

T H E
W I N E R Y

June Tasting 06.06.17

SPARKLING

Postumio Metodo Classico 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 euphemistically described 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 (where the quality is finer).

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. A blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, Postumio is a true *Methodo Champenoise*, fermented and aged for 18 months in bottle.

WHITE

Malvasia 2016, Cantina di Casteggio (Lombardy/Italy)

11.99

The aromatic grape Malvasia is thought to have come to Italy from Greece in the 17th Century. The Venetians became prolific traders of Malvasia and wine shops in Venice were known as *Malvasie*. Today Malvasia is grown in Croatia, Slovenia, Portugal, Madeira and in Italy. In Lazio it is the main component of Frascati. On the volcanic island of Lipari, just off the north coast of Sicily, it is used to make an unctuous dessert wine. Here in Lombardy we experience it in its wonderfully spicy, dry form.



Hallgartener Riesling trocken 2015, Fred Prinz (Rheingau/Germany) ORGANIC

18.99

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 Village-level wine, the morphing of his former “Tradition Riesling” and his Hallgartener Kabinett trocken.

Riesling trocken 2014, Lubentiushof (Mosel/Germany)

19.99

We now find ourselves in the suburbs of Koblenz, where the Mosel tips into the Rhine and the vineyards are dizzyingly steep - terraced to squeeze out every last bit of late autumn sunshine.

Andreas Barth studied Law and Music but decided, with the support of his interior designer wife, Susanne, to turn to wine-making. He is almost entirely self-taught. In 1994 they bought an estate called Lubentiushof in the outskirts of Koblenz on the (at that time) not very well-known Lower Mosel. Sounds grander than it was, but it did come with a run-down cellar and an old vineyard in Gondorf.

Andreas' career trajectory has been impressive. Early on, he received rave reviews in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung from Daniel Deckers and Stuart Pigott. Since 2005 he has also been winemaker at the historic von Othegraven estate on the Saar.

With tiny yields and very late harvesting you can really taste the old vines. He only uses natural yeasts, and is virtually organic.

2014 was extremely challenging for many growers in this part of Germany. Like many of his neighbours, Andreas was glum and had to think long and hard about whether or not to change his winemaking technique and strenuously intervene. He finally decided to make his wine completely as normal. Usually he would taste the new wines almost daily but on this occasion he left the wine completely alone for a couple of months. When he tasted it in January he was gobsmacked by the way it had developed. It was the wine that made itself! We were certainly very taken with it, so much so that we recently scooped up a second helping.

RED**Rosso di Montepulciano 2015, Il Macchione (Tuscany/Italy) ORGANIC 20.99**

We were having a wonderful dinner at Osteria La Porta in Montichiello between Montepulciano and Montalcino in March. The first red was high-profile and a bit overwhelming for us. "Do you have something a bit more restrained, austere, traditional and low-profile?" Daria Cappelli, the charming owner, and her wine-waiter looked at each other and came up with a bottle of *Vino Nobile* from Il Macchione. We contacted Il Macchione at the crack of dawn. "May we visit you? We are really sorry we only have one hour to cram a meeting in before heading to Montalcino." "OK." Minutes later, we arrived at Il Macchione to be met by Simone Abram, a bearded man with bags of energy and bags of quotes.

Quote #1 – "We're not from Tuscany, our family is from Trentino. We were driving around for 5 or 6 years looking for the right spot."

Quote #2 – "I didn't choose Sangiovese – I chose this land".

Quote #3 "It's just me, my brother and a couple of gypsies. No, they really are gypsies. Actually just one main one really. He's one of the family. Totally committed."

Quote #4 – "100% Sangiovese – not cut with Cabernet or Merlot or other stuff."

Quote #5 – "Everyone talks about acidity and dark fruits and tannins and stuff – I taste with my body."

Not certified but totally organic, we would describe Il Macchione as *beyond* organic. This is where we first saw Favino plants (Broad Bean/Field Beans) between the rows - an effective natural fertiliser, used to fix nitrogen in the soil.

We listened, loved the attitude, tasted with our bodies and were very impressed.

Nero d'Avola 2014, Mimmo Paone (Sicily/Italy) 11.99

For the past six or seven years the return of Mimmo Paone's Nero d'Avolas from Sicily is always eagerly awaited. Funnari barely touches the shelves before selling out. And yes, although we're not tasting it tonight, we do have more Funnari. Not for long.

Mimmo is a Sicilian with the firmest, bone-crunching handshake we have ever experienced. Once our hands had recovered, we were blown away by his two dark, brambly Nero d'Avolas. Although Mimmo is based on the north coast, in the top right hand corner of the island, his Nero d'Avola is picked in Agrigento on the south coast and driven overnight to his winery in Condro' near Torregrotta.

**Côtes de Provence Rouge Vieilles Vignes 2015, Domaine de Mauvan (Provence/France) 16.99**

We were looking for another Rosé in Provence in the wilting 40°C heat of summer. Much of our shortlisting work was done in the (thankfully) cool Côtes-de-Provence-Sainte-Victoire Vinothèque in the town of Trets. The clear winner was Mauvan. 30 minutes later, with the stunning long ridge-like Mont Sainte-Victoire as backdrop (much painted by Cézanne), 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 in 1994, stripped out the cereal production and has concentrated on wine ever since. The wines are terrific. A refreshing white, two levels of Rosé and three reds. This is her deep, lush bottling of 80% Grenache and 20% Carignan from old vines planted in 1953 and 1956.

OLIVE OIL**Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Heredad Pangua Sodupe (Rioja/Spain) 500ml - 12.99**

Roberto Pangua makes Rioja in red and white and recently started bottling his own olive oil.

LUNAR CALENDAR OBSERVERS – today is a Flower Day.

We are hoping that our **next tasting on Wednesday 12th July** will feature two visiting growers. Christophe Graf of **Schloss Vaux**, the wonderful Sekt producer in the Rheingau, and Chris Cardon & his wife Caroline, owner of the excellent **Chateau La Haye** in St-Estèphe, Bordeaux.

Just arrived – from the Rheingau, Germany; JB Becker "Bend It Like Becker!", Fred Prinz "Your Prinz Has Come", Sekt by Schloss Vaux. From Italy; Il Macchione from Tuscany. Casteggio from Lombardy. Grand Jacquet from Mont Ventoux. Champagne from Marie-Noëlle Ledru, Vautrain-Paulet, François Secondé & Saint-Chamant. From Burgundy; Guillemot, Fruit Liqueurs (Cassis, Mûre, Myrtille, Pêche de Vigne, Framboise) by Baccate.

Arriving today, hopefully – From Friuli, Italy; Alessandro Vicentini Orgnani & Franco Toros.

Arriving soon – Sancerre by Didier Raimbault & Pouilly Fumé by Bouchot, Beaujolais from Anne-Sophie Dubois & Laurent Gauthier. Bordeaux from the Rivière brothers; Lavagnac, Picampeau, Clos des Menuts, Larmevaille, Callac. More Mâcon from Thierry & Charles Drouin.

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