

Wine Talk: October 2012

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 31

Since the last newsletter we have made a flying dash to France to find some new producers to add to our range. It was a short trip but was very exciting! We tried a lot of new wines in some of the hottest bars and restaurants in Paris, Copenhagen and London and even managed to squeeze in a visit to the Loire, Burgundy and the Jura. We will give you an update on the new producers in the next newsletter with an indication of when their wines are likely to arrive in Australia. We have two new producers from the Loire, two from Burgundy, one from the Languedoc and some others we are talking to in the south and south-west.

One of the main impressions that we gained on this trip was that consumers are really driving the wine-styles bus. They are asking wine makers and importers (like us) to provide a wider range of styles and asking us not to be too conservative because they want to revel in the diversity that's now readily available. The people we talk to also want wines to be as pure as possible – no additives and no unnecessary manipulation.

And now to the special offers for this month. The first is a pack for spring sipping with some lovely wines to see you into those sunny, spring days that are just around the corner. We have a six pack from one of our new producers in the Loire, Bainbridge and Cathcart. Everyone who has tried their wines has been amazed at the flavour they pack into their bottles! There are probably only three of these packs available because the wines have sold so quickly so it will be first in first served. We have also collected together a six pack of wines with at least seven years of age so that you don't have to cellar them. Our final six pack for this month is of the wines made by talented winemaker Jeannot Montanet who was mentored by the famous Chablis producer Raveneau. His wines are not only delicious and beautifully made, they are also amazing value.

Remember that the special packs attract a 15% discount instead of a 10% discount, so if you order a special pack you really are getting a special deal (not that a 10% discount for most wines and free freight on your own selection isn't a good arrangement too)!

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.

News from Living Wines

General news

We always get excited about new wines arriving (like the juicy Bainbridge and Cathcart stunners from the Loire that arrived recently) but we also like to ponder what is lurking in our temperature-controlled wine storage facility gaining some bottle age or settling down after the long journey from France.

In this newsletter we are offering a six pack of wines that have at least seven years in the bottle so that you don't have to cellar them.

We have also been trying some of the wines that arrived a few months ago and that have had time to mature and change.

One of these is one of our cheapest wines. The Bois-Rouge from Domaine Mosse is a beautiful wine that has improved in the bottle since it arrived. It is comprised of 75% Cabernet Franc and 25% Cabernet Sauvignon and is a juicy quaffer that is drinking very nicely right now.

We also have good stocks of the popular Domaine du Moulin Sauvignon Blanc from Hervé Villemade in the Loire Valley which is also very reasonably-priced and is on a number of wine lists in Melbourne and Sydney.

We have received the latest news from Alice and Olivier de Moor about how the wines from their 2011 vintage are progressing and the good news is that they will be available in December and January so we should expect a delivery in about March or April next year. We are delighted that there will be a reasonable supply of their delicious Chitry – we love this area because there is amazing biological diversity around their vineyards and the soil type is very similar to the nearby Chablis vineyards. This leads to very healthy grapes and beautiful, mineral-accented wines.

News about the sailing ship *Tres Hombres* delivering wine to Denmark

We were delighted to find that two of our suppliers were included on the recent shipment of wines to Denmark aboard the brigantine *Tres Hombres* which were destined for restaurants such as NOMA, Relae and Manfreds & Vin. The ship delivered wine without using any carbon. Some of the suppliers even delivered their wines to the docks using horse and cart transport!



Photo of *Tres Hombres* ©Fair Transport

The wines of Bainbridge and Cathcart (one of our newest suppliers) and Domaine Saint Nicolas (many of you met Thierry Michon on his last visit to Australia and he will be here again in early November) were included on the shipment and are now on the menu at some of the restaurants mentioned above.

The Fair Transport organisation is currently working on a much larger, more modern sailing vessel that will be able to deliver cargo anywhere in the world.

Arrival of Stephane Guion wines

The Guion shipment has arrived! One problem we have with the wines of Stephane Guion is that some people do not treat them seriously enough because they are so reasonably priced. Both of his cuvées are priced in the mid-twenties (retail!). These are beautiful expressions of the Bourgueil terroir and of the Cabernet Franc grape.

