

# T H E W I N E R Y

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## November Tasting 19.11.15

### SPARKLING

#### **Cruasé Metodo Classico Rosato 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. In 2008, the Cantina di Casteggio was bought (although they euphemistically describe it as a “fusion”) by the Cantina di Bronis in the town of Broni just 12kms to its east. Quality has gone from strength to strength. Their dynamic boss, Livio Cagnoni has been driving big projects through and, when we visited recently, we saw their shiny new, extensive, state-of-the-art facility in Broni. The combined group now has 900 members spread across 28 villages, 90% of them in the hills.

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, Cruasé is a true *Methode Champenoise*, fermented and aged for 18 months in bottle.

### WHITE

#### **Verdejo 2014, Adrede (Rueda/Spain) 12.99**

Rueda is a small region two hours' drive northwest of Madrid, the high, flat plains north-west of Segovia in the former Kingdom of Castille. Although the region is fairly small, it is one Spain's best known areas for white wine: home to Sauvignon Blanc and the local speciality Verdejo. We mistakenly believed that Verdejo is a synonym for Verdelho. It seems to be related to Savagnin (from Jura in eastern France) and Castellana Blanca (a grape which is hard to trace and, awkwardly, shares its name with a breed of sheep). There is even a suggestion Verdejo originated in North Africa.

Adrede was a recommendation from Nacho Leon who makes Demencia, Taruguin and Pyjama (which we will be tasting this evening). It is made by his friend JR, Jose Román, who is a wine distributor in Madrid. Coincidentally, JR makes his wine in the cellar of Viñedos de Nieva who we used to import until they were swallowed up by a larger company in 2009. Small world. JR has made a classic Verdejo: herbal and zesty, evocative of fresh cut grass, mint, lime blossom and camomile flowers.



#### **Riesling trocken 2014, Clemens Busch (Mosel/Germany) BIODYNAMIC 15.99**

Clemens Busch, the man who looks like Jesus, is something of a guru to his disciples, the New Wave German winemakers. He was the first to show that, with meticulous work in the vineyards, 100% organic viticulture - biodynamic even, and if you pick late enough, you can make amazing dry Riesling on a river best known for its sweeter styles. Based in the village of Pünderich, between Traben-Trarbach and Zell, Clemens and Rita's live in a 17<sup>th</sup> Century picturebook house on the riverside, with a stunning view of the overwhelming wall of vines on the opposite bank.

This is Clemens and Rita's first level, dry Riesling from the Pündericher Marienburg vineyard - until recently labelled Riesling Kabinett trocken. Mosel valley Riesling is all about the slate. Although their Rieslings are exclusively from one village, Clemens and Rita have three colours of slate to play with; grey, blue and red. Their wines are packed with minerals and, year-in year-out, are clear, expressions of their geology and their vintage. Precise, focused, always balanced, mineral-laced and tingling with fresh, crisp acidity.

#### **Rheinschiefer Riesling trocken 2014, Peter-Jakob Kühn (Rheingau/Germany) BIODYNAMIC 16.99**

Congratulations to Peter-Jakob Kühn for his “Winemaker of the Year” award in the latest Gault-Millau German Wine Guide 2016!

Despite seeming (at first) quite shy, Peter-Jakob Kühn is a high-visibility figure on the German biodynamic wine scene. Peter-Jakob, his wife Angela, their son Peter-Bernhard and their burgeoning family are from Oestrich in the heart of the Rheingau.

Peter-Jakob had a complete change of direction in 1999, was certified organic in 2004 and then went the whole way to biodynamism – the extreme end of organic viticulture ruled by the lunar calendar.

So, how are the Kühns' wines? Their style is utterly distinctive - standing quite apart from other Rheingau. They can challenge our idea of how Riesling should taste. The aromas can invoke incense, orange peel and hedgerows. There's an oiliness without ever being cloying. There's sometimes a sense of tannin that you expect in red wine but not in white. We often recommend putting their top Rieslings in a decanter several hours before serving. Rheinschiefer is a selection from the Grand Cru Hengelberg vineyard between Hallgarten and the Steinberg which, unusually for the Rheingau, has a high proportion of Devon Slate.

