

T H E W I N E R Y

May Tasting *Maida Vale* 01.05.25 *featuring Anaïs Vallot*

sparkling

Zum Krug Riesling Sekt Brut 2022, Josef Laufer (Rheingau/Germany)

15.99

The legendary hotel/restaurant Zum Krug in the village of Hattenheim is a magical place: the embodiment of the Rheingau, a region thick with castles, convents and vineyards. Run by the Laufer family for three generations and reminiscent of a gingerbread house, it's the sort of place that takes you back to mediaeval Germany with its atmospheric twists and turns, and a wooden interior straight out of a fantasy grotto from ancient legend. With its hefty two-inch thick, exclusively Rheingau winelist, Zum Krug was responsible for our initiation – baptism even – into the treasures of Rheingau Riesling and Spätburgunder. We have learnt so much from Josef Laufer Senior and Josef Junior over the decades. Their sparkling Riesling is a fixture on our shelves: a dry Sekt made with top class Riesling from the slopes overlooking the village – a wake-up call to the senses.

white

Würzburger Stein Riesling trocken 2023, Juliusspital (Franken/Germany)

29.99

Bonkers about Bocksbeutel? Yes, we are. The Bocksbeutel (*goats' sack*) is the traditional bottle shape for wine from Franken, a region an hour east of Frankfurt. Although many growers have switched to more mainstream shapes, we adore the unique traditional shape and seek it out.

After spotting (and drinking) a few on wine lists in Germany over the past decade, it's fair to say that we had become a bit fixated on Juliusspital wines. It was finally time to visit. Despite the contrast in our relative sizes (with 180 hectares it makes Juliusspital the second largest producer in Germany), we were very warmly received. Our first pick-up in 2023 included all the classics: Riesling, mature Riesling. Silvaner, mature Silvaner, All dry. We missed them when they were gone and recently headed back for more.

For a population of 130,000 Würzburg has a remarkably high density of historic buildings: cathedral, churches, palace, fort and wineries - many with histories going back centuries. Vineyards can be seen rising above the city in every direction, including the Würzburger Stein. Julius Echter, Prince & Bishop, founded the Juliusspital in 1575 as a hospital for the poor, providing care, education, religious instruction and wine in the centre of Würzburg. It has continued with the same model to this day. The extensive wine cellars are in the basement directly below the hospital.

This is vibrant, expressive dry Riesling surging with fruit, freshness and minerality.

Flavus Lias Blanco 2020, Viña Sastre (Ribera del Duero/Spain)

34.99

We were in northern Spain two years ago. After another hard day's tasting, we were in Vino Tinto restaurant in Valladolid in Ribera del Duero. We had almost finished a bottle of the benchmark Pesquera Crianza when we were joined by Jorge Herreras (we met through Bodegas Alvides who we have worked with for over twenty years).

"We need another bottle of red, do you see anything interesting on the list?"

"Do you know Viña Sastre?"

"Not yet."

So along came the Viña Sastre whose entry-level Joven Roble showed impressively up against the fancier Pesquera. Our first pallet arrived week before last.

Given that we already have four reds in this evening's line-up, we thought we'd better go with their Flavus Lias (*Golden Lees*). Lees? The sediment formed of yeast which, with longer contact, provides added texture to the wine. It's a surprisingly serious white for the region and comes from Jaén Blanco vines planted by accident 50-60 years ago. Jaén? Jaén is a synonym for the red grape Mencía and has nothing to do with this white which may be better known as Cayetana Blanca, used for Brandy in southern Spain.



*red***Côtes-du-Rhône 2022, Vallot (Rhône/France) BIODYNAMIC****17.99**

Las November, when we visited Anaïs and her father François (who is supposed to be retired), François was trying to figure out when it was that we first dropped by and bought their wines. It might have been 2000 or 2001! Anaïs, a fifth-generation winemaker, and her father François, own one of the oldest wineries in the Côtes-du-Rhône, an area where much of the wine is still bottled by the big co-operatives. Organic since 2003, they have been fully biodynamic since 2007. (*Biodynamism is the extreme end of organic viticulture, where decisions are synchronised with the lunar calendar*).

Their Côtes-du-Rhône comes from the vineyard in front of their cellar planted in 1980 and is a blend of Grenache 70%, Syrah 10%, Mourvèdre 10%, Cinsault 5%, Clairette 2.5% and Bourboulenc 2.5%. It's a 'field blend', meaning that all the grapes are picked at the same time, regardless of the different ripening times of each varietal. The moment they choose to pick everything is when the Grenache is ripe. It's terrific Côtes-du-Rhône, juicy, with some texture and complexity.

La Magnaneraie 2023, Vallot (Rhône/France) BIODYNAMIC**21.99**

The southern Rhône is a beautiful, wide, warm and windswept valley with the jagged Dentelles de Montmirail and imposing Mont Ventoux forming the backdrop on its eastern side. Windy and hot in summer, windy and cold in winter.

The blends in this part of the Rhône almost always involve Grenache. This bottling is an oddity being 99% Syrah, which is dominant in the northern Rhône. During the early days of our visits the wine was called Clos de la Magnaneraie and was from a walled vineyard four miles up the road in Nyons, a town better known for its olive oil. François used to say that the neighbours in the town were "a bit sensitive" about when he worked on the vines with his tractor, which could interfere with their breakfast, their post-lunch nap or their pre-dinner aperitif. Eventually the Vallots ditched that vineyard and the locals went back to sleep. La Magnaneraie is still Syrah but from a sandy vineyard high above Vinsobres, surrounded by oak and pine woods. The vines were grafted with cuttings by Anaïs' grandfather Claude in 1970. Big, chunky, earthy and yet silky. Cassis, coffee bean and violets - proper Syrah from the south.

**Vinsobres 'François' 2020, Vallot (Rhône/France) BIODYNAMIC****22.99**

Vinsobres, in the northeast corner of the region, is one of the named Côtes-du-Rhône Villages - like Gigondas, Vacqueyras, Cairanne - all satellites of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, where Grenache and Syrah vines are twisted and ravaged (rather than caressed) by the Mistral wind.

Since the return of Anaïs a dozen years ago, following a career in hotel hospitality in North America and around Europe, further study in University and an internship at Yquem (the most famous Château in Sauternes), there have been changes in the day-to-day management of the winery and vineyards plus some subtle changes in presentation. Although her (retired) father still pops up to help, Anaïs is very much at the helm. The blend is Grenache 65%, Syrah 32% with a 3% splash of old bush vine Mourvèdre planted in 1961.

Deep fruit, blackcurrant pastille and liquorice root. Structured. This could age for another 10-15 years.

Vinsobres 'Claude' 2018, Vallot (Rhône/France) BIODYNAMIC**26.99**

Cuvée Claude comes from 60 year-old vines, a blend of 70% Grenache with 30% Syrah. Gnarly windswept vines make butch wines - deep and dense - packed with dark matter for the long haul! Thankfully, there's never any sense of new oak. This wine spent just 6 months in 3 year-old barrels. While this will also age effortlessly for 15 years, you can drink it now. Anaïs recommends opening it in the morning and letting it sit in a decanter until dinner.

And if you'd like to go further up the ladder (of quality) you could also consider Le Haut des Côtes 2018 at 27.99 and L'Exception 2019 at 35.99.

LUNAR CALENDAR OBSERVERS – today is a Flower Day.

Our following tasting will be on **Thursday 12th June at The Winery Fulham.**

Join us for our Monthly Tastings

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