this is where we get back to the use of the term "récoltant-manipulant". There are two rules governing the display of this term on a Champagne label. The first is that the person who grows the grapes must make the wine. And the second is that a maximum of 5% of the grapes used in any vintage can be bought from other growers.

Roland Piillot grows all his own grapes and makes his own Champagne, so he proudly displays RM instead of NM on his labels. He also is converting his entire vineyard to biodynamic practices and has developed a special technique for ensuring that the second fermentation in the bottle can use the natural yeasts from the vineyard.

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His wines are very pure and very fresh. They point to the emergence of the Côtes des Bars region in the Aube as a serious contender in the Champagne stakes.

We love the Cuvée de Reserve Brut which is his entry level Champagne made from Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. It costs only \$61 retail which is amazing for a grower Champagne.

But the real thrill from our recent shipment was to sample his Extra Brut made from 100% Pinot Blanc. Although quite unusual in the Champagne region, it has been a tradition in the Côtes des Bars for quite a while. This is an incredibly fresh, vibrant and delicious Champagne (RRP \$84) with the added interest of the unusual grape variety. We have a number of cases of this amazing Champagne available but it will sell very quickly. Anticipating that, we have more on the way, although we can't guarantee the price from the second shipment will be the same as this if the dollar keeps misbehaving.

Chambers Street Wines in New York were very excited by this Champagne in their recent newsletter:

“hailing from a small parcel of massale selected Pinot Blanc vines. Apple-y with delicious white orchard fruits on the nose, this is an earthy yet crisp and fruit-forward Champagne in which savory and mineral notes are in excellent balance with fruity ones... A delicious new Champagne!”

Endnote: Exactly what distinguishes a Brut from an Extra Brut and from a Demi-Sec for that matter? It is all about the residual sugar in the wine. The rules for Champagne are as follows:

Brut Nature – The driest of all with 3 grams per litre of sugar or less. Champagnes with sugar levels within this range can either be labelled Brut Nature or Extra Brut.

Extra Brut – The term Extra Brut can only be displayed on a Champagne label if it has a very low level of residual sugar in the range 0-6 grams of sugar per litre.

Brut – A Brut wine should finish quite dry on the palate with the residual sugar in the range 0 grams per litre to 15 grams per litre.

Extra Sec – The sugar level must be between 12 grams per litre and 20 grams per litre.

Sec – Here is where you might be fooled by the translation. Sec means dry but the amount of sugar allowed is reasonably high at 17 to 35 grams per litre.

Demi-sec – The term demi-sec translates literally as half dry, but a demi-sec Champagne can have between 33 and 50 grams of sugar per litre.

Doux – It is very rare to see a Champagne with Doux on the label. This is the sweetest one of all, clocking in at over 50 grams of sugar per litre.

Wines of Vézelay available again!

Domaine de la Cadette, Domaine Montanet-Thoden and La Soeur Cadette back in stock



Vézelay is one of the most beautiful villages in France. Sitting high above the surrounding countryside this is a classic ‘perched’ village with a long history. The region of Vézelay lies north of Dijon and south of Chablis.

It is here that winemaker Jean Montanet and his son Valentin make the wonderful wines of Domaine de la Cadette, Domaine Montanet-Thoden and La Soeur Cadette.

They make ethereal Chardonnay wines and a racy Melon de Bourgogne (a very rare grape in this region). They also make a range of Pinot Noir wines under the Bourgogne designation.

Due to the low yields in 2012 (but very good wines due to a warm September) we don’t have many bottles of some of the cuvées. The ones that we have the most of are Les Saulniers, La Chatelaine and the Melon de Bourgogne.

Les Saulniers is a long-time favourite of ours. The wine is made from grapes sourced from the Les Saulniers vineyard which is not too far from the village of Saint Père where the winery is situated. The grapes for this wine are crushed and the juice is fermented and aged in stainless steel tanks to give a fresh, lively yet elegant white wine of considerable refinement. It is a beautiful example of a natural wine.

The La Chatelaine vineyard has more clay in it than Les Saulniers although it shares a base of limestone that is common in this area and which provides the characteristic minerality to the Vézelay white wines. The vineyard is on the southern side of the Vézelay hill so gets good exposure to the sun. The La Chatelaine receives similar treatment to the Les Saulniers.

