

T H E

W I N E R Y

October Tasting *Maida Vale* 12.10.21

SPARKLING

Zum Krug Riesling Sekt Brut 2019, Josef Laufer (Rheingau/Germany)

13.99

We are opening this Sekt - a Winery Classic for the past twenty years - in memory of Josef Laufer Senior, the Legend of Hotel Zum Krug in Hattenheim, the Heart of the Rheingau, who died a couple of weeks ago. He was responsible for our initiation – baptism even - into the treasures of Rheingau Riesling and Spätburgunder. We have learnt so much from him - and from Josef Junior (who continues the tradition seamlessly) - and from simply being at Zum Krug over the decades.

Zum Krug 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. There is always 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.

WHITE

Château Haut-Bessac Entre-Deux-Mers 2020 (Bordeaux/France)

12.99

We were in Bordeaux a week ago, picking up some mature reds from Château Calon in St-Georges-Saint-Emilion and some younger wines from Horeau-Beylot in Libourne, who own several Châteaux on the Right Bank in and around Saint-Emilion and Fronsac. We also buy this fabulous, zizzy, melony, limey white Bordeaux from them. 80% Sauvignon Blanc, 20% Muscadelle. Part of Château Goudichaud, a rather grand building from 1780. The vines are on gravelly soil, across the Dordogne from Libourne.

Why Entre-Deux-Mers? There is a triangle of lush, rolling, green countryside carpeted with vines, between the city of Bordeaux on the Garonne and the town of Libourne on the Dordogne – *Entre-Deux-Mers* - between two seas. Poetic licence - they are big rivers, not quite seas.



Val Cerasa Etna Bianco 2018, Alice Bonaccorsi (Sicily/Italy) ORGANIC

33.99

We have two wines from Sicily in tonight's line-up. The first is fascinating white from Mount Etna by Alice Bonaccorsi. The grape is Caricante, the vines are old and gnarly, the soil is (unsurprisingly) volcanic.

Living on a live volcano may seem nuts, but the growers on Mount Etna see it differently. The presence of "The Etna" is not some angry god of fire and destruction, dark, brooding and malignant but more a thing of Mother Nature, warm and fertile, gently spewing lava which will recharge and renew the soil with rich mineral nutrients. If you ask the locals what the loud daily siren is for they will say "time to go to the fields to work". We suspect it's a test for, and a reminder of, possible eruptions. In any case, it's a remarkable place. "The Etna" is visible from far away, although whenever we visit, the peak is covered in cloud or mist.

Unusually for the northern hemisphere, the northern, north-facing slope is considered finer than the eastern or southern slopes (there are no vines on the west side). In the sweetest sweet-spot you find Val Cerasa. Alice trained as an agronomist and, with her husband Rosario, made her first bottlings at Benanti in 1997. They bought their startling, terraced vineyard in 2000.

Now organic, wild yeasts and used oak barrels (never new ones) help the elegance and purity of the fruit and the volcanic terroir shine through. Alice makes fascinating wines. The whites are oily, with hints of grapefruit zest, surprisingly good acidity and a savoury, almost salty finish.

Riesling trocken 2019, Huff (Rheinhessen/Germany)

15.99

Tonight's dry Riesling is by Christine Huff from Nierstein, a town overlooking the Rhine on the strip between Mainz and Worms, and which historically has always been considered to be at the summit of the hierarchy of Rheinhessen's vineyards.

It was a random sample bottle left at Schloss Sörrenloch, a Hotel/Restaurant deep in Rheinhessen, back in 2011 that brought us to Christine Huff's door. Fate. Christine was fresh out of Geisenheim, the top German wine college (where our intern Sophia is studying) and was already making wonderful, finely-judged dry Rieslings from the red slate and sandstone cliffs around Nierstein. *Der Roter Hang*: the red cliffs - red from iron oxide, which can often infuse Riesling with some marked spicy and tropical notes.