We visit Stephane each year and we love walking through his immaculate vineyards and seeing the quality of the fruit which he produces. We also love the long walk into the subterranean labyrinth where his wines are cellared in the limestone quarries that the local village was built from hundreds of years ago.

We also enjoy the moment at the end of the 'degustation' when we have tasted his current vintages when he disappears into the cellar to bring us a very old (sometimes almost thirty years old) example of the Prestige cuvée. This shows that wines made naturally and given only a very light sulphur treatment are capable of lasting for decades.

We are particularly pleased with the current vintages (2011 for the Domaine and 2010 for the Prestige).

Special wine events in Launceston and Perth, WA

We have just conducted a special wine tasting in Launceston at the lovely Pinot Shop. We had a range of wines from throughout France on show and were delighted with the excellent attendance at this event and the eagerness of attendees to learn about wines from some very obscure regions of France and some even more obscure grape varieties. This further confirms our view that consumers no longer want to box themselves into the traditional grape varieties and traditional wine styles.

We will be conducting a trade tasting in Perth, WA for our trade customers in November along with our Sydney colleagues from Black Market Sake, Vini Imports and Godot Wines. Details will be available soon.

We will also be conducting a couple of special tastings with Thierry Michon from Domaine Saint Nicolas who's making a brief diversion to Australia on the way to wine events Tokyo and Shanghai.

Pack 1: Spring sipping selection 6 pack



This six pack contains some delicious easy-drinking wines that are perfect for spring sipping.

Bornard Pétillant Naturel Ploussard Tant-Mieux – Nothings compares with Tant Mieux for lazy spring sipping in the sun. It is slightly sweet but in a very nice way. This is a perfect aperitif or, as we can testify from lots of experience, a great refresher at the end of a long night of imbibing. And it is only 8.5% alcohol!!

Causse Marines Gaillac Les Greilles 2011 – Les Greilles is a classy white wine blended from local Gaillac grapes Mauzac and Loin-de-l'Oeil with a little Muscadelle thrown in. It is a perfect aperitif wine as well as being an ideal accompaniment for a range of foods such as charcuterie, including cured meats and a many spicy foods.

Domaine de la Cadette Bourgogne Vézelay Les Saulniers 2011 – Les Saulniers is another 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. It has a liveliness and freshness that is very appealing for such an elegant wine.

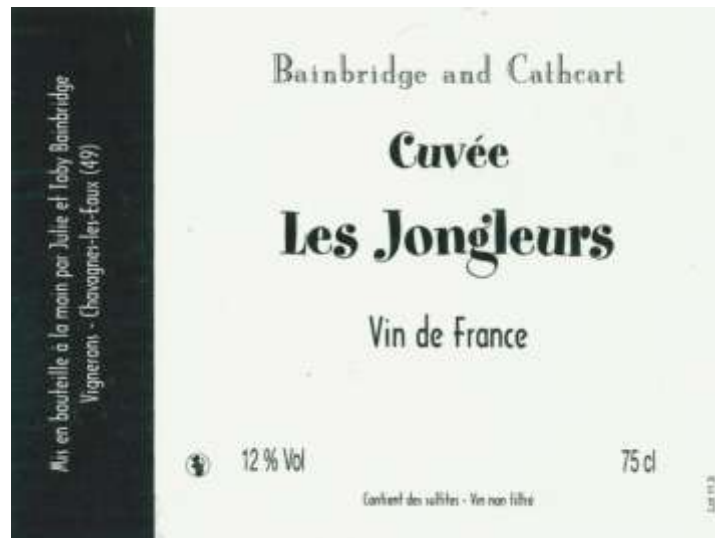
Domaine du Moulin Vin de Pays du Val de Loire Sauvignon 2011– A pure Sauvignon Blanc from Domaine du Moulin that belies its low price tag. Hervé Villemade does great things with Sauvignon Blanc and this wine is no exception.

Domaine Stéphane Guion Bourgueil Cuvee Domaine Rouge 2011 – This wine is produced from 100% Cabernet Franc and shows hints of raspberries and cherries on the nose. There are fine tannins providing structure to the wine and the wonderful fruit shines through.