The La Soeur Cadette Melon is a lovely, light, aromatic white wine that is only 11% alcohol. It is a perfect aperitif wine.

Rootstock Sydney 2014!

Another outstanding success



Like many other natural wine lovers from throughout Australia we recently headed for the largest celebration of natural wines held in Australia – Rootstock in Sydney which was held on the 8th and 9th of February. Total attendance figures came in at over 13000 – truly amazing!

Following the amazing success of last year's event, a much larger venue at The Carriageworks was secured this year.

Producers from Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Georgia and the United States were in attendance to show their wines, the program of master classes was interesting and raised many questions about winemaking techniques. Two in particular were particularly thought-provoking, one on storage vessels and another on carbonic maceration lead to much animated discussion.

Attendees also had access to some of the finest food prepared by some of Sydney's leading chefs from restaurants such as Ester, 10 William St, Fratelli Paradiso, Café Paci, Sixpenny, Billy Kwong, Three Blue Ducks, Berta, and many more. Many are our customers and we were delighted that Ester and Sixpenny chose to match one of our wines with the dish they served.

What's in your wine?

For wines sourced from Living Wines, the answer to this question is very simple – grape juice and perhaps a tiny amount of sulphite.

However this is not the case with many wines. At the recent Rootstock 2014 event we were delighted to find a book called *What's in Your Wine* being given away by Ben Gould at his Blind Corner stand. Produced jointly by Blind Corner and Two Brothers Wines, it provides a brief description of 58 additives that are legally able to

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be added to wine in Australia and which, with the exception of sulphites, do not need to be listed as ingredients.

Some of these ingredients make it very difficult for vegetarians and vegans to know whether a wine is free of animal products. The book, for example, lists the enzyme Lysozyme which is added to wine to control bacteria as being derived from egg whites.



BLIND CORNER

Not all additives are unfriendly to vegans. For example, poly-vinyl-poly-pyrrolidone is not derived from animal products and can be added to wine to reduce bitterness – but it is essentially a plastic and there is increasing evidence of the harmful effects of plastic derivatives when they are ingested.

Another less-than-clever additive is chitosan which is used to clarify wines including reducing the level of copper in wine. The problem with this additive is that it is based on chitin which is found in the shells of crustaceans. Many people have shellfish allergies and would no doubt prefer to be warned if such an additive is used.

Another fining agent is collagen which is made from the swim bladders of sturgeon and other large fish (as is isinglass which is also used for the same purpose). Other commonly used fining agents are egg whites and gelatin.

There are many other additives discussed in the book so it is well worth taking a look.

You can get the book as a pdf by downloading it from the Blind Corner web site:

www.blindcorner.com.au

You can also follow them on Twitter @bio_garden

Useful biodynamics app from Blind Corner



And while we are talking about Blind Corner we would also recommend that while you are on their Web site that you check out their Biogarden page.

You can download a great app that provides you with all sorts of useful information about the biodynamic calendar.

It shows whether a particular day is a root day or a flower day, for example. This can be of great assistance to people tending vineyards to know when the best times are to prune or to apply biodynamic preparations. We hope that this app might encourage more people to adopt biodynamics to improve the quality of the soil and therefore the quality of the wine.

Pack 1: Champagne 6 pack



Champagne is not only for a special occasion. It is also a brilliant drink to have with food. It can be drunk right through a meal. We love the laser-like Champagnes of Champagne Piollet.

Champagne Piollet Cotes des Bar Cuvee de Reserve Brut NV (2 bottles) – When we first tasted this elegant Champagne we remarked on its beautiful light golden colour, the citrus aromas and the silky freshness on the palate and very good length. The base wine is made from 70% Pinot Noir, 20% Chardonnay and 10% of Pinot Meunier providing additional richness. Further complexity is gained from using base wine from two different vintages to make the champagne. This is an ideal aperitif!

