

T H E
W I N E R Y

March Tasting 18.03.19
featuring Grace Hafner

Tonight we are delighted to be joined by Grace Hafner, of the Hafner family in Alexander Valley, California. Grace, daughter of winemaker Parke Hafner, is currently studying in Bordeaux.

SPARKLING

Zum Krug Riesling Sekt Brut 2016, Josef Laufer (Rheingau/Germany) 13.99

Hotel Zum Krug, in Hattenheim, is a magical place: the embodiment of the Rheingau, a region thick with castles, convents and vineyards. Reminiscent of a gingerbread house, it's the sort of place that takes you back to mediaeval Germany with its atmospheric twists and turns from a wooden interior straight out of a fantasy grotto from ancient legend. Josef Laufer and his son Josef Laufer Junior, owners and fonts of local knowledge, always give us a warm welcome and we start with a glass of their brilliant dry Sekt made from top class Rheingau fruit just outside the village - a wake-up call to the senses in all its petrolly splendour.



WHITE

Rotschiefer Riesling Kabinett trocken 2017, Nico Simonis (Mosel/Germany) 14.99

In 2015 we found ourselves at something suspiciously like a Pünderich Village Summer Fête. It was an all-day event, culminating in an evening of Flammkuchen (a super-thin pizza with onion, cheese and lardons) and dancing (Hoedown followed by Oompah and Techno). The main theme was the "Riesling Kartell", a group of six young growers from the village. We bumped into Gerrit Walter (our former intern and maker of our top-selling dry Riesling) and asked him if there was something we should be trying. "Try this" he said, passing a glass. It was proper Mosel – light, delicate, floral and yet with backbone – all about herbs, salty slate minerals and racy, running water. Lovely. "What is this?" we asked. "It's Nico Simonis' Rot-Schiefer (*red slate*) Kabinett trocken 2014. He's young and learning a lot, working a few days a week at Franzen." We hot-footed it around to Simonis' house – you can guess the rest!

Chardonnay Alexander Valley 2015, Hafner (California/USA) 29.99

Scott and Parke Hafner have a different business model to most. They only sell to private clients, no retail. It is well over a decade since we were lucky enough to spot a bottle from the 5% they sell into California restaurants at Ralph's Bistro in Healdsburg. We phoned the next morning. "Hi, we're from London. We know that you don't normally sell to retail, but would you be interested in selling to us?"

"Sure, why not?"

Hafner's family winery is located in the beautiful Alexander Valley and surrounded by their own meticulously kept vines. While their winery was being built back in the early 80's, Parke Hafner did a stint at Comte Lafon in Meursault, influencing the style ever since. Lush, ripe Alexander Valley fruit unobscured by oak, with aromas of roasted nuts and a stream of minerality rarely seen in Californian Chardonnay.

Pouilly-Fumé 2017, Domaine du Bouchot (Loire/France) BIODYNAMIC 21.99

We were methodically following leads around Pouilly-sur-Loire. Some dead ends, some growers were out of town but keen, another just went to the fax line. While we were driving around trying to locate another grower we had been tipped about, we saw an intriguing sign at the end of a lane. Domaine du Bouchot, AB organic. So we phoned them. Can we come and see you? When would you like to come? In 5 minutes? OK. Rachel and Pascal Kerbiquet started their winery 31 years ago. They were the first in the area to go organic. That was in the mid 1990s. Since 2012 they have gone one step further and are now biodynamic. They make very stylish Pouilly-Fumés, the embodiment of Sauvignon Blanc in three different bottlings. This is their classic - their calling card.

We came back the next day to cram what little space was left in the van with their wines.

RED

Irpinia Rosso Ischa Piana 2014, Salvatore Molettieri (Campania/Italy) 16.99

We have a bit of a thing for Taurasi, the so-called “Barolo of The South”. The grape is Aglianico and here, in the volcanic hills, Aglianico is untamed, tannic and often grand.