Terres Dorées Beaujolais l'Ancien 2010 – This is a noble Beaujolais with great structure (from the old vines used to make this wine), elegance and enormous appeal, but at a price that is very accessible. If you are one of those people who were damaged by drinking poor Beaujolais in the past - this is the wine to reinvigorate your interest in the Gamay grape.

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$177 but the pack price is \$150.45 including freight.

Pack 2: Bainbridge and Cathcart 6 Pack



This six pack comprises two new wines from Toby and Julie Bainbridge who have two very old vineyards in the Loire Valley just south of the pleasant city of Angers. Toby chooses not to label under the Anjou appellation and, instead, adopt the common Vin de France designation. They only make two wines at present and both of them are delicious. The wines are bottled in clear Champagne-style bottles (so you can see the colour) and are sealed with crown seals so that there is no chance of cork taint. The wines are also low in alcohol at only 12%.

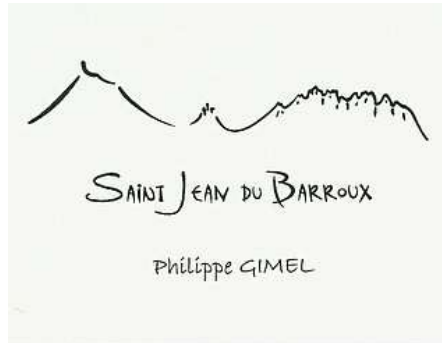
Bainbridge and Cathcart Vin de France Les Jongleurs 2011 (3 bottles) – This is a dry Chenin Blanc made from 60 year old vines from near Faye d'Anjou where the soil is sandy. Old vine Chenin is a real treat as there is a complexity in the wine that cannot be achieved from young vines. The wine is quite dry and is low in alcohol at only 12 percent. This is an excellent wine particularly when you consider the price.

Bainbridge and Cathcart Vin de France Rouge Aux Levres 2011 (3 bottles) – This wine has become an instant favourite. It is made from the red Groslot (Grolleau) Noir grape that is only found in the area between Angers and Tours in the Loire Valley and rarely seen as a single varietal. The wine shows very fresh berry aromas and flavours, soft tannins and lots of juicy goodness. It tastes very fresh. The wine has a little carbon dioxide in it as a preservative so you might detect a bit of 'fizz' at the beginning when the glass is first poured. The vines are very old at 85 years giving rise to a beautifully structured wine which exhibits considerable charm.

The RRP for this selection is \$204 but the pack price is only \$173.40 which includes freight.

Please note that supplies are very limited so it is first come first serve with this pack.

Pack 3: At least seven years old 6 pack



It is nice to try some older wines especially those made to age gracefully. For this six pack we have put together some wines that are at least 7 years old so that you can get the benefit of some aging without having to cellar them.

Philippe Bornard Côtes du Jura Savagnin Les Marnes 2006 – This aged Jura beauty has developed nutty characteristics and a savoury palate that is quite compulsive as a result of a few years 'under the veil'. The wine was produced with native yeasts and very little sulphur has been added to the bottle. The old casks that the wine is matured in impart little if no oak flavour. This is an intriguing and beautiful wine.

Henri Milan Clos Milan Rouge 2005 – The Clos Milan is Henri Milan's premium red wine made from 75% Grenache, 20% Shiraz (Syrah) and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. The grapes come from vines that are at least 40 years old that grow in Quaternary sands and gravels. The result is an elegant, perfumed, smooth, luscious wine that can be drunk now or will age further.

Saint Jean du Barroux Ventoux Oligocene Red 2004 – The wine is made from Grenache, Syrah, Carignan and Cinsault which come from vines that are harvested at extremely low yields (20 hectolitres per hectare). The wines see little wood in their maturation - Philippe prefers to use concrete and enamel instead. Only 5% of the wine is treated with wood and those barrels are ten years old!

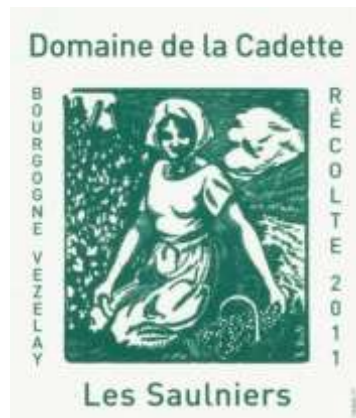
Domaine St Nicolas La Grande Piece 2004 – This is one of the domaine's prestige red wine and is made from pure Pinot Noir from vines that are at least 25 years old and that provide very low yields (<30 hectolitres per hectare). It is already elegant and refined but will continue to improve with age. It is a sensible 13% alcohol.

