

T H E

W I N E R Y

May Tasting *Maida Vale* 23.05.23

sparkling

Cava Reserva Brut, Bolet (Penedès/Spain) ORGANIC/VEGAN

19.99

Cava has been on our wish-list for more than a decade, so our Cava Quest was first priority when we landed in Barcelona last month. To our taste we find some Cavas rather hard and metallic. Not so with Xavier Bolet's bottlings which are broader, deeper, more complex. The blend in his classic Cavas is 50% Xarel-lo, 40% Macabeo (aka Viura, the grape of white Rioja), 10% Parellada. To qualify as Reserva, a Cava must be aged for 18 months. This Reserva has been aged for 40 months which may explain its fascinating texture and complexity. Honeysuckle, lanolin, nuts and flowers crowd the nose. There's a wonderful sense of aged fruit, structure and depth in the mouth. The finish is long and yeasty.

white

Riesling trocken 2021, Fred Prinz (Rheingau/Germany) BIODYNAMIC

16.99

The Rhine takes a sharp turn west at Mainz before turning north again at Rudesheim. The south-facing slope on the north bank between the two is the Rheingau, thick with castles, convents and vineyards. This is the classical home of Riesling. Evocative names like Steinberg, Marcobrunn, Johannisberg, Hochheim - the home of Queen Victoria's "Hock", back when German wines were the most expensive in the world. In contrast to wine made in historic castles and convents, Fred Prinz made his wine in the garage of the flats where he and his family live in the small village of Hallgarten. Having started as a hobby in 1991, demand became so great that he had to give up his day job and rent another cellar nearby, thereby freeing up space in his garage for a mid-life Harley motorbike.

We have been importing Fred's dry Rieslings since our first buying trip to Germany in 2002, watched him outgrow his garage and have seen his vineyard holdings grow from 1.5 to over 10 hectares. We were impressed by his 2021s. Bright, expressive, exhilarating,



Nonnberg Riesling trocken 2014, Flick (Rheingau/Germany) ORGANIC/VEGAN

24.99

We just had to scoop up some more 2014 Nonnberg (*Nuns' Hill*) from Reiner Flick, best known as the guy who makes Victoriaberg - Queen Victoria's favourite wine.

The entire Wickerer Nonnberg belongs to Reiner. Nonnberg is on the hill at the edge of the village and overlooks his home and winery. There's a sandstone statue of a nun in one corner, the original Abbess of the monastery which owned the vineyard in the late 1200s. Reiner has worked hard with the chalky, clay soil and has introduced mixed flowers, grasses and herbs between the rows of vines. His Nonnberg always produces impressive Riesling with explosive minerals, depth and concentration and, with age, morphs gradually into this graceful, tingly, fascinating liquid.

Saint-Joseph Blanc 2021, Aurélien Chatagnier ORGANIC (Rhône/France)

33.99

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 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 Saint-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. Alarmingly, this is a frequent occurrence in the region. The red wines of the northern Rhône - from Côte Rôtie to Cornas - are almost entirely Syrah. The whites are Viognier or a blend of Marsanne with Roussanne. Aurélien's brilliant, modern white Saint-Joseph is a beautifully balanced Marsanne/Roussanne blend with a touch of oak, power and finesse.

red

Fleurie Les Labourons 2019, Anne-Sophie Dubois (Beaujolais/France) ORGANIC 28.99

Anne-Sophie Dubois comes from the Champagne region, three hours north of Beaujolais. Her parents have three hectares in Sézanne, halfway between Epernay and Troyes. They had two kids, wanted to expand and bought eight hectares of vines in Fleurie, one of the ten Crus in the pretty, rolling hills of the Beaujolais. After internships at Roblet-Monnot in Volnay and various Champagne producers around Sézanne, Anne-Sophie took over the small Fleurie domaine in 2007. She started producing two Fleurie cuvées: l'Alchimiste and Clepsydre.

All her vines are in a single block on a southwest facing granite slope around her house and winery. Although not certified, she farms organically and uses many biodynamic techniques. The only difference is her refusal to use copper (widely used in organic viticulture), which she says is toxic and can leach into the groundwater.

Her winemaking style is very gentle, to emphasise the purity, fragrance and elegance of the Gamay fruit. Long maceration, wild yeasts, no new oak, no filtration or fining, no pumping – just gravity.

This bottling, made from her older vines (60 years-old or more), was labelled Clepsydre (named after a water clock created by the Ancient Greeks). The bottling now carries the name Les Labourons: the *Lieu Dit* (the vineyard name of the parcel), which is also the name of this sub-zone of Fleurie. Deep, concentrated, complex - the embodiment of elegance: Gamay at its most exquisite.

Cantarellus Ull de Llebra (Tempranillo) 2020, Bolet (Penedès/Spain) ORGANIC/VEGAN 14.99

Xavier Bolet can trace his family's winemaking history back seven generations. Four generations ago, in 1890, Josep Bolet Martí replanted vines on American rootstock after everything was wiped out by Phylloxera. In the 1970s Antoni Bolet Pascual modernised the winery with new machinery and stainless steel tanks. In 1982 Josep Anton Bolet Bolet (whose parents were from two different villages but both had the Bolet surname) and Maria Tetas Cuscó began bottling their own wines and Cava with the Bolet label. Although we were at Bolet for the delicious Cava, we were also drawn to a couple of Xavier's still wines. Ull de Llebra (*eye of the hare*) is what they call Tempranillo in Penedès. Attractive aroma, medium-bodied, silky mouthfeel, touch of tannin, easy-drinking.



Rioja Crianza 2018, Bodegas Alvia (Rioja/Spain) (magnum 29.99) 16.99

After completing our Cava Quest we headed to La Rioja. We stopped in Ventosa in the Rioja Alta at Bodegas Alvia. The Pilgrims' Trail passes in front of the Bodega - marker 593km to be precise. Alfredo Bernaldez's family has been making wine for 100 years and bottling themselves since 2006. Alfredo showed us several of his beautiful vineyards, many with seriously old vines (60-118 years old). With so many old vines, harvesting is always by hand. Old vines = intense juice.

It was the Crianza that brought us here. 85% Tempranillo, the remaining 15% Mazuelo and Garnacha. Rich, saturated fruit, silky-smooth Rioja. Plenty of action.

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

Our following tasting will be at **The Winery Fulham** on **Wednesday 14th June 2023**.

Just arrived - from **Spain**: Cava by Bolet & Rioja by Bodegas Alvia. From **Italy**: rich Puglian reds by Cosimo Taurino. From **Burgundy**: Mosnier, Lafarge and Mugnier. From **Champagne**: Marie-Noëlle Ledru and Saint-Chamant. From the **Loire**: Sancerre by Raimbault. From **Germany**: Reiner Flick's Victoriaberg. We'll be heading there next week with the van. From **Bordeaux**: Larmevaille, Callac, Lavagnac, Picampeau, Clos des Menuts.

Arriving soon – from **Tuscany**: Brunello & Rosso di Montalcino by La Colombina, from **Galicia**: Albarino by Adegas di Ricòn.

Join us for our Monthly Tastings
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