

T H E
W I N E R Y

February Tasting 25.02.14 *featuring* Schloss Neuweier

SPARKLING

Postumio Metodo Classico NV, Cantina di Casteggio (Lombardy/Italy)

13.99

The little known region of Oltrepó Pavese is a bump on the plain 60kms south of Milan. There is one major player in town. It's fair to say Cantina di Casteggio is bigger than any other winery we work with – much bigger. A Co-op with 350 members and a massive facility, part run-down *fascista*-style, part space-age. Try as we might, we just couldn't resist the wines. The Cantina is very switched-on and started a "quality project" with their best 50 growers, bringing in high-profile consultant Riccardo Cotarella. 100% Pinot Noir, Postumio is a true *Methodo Champenoise*, fermented and aged for 18 months in bottle.

WHITE

Riesling trocken 2012, Schloss Neuweier (Baden/Germany)

16.99

It was a tip from Reiner Flick. We were at a VDP tasting at the German Embassy. "Anything new we should taste here?" "Check out Schloss Neuweier. I'm hearing good things - the new guy's going places." He wasn't wrong. This was swiftly followed by a diversion on our next trip to Germany, down to the outskirts of the spa town of Baden-Baden on the edge of the Black Forest. The sun was beginning to set as we arrived. The vineyard was deep orange – there's a reason why one of Neuweier's top vineyards is called Goldenes Loch (Golden Hole).

Robert Schätzle, complete with curly, almost Afro-style hair and a regional southern Baden accent, had only recently persuaded his family to move from the southern end of Baden, close to the Swiss border, up to the other. Schloss Neuweier has centuries of history. Its Mauerwein (Wall wine - from a terraced vineyard on the hill behind the castle) was another of Queen Victoria's favourites. It had won awards in Philadelphia in the 1800s and was on the airship Graf Zeppelin's maiden flight. After consulting soil guru Claude Bourguignon, Robert went for it and 2012 was his first full vintage.

Robert hasn't appeared out of nowhere. He has put in the time at serious wineries over the years - at Fritz Keller and Heger in Baden, across the Rhine in Alsace with Zind-Humbrecht and Marc Kreydenweiss, and in Bordeaux at La Tour de By. Robert clearly knows what he's doing. The first vintage was a success – the dry Rieslings are open, expressive with plenty of fresh acidity. "The acidity is interesting. The Riesling here is grown on granite soil. That's very unusual. Other than one or two vineyards of Zind-Humbrecht's, you rarely come across Riesling on granite."

Alte Reben Riesling trocken 2012, Schloss Neuweier (Baden/Germany)

21.99

Robert has a couple of other secrets. Deep in the old cellar (and you have to squeeze behind the tanks to see it) is a seriously old rock. He had been told that it was a billion years old until a geological expert came down and put him right: it was only 700 million years old!

The other secret is a magic box. "You know sometimes the wine in one tank is troubled, jumbled-up and doesn't taste right? Well, Tobias (my colleague) or I take a beaker from that tank and put it overnight in this 8-sided box from the Far East. Then we pour it back into the difficult tank. Don't ask me how it works but it tastes much better!"

This is Robert's old vine dry Riesling.

Mauerberg Riesling trocken 2012, Schloss Neuweier (Baden/Germany)

26.99

Mauerberg (*Wall Hill*) is a terraced vineyard on the hill behind the Schloss (Castle). Maybe there is some magic at play. Maybe it's the rock, the granite, the magic box or the energy from the Heiligenstein (Holy Stone) at the other end of the village, from which a natural spring gushes. Whatever it is, it's working!



RED**Pinot Nero 2011, Cantina di Casteggio (Lombardy/Italy) 12.99**

Back to the Cantina in the Oltrepó Pavese, where they have really raised their game and now make a great range of modern wines. In addition to the sparkling Postumio in white and pink, there's a delightfully floral Pinot Grigio, aromatic Malvasia, a cherry-bright Barbera and this sleek, smoky Pinot Noir.

Pécharmant Cuvée Veuve Roches 2009, Haut-Pécharmant (SW France) 16.99

One night, on our recent trip to Bordeaux, after a long day in the Médoc, we found ourselves in the quirky Au Petit Bois wine bar, the one with a tree inside the bar. The wine of the evening was surprisingly not a Bordeaux. It was a wild, sweaty Pécharmant from Bergerac. The dangerous scent of undergrowth, the animal sweat of this uncompromising, untamed red wine got us excited. So excited that we reorganised our timetable to drive east to meet Didier Roches of the Domaine du Haut Pécharmant, the winery at the top of the slope that is Pécharmant, northeast of the city of Bergerac.

Didier's Pécharmant is Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc with some Merlot and Malbec. This is his slightly sleeker, slightly less animal Cuvée Veuve Roches, dedicated to his mother.

Taruguin 2011 (Castilla y Leon/Spain) 15.99

We are big fans of Nacho Leon and his impressive red wine from Bierzo, called, Demencia. Last year he visited us with an unlabelled bottle. It was big, deep and delicious. What is it and can we have some please? It was Taruguin, a brand new wine from around Soria, between the east end of Ribera del Duero and Rioja.

Nacho was driving back to Bierzo from Barcelona and had taken some back roads through the villages near Soria. What's the story Nacho? "I was really surprised to see some very old vines and decided to take a walk through them. It was marvellous and exciting because I knew this area lots of years ago. A close friend from my childhood has family there and I used to spend some weekends with him and his friends.

I was thinking about the wines that I tasted in Barcelona, and was looking for another profile of Ribera del Duero wine - more altitude, more fruity sensations, more acidity. Maybe vines like these could help us? I told my friend Julio and we began working on the idea of making a different type of wine from his parent's land. We chose some vineyards in the area and, thanks to his family, were able to start work right away. We are not the owner of the vines but we do the vineyard work. 2010 was a terrible vintage, we had late frost and we decided not to make the wine. Hard for us!" But they gave it another go in 2011.

Although it could be labelled as Ribera del Duero, they decided to make it outside the Denominación de Origen (Spain's classification system). "We are only a 'Vino de Mesa', the lowest classification in Spanish laws, but we believe that this is not important, the most important thing for us is the wine we have in the bottle."

Taruguin is made from Tempranillo with a splash of Albillo, a white varietal. "We took the grapes in a van and brought them here (to Bierzo) where I can work easier. 9 months in French barrels and the result - a pretty wine that has sold out in 3 weeks!" We certainly are glad we could get some!

**OLIVE OIL****Il Mercante di Delizie Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Paladin (Veneto/Italy) 1 litre - 17.99**

Extra Virgin Olive Oil from the Paladin family in Annone Veneto.

LUNAR CALENDAR OBSERVERS – today is a Fruit Day.

After over six years at The Winery our colleague **Giorgio Parrino** is moving on and this will be his last tasting on this side of the counter. His wonderful, warm personality will be greatly missed in the shop but hopefully you will visit him at World of Whiskies as you pass through Gatwick Airport.

Our next monthly tasting here at **The Winery** is slated for **Monday 10th March**.

NEW ARRIVALS – Shock – Australian wine at The Winery?! - A year after stumbling across two Yarra Valley wineries on a trip to Sydney and Melbourne, our first serious shipment of Australian wine has just arrived. Everyone knows us as strictly northern hemisphere but two bottles - The **Yarra Yarra** by Yarra Yarra and The **North Face** by **Wedgetail** were impossible to ignore.

Join us for our Monthly Tastings

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