Domaine St Nicolas Blanc Cuvee Maria 2005 – Cuvee Maria is named after Thierry's grandmother. This is a very Burgundian wine being made from pure Chardonnay and aged in new oak. If you like the wines of Burgundy then you will love this cuvee.

Domaine du Pech Buzet La Badinerie du Pech Rouge 2005 – This is a beautiful and harmonious wine made from Cabernet Franc 33%, Cabernet Sauvignon 33% and Merlot 33%. It has masses of red and black berries on the palate and deep flavour. It is quite balanced now but will even improve given more time. Alcohol level is 13%.

The RRP for this selection is \$316 but the pack price is only \$268.60 which includes freight.

Pack 4: The wines of Vézelay 6 pack



The Vézelay region lies west of the main wine producing part of Burgundy (it is about 140 kilometres west of Gevrey Chambertin, for example) and about 50 kilometres south of the town of Chablis. Here, some beautiful white wines and silky reds are produced. We source wines from this area from Domaine de la Cadette which is owned by Catherine and Jean Montanet and from Domaine Montanet-Thoden which is owned by Catherine and her brother. All the wines are made by Jean Montanet.

Domaine de la Cadette Bourgogne Grand Ordinaire Melon de Bourgogne 2011 –

This wine is a great favourite of ours especially given the extremely reasonable price considering how little is produced. It is a perfect food wine marrying well with many flavours, but it comes into its own with terrines, parfaits and charcuterie.

Domaine de la Cadette Bourgogne Vézelay La Châtelaine 2011 – The wine comes from Chardonnay grapes from the vineyards on the pretty south-facing slopes of the Vézelay hills. The grapes are harvested by hand and then fermented naturally in vats (80%) and old barrels (20%). This is a beautifully-textured wine, showing that white wines of considerable elegance can be produced in this region.

Domaine de la Cadette Bourgogne Vézelay Saulniers 2011 – Les Saulniers is another white cuvée made entirely from Chardonnay. It has a liveliness and freshness that is very appealing for such an elegant wine.

Domaine Montanet-Thoden Bourgogne Vézelay Galerne 2011 – This is a lively 100% Chardonnay packed with white flowers and impressive minerality backed by a bracing acidity and beautiful, rounded flavour. The grapes are hand-picked and then pressed very gently. It was fermented in stainless steel using wild yeasts to provide added complexity.

Domaine Montanet-Thoden Bourgogne Garance Rouge 2011 (2 bottles) – This Pinot Noir 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 RRP for this selection of 6 bottles is \$200 but the pack price is a very reasonable \$170 including freight.

Fermentation of wine

Natural fermentation versus commercial yeast

Part 1

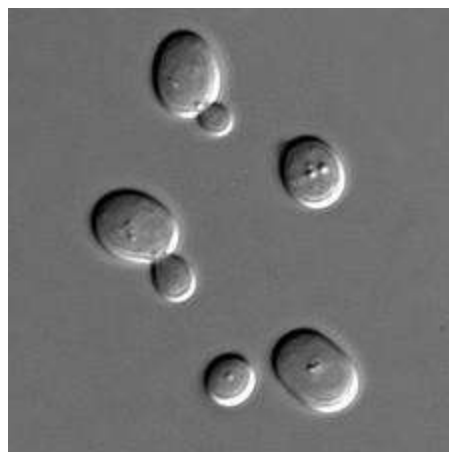
We have written this short essay to try to explain why we like natural fermentation as opposed to making wine with commercial, ‘created’ yeasts. We are not saying that there is anything necessarily bad about the use of commercial yeasts – in fact there are many advantages. We just prefer to drink wines that have been made with natural yeasts and we will try to explain why.

A widely-accepted requirement for a wine to be classed as a natural wine is for fermentation to be carried out using only the yeasts that are on the grapes and in the winery. These yeasts are termed natural yeasts or indigenous yeasts or wild yeasts or native yeasts depending on where you come from.

