

T H E
W I N E R Y

20 Years of Independence Tasting

featuring Reiner Flick & Nacho León 22.11.16

We are celebrating an important milestone for The Winery – 20 years of independence and (quite possibly) 100 years as a wine shop. Amateur Archeologists and Researchers (us) have reason to believe that there has been a wine shop on this site for 100 years (give-or-take a decade). Recently unearthed photographs from the turn of the previous century show an identical shop front. The resolution isn't quite high enough to conclusively establish if it was a wine shop or the apothecary that predated it. Rigorous research may or may not follow at some point.

To celebrate our 20 years, we are holding tastings with some of the growers that have become Winery classics over the past two decades. Tonight we are delighted to be joined by Reiner Flick from the Rheingau, Germany, and Nacho León from Bierzo, northern Spain.

SPARKLING

Nonnberg Riesling Sekt Brut 2014, Flick (Rheingau/Germany)

24.99

We picked up Reiner's latest releases when we were in the Rheingau last Friday. We were very keen to show his sparkling Riesling from the Nonnberg, his *monopole* vineyard on the slope above his house. It sold out in a couple of hours when Reiner came last December.

Reiner Flick and his family live in a renovated 13th Century mill in the village of Wicker. It is part of the east end of the Rheingau next to Hochheim where the River Main meets the Rhine and from whose slopes you can watch the planes on final approach to Frankfurt airport. Although wine has been in the Flick family since 1775, it is only over the past two decades, through Reiner's rising fortune, that Wicker has been put on the wine-lovers' map.



WHITE

Victoriaberg Riesling trocken 2015, Flick (Rheingau/Germany) (*magnum 2014 - 46.99*) 18.99

Reiner always seems to have a new project whenever we visit. We were really excited that from 2010 he managed to rent the vines in a small vineyard in Hochheim called Königin Victoriaberg (Queen Victoria's hill). This was Queen Victoria's favourite wine and where the name "Hock" comes from (the British struggled to pronounce Hochheim and eventually referred to all Rhine wine as Hock). She was so taken with the wine that she asked to see the vineyard on a visit to Germany in 1845. She observed it from her carriage and, shortly after, the vineyard was named after her and a monument was built to commemorate the visit.

We adore this wine and adore the historic label. Reiner phoned us to ask our opinion on whether he should keep the original label. "Yes, definitely!" we replied, emphatically.

And the wine? Elegant, persuasive and reeking (in a good way) of history and breeding.

Nonnberg Riesling trocken "R" 2011, Flick (Rheingau/Germany)

19.99

Reiner told us that the not particularly big road in front of their property was once the main route between Paris and Moscow, and that Napoleon passed their gates twice - once on his way to Russia and once on the way back, with the Prussian Army in hot pursuit. It was then that the village of Wicker was burnt to the ground after a particularly nasty battle.

The entire Wickerer Nonnberg belongs to Reiner. Nonnberg (Nun's hill) is on the hill at the edge of the village and overlooks their home and winery. There's a sandstone statue of a nun in one corner, the original Abbess of the monastery which owned the vineyard in the late 1200s. Reiner has worked hard with the chalky, clay soil and has been introducing some mixed flowers, grasses and herbs between the rows of vines. His Nonnberg always produces impressive, spicy Riesling with depth and concentration.

"It would be nice to show something a little bit older at the tasting, wouldn't it?" said Reiner when we visited last Thursday.

Yes, it would. What have you got?

Nonnberg 2011. One year in an oak barrel, several years in bottle. Savoury, salty, oily, dry.

WHITE (FRUITY)

Nonnberg Riesling Spätlese 2015, Flick (Rheingau/Germany) 21.99

What happens if you pick ripe grapes and, at some point, stop the yeast from fermenting all the natural sweetness of the grapes into alcohol? You get sweeter wines with lower alcohol that can age for 30 years or more with ease.

This was one of this year's UK Top 50 German Wines. Here's what the panel said, "A cocktail of flavours – kiwi, lime and sweet apricot. Fresh, zesty and charming."

Reiner has unfathomable energy; running the winery, making wine, running events in their venue down the road, barbecuing and cooking for 300 guests, hunting in the forests near Frankfurt, making wild boar sausages, experimenting with new grape varieties (Cabernet Blanc?!), making barrels from wood felled from his own land, building a new cellar with a vaulted ceiling, putting in a light display to demonstrate the effect of different coloured light on the taste of wine, renovating the tasting room and his office. Putting in a new kitchen.