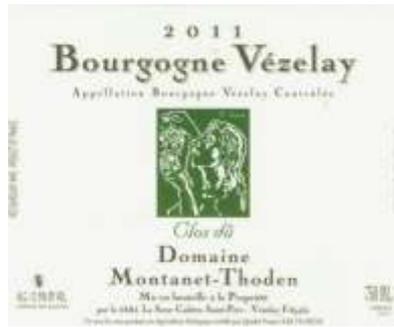
Champagne Piollet Cotes des Bar Extra Brut Pinot Blanc NV (2 bottles) – This is a brand new cuvee for Roland Piollet made from Pinot Blanc grown on his estate. The vines thrive on the slopes near Polisot overlooking the upper reaches of the Seine River. This is a very savoury wine with lots of fresh fruit aromas and lovely, balanced acidity. It is very rare to find a Champagne made exclusively from the Pinot Blanc grape, however once you taste it you will wonder why more producers don't do it!

Champagne Piollet Cotes des Bar Cuvee Millesime 2008 – The vintage cuvees are only produced in exceptional years and 2008 was a very good year in the region of Champagne. When Roland makes a vintage cuvee he predominantly uses Chardonnay or exclusively uses Chardonnay. In 2008 some Pinot Noir was added so it is not labelled as a Blanc de Blanc.

Champagne Piollet Cotes des Bar Cuvee Millésime Rose Extra Brut 2006 – In the Cote des Bar region of Champagne it is common for rosé-style wines to be made using extended maceration of the Pinot Noir grape. The grapes (only Pinot Noir is used) are first crushed by foot and then macerate for up to five days before pressing to extract the juice which, by this time, has developed cherry, strawberry and raspberry overtones. This wine has an appealing intensity and a lingering freshness.

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$439 but the pack price is \$373.15 including freight.

Pack 2: Vézelay Red and White 6 pack



We are very happy that our most recent shipment contained a pallet of wines from Domaine de la Cadette and Domaine Montanet-Thoden from the Vézelay region of northern Burgundy. These are exceptionally well made, fresh, vibrant wines that are a joy to drink. The Cadette wines are made by Jean Montanet and his son Valentin. The Montanet-Thoden wines are made by Valentin who is showing that he has inherited the rare talent of his father.

Note that all these wines come from the area around the village of Vézelay, but only the white wines can display the Vézelay name on the label due to the rules of the appellation.

Domaine de la Cadette Bourgogne Vézelay La Châtelaine 2012 – La Châtelaine is one of Domaine de la Cadette's best cuvées made from the only permitted white grape variety in the Bourgogne Vézelay appellation, Chardonnay. The wine comes from grapes from the vineyards on the pretty south-facing slopes of the Vézelay hills.

Domaine de la Cadette Bourgogne Champs Cadet Rouge 2012 – This red Burgundy is made from 100% Pinot Noir. The Champs Cadet vineyard is one of Cadette's most remote and difficult with lots of stones littering the surface. This is a lovely wine with a velvet texture provided by maturation in old oak barrels, but also with the trademark freshness that makes these natural wines so appealing. This is the first time for several years we have been able to secure 750ml sized bottles of this wine.

La Soeur Cadette Vin de France Melon de Bourgogne Blanc 2012 – The Melon de Bourgogne grape is common in the Muscadet appellations found around Nantes near the Atlantic coast, however it has almost disappeared from Burgundy. This wine is a great favourite of ours especially given how little is produced. It is a perfect food wine marrying well with many flavours, but it comes into its own with terrines, parfaits, charcuterie and other light meat dishes.

La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Vézelay Blanc 2011 – The La Soeur Bourgogne Vézelay is a blend of grapes grown in the Domaine de la Cadette vineyards and grapes grown in the Domaine Montanet-Thoden vineyards. For this reason they cannot display the name of either domaine, therefore the wine is labelled with their 'negoce' La Soeur designation. It is, however, able to be labelled with the prized Bourgogne Vézelay appellation which is only available for white wines made entirely from grapes grown within the area. This is a very beautiful wine made entirely from Chardonnay grapes sourced from the limestone-rich soils of their vineyards.

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Montanet-Thoden Bourgogne Vézelay Clos dû Blanc 2011 – Domaine Montanet-Thoden is owned by Catherine Montanet and a friend, and, this year, the Clos Du cuvée was made by her son Valentin who has been working with Jean in the winery for a number of years. This is a very fine example of a Bourgogne Vézelay which must, by law, be a white wine made from 100% Chardonnay. This cuvée benefits from the clay and limestone soils in the area which give the strong minerality to the wine.