There is nothing revolutionary about this idea – it is the way wine has always been made! The tiny yeasts that are brought into the winery hitching a ride on the grape skins or found in the air and walls of the winery start chomping on the sugars (glucose, fructose and sucrose) in the juice and converting these sugars into alcohol and carbon dioxide and emitting heat.

There are many different types of natural yeasts that help to ferment wine. In fact studies have shown that up to thirty different yeasts can be present at various stages of the fermentation process.

Yeasts are tiny ovoid, unicellular organisms (which are actually tiny fungi) that are somewhat similar to bacteria in appearance. They reproduce by ‘budding’ which looks like a growth on the side of the cell and which eventually detaches to become a new cell (see photo below).



[Saccharomyces yeast strain with budding](#) - Source: Wikipedia

As we stated above there are many different types of yeast that help ferment grapes. At the beginning of fermentation it could be *Kloeckera apiculata*, *Candida*

pulcherrima, *Candida stellata* and *Candida colliculosa*¹. These yeasts can add complexity and richness to wine if handled carefully. For example, *Kloeckera apiculata* can produce the precursors for ethyl acetate which, if present at low levels can give an added richness and sweetness to wine. At high levels it causes wine to smell like nail varnish. But they also provide some of the precursors for aromas and flavours that add to the complexity of the wine.

The source of these yeasts is predominantly the skins of the grapes picked that day from the vineyard provided they are healthy².

There has been much research carried out about the improved sensory perception of wines produced via fermentation with native yeasts such as the predictions of Heard (1999)³ relating to the use of indigenous yeast species to improve the sensory quality of wine even though we disagree with his overall approach of using some commercial yeasts in the mix.

The yeasts mentioned above thrive in low alcohol environments and temperatures above 10°C but find it difficult to survive once the level of alcohol rises or the liquid reaches a temperature of 20°C⁴.

This is where the main grape fermenting yeast with its tolerance of ethanol takes over and does the heavy lifting. Its name is *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* and it the yeast most commonly found in fermenting wine, especially towards the end of the process when the alcohol level is higher and the temperature is in the twenties (Centigrade).

The main source of *Saccharomyces* is not the grape skins (although tiny quantities have been found on grape skins in the vineyard⁵) but instead they lurk in the winery walls, on the winemaking equipment and in the air.

Yeasts are also responsible for the aromas and flavours that are present in wine and we shall discuss some ideas about that later in this article.

But, of course, the main job that the yeasts perform is the conversion of sugars to alcohol.

This gives rise to the question of what it is about yeast that it is able to catalyse this reaction. Well the answer lies in an enzyme called Zymase that is present in these tiny yeasts. Grapes contain sugars. The vast majority of these sugars are glucose and fructose although others such as sucrose can also be present. Zymase breaks down the glucose (and fructose) molecules to produce ethanol and carbon dioxide.

¹ N.P. Jolly, O.P.H. Augustyn and I.S. Pretorius *The Effect of Non-Saccharomyces Yeasts on Fermentation and Wine Quality*. Institute for Wine Biotechnology and Department of Viticulture & Oenology. 2nd International SASEV Congress, 8-10 November 2000.

² *ibid*

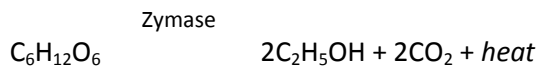
³ Heard, G., 1999. *Novel yeasts in winemaking – looking to the future*. *Food Aus*.51, 347-352.

⁴ H. Erten *Relations between elevated temperatures and fermentation behaviour of Kloeckera apiculata and Saccharomyces cerevisiae associated with winemaking in mixed cultures*. *World Journal of Microbiology & Biotechnology* 18: 373–378, 2002

⁵ Martini et al., *Direct enumeration and isolation of wine yeasts from grape surfaces*. *Am. J. Enol. Vitic.* 47, 435-440.

Wine Talk – the newsletter of Living Wines

The chemical equation for this reaction is very simple. The chemical formula for glucose is $C_6H_{12}O_6$. Fructose also has six carbon atoms. When the yeasts release their enzymes the following multi-phase transformation takes place:



Now notice that the glucose has been broken down into two molecules of ethanol (C_2H_5OH) and two of carbon dioxide (CO_2). Ethanol is alcohol – the stuff that makes us mellow, exhilarated, excited or maybe depressed if we ingest too much of it.

