

T H E
W I N E R Y

September Tasting 26.09.17

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. The combined group now has 900 members spread across 28 villages, 90% of them in the hills. Quality has gone from strength to strength. Try as we might, we just can'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

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 element in 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 see it in its wonderfully spicy, dry form.



Riesling trocken 2016, Riffel (Rheinhessen/Germany) ORGANIC 17.99

Bingen is on a massive corner on the Rhine, opposite Rudesheim. Carolin and Erik Riffel have vines in the full south-facing Bingen Scharlachberg vineyard. Millions of years ago the Rhine looped below it, which may explain why their wines have an element of Rheingau opulence. The Riffels make electric, dry, modern Riesling which express the steep, quartz-infused, fossil-laden slate it is grown on and the very late October harvesting which extracts maximum ripeness. They have been fully organic for some years and Erik was telling us about their current conversion to biodynamic (the extreme end of organic viticulture where decisions are aligned with the Lunar Calendar). He showed us the Camomile and Yarrow which are used to make infusions to spray in the vineyard in homeopathic concentrations. How can such small concentrations have any effect? Somewhat incredulously, he says, they seem to work.

Riesling trocken 2016, Sinss (Nahe/Germany) UNDER CONVERSION 17.99

There is an eye-catching stand-alone hill not far from the Autobahn in the Nahe. The village is Windesheim. We always thought that there must be someone making good wine there. Turns out the answer was right under our noses.

We met Johannes Sinss at the same time we met Gerrit Walter, back in 2009, when they were both at Wine Uni in Geisenheim. Johannes did internships at Williams-Selyem in California and Wairau River in New Zealand before heading straight back to work in the family winery. Our Berlin friend Ursula Heinzelmann had some of Johannes' latest Rieslings when we saw her last month. We were so taken by them that we visited asap. We tasted last Tuesday and loaded some into our van on Wednesday.

Johannes' Riesling trocken is a blend from parcels of vines on the hill (some red sandstone, some slate) and some from the other side of the village. It's vinified in a split of large old oak barrels (classic German *Stückfässer*) and in steel tanks. It has a gently wild, yeasty nose and at 11.5% is pleasantly low in alcohol.

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RED

Spätburgunder 2015, Johannes Sinss (Nahe/Germany) UNDER CONVERSION 18.99

Velvety Pinot Noir from Germany (*Spätburgunder* = *Pinot Noir*). Johannes must've been paying attention during his internship at Williams-Selyem. Over the past few years Johannes has eased off picking late to try to bring the alcohol levels down. "It's all about tasting the grapes – looking for ripeness without over-ripeness".

This Spätburgunder is bright, ripe, with pretty fruit and some adult tannic structure. It was aged in 70% old oak barrels, 30% steel tanks. Unfiltered and without fining (that's the clarification process).

We also picked up some of his Windesheimer Spätburgunder 2014 last week – up several notches, it has a beautiful, haunting, almost fragile perfume and silky mouthfilling texture.

Château de Lavagnac 2014 (Bordeaux/France) 12.99

Philippe Rivière, with his brother Jean-Pierre, co-owns the Clos des Menuts, one of our favourite Saint-Émilions. They also individually own châteaux in Saint-Émilion's satellite appellations. Jean-Pierre has Château Picampeau and Philippe owns Château de Lavagnac, a 15th century fort, down the hill from the picturesque town of Saint-Émilion, so close to the Saint-Émilion line that it's still north of the Dordogne but just inside the Bordeaux Supérieur zone. Lavagnac 2014 is a classic Right Bank Bordeaux blend of 75% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Cabernet Franc, punching well above its modest, basic Bordeaux status.

Pyjama 2014, Demencia (Bierzo/Spain) NATURAL 17.99

It's Pyjama Time! Don't be alarmed - Pyjama is a red wine made by Nacho León. Nacho started making Demencia, one of Bierzo's very finest reds, in 2006 in the corner of a friend's cellar on the Pilgrim's Trail to Santiago de Compostela in lush, hilly Bierzo, northwest Spain.

Mencia is the name of the grape; an old, indigenous variety being brought back to life by young winemakers in this corner of Spain. When we visited Nacho first, he showed us pretty much every one of his twenty-five tiny parcels of beautiful, gnarly, old vines in villages outside Ponferrada. In 2011 he added a new bottling – Pyjama - also Mencia from the same vineyards as Demencia, but using his younger vines which are only (!) 50 years old. It's a selection from vines on sandy soil, fermented with wild yeasts in larger tanks before being moved into used barrels for ageing. The results: a sumptuous red with saturated, brambly fruit with ripeness and freshness.



OLIVE OIL

Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Il Mercante di Delizie 500ml - 13.99

Milly and Carlo Paladin's latest Extra Virgin Olive Oil. Peppery, liquid gold.

LUNAR CALENDAR OBSERVERS – today is a Fruit Day.

Our following tasting at the shop will be on **Monday 16th October** when we will be joined by Charles Drouin and Melanie Malard from Vergisson, southern Burgundy. Charles and his father Thierry make wonderful Mâcon, Saint-Véran and Pouilly-Fuissé.

More dates for your diary

We are keen supporters of The Little Venice Music Festival. Now in its 16th year, it will run from Thursday 19th October until Sunday 22nd. Curated for the second time by the very talented Berkeley Ensemble, it's a joy to have such an exciting and varied programme packed with extraordinary performers in our midst. Tickets are available online, also at The Winery or on the door.

<http://littlevenice-mf.com/events-2017/>

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