When we visited last week, Reiner was delighted to report that his youngest daughter Katharina, who is now 17, is keen to follow the wine path. She is doing a practical internship at August Kessler, another highly regarded estate in the Rheingau. Shall we lobby for an internship at The Winery in a couple of years?

RED

Pyjama 2014, Demencia (Bierzo/Spain) ORGANIC 17.99

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 made 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 he 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.



Taruguin 2014 (Castilla y Leon/Spain) ORGANIC 19.99

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 here, 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 (known as Tinta del País locally) 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!

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RED (cont)

Demencia 2010 (Bierzo/Spain) ORGANIC

32.99

Ten years ago Nacho started making Demencia in tiny quantities in the corner of a friend's winery in the lush, green, rain-soaked and very hilly region of Bierzo on the Pilgrims' Trail to Santiago de Compostela. A mutual friend introduced us soon afterwards. The witty-edgy name was enough to get our attention. (Demencia – of *Mencia* – *demented*, get it?)

Mencia is the name of the grape. A total contrast to many other heavy Spanish reds, Mencia is usually a crisp, fresh red with low tannins - a breezy, crunchy glugging wine. In Nacho's hands, however, it is deep, brambly and powerful. Demencia was built on the idea of reviving very old vines and working by hand. The first vintage was 2006 when just 1,924 bottles were made. Although volumes haven't increased much over the past decade, Nacho has added a few wines to his line-up. Pyjama, in red and white. Taruguin. He also collaborates with a friend who has a wine bar in Madrid on a Verdejo from Rueda called Adrede. There are other very limited bottlings in the pipeline - the Demencia 10 Year Anniversary Edition and an experimental Natural wine called Cachicán.

Nacho has become increasingly interested in Natural wines and last came to London to show at the RAW Wine Fair.

"Although our wines are not certified, I am working in an organic way because I believe that's the way to get better, healthier wines.

We are working mostly in the vineyards in order to get the best fruit with the characteristics needed for aging and to avoid adding products or other oenological materials. I believe in minimal intervention to get the most honest wines that show better their origin and 'terroir'.

In the vineyards, we are not using herbicides, pesticides, chemical fertilization. The vines are old and produce very low yields.

This is hard to explain, but it is something I am really passionate about: how we are reviving plants in a natural environment.

In the beginning we worked with very stressed plants and we needed a period of transition to withdraw the products. But now, I can really say that all our wines are organic - despite not being certified - since 2010."



OLIVE OIL

Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Terre a Mano (Tuscany/Italy) BIODYNAMIC

500ml - 24.99

Rossella Bencini's Extra Virgin Olive Oil from olive trees on her estate east of Florence.

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

Our following tasting here at The Winery is scheduled for **Wednesday 7th December** and, to continue our **20 Years of Independence** celebrations, we will be joined by Gerrit Walter from the Mosel and Isabel Fernandez who makes Longrande Rioja.

Just arrived – Bordeaux, Germany (Bastgen, Busch, Studert-Prüm, Kühn, Asbach-Kretschmar, Zum Krug, Adeneuer, Haart, more Busch, Flick, JB Becker), Rhône (Chateauneuf-du-Pape by Banneret & Saint-Siffrein), Bandol by Chateau Vannières, Natural Wine by François Grinand of Domaine du Perron. From Spain; Demencia, Pyjama, Taruguin and Adrede. Burgundy; Mosnier, Denis. Italy; La Colombina (Montalcino), Pugnane, Palladino, Mauro Veglio (Piedmont), Casteggio (Lombardy). Champagne from Marie-Noëlle Ledru, Saint-Chamant and Vautrain-Paulet.

Arriving soon – more Bordeaux, more Germany (Becker-Landgraf, Bischel, Walter, Christine Huff, more Kühn). Spain; Rioja by Heredad Pangua Sodupe & Longrande. Loire; Chateau Pierre-Bise, Raimbault Sancerre, Bouchot Pouilly-Fumé. Burgundy; Guillemot, Gagnard, Lafarge. Champagne by Amyot, François Secondé and Sabine Godmé. Even more Bordeaux.

Join us for our Monthly Tastings

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