

WINE Talk: September 2014

(Issued in October)

The newsletter of Living Wines: Edition 49

This is a very brief newsletter this month for two reasons. The first is that we have been in France for the past six weeks visiting our suppliers and the second is that we are very low on stock at the moment.

We are, however, about to receive a big new shipment, our first full container, and the details are provided in this newsletter.

We only have two special packs for you this month due to the state of the stocks in our warehouse. The first is a pack of “mountain wines” from the Jura and the Savoie that we have selected to show you the diversity of styles coming out of these exciting regions. The second is a good value red pack with wines from throughout France.

There is also a secret pack that you will stumble across when you read the newsletter.

We also have a few special articles for you this month including one on the beneficial effects of bacteria in wine, a story about the Romorantin grape and another about the Pommard appellation.

And there is news of an exciting event to be held at Luxembourg restaurant in St Kilda in November to celebrate the wines of Beaujolais featuring wines from our supplier Jean-Paul Brun. We hope to see some of you at the event. And if you're a Tasmanian in the wine trade you may be interested in the news item about a Sommeliers Australia tasting we're co-presenting in Hobart on 21 October.

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.

New arrivals in October

We need to start with an apology. We have run out of many of our standard lines of wines. However, in the middle of October we receive our first full container of wine which will include wines from **Jean-Pierre Robinot**, **Jean-Michel Stephan** (a new producer from Côte Rôtie) who makes beautiful, light red wines from the Sérine grape variety¹, another new producer, **Pascal Simonutti** (some of you may know the “scribble” labels) whose lovely wines we have been enjoying for the past few years in France, **Agnès and René Mosse** (yes, Moussamoussettes will be back), **Yann Durieux**, a bunch of pet nats from **Les Capriades**, some more of the exciting wines from Anne-Marie and Pierre Lavaysse of **Petit Gimios**, the rustic white and red wines from **Nicolas Carmarans** in the Aveyron, a new supply of the no-added-sulphur wines from Axel Prüfer of **Le Temps des Cerises** in the Languedoc, more wines from **Jean-Paul Brun** in the Beaujolais including his quaffable rosé, the delicious sulphur-free wines of **La Paonnerie**, another shipment from **Henri Milan**, the much-loved Vézelay wines from **Domaine de la Cadette** and **Domaine Montanet-Thoden** including the ever-popular Melon de Bourgogne, a shipment from **Fanny Sabre** in Burgundy, the good value reds from **Stéphane Guion** in the Loire and also in the Loire the wines of **Domaine de la Garreliere** (and yes, the Gamay Sans Tra La La will be in the shipment!).

Special dinner at Luxembourg

We love Luxembourg, the restaurant in St Kilda set up by Andrew McConnell and chef Chris Watson. This French-themed venue serves amazing food and has an excellent selection of wines to match the food. Many of them are natural wines.

On Monday 17th of November they are holding a special dinner to celebrate the imminent release of the Beaujolais Nouveau wines that always are available late in that month. While we won't have any nouveau examples there will be a range of interesting Beaujolais wines from master winemaker Jean-Paul Brun served including a rare white Beaujolais.

Tickets are \$130pp for all courses and matched wines. For bookings call +61 3 9525 4488. It will be a night to remember, one we're looking forward to very much!

Sommeliers Australia Tasting: Biodynamics Demystified

Along with Stefano Lubiana from Stefano Lubiana Wines, which has recently achieved biodynamic certification, and Louise Radman, we're delighted to be co-presenting a discussion on biodynamic farming and biodynamic wines, with a tasting

¹ See our story on this grape variety in the next edition of the newsletter.

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of course, that includes some of our wines and Tasmanian wines grown using the principles of biodynamic farming. Sponsored by Sommeliers Australia it's an event for the wine trade but non-members are also welcome. It's from 3pm to 5pm on Tuesday 21, October in southern Tasmania. To buy a ticket visit sommeliers.com.au.

Wine of the month: Yann Durieux Manon

A recent visit to Yann Durieux reminded us of the incredible quality of his wines and enabled us, once again, to visit his vineyards and see the detailed work that he does there.