By the way, we chose the example of glucose because most yeasts prefer to break this down in preference to fructose. This means that any residual sugar left in a wine is likely to contain a bit of fructose.

Yeasts are living things therefore they need nourishment to survive and to carry out their important work. Conversely some things also harm them. Paradoxically the substance that is most deadly for yeasts is the substance they produce – namely ethanol! Some yeasts cannot withstand 14% of alcohol and some can hang out until the level reaches 18% but very few survive beyond this.

Of course, if the yeast converts all the sugar to alcohol there will be nothing to sustain them and they will also die. They are also often killed by the addition of potassium sorbate or potassium benzoate to ‘stabilise’ a wine. We wouldn’t consider a wine that used these substances to be a natural wine.

The nourishment yeast needs to carry out the fermentation includes lots of nitrogen and fermenting wine can become poor in this element. Many winemakers add nitrogen rich substances to the fermenting wine to ensure that the yeast has sufficient nourishment to carry out the conversion of the sugars. Basically, they fertilise it! This is another process that would be spurned in natural winemaking.

In the New World and many wineries in Europe winemakers began using commercially prepared yeasts in the 1960s rather than rely on the yeasts from the vineyard. This was partly out of necessity due to an increase in the number of sprays being used. In this short space of time many winemakers have come to regard the use of commercially-prepared, ‘created’ yeasts as the only way that wine can be made.

There is a good analogy with bread making. At about the same time that these commercial preparations were infiltrating the winery they were also starting to dominate bread making. Bags of created yeast (along with an array of other additives such as bread ‘improvers’) became de rigeur for bakers throughout the world. And, of course, the quality of bread slowly nose-dived and it has only been since the resurgence of artisanal sourdough bread that there has been a move back to the use of natural yeast to ferment the dough.

Of course, in both wine making and bread making the created yeast is more reliable, more predictable and ‘safer’ even though the yeasts in both cases affect the taste and aromas in the final product.

But before we discuss this topic further we need to address some of the views of the technologists who dominate the New World wine industry thinking. Centres such as the University of California at Davis and the Australian Wine Research Centre are almost messianic in their promotion of commercial yeasts. They claim that there is a high risk of spoilage and that the onset of fermentation is unpredictable with natural yeasts.

Much of their concern arises because they are mainly dealing with vineyards where the grapes have been grown in less than optimal conditions.

Because parts of the industry also promotes the use of insecticides and fungicides and pesticides and irrigation and the use of artificial fertilisers, many grapes are grown in 'microbially-dead' soils that harbour disease and are often unhealthy and prone to rot and mould.

The use of artificial fertilisers and lots of water also increase yield and decrease the concentration of flavour within the fruit.

There is also another reason why created yeasts have become so common. In many cases in the New World there is a separation between the people who tend the vineyard and the people who make the wine – an unthinkable proposition to our natural wine makers. The owners of commercial wine making facilities get grapes from many vineyards coming through their doors. They must make the wine quickly and efficiently because there is a lot of pressure as different vineyards complete their picking. The last thing they want to do is wait for natural fermentation to occur. They need the certainty that created yeasts provide.

There is another factor about created yeast that is not discussed as much as predictability and that is the effect of these yeasts on aroma and flavour.

It is probably easier to discuss what we see as unnatural about created yeasts by understanding the import of one of many papers on the topic of adjusting aromas in wine through the use of different types of created yeasts.

In a paper published by staff at The Australian Wine Research Institute, the purpose of the research is clearly to produce yeasts that will modify the aroma of a wine. We quote directly from the paper⁶:

“This paper briefly reviews the metabolic processes involved in the production of important volatile sulfur compounds and the latest strategies in the pursuit of developing wine yeast strains as tools to adjust wine aroma to market specifications.”

The clear implication is that whatever the market is asking for, a yeast can be created to deliver the aroma the market wants!