Domaine Montanet-Thoden Bourgogne Cuvée Garance Rouge 2012 – This red is also from Domaine Montanet-Thoden. This red burgundy is a very good example of a red wine from the Vézelay region. The end result is influenced by the fossilised limestone soils that are found here - giving the wines a lively minerality. The grapes for this wine are hand-picked from the small plots of vines, destemmed, fermented with native yeasts and matured in tanks. Little sulphur is added to the bottle to maintain the freshness of the wine.

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$243 but the pack price is \$206.55 including freight.

Pack 3: Mylène Bru 6 pack



Mylène Bru is a very special winemaker. She cares passionately about her vines and understands the terroir intimately. She also makes her wines with a very light touch producing wines of elegance and charm in an area where this is definitely not the norm.

Mylène Bru Vin de Table Lady Chasselas Blanc 2012 (2 bottles) – The plot where



Mylène has her Chasselas vines is a site of amazing beauty. There is a long view over the short-cropped vines to the hills and mountains beyond. The vines are at least 50 years old and face East North East. Chasselas is almost unknown in this region so this is a very rare wine, but one of some delicacy and with a really lovely mouth-feel. The

clay and limestone soils give the wine a persistent minerality that is very appealing. The finish is quite dry.

Mylène Bru Coteaux du Languedoc Far-Ouest Rouge 2011 (2 bottles) – This lovely



wine is a blend of all the red grapes in Mylène's vineyard so it has some Grenache, Syrah, Carignan and Cinsault but might also have a little Marselan and Aubun (an obscure grape from the Vaucluse) depending on the vintage. It shows the characteristics of the two main grapes (Grenache and Syrah) very well and the other grapes lend

a pleasant spiciness to the finish.

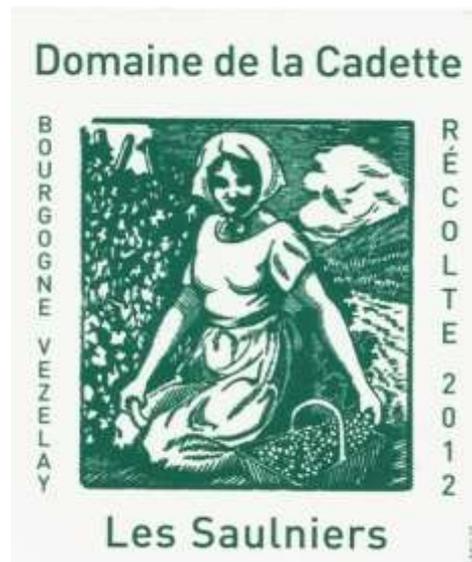
Mylène Bru Vin de Table Rita Rouge 2011 (2 bottles) – The Rita is Mylène's latest



wine and is named after her Andalusian grandmother and also St Rita the saint of desperate causes! The wine is made from 100% Carignan from 50 year old vines which is not unusual in her area because it is quite close to Saint Chinian where Carignan is revered. This is a silky Carignan with a beautiful mouth-feel and a long, lingering finish.

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$254 but the pack price is \$215.90 including freight.

Pack 4: New Arrivals White 6 pack



This pack represents a small selection of the white wines that have arrived in the last two shipments. Each is a new vintage of an old favourite such as the fabulous Les Clous from Domaine St Nicolas and the Les Saulniers from Domaine de la Cadette.

Domaine de la Cadette Bourgogne Vezelay Les Saulniers 2012 – Les Saulniers is a white cuvée made entirely from Chardonnay. The Les Saulniers vineyard is a beautiful parcel of land situated on an old road once used by salt smugglers, who extracted contraband salt from the water at the nearby "Fontaines Salées". It has a liveliness and freshness that is very appealing for such an elegant wine.

Domaine Saint Nicolas Fiefs Vendéens Les Clous Blanc 2012 – Les Clous is a south-westerly exposed vineyard which was planted in 1980. It's been managed biodynamically since 1993. Le Clous is beautiful white wine made from a mix of Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay with a little Groslot Gris in this vintage. Both the Chenin Blanc and the Grolleau Gris play a subtle but noticeable role in this beautiful wine that goes so well with food. Bottled in the spring following vintage after elevage in stainless steel it's light and bright and very gluggable.

