

T H E
W I N E R Y

December Tasting 09.12.14

Killer Christmas line-up tonight! Our shelves are filled with a blizzard of new arrivals from an intense few months of travelling. Plus, we are excited to be joined by **Benoit Velut** tonight. Benoit is the son of Anne and Denis. The Velut family make Champagne in Montgueux just west of the mediaeval city of Troyes. What's more is that he's not just coming to say hello, but we are opening the tasting with their delicious, racy Champagne!

SPARKLING

Champagne Brut Tradition NV, Velut (Champagne/France) 27.99

The wind roars across the flat plains of Champagne 100kms south of Épernay. There is just one small hill – it's just west of the city of Troyes and covered with vines, many of them Chardonnay. The village at the top of the hill is Montgueux, recently hailed by a French Journalist as “the Montrachet of the Côte des Bars”, and that's where we found Denis and Anne Velut. After finishing his studies (including an internship in Burgundy at Lafarge, the benchmark grower in Volnay), their 27 year-old son Benoit has recently joined the domaine. Tonight Benoit is pouring their Cuvée Tradition, a blend of 80% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot Noir. Fresh citrus, lemon sorbet notes, some caraway, clean, clear and lively. Across the board their range is impressive. Cuvée Speciale is 100% Chardonnay – the speciality of Montgueux. Their vintage bottlings are always round and deep. Latest addition to their line-up is the super-dry Brut Nature. Same base wine as the Cuvée Speciale, a blend of 2001 and 2002 with zero dosage (*dosage* is the small dose of sugar that is added to make the second fermentation within the bottle, thereby creating the bubbles). It was bottled in 2004. Excellent.

Every time we visit, Benoit's mother Anne, ex-teacher and keen pastry chef, offers us a little something. Once it was a “sucré salé”, a flat croissant-like sweet and salty pastry filled with apple compôte and foie gras - perfect with a glass of their vintage Champagne. In October she had baked a delicious fig tart which she served with their Rosé.



WHITE

Mâcon-Davayé 2013, Cheveau (Burgundy/France) 14.99

In southern Burgundy, near Mâcon, the primal presence of the two jagged rock faces of Vergisson and Solutré dominate the skyline above the tiny village of Pouilly, the village that time forgot. When we first visited 12 years ago, the whole Cheveau family, from Grandparents to Grandchildren, gathered in the doorway to watch the hot-shot wine merchants from London taste their wines. At that time Nicolas Cheveau made Mâcon, St-Véran and Pouilly-Fuissé. Much has changed since then. When we visited in October Nicolas (now 37) proudly showed us the brand spanking new, much more accessible winery on the approach to the village. Also there are several new bottlings. Four Mâcon, one Bourgogne Blanc, one St-Véran and no fewer than four separate Pouilly-Fuissé selections. In red he now produces three Beaujolais, including a chunky Saint-Amour.

Schiefer Riesling trocken 2013, Deutschherrenhof (Mosel/Germany) 13.99

Brand new to the UK - we picked this up last month after our visit in September. Trier is a city thick with history back to Roman times and has long been a centre for the wine trade on the Mosel. The village of Olewig is barely 5 minutes' drive from the centre of Trier. It is wonderfully fitting to see vineyards on the hills overlooking the city. After the obligatory stint at Geisenheim (Wine Uni) and internships in Australia, New Zealand and around Germany, Sebastian Oberbillig (now 34) is the driving force in his family's winery. The winery has been in the family for five generations. His father, Albert (who still works in the winery, mainly on admin, bottling and labelling), had 3.5 hectares of vines. Sebastian has grown their holdings to 11.5 hectares in Deutschherrenberg, Burgberg, Jesuitwingert and Deutschherrenkopfchen. As everywhere on the Mosel, it's all about the slate (*Schiefer*). This is Sebastian's calling card: a tingling, zingy, moreish dry Riesling grown on blue-grey slate.

W I N E R Y

WHITE (cont)**Riesling trocken 2013, Kirsten (Mosel/Germany)****15.99**

After picking up from Deutschherrenhof, it was just a few loops eastwards along the river Mosel to the village of Klüsserath where Bernard and Inge Kirsten make deeply textured dry Rieslings from the magnificent, amphitheatre-like Klüsserather Bruderschaft vineyard.

Bernhard is from the Mosel; Inge from Hamburg. They met in 1987 in New York while she was working in the travel business and he was passing through, visiting his sister, between Germany and California where he had internships at Domaine Napa, Pine Ridge and Mondavi in Oakville. After a couple of years learning about Cabernet Sauvignon, he came home to take over the family winery and concentrate on Riesling. Wind forward 27 years and the winery has grown to 15 hectares and, for the past 6 years, has been fully organic. Well-known domestically for their sekt and locally for their trester (marc/grappa), the core of their output is dry Riesling. Most of their vines are in the imposing, sweeping loop of Klüsserather Bruderschaft, many in the Herzstück (the heart piece) - the best part. The wines are impressive, packed with surging minerals, deep, textured and multi-layered.

RED**Chateau Brisson 2002 (Bordeaux/France)****15.99**

We started working with the excellent Clos des Menuts in the historic town of Saint-Émilion about a year ago. The Rivière brothers, who own Clos des Menuts, Chateau Lavagnac and Chateau Picampeau also had this in their cellars – a Côtes de Castillon with some age, drinking beautifully. It flew from our shelves, so we asked them to put everything they had to one side for us.

The Côtes de Castillon is the eastern flank of Saint-Émilion's satellite appellations. The Dordogne river is its southern limit. The French King Charles VII was grateful for the support of Castillon, which, along with Fronsac, rallied to his side when he was trying to boot the English out of Bordeaux in the 1450s. Castillon was rewarded with his favour and was highly prized for following centuries. The blend is classic Right Bank – 85% Merlot with 10% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Cabernet Franc. Our final shipment has just arrived - catch it while you can!

**Funnari 2010, Mimmo Paone (Sicily/Italy)****15.99**

For the past four years the periodic return of Mimmo Paone's Funnari from Sicily is always eagerly awaited. Funnari barely touches the shelves before selling out.

Mimmo is a Sicilian with the firmest, bone-crunching handshake we have ever experienced. Once our hands had recovered, we were blown away by his two dark, brambly Nero d'Avolas. Although they are based on the north coast, in the top right hand corner of the island, Mimmo's Nero d'Avola is harvested in Agrigento on the south coast and driven overnight to their winery in Condro' near Torregrotta.

Pyjama 2012, Demencia (Bierzo/Spain)**15.99**

Finally, it's Pyjama Time! Don't be alarmed - Pyjama is a new wine by Nacho León. We are big fans of Demencia, the sumptuous red which Nacho and two mates makes in the corner of a friend's cellar on the Pilgrim's Trail to Santiago de Compostela in Bierzo, northwest Spain.

Mencia is the name of the grape; an old, indigenous variety being brought back to life by young winemakers in northwest Spain. When we visited Nacho in 2009 he showed us pretty much every one of their twenty-five tiny parcels of beautiful, gnarly, old vines in villages outside Ponferrada. In 2011 they added a new bottling – Pyjama. It's a selection from 50 year-old vines on sandy soil, fermented with wild yeasts in larger tanks before being moved into used barrels for ageing.

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

Extra Virgin Olive Oil from the Paladin family in Annone Veneto.

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

Our **following tasting** will be at the shop on **Tuesday 27th January**, when we will be joined by Gerrit Walter, who makes our biggest selling dry Riesling in Briedel on the Mosel.

Join us for our Monthly Tastings

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