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W I N E R Y

**RED**

**Côtes-du-Rhône 2006, Domaine de la Garance (Rhône/France) 10.99**

André and Jos Liautaud's Domaine de la Garance (named after a climbing plant with small yellow flowers *Eng. Madder/Rubia*) is in Rasteau. Rasteau is one of the named Côtes-du-Rhône Villages, the villages that fan out across the striking landscape of the southern Rhone valley between Châteauneuf-du-Pape and the hills and mountains to the east - the jagged Dentelles de Monmirail and the imposing Mont Ventoux. It's a windy place - a hot, dusty wind in summer turns bone-chilling in winter. The wind has a name; Le Mistral. The vines are weather-beaten and gnarly - the wines are muscular and deep. André and Jos have vines in Rasteau and nearby Séguret. This Côtes-du-Rhône really grabbed our attention. It's rare to stumble across a mature Côtes-du-Rhône - most are consumed within a couple of years of release. 100% Grenache from Séguret's gravelly soil - butch, plummy and chewy.

**Barbera d'Asti Fonda San Nicolao 2010, Guasti Clemente (Piedmont/Italy) 17.99**

One of the highlights of a trip to northern Italy was stumbling across a ridiculously good Barbera d'Asti in Le Due Lanterne, a restaurant in Nizza Monferrato in Piedmont. We were there to visit the iconic Scarpa winery and were wading through a bottle of their delicious Barbaresco 1999 when we asked the restaurant owner if he could recommend something else from his winelist that was in a similarly unreconstructed and old-fashioned vein. He thought for a moment and said "there is just one other wine I can think of". He disappeared and came back with a bottle of Barbera d'Asti Fonda San Nicolao by Guasti Clemente. It was excellent. Plump, deep, dark autumnal fruit with a whisper of truffles and distant bonfire.

The following day, after a wonderful tasting at Scarpa, we hotfooted it around to meet Andrea and Alessandro Guasti and to be dazzled by Andrea's incredibly mobile and expressive hand gestures - and the wines.

**Pyjama 2013, Demencia (Bierzo/Spain) 15.99**

Finally, it's Pyjama Time! Don't be alarmed - Pyjama is a new wine by Nacho León. We are big fans of Demencia, the sumptuous red which Nacho and two mates makes in the corner of a friend's cellar on the Pilgrim's Trail to Santiago de Compostela in Bierzo, northwest Spain.

Mencia is the name of the grape; an old, indigenous variety being brought back to life by young winemakers in northwest Spain. When we visited Nacho first, he showed us pretty much every one of their twenty-five tiny parcels of beautiful, gnarly, old vines in villages outside Ponferrada. In 2011 they added a new bottling - Pyjama. It's a selection from 50 year-old vines on sandy soil, fermented with wild yeasts in larger tanks before being moved into used barrels for ageing.



**OLIVE OIL**

**L'Arbaude Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Mas de Cadenet (Provence/France) 500ml - 22.99**

Olive Oil has become scarcer over the past 6 months. The Négrel family make peppery Extra Virgin Olive Oil overlooked by the Mont Sainte-Victoire.

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

**NEW FACES AT THE WINERY**

**Paul Newton** has left to work on a personal project - he will be missed and we wish him every success.

**Martin Rikovsky** is away on holiday in the Czech Republic.

We are excited to welcome our new colleague **Nick Reder**.

You may recognize a familiar face from earlier in the year; **Philip Geck**, our former intern from Geisenheim who is now studying at Plumpton near Brighton.

**Our following tasting** will be on **Wednesday 2nd December** when we will be joined by **Reiner Flick** from the Rheingau (he's the one who makes Victoriaberg Riesling - Queen Victoria's favourite wine).

**Just arrived - France** - from the Loire, more of those Anjou Rouge bottlings by Chateau Pierre-Bise that flew out earlier in the year. From the Rhône valley; Côtes-du-Rhône Villages by Pascal Chalon and Domaine de la Garance, Châteauneuf-du-Papes by Banneret and Saint-Siffrein. **Italy** - from Puglia; Schola Sarmanti the Men in Black are back! From Piedmont; Scarpa and Guasti Clemente.

**Arriving soon** - more biodynamic Pouilly-Fumé by Pascal and Rachel Kerbiquet of Domaine du Bouchot. New Sancerres by Didier and Isabelle Raimbault. Our favourite Beaujolais by Cédric Vincent and Laurent Gauthier. Prosecco by La Vigne di Ermes.

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