

T H E
W I N E R Y

May Tasting 18.05.16

featuring Gut Hermannsberg

Tonight's sparkling and white selection features the bold new wines from the legendary German estate Gut Hermannsberg – the former Prussian State Wine Domain. Built in a beautiful fold of the Nahe valley and reachable only by a narrow, winding, single lane road (every transporter's nightmare), the estate boasts some of the finest Grand Cru vineyards in the valley, including the Schlossböckelheimer Kupfergrube, their monopole Niederhäuser Hermannsberg and the miniscule Traiser Bastei. We are delighted to welcome Tobias Fricke who joins us tonight from the estate.

SPARKLING

Blanc de Blancs Sekt Brut 2014, Gut Hermannsberg (Nahe/Germany) 21.99

Justly famous for their Riesling, they also make a very small amount of Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc) and Chardonnay for this fresh, yet biscuity Sekt.

WHITE

Just Riesling trocken 2014, Gut Hermannsberg (Nahe/Germany) 16.99

The Domain was started in 1902 using convict labour and plenty of earth-moving, rock-shaping dynamite by Forester Hoepf who persuaded the reluctant Prussian State to build a new wine domain in the Nahe. The region's vital fruit and oak sales had collapsed and Hoepf, who was a strong supporter of "Naturwein" (the new concept of wine as a natural product), believed that winemaking should be encouraged. He proposed that the new domain should be operated as a "model vineyard"; improving the quality of winemaking in the area and raising the reputation of German wine generally. He was convinced that the location and geology were perfect for vines. Subsequent decades proved him to be correct.

After a long golden era the estate's fortunes went south in the 1980s and 90s until it was bought in 1998 by the Maurer family, who had made their fortune selling potatoes to German supermarkets. The talented Christian Vogt was brought in to make the wine. We visited and bought a few times in the mid 2000s. The estate was on the up again but Erich and Tilly Maurer decided to retire and sold in 2009. Their daughter Gudrun continues to work at the estate. Christian Vogt moved to Karthäuserhof in the Ruwer.

The new owners, Dr Christine Dinsel and Jens Riedel, a wealthy, wine-loving couple from Hamburg with a background in banking, have invested generously in every area of the estate. Dr Christine has written a very thorough and readable history of the Domain and the striking new label is a reworking of the original design from the early 1900s. They have an excellent young winemaker plucked from the Pfalz, called Karsten Peter.

This is their entry-point dry Riesling, a blend of Schlossböckelheimer Kupfergrube, Niederhäuser Hermannsberg and Steinberg, Altenbamberger Rotenberg and Kreuznacher Gutental.

Niederhäuser HB Riesling trocken 2013, Gut Hermannsberg (Nahe/Germany) 21.99

This is one of the wines that brought us knocking at the gates of the estate. A striking, bold, full-throttle dry Riesling exploding with deep, layered minerals and surging with freshness. This is their village level selection, from the Hermannsberg vineyard that surrounds the winery and barely 200 metres from the Kupfergrube which tastes completely different.

Steinterrassen Riesling trocken 2014, Gut Hermannsberg Magnum 58.99 - 750ml 28.99

This sits just one notch below their Grand Cru bottlings – Steinterrassen (*Stone Terraces*) is a selection from steep, south-facing vineyards; the volcanic soils of the Steinberg, the red slate of the Rotenberg and the gravelly Kertz. Fermented in traditional oak Fuders. Exotic (guava, pineapple & cinnamon), spicy and mineral-laced.



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RED

Barbera 2014, Cantina di Casteggio (Lombardy/Italy)

8.99

The little-known region of Oltrepó Pavese is a bump on the plain 60kms south of Milan. It's fair to say Cantina di Casteggio is bigger than any other winery we work with. Much bigger. A Co-op with 350 members and a massive facility, part run-down *fascista*-style, part space age. The Cantina is very switched-on and started a "quality project" with their best 50 growers, bringing in famous Italian consultant Riccardo Cotarella. Clearly they were making notes whenever he visited and the quality of the entire range was transformed. Try as we might, we just couldn't resist: they make a great range of modern wines.

In 2008, the Cantina di Casteggio was bought (although they euphemistically describe it as a "fusion") by the Cantina di Bronis in the town of Broni just 12kms to its east. Quality has gone from strength to strength. Their dynamic boss, Livio Cagnoni has been driving big projects through and, when we visited in April, we saw their shiny new, extensive, state-of-the-art facility in Broni. The combined group now has 900 members spread across 28 villages, 90% of them in the hills. This Barbera is ripe and sleek, packed with autumn fruits and soft tannins.

Chianti Rufina, Dreolino (Tuscany/Italy)

13.99

A few years ago, we stumbled across a delicious Chianti Rufina by Dreolino in the unassuming and excellent Trattoria Tre Soldi in Florence. The following morning we were driving north-east out of Florence to the pretty town of Rufina and knocking on Sabrina Tanini's door. (Tanini? Dreolino? Dreolino was her grandfather, Gino Tanini's nickname).

We were back in Tuscany in March and another visit was overdue. Her wines are no-nonsense, toothsome – breezy strawberries/raspberries and yet savoury, with weight and texture. It was a welcome relief after too much overhyped, overpriced Chianti Classico. We agonised long and hard over whether or not to buy it in the old straw-covered flasks, finally opting for the newer label and bottles. Feel free to lobby us for the flasks for next time. After all, you may need new candle-holders for your 1960s retro interior, right?



Dolcetto d'Acqui 2000, Scarpa (Piedmont/Italy)

16.99

Ever since our first bottle of Scarpa Barolo 1999 we have been hooked. There's a well-stocked wine shop in La Morra next to a small restaurant/bar. If you ask nicely, you can buy a bottle in the shop and drink it with your meal. We spotted the Scarpa and the guy from the shop ran over to the restaurant with the wine. "This is the best Barolo in the shop", he said. "Sure you can spend more" (here he peppered the expectant air with high profile examples) "but this – this is proper Barolo. Anything else is bolshhit."

Our trip to Piedmont last month took us again to Scarpa, whose cellar is a treasure trove of mature Barolo, Barbera and several wines made from obscure local grapes such as Freisa Secco and Rouchet. The style is truly traditional – they have had the same winemaker for 50 years (he was taking a nap when we visited this time). Martina Barosio, who runs the winery for her mother and stepfather, also showed us something very unusual - their Dolcetto d'Acqui 2000, picked late and vinified dry. We were rather taken by this remarkable wine – not your normal, light Dolcetto!

OLIVE OIL

Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Il Mercante di Delizie (Veneto/Italy)

500ml - 11.99

Milly and Carlo Paladins' latest (and scarce) Extra Virgin Olive Oil. Peppery, liquid gold.

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

Our following tasting, featuring **Johannes Haart** from Piesport on the Mosel, will be here at The Winery on **Wednesday 15th June**.

Just arrived – from Germany; Busch, Walter, JB Becker, Prinz, Peter-Jakob Kühn. Becker-Landgraf Spätburgunder (hopefully today). From Italy; Dreolino, Cantina di Casteggio, Guasti Clemente. From Burgundy; Cheveau, Paul Pernot, Vincent Latour. Sancerre; Didier Rimbault. Pouilly-Fumé; Bouchot. From Rioja; Longrande, Heredad Pangua Sodupe (that barrel-fermented white Rioja).

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