As we discussed in a previous newsletter, the Gamay grape is often described as having banana and bubble gum flavours and aromas. However we have drunk many

⁶ Swiegers JH, Pretorius IS. Modulation of volatile sulfur compounds by wine yeast. *Appl Microbiol Biotechnol.* 2007 Apr;74(5):954-60. Epub 2007 Jan 30

wines from Beaujolais that have none of those characteristics. The wines we tried had all been fermented naturally.

The banana aromas actually come from a yeast called 71B produced from tomato plants by the Dutch company Lalvin who actually promote the fact that using the yeast will produce tropical fruit flavours. They even talk about BA11, another created yeast, which in neutral white wines will create fresh fruit aromas of orange blossom, pineapple and apricot.

University of Auckland research⁷ into the tropical fruit aromas and flavours of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc shows that:

“Volatile thiols are a critical component of the distinctive aroma of New Zealand’s most important grape variety, Sauvignon Blanc. The thiols are synthesized by yeast from aroma-less precursors found in the grape. Recent data suggests that esters form another important aroma chemical in New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc wines. These chemicals are formed in yeast strains during fermentation. New Zealand wines are typically fermented at low temperatures, which is reported to result in increased fruit character in the wines.”

Once again, the research shows that commercial yeasts are being used to promote those fruit flavours and aromas even though there is a wide variety of native yeasts in New Zealand that could be used for the same purpose including *Pichia kluyveri*, according to Anfang et al.

This effect of commercial yeasts and their effect on flavour is supported by research carried out by Denis Dubourdiou of the Institute of Oenology in Bordeaux⁸. In a paper entitled Bordeaux White Wine Aromas he reported a very similar finding also through the use of commercial yeasts on Sauvignon Blanc. His contention is that none of the asparagus and tropical fruit aromas present in the wine are present in the aroma of the grape – it is the fermentation that converts chemical pre-cursors present in the grape juice into thiols. He says:

“We knew that the yeast creates aromas, but not that it could reveal potential varietal aromas. At the same time as we were making this discovery, we demonstrated that the use of different yeast strains could have different effects on the creation of thiols, and hence significantly alter varietal wine aroma profile.”

So, one of the reasons we don’t like the use of created yeasts is that they introduce flavours into the wine that are not part of the local terroir and not from the fruit.

We will follow up this discussion in more detail in future newsletters. This is only a very small part of our views on the use of natural yeasts which we believe are essential to the production of wines that are capable of delivering the complexity and deliciousness that we crave.

⁷ M.R. Goddard, N. Anfang, M. Brajkovich, "Co-fermentation with *Pichia kluyveri* increases varietal thiol concentrations in Sauvignon blanc", *The Australian Journal of Grape and Wine Research* 14 (2009): 1-8

⁸ Denis Dubourdiou *Bordeaux White Wine Aromas*. Institute of Oenology, Bordeaux.2000.

Grolleau (Groslot) Noir grape variety

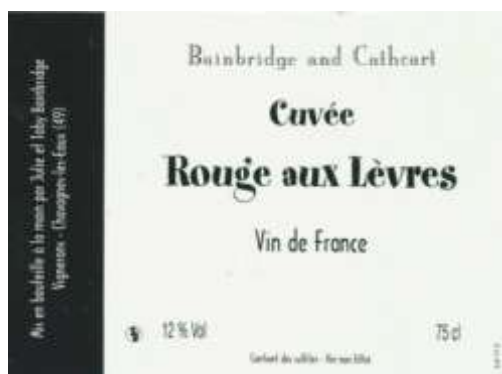
Grolleau Noir is a red grape (actually the skin of the grape is almost black in colour) that is only found planted in the western part of the Loire Valley round the cities of Angers and Tours as well as a few small plantings in the western-most of the appellations, namely Fiefs Vendéens.

The grape is thought to have been derived from the same parent as Chardonnay, namely the enigmatic Gouais Blanc⁹ (which is also known by any other names including Heunisch Weiss in Austria).

The area planted to Grolleau has dropped significantly since the 1950s which saw almost 12000 hectares planted. Now there is only a little over 2000 hectares scattered through the Loire Valley.

It is used to make low-alcohol red wines that are very juicy and food friendly and also for the famous rosé wines that hail from the Anjou area called Rosé d'Anjou.

