

# T H E W I N E R Y

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## April Tasting *Maida Vale* 07.04.22

### SPARKLING

#### **Champagne Gaston Lemaire Tradition Brut NV, Gérard Dubois (Champagne/France) 32.99**

We rekindled our relationship with Gérard Dubois during lockdown. He is based in the village of Avize, one of the jewels on the Côte des Blancs, the slope that runs south from just outside Epernay and home to the Chardonnay that makes the most highly-regarded Blanc de Blancs Champagnes. Monsieur Dubois retired in 2008, a couple of years after we started working with him. At that time he said, "I have given my vines to my brother, nephew and niece, I have a full cellar, can do a few meetings with my favourite clients, have lunch with my mother more frequently and go Scuba-Diving in the Red Sea." Wind forward to 2021 and we find him healthy and relaxed. He occasionally needs a little technical help from his niece on the computer and has phoned us more than once to tell us, "this paperwork is very complicated". We scooped up some more 2012, fully mature 2004 and this Cuvée Tradition Gaston Lemaire, a blend of Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier named after his maternal grandfather, from vineyards in Chouilly, the first village you get to as you leave Epernay.



### WHITE

#### **EX Unoaked Chardonnay 2019, Wrath (California/USA) 23.99**

We continue to celebrate the arrival of our shipment from California, a shipment that was adrift in the Pacific for eight months last year. Well, that is a slight exaggeration but it did take over eight months to get here following a fire in the engine room.

We stumbled across one of their impressive Pinot Noirs as we overnighted in San Luis Obispo on our way from LA to San Francisco. Wrath are based on the edge of the Santa Lucia Highlands, 40 miles southeast of Monterey. Michael Thomas, an Archaeologist from Texas who got the food and wine bug during excavations in Italy, bought the San Saba vineyard with his mother Barbara in 2007. Here is their unoaked Chardonnay made EX (*from/out of*) the San Saba vineyard which was planted 35 years ago. Gently tropical with balanced acidity and a broad mouthfeel.

#### **Riesling trocken 2019, Sinss (Nahe/Germany) ORGANIC 16.99**

There is an eye-catching stand-alone hill not far from the Autobahn in the Nahe. The village is Windesheim. We always thought that there must be someone making good wine there. Turns out the answer was right under our noses.

We met Johannes Sinss at the same time we met Gerrit Walter, back in 2009, when they were both at Wine Uni in Geisenheim. Johannes did internships at Williams-Selyem in California and Wairau River in New Zealand before heading back to work in the family winery.

Johannes' Riesling trocken is a blend from parcels of vines on the hill (some red sandstone, some slate) and some from the other side of the village. It's vinified in a split of large old oak barrels (classic German *Stückfässer*) and in steel tanks. It has a gently wild, yeasty nose and at 11.5% is pleasingly low in alcohol and high in flavour.

#### **Alte Reben Riesling trocken 2020, Peter Jakob Kühn (Rheingau/Germany) BIODYNAMIC 22.99**

The Kühn family makes striking biodynamic Rieslings in the Rheingau. Their wines are many things – lean, exotic, oily, peppery, salty, savoury and haunting, to name a few.

Peter Jakob Kühn had a complete change of direction in 1999, was certified organic in 2004 and then went the whole way to biodynamism. Biodynamism is the extreme end of organic viticulture, where decisions are made according to the lunar calendar, based on the teachings of Maria Thun, Rudolf Steiner and traceable back to Hildegard of Bingen, the 12<sup>th</sup> century mystic nun.

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The Kühns' wines are utterly distinctive - standing quite apart from other Rheingau wines. They can even challenge our idea of how Riesling should taste. The aromas can evoke incense, orange peel and hedgerows. There's an oiliness without ever being cloying. Occasionally you might get a sense of tannin – something you expect in red wine but not in white. We often recommend putting their top Rieslings in a decanter several hours before serving. The Alte Reben (the wine formerly known as Rheinschiefer) is an old vine selection from the Grand Cru Hendelberg vineyard between Hallgarten and the Steinberg which, unusually for the Rheingau, has a high proportion of Devon Slate.

**RED****Héritage de Vannières Rouge 2018, Château Vannières (Provence/France)****19.99**

Bandol is a coastal town in Provence and one of France's great age-worthy red wines. It's the mad king of Provençal wine that can trace its roots back to Roman times and the spiritual home of Mourvèdre, a grape that needs plenty of heat and sun to ripen.

We adore Château Vannières' traditionally-styled Bandol and have a wide range of vintages on our shelves back to 1983. The current incumbent, Eric Boisseaux, has the air of a 1960s playboy about him – suave, jacket, scarf, smart jeans and smart shoes: very Côte d'Azur. He and his son, Charles-Eric, also make a slightly less demanding red called Heritage de Vannières. It's a gently robust, gently fruity-herbal blend of mainly Mourvèdre with Grenache and Cinsault.

**Chianti Rufina Riserva 2016, Dreolino (Tuscany/Italy)****23.99**

A few years ago, we stumbled across a delicious Chianti Rufina Riserva 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's Gino nickname.

Sabrina's wines are no-nonsense and toothsome – breezy strawberries/raspberries on the palate and yet savoury, with weight and texture. It was an excellent partner to the food and a welcome relief after too much overhyped, overpriced Chianti Classico.

We agonised long and hard over whether or not to buy some of their Chianti in straw-covered flasks, finally opting for the newer label and bottles. We have subsequently taken the plunge. After all, you may need new candle-holders for your 1960s retro interior, right?

**Cirò Rosso 2016, Cote di Franze (Calabria/Italy) ORGANIC****16.99**

Final stop is Calabria in Italy's untamed deep south. If Puglia is the heel of Italy, Cirò in Calabria is the instep. Cirò has the cooked fruit of the south with the tannic presence of Barolo or Taurasi.

It is one of the oldest named wines in the world - Milo of Croton, a famous 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC Greek wrestler was said to drink 10 litres of Cirò a day and Pliny the Elder, the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Roman, wrote it in his list of quality wines of the time.

Francesco and Vincenzo Scilanga's Cote di Franze is close to the sea on a plateau called Piana di Franza. They trace their family's winemaking history back to 1701 when their ancestor Vincenzo was born. The soil is clay. Their Cirò is 100% Gaglioppo which they farm organically without fertilisers and ferment with wild yeasts. It's an untamed wine, as Cirò should be, wild and unruly. Taste it if you dare!

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

Our following tasting, which will be at **The Winery Fulham**, will be on **Thursday 21st April**.

**New arrivals** – Champagnes by Gérard Dubois from Avize on the Côte des Blancs. Bordeaux from La Fleur Poitou (Lussac-Saint-Émilion), Laujac (Médoc), La Tour Cordouan (Médoc), La Croix de Saint-Georges (Saint-Georges-Saint-Émilion), Tour Canon (Fronsac) and Martinet (Saint-Émilion). Fabulous limey, herbal white Bordeaux from Haut-Bessac (Entre-Deux-Mers).

**Coming soon** – Burgundy from Guillemot in Savigny-lès-Beaune. Wines by Nacho León; Demencia and Pyjama from Bierzo; Taruguin from Ribera del Duero.

Join us for our Monthly Tastings

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