

T H E
W I N E R Y

February Tasting 16.02.15

Flushed with success from his 20 second appearance on Location, Location, Location, our colleague Paul has taken a holiday. He will be back next week. In the meantime, the eagle-eyed may spot a new face this evening. Please welcome Philip Geck, our new intern from Geisenheim, German Wine Uni.

SPARKLING

Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore Brut NV, La Vigna di Ermes (Veneto/Italy) 13.99

We recently introduced a new Prosecco by the Marsuret family from Valdobbiadene - "Prosecco Central". Tonight we are tasting their Superiore.

NB Fear not, Bosco del Merlo will be back shortly, but we thought - you can never have enough Prosecco, right?

This is one of those rare occasions when a grower sends us an email asking if we'd like to taste their wine, we say yes, they send samples and we like them enough to order them right away. The grape formerly known as Prosecco has been re-named Glera. We love the delightful aromas of white flowers, soft, round mouth-feel and its gentle 11.5% alcohol.

WHITE

Riesling trocken 2013, Schloss Neuweier (Baden/Germany) 15.99

The sun was beginning to set as we arrived at Schloss Neuweier in the outskirts of the spa town of Baden-Baden on the edge of the Black Forest. 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 Schloss Neuweier. After consulting soil guru Claude Bourguignon, Robert decided to go 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 - in Baden, Alsace and Bordeaux. Robert clearly knows what he's doing. The first vintage was a success – the dry Rieslings were open, expressive with plenty of fresh acidity. "The acidity is interesting. The Riesling here is grown on granite soil. That's very unusual."

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 for 45 minutes in this 8-sided box. Then we pour it back into the difficult tank. Don't ask me how it works but it tastes much better!"

Riesling trocken 2013, Riffel (Rheinhessen/Germany) ORGANIC 12.99

One of the winners of the UK German Top 50 - Erik and Carolin Riffel's Riesling trocken has always been a winner on our shelves.

Bingen is on a massive corner on the Rhine, opposite Rudesheim. Carolin and Erik Riffel have vines in the full south-facing Bingen Scharlachberg vineyard. Millions of years ago the Rhine looped below it, which may explain why their wines have an element of Rheingau opulence. The Riffels make electric, dry, modern Riesling which express the steep, quartz-infused, fossil-laden slate it is grown on and the very late October harvesting which extracts maximum ripeness. They are now fully organic and, when we visited at the end of March, Erik was telling us about their aim to become biodynamic (the extreme end of organic viticulture where decisions are aligned with the Lunar Calendar). He showed us the Camomile and Yarrow which are used to make infusions to spray in the vineyard in homeopathic concentrations. How can such small concentrations have any effect? Somewhat incredulously, he says, they seem to work.



WHITE (cont)**Bergerac Blanc 2013, Chateau de la Malleville (SW France)****9.99**

It was a fascinatingly oily, dry white wine, Montravel, that brought us to a hill in the Bergerac, just east of Saint-Émilion and Castillon in Bordeaux. Four days into our recent Bordeaux trip, Montravel had popped into mind and, seeing how close we were geographically, we thought we would call in on its finest grower.

Once they had called off the imposing and very vocal Alsatian guard dog, we were very warmly received by Thierry Bernardinis and his father-in-law Philippe Biau. The tasting was a joy. Their wines are packed with character and thoroughly enjoyable - each punching well above its weight. Their Bergerac Blanc is a grassy, limey Sauvignon Blanc with a splash of Semillon. Thierry and Philippe talk about a walk in a spring forest when describing this wine. BTW, their Montravel is flying from the shelves, so pick one up while you can.

RED**Bourgogne Pinot Noir 2012, Sirugue (Burgundy/France)****18.99**

Those of you who are familiar with our shelves of Burgundy may have come across Noëllat from the village of Vosne-Romanée in the Côtes de Nuits. Vosne-Romanée is a name that makes Pinot lovers go misty eyed. Alain Noëllat's daughter Sophie did a very short stint with us as an intern. This unfortunately coincided with some serious love-sickness. She had fallen in love with Arnaud Sirugue, the son of another wine-making family from around the corner, less than 100 metres from her home. That, and the contrast between a quiet French village and a flat in Brick Lane, made her revise her plans. Shuttle forward to summer 2013 and the two were married. An unexpected benefit for us, as the romance unfolded, was a re-awakening of our interest in the Sirugue family's wines. We tasted when we next visited and were impressed. They are elegant, focused and very pure.

You could describe this Pinot Noir as baby Romanée: it's their entry-level wine and grown on Vosne soil. Speaking of babies, Sophie and Arnaud had a baby 3 months ago, called Oscar. Mother, father, baby *and* wines are all doing well.

Lelia Garnacha 2013, Piquer (Cariñena/Spain)**7.99**

If you can cast your mind back to our Spanish range two years ago and back further, you may remember our hardy perennial "Lelia"; a Grenache by Manuel Piquer from a windy corner of northeastern Spain. The wind comes roaring around the mountains, to Cariñena in the former Kingdom of Aragon, battering the gnarly, old Grenache vines. Old vines can be relied on for their deep fruit. Manuel Piquer's "Lelia" is made without a hint of oak to let the fruit shine through.

**Pécharmant 2010, Haut-Pécharmant (SW France)****15.99**

One night, on a 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 re-organised 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. The 2010 isn't quite as "lived-in" as the 2009, but it still has some of those gently perspiring, countryside-meets-locker-room aromas. Proper French wine from the southwest.

OLIVE OIL**Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Il Mercante di Delizie (Veneto/Italy)****500ml - 13.99**

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

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

Diary date - our following tasting is scheduled for **Wednesday 18th March**, here at The Winery.

Join us for our Monthly Tastings

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