The Molettieri family has been making wine for four generations in Montemarano, in the southern part of the zone. In 1983, instead of selling grapes to Mastroberardino (who was widely credited with bringing Taurasi onto the world stage), Salvatore Molettieri decided to make his own wine.

Salvatore, now 68, is joined by his four sons Giovanni, Giuseppe, Luigi, Paolo and their families. Giovanni, who studied Oenology, plays a leading role. Salvatore and his wife Angela had hoped to have a daughter but their doctor told them they might need 12 children before getting a girl. They called it a day at four.

Molettieri’s Irpinia Rosso comes from a single vineyard, Ischa Piana, planted in 1994 and is predominantly Aglianico with a splash Cabernet Sauvignon. The combination produces a rich, round, southern red.

Moulin-à-Vent “Cuvée Étalon” 2014, Laurent Gauthier (Beaujolais/France) 16.99

Beaujolais *after* a Campanian red? Can’t be right. Or can it?

When we first stumbled upon wild-eyed Laurent Gauthier well over a decade ago, he seemed a man of few words. It could just have been that he didn’t understand our mangled French. Laurent makes an excellent Moulin-à-Vent called Cuvée Étalon, a dense and fleshy interpretation of the Gamay grape. Moulin-à-Vent is one of the ten “Cru” villages of Beaujolais, all of which enjoy superior soil, rich in granite, compared to the rest of the region. Moulin-à-Vent always tends to be the fullest-bodied of all the Crus and is one of the wines of the Beaujolais that can age 30 years with ease.

Despite having bought annually since our first visit in 2004, there was a ten year gap before we visited again. Since then we have been dropping by his mini-fortress style winery on the road between Fleurie and Chénas much more frequently. In the meantime, Laurent seems to have become a bit chattier - either that or our French has improved a little. “See you in another ten years then?” he said as we went. “Haha – maybe sooner!”



Cabernet Sauvignon Alexander Valley 2012, Hafner (California/USA) 47.99

If the Hafner’s Chardonnay looks to Burgundy for its inspiration, their Cabernet tilts towards Bordeaux rather than Napa as its benchmark. While Alexander Valley produces succulent fruit, the valley is cooler than Napa, making the wine more restrained than its neighbour from the other side of the canyon.

Hafner tend to pick earlier than most in California to keep freshness and avoid higher alcohol in the finished wines. There is 2.5% Petit Verdot and 4.5% Malbec for colour and depth in the final blend.

We revel in its herbal aromas, its pure, high-toned elegance, fleshiness and generosity, reminding us of those legendary Cali bottles from the 70s and 80s before some people got carried away with new oak and over-extraction.

They release the Cabernet five years after harvest and hold back some for release after a decade – which explains the magnificent 2007 on our shelves. These wines age beautifully for 20 years or more.

OLIVE OIL

Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Il Mercante di Delizie (Veneto/Italy) 500ml - 13.99

Milly and Carlo Paladin’s latest Extra Virgin Olive Oil. Peppery, liquid gold.

LUNAR CALENDAR OBSERVERS – today is a **Fruit Day**.

Our following tasting here at The Winery will be on **Thursday 25th April**, when we will be joined by **Marta Alessandria** from **Monforte d’Alba, Piedmont**.

Recently arrived – Valentina Cubi, Champagne Amyot, Thierry Drouin from Burgundy, Bordeaux – Lavagnac, Callac, Clos des Menuts **Arriving soon** – more Bordeaux, more Burgundy: Paul Pernot & Guillemot; Pascal Chalon Petite & Grande Ourse from the Rhône; Schola Sarmenti from Puglia. From Germany; Adeneuer from the Ahr valley, Lubentiusshof from the Mosel, Reiner Flick’s Rosé. Speaking of Rosé, we should have our next delivery of Mauvan from Provence around Easter.

Join us for our Monthly Tastings
The Winery, 4 Clifton Road, London W9

mailinglist@thewineryuk.com
020 7286 6475

www.thewineryuk.com

info@thewineryuk.com