La Soeur Cadette Bourgogne Vezelay 2011 – The La Soeur Bourgogne Vézelay is a blend of grapes grown in the Domaine de la Cadette vineyards and grapes grown in the Domaine Montanet-Thoden vineyards. For this reason they cannot display the name of either domaine, therefore the wine is labelled with their 'negoce' La Soeur Cadette designation. It is, however, able to be labelled with the prized Bourgogne Vézelay appellation which is only available for white wines made entirely from grapes grown within the area. This is a very beautiful wine made entirely from Chardonnay grapes sourced from the limestone-rich soils of their vineyards.

Domaine Mosse Vin de France Magic of Juju 2012 – This Chenin Blanc has been made by René Mosse using grapes grown organically by two of his friends. Marta Irico maintains a vineyard in nearby Bonnezeaux and Mr Bordage-Dessange whose vineyard is in Chaume also supplied some of the grapes. The vineyards are a mix of clay, gravel and shale. The wine was fermented in fûts and then aged for 12 months.

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There is a tiny bit of residual sugar in this charming Chenin and a lovely hint of oxidative qualities that make the wine a perfect match for food. This wine has only miniscule amounts of free sulphur.

Hervé Villemade Cheverny Blanc Domaine 2012 – This is a favourite wine of ours and has been for some time. It is actually quite an elegant, refined wine that is perfect with a range of foods including seafood, cheese and white meats. A blend of 70% Sauvignon Blanc and 30% Chardonnay this wine is only produced in small quantities from vines that are between 18 and 24 years old. It is a fresh, lively wine with lovely fruit and a nice balancing acidity. The wine is matured on lees to provide additional complexity.

Terres Dorees Beaujolais Blanc Chardonnay 2012 – This lovely wine is made from 100% Chardonnay. It is matured in horizontal steel tanks designed to increase the lees contact. It is a fresh, vibrant wine perfect for pairing with food. There are very few examples of white Beaujolais available, so this is a special treat.

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$218 but the pack price is \$185.30 including freight.

Pack 5: Red wine new arrivals 6 pack



This month we have assembled a great selection of interesting red wines that have recently arrived in our warehouse.

Domaine de la Cadette Bourgogne Champs Cadet 2012 – This red Burgundy is made from 100% Pinot Noir. The Champs Cadet vineyard is one of Cadette's most remote and difficult with lots of stones littering the surface. This is a lovely wine with a velvet texture provided by maturation in old oak barrels, but also with the trademark freshness that makes these natural wines so appealing.

Domaine Saint Nicolas Fiefs Vendéens Reflets Rouge 2012 – This wine is dominated by Pinot Noir (90%) and has equal parts of Gamay and Negrette. It is an elegant wine with good structure. It has not been filtered this year at our request. This is a smooth and delicious wine that will go very well with a wide range of foods. At our request, this wine has not been filtered, to make the cuvee one that is unique to us.

Domaine Montanet-Thoden Bourgogne Cuvée Garance Rouge 2012 – This red burgundy is a very good example of a red wine from the Vézelay region. The end result is influenced by the fossilised limestone soils that are found here - giving the wines a lively minerality. The grapes for this wine are hand picked from the small plots of vines, destemmed, fermented with native yeasts and matured in tanks. Little sulphur is added to the bottle to maintain the freshness of the wine.

Domaine Mosse Vin de France Bois Rouge 2012 – This wine is produced from younger vines from the same parcels as their Anjou Rouge. It comprises 25% Cabernet Sauvignon and 75% Cabernet Franc. It is ready to drink now, in fact at a recent tasting this wine performed in a stellar manner, showing beautiful, soft, well-integrated tannins and a long finish.

