

T H E
W I N E R Y

February Tasting 06.02.17
with Christophe & Valérie Denis

SPARKLING

Crémant de Bourgogne Brut NV, Denis Père et Fils (Burgundy/France)

18.99

Tonight we welcome Valérie and Christophe Denis from Burgundy. In the two decades of our stewardship of The Winery, we spent the first decade looking for good Pernand-Vergelesses. Ten years ago we found what we were looking for: a small family Domaine run by two brothers, Christophe and Roland Denis, Christophe's wife Valérie and their nephew Jean-Baptiste Gauthey.

Pernand-Vergelesses is a pretty village at the northern end of the Côte-de-Beaune, nestling in a fold of the hill of Corton. The Denis family make a spread of Pernands in red and white at Village and 1er Cru level, some Savigny-lès-Beaune, Aloxe-Corton, Chorey-lès-Beaune, Corton Grand Cru and this delicious Crémant de Bourgogne made from 50% Chardonnay, 40% Pinot Noir and 10% Aligoté.

WHITE

Bourgogne Chardonnay 2014, Denis Père et Fils (Burgundy/France)

18.99

Good Burgundy is getting scarcer - partly through increasing demand and partly through adverse weather conditions, which have slashed the yields. With floods, hail and frost, recent years have seemed almost biblical. When we visited Christophe and Valérie in spring last year, they showed us the impact of a recent, late, hard frost. Some parcels (the one at the back of their winery, for example) had been 100% hit, which would mean no grapes could be produced there in 2016.

More demand + less supply = less than ideal. We are grateful that Valérie and Christophe always manage to keep some wines for The Winery.

We were very taken with this Bourgogne Chardonnay from a parcel called "La Grande Corvée de Bully" on the north west side of the Hill of Corton. Classic white Burgundy – expressive, crisp yet creamy Chardonnay with a touch of honey in the nose.



Just Riesling trocken 2015, Gut Hermannsberg (Nahe/Germany)

16.99

This historic Domain was built in 1902 using convict labour and plenty of earth-moving, rock-shaping dynamite by Forester Hoepf who persuaded the reluctant Prussian State to build a new wine domain in the Nahe. The region's vital fruit and oak sales had collapsed and Hoepf, who was a strong supporter of "Naturwein" (a new concept of wine as a natural product), believed that winemaking should be encouraged. He proposed that the new domain should be operated as a "model vineyard"; improving the quality of winemaking in the area and raising the reputation of German wine generally. He was convinced that the location and geology were perfect for vines. Subsequent decades proved him to be correct.

After a long golden era the estate's fortunes went south in the 1980s and 90s until it was bought in 1998 by the Maurer family, who had made their fortune selling potatoes to German supermarkets. The estate was on the up again but Erich and Tilly Maurer decided to retire and sold in 2009.

The new owners, Dr Christine Dinsel and Jens Riedel, a wealthy, wine-loving couple from Hamburg with a background in banking, have invested generously in every area of the estate. They have an excellent young winemaker plucked from the Pfalz, called Karsten Peter.

Here is their bold, basic dry Riesling fizzing with minerality and freshness.

Piesporter Riesling trocken 2015, Haart (Mosel/Germany)

19.99

Piesport is one of the most famous villages in the Mosel valley. The Haart winery is, without doubt, the top estate in Piesport and can trace its history back to 1337. The family has prime vineyards in Piesport and Wintrich, all on steep slate slopes teetering precariously over the river.

Johannes Haart's father Theo is a master (and lover) of the sweeter styles of Mosel Riesling. While Theo has been in the decade-long process of retiring, Johannes has overseen a steady increase in their dry styles. Recently his younger, hipster brother Marcus has joined the team.

This Piesporter is their dry, village-level Riesling, vinified and raised entirely in traditional big old oak casks called *Fuder*. From the dizzy nose, packed with wild yeast aromas, through to the almost oily, mineral-laced body and fresh finish, it's a fairground ride.