Although he appears to us to be very young he is quite experienced both in the vineyard and in the making of wine. He worked with Macon icon Julien Guillot from Domaine des Vignes du Maynes and also for leading Burgundy house Prieuré Roch (where he still helps out with the vineyard management)



Yann in his vineyard (Source: Foodtourist.com)

He now makes a number of cuvées including an amazing skin contact Aligoté, however his Manon is a truly beautiful white Burgundy of the old style before winemakers began pumping up their wines to please the palate of international wine critics.

Manon is named after his charming young daughter, who in turn is named after a much-loved French cartoon character, Manon, a young girl known as "the little queen of animals" whose antecedents can be traced to a French novel written by Abbé Prévost in 1791. It is a fragile and elegant Chardonnay, with some oxidative characteristics, released under the emerging Hautes-Côtes-de-Nuits appellation.

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There is concentration of flavour in the wine from the exceptionally low yields he gets from his vines. But please don't buy this wine if you like big, oaky, buttery Chardonnays – you will be disappointed.

This month we have a special secret offer to buy two of the Manon at a discount of 15%. Simply send us an email asking for the Manon Secret Pack and we will reduce the price for the two bottles from **\$208** to the special price of **\$176.80**.

Article held over

In the last edition of the newsletter we promised that we would begin a series on different fermentation vessels and aging vessels and that the first one would be fibreglass tanks.

Unfortunately we haven't had time to complete this article. We have been constantly on the road for the past five weeks visiting producers but we have seen a lot more fibreglass tanks in action and talked to the producers about their use of these tanks and have a lot more information to give you. So, we will make it a feature of newsletter number 50!

The benefits of bacteria in wine

Recently (26th September 2014) the online edition of Scientific American reported the results of a peer-reviewed study by Spanish scientist Dolores González de Llano from the University Autónoma de Madrid into the possible health benefits of bacteria in wine which will be published in the Food Microbiology journal in December this year.

The study isolated 11 strains of bacteria from wine, including *Lactobacillus*, the same beneficial bacteria that is the active agent in good yogurt. It is one of a group of bacteria that have probiotic properties including the maintenance of healthy gut bacteria and assistance with bowel functions.

The research was carried out because dairy products have been the best vehicle for delivering beneficial strains of bacteria, but with the widespread emergence of lactose-intolerance throughout the world as well as the level of cholesterol in dairy products, the researchers were looking for alternate delivery mechanisms – and what better than a glass or two of wine!

The problem, however, is that the human stomach and intestinal tract are hostile environments for bacteria and not all survive in this environment due to the acids and also the presence in our guts of the enzyme lysozyme which can damage cell walls of bacteria.

The study found that the bacteria in wine survives well, in fact better, than many other delivery methods. One strain in the wine was even found to be efficient in fighting the harmful *E. coli* bacteria.

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The study also found that lactic acid bacteria present in wine are similar to the probiotics found in yogurt, sauerkraut and fermented sausages.

The only problem they found was the thing that leaped out at us from the research report. The study found that the beneficial bacteria were partly eliminated by the addition of sulphites to the wine.

Therefore wines where no sulphites have been added will be more beneficial than those that have had sulphites added.

Pack 1: Mountain wines 6 pack



As you drive out of Burgundy towards the Swiss border the flat plains become rolling hills and then, by the time you reach the Jura the mountains are clearly in view. From the Jura you drive south to the Savoie where the mountains are much higher and much more obvious. Mont Blanc with its snow covered peak hovers over the landscape and does the Grands Jorasses. The vines that cling to these slopes produce grapes that ripen slowly leading to beautifully elegant wines.

Domaine Belluard Savoie Ayse AOP Brut "Les Perles du Mont Blanc" 2010 – This is a slight “rebadging” of the Belluard Ayse sparkling wine which is made from the rare Gringet grape. It is a sparkling wine that everyone loves and has been a staple offering at restaurants such as Garagistes since we first imported it.

Domaine Belluard Vin de Savoie Blanc Gringet Les Alpes 2012 – The Les Alpes just keeps getting better and better. This is an elegant wine that has beautiful mouth feel, intense fruit and mineral flavours and incredible length.