Grolleau Noir is permitted in the Anjou appellation, however the maximum amount permitted in a red wine is 10%. This is the reason why Toby Bainbridge's delicious Grolleau Noir called 'Rouge aux Levres' is a Vin de France, because it is 100% Grolleau Noir and hence does not meet the rules of the Anjou appellation.



You can see from the label that the wine is only 12% alcohol which is typical of Grolleau. It also has very fine tannins.

Below is a photo of the vine leaf and some bunches of ripe grapes:



Photo courtesy of Mai and Kenji Hodgson <http://vinshodgson.posterous.com>

⁹ Boursiquoat, J.-M.; Lacombe, T.; Bowers, J.; Meredith, C. *Le Gouais, un cépage clé du patrimoine viticole, Européen XXVIIth World Congress of Vine and Wine, 2002*

In the six packs this month we have one consisting Toby and Julie Bainbridge's wines so that you can try three bottles of their absolutely delicious Grolleau Noir as well as three bottles of their excellent Chenin Blanc.

Appellation: Anjou

We just love the Anjou appellation which permits red, white and the famous rosé wines to be produced. The reds are made from Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon with the secondary grapes of Grolleau Noir and Pineau d'Aunis being permitted.

Grolleau Noir cannot comprise more than 10% of the blend and the two secondary grapes combined cannot exceed 30%.

The whites are made from the principal grape of Chenin Blanc with the secondary grapes of Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay being allowed. Chenin Blanc must comprise at least 80% of the blend.

The appellation is centred on the city of Angers in the Loire Valley. It is a city we love and which we return to every year to enjoy the delights of the restaurants, the wine bars and its liveability.

And we love the fact that the appellation is a hotbed of natural wine producers. Everywhere you turn there is a small producer who is returning to tradition and making wines as they are supposed to be made.

The Anjou appellation area encompasses other appellations including Anjou-Villages, Anjou Rouge, Savennieres (including Chateau de La Roche-aux-Moines and Coulee de Serrant), Coteaux du Layon (including Bonnezeaux and Quarts de Chaume) and Cremant de la Loire among others.

It is here that René and Agnès Mosse are making their amazing wines a short drive south of Angers.

'-age' words in French winemaking

Debourbage

Each newsletter we introduce you to a French winemaking terms ending with 'age'.

When grapes are picked and brought to the winery they are sorted and maybe de-stemmed depending on the winemaker and their preferences. They are then crushed to allow the juices to escape. With red wines the skins are left in contact because they contain much of the pigment needed for the colour of the wine.

With white and rosé wines, however, the juice is usually quickly pressed to allow the juice to be extracted quickly.

Wine Talk – the newsletter of Living Wines

The word *debourbage* is used to refer to the process of allowing the wine to ‘settle’ after being pressed and before being fermented. This is so that remaining solids are precipitated out of the liquid allowing the clear juice to be racked off before fermentation starts.

An exception is the practice adopted by an increasing number of European winemakers for creating orange wines through extended skin contact (sometimes up to 9 months) using white grapes. We have tried many orange wines from Friuli and Slovenia made using this method and they can be quite stunning and great matches for many foods. In Alsace, *Gewürztraminer* skins are often left in contact with the juice for a short time before pressing because the skins contain some of the desired flavour compounds. On our most recent trip to France we also tried an incredibly complex orange *Aligoté* from the Burgundy heartland that had been made using this technique which we hope to have available in Australia next year. But we digress!

There are many so-called modern methods of inducing settling including using centrifugal force or the addition of foreign substances such as sodium carboxymethyl cellulose which is derived from wood to cause suspended particles in wine to flocculate and fall to the bottom of the container. Another method is to super cool the wine to produce the same effect. This method requires a large energy input.¹⁰

Most natural wine makers, however, allow the process to occur naturally. They don’t want to extract too much of the solids because they want to retain the natural yeasts and also the varietal character of the wine.

Living Wines Order Form

You can simply send us an email to order wines, but if you would like to use the form to check prices or availability, click on the link below.

http://www.livingwines.com.au/Catalogue/Order_Form_Current_2012.pdf

¹⁰ *Bisson, L.F. Introduction to Wine Production – Overview of White Wine Processing. Viticulture and Enology. University of California Davis. Lecture 7.*