Hervé Villemade Cheverny Cuvée Domaine Rouge 2011 – An assemblage of 50% Pinot Noir and 50% Gamay, the grapes are sourced from a special part of the vineyard. Half are destemmed and the other half are left as whole bunches. It is a lively, fresh, flavoursome wine that shows off the two grapes perfectly

Terres Dorees (Jean-Paul Brun) Bourgogne Rouge 2012 – This is a Bourgogne appellation wine instead of the more usual Beaujolais from Jean Paul Brun, therefore it is a Pinot Noir rather than Gamay. The grapes come from three small, sun-drenched parcels and the wine is matured in old wooden fûts. This is a beautiful drinking wine. It is not often that you will find a quality red Burgundy at this price.

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$228 but the pack price is \$193.80 including freight. (Note: Amended, lower price!)

Grape variety: Pinot Blanc

Pinot Blanc is quite widely grown in France but it is quite rare to find wines made exclusively from this grape variety except in Alsace (where it is also known as Klevner), although some are produced in Burgundy and Champagne. It is also planted in Germany (Weissburgunder), Luxembourg and Friuli (Pinot Bianco) as well as the United States and Argentina.

In total there are only 1300 hectares of this grape variety planted in France with most of the plantings being in the Alsace area.

In Alsace it is usually used as a blending wine as a component of the widely-drunk Edelzwicker which usually sees Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc blended together. In Alsace you can also find many wines with Pinot Blanc on the label, but quite often these wines are a blend of the various Pinot varieties where Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir are crushed and the skins immediately removed to produce a white wine.

Like so many other grapes, Pinot Blanc is thought to have been derived from Pinot Gris, which, in turn, was derived from the the notoriously unstable Pinot Noir and the obscure but vitally important Gouais Blanc although Vitis International lists it as being simply a mutation of Pinot Noir.

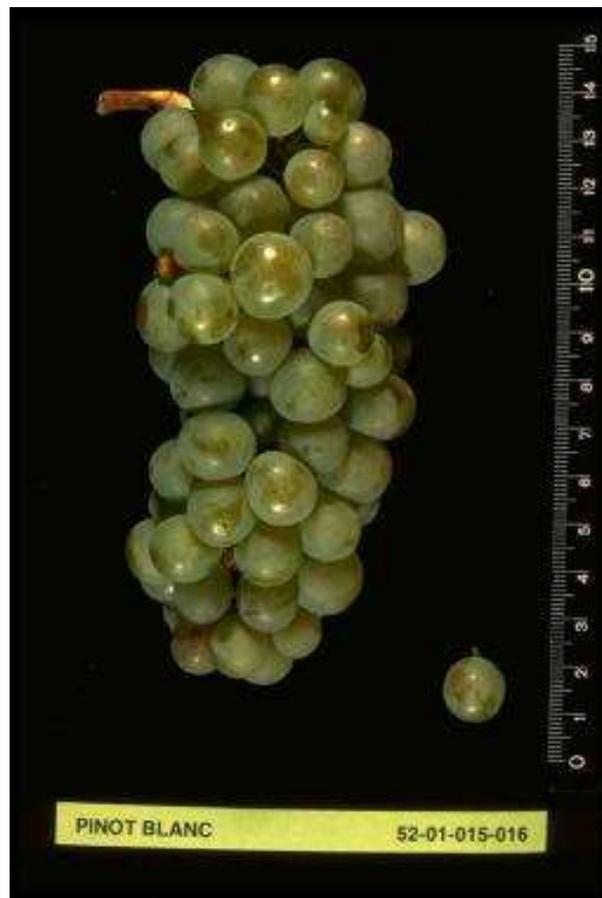


Photo courtesy of Vitis International Variety Catalogue

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Pinot Blanc is well-known for ripening easily even in cold weather which is why it is prized in colder areas such as Champagne (where it is sometimes called Blanc Vrai) and Alsace.

Pinot Blanc delivers best when it is not subjected to treatments such as new oak; rather it seems to benefit from maturation in stainless steel or concrete.

We love the Champagne made from 100% Pinot Blanc produced by Roland Piollot in the southern Champagne area of the Côtes des Bar where Pinot Blanc has always been held in high esteem and where it benefits from the limestone in the soil (see earlier story in this newsletter about the Piollot wines).

How to order

You can order any of these packs by sending us an email to wine@livingwines.com.au

Or for other wines you can use our order form.

http://www.livingwines.com.au/Catalogue/Order_Form_Current_2014.pdf