

T H E

W I N E R Y

February Tasting *Maida Vale* 22.02.22

SPARKLING

Crémant de Bourgogne Brut NV, Denis Père et Fils (Burgundy/France)

21.99

The village of Pernand-Vergelesses nestles behind the hill of Corton, just north of Beaune. Winemaking has been challenging over the past half decade in Burgundy with output-decimating attacks by hail and frost increasing in frequency. As a result Christophe and Valérie Denis don't make a Crémant every year and, whenever they have enough suitable grapes, they don't make much. Those suitable grapes would be 70% Pinot Noir, 25% Chardonnay and 5% Aligoté, picked from the Bourgogne Rouge and Blanc parcels five days before the main harvest to keep the acidity high.

As usual, it's delicious - fresh and balanced.

WHITE

Just Riesling trocken 2020, Gut Hermannsberg (Nahe/Germany)

19.99

We did a pick-up recently from Gut Hermannsberg, a notable estate in the Nahe, built with the land-modifying help of convict labour and lots of dynamite in 1902 by the Prussian State (hence the Prussian eagle on the label). The domain sits in its own GG (Grand Cru) vineyard in Niederhausen and overlooks the magnificent Schlossböckelheimer Kupfergrube (*Copper Mine*).

It was Forester Hoepp who persuaded the reluctant Prussian State to build a new wine domain in the Nahe at the beginning of the 1900s. The region's vital fruit and oak sales had collapsed and Hoepp, who was a strong supporter of 'Naturwein' (a 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", aiming by example to improve the quality of winemaking in the area and raise the reputation of German wine internationally. Odd, in some ways, given that top German Rieslings were often more expensive than Bordeaux at that time. Hoepp 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 estate was on the up again but Erich and Tilly Maurer decided to retire and sold in 2009.

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. They have an excellent young winemaker plucked from the Pfalz, called Karsten Peter.

Here is their bold, everyday dry Riesling from vines in the nearby spa town of Bad Kreuznach, fizzing with minerality and freshness.



Walkenberg Riesling Spätlese trocken 2011, JB Becker (Rheingau) BIODYNAMIC

26.99

Our first visit to the Beckers almost two decades ago is etched in our memory. Like something out of Laurel and Hardy, Maria Becker sloshed some Riesling out of the window anointing a surprised postman. The picture was completed with an excitable dog and Maria's moustachioed brother Hans-Josef - a winemaker who looks suspiciously like a circus ringmaster.

The Beckers make distinctive Riesling and Spätburgunder in their maze-like buildings and cellar by the Rhine at Walluf. Their wines are made in the traditional way, "the way our Grandfather made wine", fermented in huge, old wooden barrels called Fuders in the darkest recesses of their damp cellar. The style is utterly traditional, utterly distinctive and untouched by fashion.

Little has changed in the last 18 years other than the big news that 70-something Hajo (Hans-Josef) fairly recently married Eva Engel, a woman 30 years his junior.

The Beckers are a wonderful mixture of ancient and modern. Despite being the first winery in the world to use a cutting-edge glass closure, the wines continue to be made in the traditional way, in huge old creaking Fuders with long, slow fermentation. Their wines are unreconstructed - gloriously traditional.

WHITE continued**Gavi Regaldina 2016, Terre di Maté (Piedmont/Italy) NATURAL****19.99**

One of our missions (which we chose to accept) while we were in Piedmont, was to find a new Gavi. By chance, our search took us to psychologist Stefania Correa's kitchen in a block of flats. The first mouthful of the first bottle was explosive: the most intense Gavi we have ever tasted. "Before tasting the rest," she asked, "would you like to see my vineyard before it gets dark and visit the cellar?"

"Yes, please!"

Stefania, a psychologist specialising in CBT (*Cognitive Behavioural Therapy*), came late to winemaking. Her father, Maté, who died in 2008, had a vineyard and would sell the grapes. He never made wine. Having inherited the beautiful Regaldina vineyard, named after a wood below the vines, she became increasingly curious about what it would be like to make her own wine. She rented a little space in the large Co-op in Gavi and, with some guidance from an Enologist called Gaspare Buscemi, started making her wine in 2013. Gaspare told Stefania that "the wine makes itself". We suspect it is slightly more involved than that.

RED**Spätburgunder 'von der Mark – Walter' 2019, Jürgen von der Mark****14.99**

Spätburgunder is German for Pinot Noir. It comes as a surprise to many that any red wine is produced in Germany. Germany is currently the world's third largest producer of Pinot Noir and bottles more still, red Pinot Noir than France. Most Pinot Noir in France is used for Champagne.

We made a rare trip down to Baden, close to the Swiss border, hoping to rekindle our relationship with Jürgen von der Mark. He makes excellent Spätburgunders, including his top-of-the-range Song Wines, named after songs he particularly likes. Our shipment arrived a couple of weeks ago. Consider our relationship rekindled.

Jürgen is a flying winemaker - meaning he consults about winemaking for several other wineries in Germany and beyond as far as South Africa. His own wines have a distinctive, savoury, smoky, often autumnal style, with pure red fruits and a silky mouth-feel.

This particular wine is a collaboration with a Co-op in the Ortenau, between Baden-Baden and Freiburg.

**Château Bonnange 2017 (Bordeaux/France)****21.99**

Bordeaux. November 2021. We had an appointment in Blaye (the westernmost appellation on Bordeaux's right bank) with Pascal Montaut of Château Les Jonqueyres. What he hadn't told us before was that he had just retired and sold his vineyards. "Come with me and meet the new owners," he said.

We drove to Château Bonnange to taste his wines and theirs. The short version is, we tasted without a price list and the Château Bonnange 2017 was a revelation. If you had told us it was a swanky Pomerol well north of 50 Euros, we would not have baulked. It turned out to be substantially less.

Amazing depth and concentration from low yields (25 hl/ha). 90% Merlot/10% Cabernet Sauvignon.

'S' Visan Côtes du Rhône villages 2019, Pascal Chalon (Rhône/France) BIODYNAMIC**19.99**

We discovered Pascal Chalon in 2007 when he was making his wines in his granny's garage not far from Châteauneuf-du-Pape and we had to clamber over apples and a dusty old Renault to get to his five barrels. As soon as we had tasted his entire range of two wines, 'La Petite Ourse' and 'La Grande Ourse', we were quick to back the van up and load the last cases he had. In the meantime, Pascal has built his own, larger winery and extended his range to include Ursa Major and a couple of whites.

'S' is one his newest bottlings, from parcels planted in the village of Visan in 1974. Why 'S'? Most southern Rhône wines are Grenache and Syrah blends and heavy on the Grenache. This one is the reverse: very heavy on the Syrah.

The wines are always pure, biodynamic Rhône heaven. Fragrant and gutsy. Deep richness and herbal flavours, evocative of the lavender and thyme-laden local landscape ravaged by the penetrating Mistral wind.

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

DO YOU KNOW ANYONE LOOKING FOR A JOB?

We are looking for someone to join our team working Full Time for 35 hours a week, plus some overtime. Please ask them to send a CV to david@thewineryuk.com

Our **following tasting**, which will be at **The Winery Fulham**, will be on **Wednesday 2nd March**.