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RED

Pernand-Vergelesses 2013, Denis Père et Fils (Burgundy/France)

26.99

The Denis family's connection with wine goes back several generations - certainly to Christophe's great-grandfather. Christophe's father Raoul made wine at the Hospices de Beaune, a prestigious landowner in the area which, to this day, is run for the benefit of local hospitals. In 1940 Raoul and his wife Raymonde picked up 2 hectares of vines to work alongside his day job. In 1972 the domaine began for real when they bought more vines in Pernand-Vergelesses and eldest son Roland and his wife Annick joined. Christophe took over on his father's retirement in 1992.

They work the vines according to the "Lutte Raisonnée" a half-way house between conventional and organic. Most of their vineyard work and all harvesting is done by hand.

Burgundy is the spiritual home of Pinot Noir. Fickle and difficult to grow, it thrives in the marginal, cold climate of this corner of France, south of Dijon and fascinates wine geeks as it ages. Pure, elegant Pinot fruit, mercifully free from any dominance of new oak. Some gentle, autumnal notes in the background. Good freshness.

Dolcetto d'Alba 2015, Gianfranco Alessandria (Piedmont/Italy)

14.99

From the hilltop town of La Morra, across the valley you can pick out the Barolo townships on their respective hills, evoking mediaeval times. There is enormous variety in styles from the different townships. Serralunga is stern and minerally, La Morra is elegant and perfumed, Barolo town is a balance of power and elegance, Monforte d'Alba is considered the bruiser, the most macho and powerful. This is where Gianfranco and Bruna Alessandria and their two daughters Vittoria and Marta live.

Gianfranco Alessandria is one of the brightest stars of the township. With our not-very-fluent Italian, communication has usually relied on warm goodwill here. Vittoria, now 26, has been working alongside Gianfranco in the cellar for a few years and has been studying English.

Gianfranco and Vittoria continue to use the traditional fermentation methods, punching down the cap in open-top fermentation vats. Having said that, the wines are far from traditional. Tiny quantities, low yield - they manage to combine raw power with silky finesse.

Dolcetto (*the little sweet one*) has no sweetness, it's just a term of endearment. The vines have distinctive purple leaves, ripen early and usually deliver light, charming, breezy wines. This, however, is surprisingly serious - anything but light and breezy!



Rioja Crianza 2012, Heredad Pangua Sodupe (La Rioja/Spain)

13.99

Our latest encounter with cigar-chomping, Che Guevara look-alike Roberto Pangua and his family almost killed us. After a full tasting at his Bodega in San Asensio in the Rioja Alta, the entire contents of the local butcher's shop were brought in and grilled over vine cuttings in the corner of the tasting room. We were subsequently four hours late for our following meeting and all we really wanted to do at that point was lie down. You only live once - and it almost ended there and then!

Roberto has 20 hectares around San Asensio and neighbouring Briones in the Rioja Alta. His family has worked the vines for as long as anyone can remember, always selling to the larger Bodegas. It was finally time to go it alone, so he started his own Bodega in 1998.

This is his Rioja Crianza, 100% Tempranillo, the very happy medium between the young Joven wine and the Reserva, evocative of forest fruit, tobacco, vanilla and herbs.

OLIVE OIL

Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Heredad Pangua Sodupe (Rioja/Spain)

500ml - 12.99

We are loving Roberto's new virgin olive oil!

Our following tasting here at The Winery is provisionally slated for **Tuesday 21st March** from 17.00-21.00h

Just in - Dolcetto, Barbera, Nebbiolo and Barolo by Gianfranco Alessandria, Cavallotto and Osvaldo Viberti.

Coming shortly - Mimmo Paone from Sicily, Cantina di Casteggio from Lombardy and Guasti Clemente from Piedmont. **Wall-to-wall Italians?!**

Join us for our Monthly Tastings

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