

T H E
W I N E R Y

August Tasting 09.08.16

SPARKLING

Cuvée Vaux Sekt Brut 2013, Schloss Vaux (Rheingau/Germany) 18.99

When we were picking up at Schloss Vaux 10 days ago, Nikolaus Graf von Plettenberg (Chairman of the Board and a real live Earl) came out to say hello, thank us for our frequent orders (we are big fans) and discuss recent political developments.

Schloss Vaux originally started in Berlin in 1868 and in the 1880s had the opportunity to buy a winery in Metz, which became Chateau Vaux. Fifty years later it was time to move from Metz to Eltville where they focused on making Sekt from top Rheingau sites. From the beginning it was based on the French Champagne House model. Until very recently they owned no vines, and always had longstanding grape contracts with top growers such as Kloster Eberbach and Langwerth von Simmern from which they produce startling sparkling versions of the legendary Steinberg and Erbacher Marcobrunn Rieslings and the red Assmannshäuser Höllenberg from Spätburgunder.

This bottling is one of this year's UK Top 50 German Wines. Here's what the panel said - "Malty aromas of brioche and spice. Creamy citrus mousse and good length on the finish." Do you agree?



WHITE

Côtes-de-Provence Blanc 2015, Domaine de Mauvan (Provence/France) 13.99

We were looking for another Rosé in Provence in the wilting 40C heat of summer 2012. Much of our shortlisting work was done in the (thankfully) cool Côtes-de-Provence-Sainte-Victoire Vinothèque in the town of Trets. Our clear winner was Mauvan. 30 minutes later, with the stunning long ridge-like Mont Sainte-Victoire as backdrop, we were tasting the full range with Martin Massot, Gaëlle Maclou's long-term boyfriend and co-worker. Gaëlle's Grandfather started the Domaine in the 1950s. It was mixed farming; mainly cereal, fruit and a few vines. Gaëlle, a qualified Oenologist, took over the Domaine 22 years ago, stripped out the cereal production and has concentrated on wine ever since. The wines are terrific. They make two levels of Rosé, three wonderfully herbal reds and this refreshing, fragrant, gently oily white from 100% Rolle, otherwise known as Vermentino.

Tradition Riesling trocken 2014, Fred Prinz (Rheingau/Germany) ORGANIC 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, demand was so great 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. This is his "Tradition Riesling", a wine made the old-fashioned way - with wild yeasts and aging in old wooden casks.

Gau-Odernheimer Riesling trocken 2014, Becker-Landgraf (Rheinhessen/Germany) 15.99

From the ashes of Rheinhessen rises the twin-headed phoenix of modern dry Riesling and Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir). A local grower threw a party early last decade, hoping his daughter would catch Johannes Landgraf's eye. Johannes made a bee-line for another winery's daughter, Julia Becker, and so in 2004, Becker-Landgraf was born. Among other things (Pinot Blanc, Rivaner, Dornfelder and so on) they determined to make top-class, cool-climate, dry Riesling and silky Pinot Noir, slap bang in the rural centre of the region. Johannes and Julia's Gau-Odernheimer Spätburgunder is a perennial Winery Classic and multiple award winner. Our recently-arrived pallet is disappearing fast, so we thought it more sensible to show their toothsome Gau-Odernheimer Village-level dry Riesling, surging with minerals, fruit and exhilarating freshness.

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RED

Schieferboden Spätburgunder 2014, Nelles (Ahr/Germany) 15.99

Smoky, velvety, Pinot Noir from Germany (*btw Spätburgunder = Pinot Noir*). The tiny Ahr valley near Bonn is one of the northernmost winemaking regions of Europe. Romans planted vines here. Locals say the sheltered valley has an almost Mediterranean micro-climate. We wouldn't go quite that far, but there is little doubt that some of Germany's finest Pinot Noir comes from here. Philip and his father Thomas name their top wine "B52" and ferment their wines in the traditional, huge, old oak Fuders. Founded in 1479, the Nelles family has been making wine for generations and own some of the best vineyard sites for red wine in Germany. Schieferboden (*Slate Soil*) is a recent addition to their range, a pre-selection from Ruber, the next one up their ladder of quality.

Il Tabarro Valpolicella Classico Superiore 2013, Valentina Cubi (Veneto/Italy) ORGANIC 18.99

It's almost a decade since we first came across Valentina Cubi's wines in the wonderful Enoteca della Valpolicella in Fumane, just east of Lake Garda. It took another five years before they were on our shelves. They didn't last long and, surprisingly, Valentina's top shelf Amarone "Morar" was one of the big hits.

Winding back further - Valentina's father-in-law Federico Vasan was a big name in Negrar in the neighbouring valley until he sold his wine business in World War 2. In the 1970s, Valentina and her husband Giancarlo Vasan found and bought an old winery in Fumane which produced and sold wine in bulk. They were trying to restore it but the building fell down when a worker accidentally knocked down a supporting wall. A complete rebuild became necessary.

We have often experienced Valpolicella as a crunchy, simple, harsh red to choke down with pizza and were surprised by the elegance and complexity of Valentina's wines. This is her Valpolicella Classico Superiore, named "Il Tabarro" after a sleeveless coat worn by farmers and a one-act opera by Puccini. The blend is 65% Corvina, 25% Rondinella and 10% Molinara. We love the pure, elegant nose and, although there is classic Valpolicella breezy freshness in the mouth and finish, it has focus and structure.



Vinsobres 2014, Coriançon (Rhône/France) BIODYNAMIC 15.99

François and Anaïs Vallot's gnarly Grenache and Syrah vines are twisted and ravaged (rather than caressed) by the Mistral wind as it blasts across the southern Rhône valley. The heavily moustachioed François Vallot is a fourth-generation wine-maker and owns one of the oldest wineries in the Côtes-du-Rhône, an area where much of the wine is bottled by the big co-operatives. Since the 2007 vintage he has been fully biodynamic (*Biodynamism is the extreme end of organic viticulture, where decisions are synchronised with the lunar calendar*). His winery is in Vinsobres, one of the named Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages, like Gigondas, Vacqueyras, Cairanne - all satellites of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. It's a beautiful, warm, windswept setting with the jagged Dentelles de Montmirail and Mont Ventoux as a backdrop. Since the arrival of his daughter Anaïs in the day-to-day management of the winery and vineyards, we notice some subtle changes in presentation; an overhaul of the website and a new label for the latest vintage of their Côtes-du-Rhône.

OLIVE OIL

Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Il Mercante di Delizie (Veneto/Italy) 500ml - 11.99

Milly and Carlo Paladins' latest (and scarce) Extra Virgin Olive Oil. Peppery, liquid gold.

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

Our following tasting here at The Winery is scheduled for **Wednesday 7th September**.

The fruits of multiple trips are in from Italy; Campania – Molettieri and Guastaferro. Tuscany – Terre a Mano, Il Macchione, Dreolino. Piedmont – Scarpa. Veneto – Valentina Cubi & Bosco del Merlo. **Germany;** Rheingau - Flick, Schloss Vaux, Zum Krug. Franken – Josef Walter. Ahr – Nelles. Mosel – Walter, Busch. Rheinhessen – Riffel, Becker-Landgraf. **France;** Provence – Mauvan. Rhône – Chalon, Coriançon, Fauterie, Louis Sozet. Lots of Bordeaux. Burgundy – Mugnier, Sirugue, Noëllat, Thierry Drouin, Vincent Latour, Pernot. Champagne – Amyot, François Secondé, Saint-Chamant, Ledru.

Join us for our Monthly Tastings

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