Domaine Belluard Vin de Savoie Blanc Gringet Le Feu 2012 – The Le Feu is also made from Gringet but comes from a plot of land higher up the morainal slopes. The soil here is very rich in iron which flashes red in the sunlight (hence the name). The minerality of the soil is definitely reflected in this wine.

Domaine de l’Octavin Vin de France Trousseau Les Corvées 2012 – This is a fascinating wine. It has the colour of a rosé but the weight and texture of a red wine making it a very versatile food wine but also perfect as an aperitif. Notice that this is a Vin de France rather than being under the Arbois appellation. The reason is that the alcohol level is only 9.8% which is less than the required minimum of 10%.

Michel Gahier Arbois Trousseau Le Clousot 2012 – Le Clousot is made from the Trousseau grape which is sourced from vines that are over twenty years old in the Le Clousot vineyard. It is a vibrant, fresh wine with good structure and quite good length. It is a very drinkable wine.

Philippe Bernard Arbois Pupillin Chardonnay Le Blanc de la Rouge 2010 – The Blanc de la Rouge is an intense, concentrated, very dry Chardonnay that shows characteristic mineral characters derived from the limestone soils in which the vines thrive. Chardonnay expresses itself differently at this higher altitude than nearby Burgundy. Philippe is particularly pleased with this vintage. The yields were down (hence the price increase) but the quality is the highest it has ever been.

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$298 but the pack price is \$253.30 including freight.

Pack 2: Good value red wines 6 pack



As we mentioned above, we are about to get a large shipment and we are worried about whether it will fit in our warehouse. Therefore we have selected a 6 pack where each of the wines is delicious and represents good value and THEN we have applied a one-off 20% discount so that we can clear out these stocks ready for the new arrivals.

Domaine Saint Nicolas Fiefs Vendéens Reflets 2012 – The Reflets is Thierry Michon’s “go-to” wine for just about any occasion. It is primarily Pinot Noir supported by a little Gamay and some Negrette to give it more colour and a spicy flavour.

Hervé Villemade Cheverny Les Ardilles Rouge 2011 – This is a deeply-flavoured blend of Pinot Noir (80%) and Gamay (20%) with a silky mouth-feel and a freshness and liveliness that is very appealing – surprising for a wine that is only 11% alcohol!

Bainbridge and Cathcart Rouge Aux Levres Vin de France 2012 – Grolleau Noir is only found in the Anjou district of the Loire and the vines for this cuvée are very, very old – in fact they are among the first to be planted in the area. The wine is quaffable but has good structure and fine tannins.

Domaine la Paonnerie Coteaux d’Ancenis “Simplement Gamay” 2012 – The “Simplement Gamay” 2012 is made from 100% Gamay Noir a Jus Blanc. The wine is fermented with natural yeasts and is neither filtered nor fined nor has any added sulphites. It is light, lively and delicious and drinking very nicely right now.

Terres Dorées Jean Paul Brun Beaujolais l’Ancien 2012 – Made entirely from the dominant grape of the Beaujolais, Gamay á Jus Blanc, this wine is made from grapes grown on old vines in a vineyard with good southerly exposure. This wine has excellent structure and is a fine example of the best of Beaujolais winemaking.

Causse Marines Vin de France Causse Toujours 1102 – Causse Toujours is a blend of Syrah which provides silkiness, spice and body, and a small amount of Prunelart (a local ancient grape that is being revived in the area by Patrice and some of his fellow vigneron in the area) from young vines which provides a more rustic element to the wine.

The RRP for this selection of 6 bottles of wine is \$214 but the pack price is \$171.20 including freight.

Grape variety: Romorantin

Romorantin is a fascinating grape variety found in the Loire Valley in the area east of the city of Tours near the town of Blois. Originally from Burgundy this variety was introduced into the Loire (sources are conflicting on who was responsible) and was planted near the village of Romorantin which has since grown into a larger town called Romorantin-Lanthenay.

It wasn't, however, until 1993 that the appellation of Cour-Cheverny² was created specifically for the white Romorantin grape due to the quality of some of the wines being made in the area.

The communes that are permitted to use the Cour-Cheverny appellation are Cellettes, Cheverny, Chitenay, Cormeray, Cour-Cheverny, Huisseau-sur-Cosson, Montlivault, Mont-près-Chambord, Saint-Claude-de-Diray, Tour-en-Sologne and Vineuil.