RED**Spätburgunder “vom Kalkstein” 2015, Huff****17.99**

Christine Huff has had a busy 12 years; increasingly taking control of the winery; meeting and marrying Kiwi Jeremy Bird (who came to help with the 2009 harvest and never left); having two babies; working tirelessly in the vines and cellar.

Christine and her family, in common with many growers in the region, make a wide range of wines beyond Riesling including; Sylvaner, Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc), Grauburgunder (Pinot Grigio) and Scheurebe. They also make this smoky, velvety Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir), which is grown on limestone (Kalkstein) in the Paterberg vineyard on the ridge above the cliffs south of Nierstein. Chocolate, black cherries, bracken, autumn.

Nocera Arte 2017, Mimmo Paone (Sicily/Italy)**19.99**

Our second Sicilian wine in the line-up is from Mimmo Paone, the man with the bone-crushing handshake. Other than his immobilising grip, Mimmo is best known at The Winery for Funnari, a Nero d'Avola which never survives long on our shelves.

Nocera is a little-known local grape and is allowed in the blend of Faro, the highly-regarded red of Messina in the northeast corner of the island. About five years ago, Mimmo decided it was worth bottling some on its own. The result is dark, voluptuous with surprising freshness.

Saint-Joseph La Sybarite 2018, Aurélien Chatagnier (Rhône/France)**32.99**

We stumbled upon Aurélien Chatagnier's wines a decade ago in Ampuis, the small town at the base of the Côte-Rôtie. Aurélien says he was “bad at school”. When he was 16, his mother said he should probably knock it on the head and get a job. He went to work for a couple of famous winegrowers, Jamet and François Villard. He loved it – and especially enjoyed working in the vines. In 2002, after a gentle, encouraging nudge from Villard, he set up on his own, starting with just a single hectare. Although he now has 7.5 hectares, he still doesn't make much and it took over two years to claw some bottles from his grip.

Aurélien's cellar is up on a plateau above the broad Rhône valley in a remote, draughty, lawless part of the elongated St Joseph zone. Back in March 2016, thieves broke into his remote winery and made off with most of his wine, including cases earmarked for us. Alarming, this is a frequent occurrence in the region.

In terms of red wines, the northern Rhône – from Côte Rôtie to Cornas - is all about Syrah. Depending on the winemaking style, Syrah can evoke violets or, in contrast, wild animal notes and grilled meats. Regardless of style, it is usually a powerful, structured wine with great aging potential.

Like all Aurélien's wines, his Saint-Joseph is silky, deep, modern, without being overly oaky. A beautiful example of pure northern Rhône Syrah.

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

Our following tasting will be at **The Winery Fulham**, 797 Fulham Road, SW6 5HD on **Thursday 21st October**.

New arrivals – Fleurie by Anne-Sophie Dubois, Champagne from Saint-Chamant. Lots of Bordeaux; Old School, mature vintages from Château Calon (Saint-Georges-Saint-Émilion) in 2006, 2007 and 2010, magnums of 2007 and halves in 2004, 2005 and 2010. Château Corbin-Michotte (Saint-Émilion) in 2009 and 2014. From Horeau-Beylot in Libourne, several of their Right Bank Bordeaux Châteaux; Martinet (Saint-Émilion), Tour Canon (Fronsac), La Croix de Saint-Georges (Saint-Georges-Saint-Émilion), Haut Bessac from the Entre-Deux-Mers (in the line-up tonight), from the far reaches of the Médoc; Château Laujac and Tour Cordouan.

On the way – more Bordeaux from the Rivière brothers; Clos des Menuts, Picampeau, Haut-Piquat, Lavagnac, Villefranche, Larmevaille, Callac. White Burgundy and Beaujolais from Nicolas & Aurélie Cheveau.

Gerrit Walter – yes, we have run out of many of his wines but more are on their way. **We're off to Germany this weekend**, back next Wednesday with a van-load of Mosel (Martin Müllen & Clemens Busch) and Rheingau (JB Becker & Zum Krug).

Join us for our Monthly Tastings

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