Like many obscure grape varieties there are good wines and there are some terrible wines made from the grape.

We read in Victor Hugo's *Lucretia Borgia*³ that *"if you have heard people's teeth chattering in terror at the mere mention of the notorious Borgia poison which is as white and scintillating as marble dust from Carrara and which, when put into wine, can change ordinary Romorantin wine into the finest Syracuse wine, then you will be careful not to touch the golden flagon."* This shows that there was a perception in the 19th century that wine from Syracuse was of a higher quality than wines made in the area around the village of Romorantin.

Robert Parker⁴ while generally being sceptical about the wines of the Cheverny and Touraine areas in general pays some grudging respect to Romorantin by saying *"the one exception to ageworthiness is Cour-Cheverny, as the Romorantin grape has proven capable – both in dry and off-dry versions – of taking on a marvellous, if slightly oxidized, patina after several years and of aging interestingly for a decade or more."*

The grapevines are hardy but are somewhat susceptible to disease. They have a slightly round leaf with minor serrations around the edge as can be seen from the photo below.

² Cour-Cheverny is a village about 20 kilometres north-west of Romorantin-Lanthenay

³ Victor Hugo, *Lucretia Borgia Act Two: The Happy Couple*.

⁴ Robert Parker, *Parker's Wine Buyer's Guide, 7th Edition*.



The leaf of the Romorantin vine (Source Foodtourist.com)

The grapes themselves are small and arranged in loose bunches. They take on some colour when ripe as can be seen from the photograph on the left below.



The bunches of the Romorantin grape (Source Foodtourist.com)

We find that the wines made from the Romorantin grape variety benefit from acquiring some oxidative quality, particularly those wines made from vineyards that have some age.

There are less than 75 hectares of Romorantin in the Cour-Cheverny appellation with about five of these belonging to Hervé Villemade who makes three different cuvées from this grape variety.

Two of Hervé Villemade's Cour-Cheverny's will be available when our new shipment hits the streets so look out for them in the next newsletter.



Hervé showing us his Romorantin vines (Source Foodtourist.com)

Appellation: Pommard

As you drive south-west through the less-than-exciting suburbs of Beaune in central Burgundy you are suddenly presented with a vision of wall-to-wall vineyards climbing gradually towards thin wisps of forest near the top of the hills. You have reached the renowned turf of Pommard!

The village itself is charming with a number of good eating places and a fine butcher. It sits at the junction of the D17 which runs roughly from the south-east to the north-west and the D973 which runs at right-angles to the D17. The village sits in a basin with low hills surrounding it. The hills and the valley floor are covered with the famous vineyards.

Pommard is one of the great appellations of Burgundy. Here Pinot Noir vines gain sustenance from the rusty, red, iron-rich soils that funnel down towards the eponymous village to produce wines of strength and substance.

The famous soils which are laced with limestone pebbles and iron-rich oolitic limestone are shown in the photo below:



We always enjoy arriving in Pommard because it is here that our friend Fanny Sabre maintains her sparkling new winery and her welcoming bistro where we always enjoy a delightful lunch.

On our most recent visit we went to the vineyards to see how the vintage was progressing. We drove up out of the village to the slopes that arc up to the thin layer of forest that protects Fanny's vines from the elements. You can see the vines in the photo below. The vineyards are to the north-west of the village on a gently sloping hill. The village of Pommard can be seen on the left side of the photo.



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It is easy to spot Fanny's vines because they are always marked with her trademark pink colour!



This appellation was first declared in 1936 and has been recognised for the quality of the wines produced here ever since. However, only red wines can display the name of Pommard!

The wines must be made from Pinot Noir but small amounts of Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris may be added. Most winemakers in this appellation do not include the secondary grapes.

We currently have supplies of the Catherine & Dominique Derain Pommard Les Petits Noizons from both the 2010 and 2011 vintages. This is a fine wine of considerable elegance coming as it does from the Les Petits Noizons vineyard which abuts the famous Les Charmots Premier Cru vineyard and shares many of its characteristics.

Unfortunately Fanny Sabre's vineyards have been damaged by hail from 2011 through to 2013 so we have to wait another year to stock her Pommard again.

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