

T H E

W I N E R Y

March Tasting 20.03.18

SPARKLING

Chardonnay Metodo Classico Brut NV, Cantina di Casteggio (Lombardy/Italy)

16.99

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 “fused” with (one might say *was taken-over by*) the Cantina di Bronis in the nearby town of 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, despite their size, 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. This 100% Chardonnay is a true *Methodo Champenoise*, fermented and aged for 18 months in bottle.

WHITE

Mâcon-Bussières “Le Vieux Puits” 2016, Thierry Drouin (Burgundy/France)

15.99

If you find yourself in France driving south on the Autoroute towards Lyon and you look right as you pass Mâcon, you will spot two magnificent cliff-shaped rocks; the Roche de Vergisson and the Roche de Solutré. It is difficult not to be impressed by their primal presence. La Roche de Solutré is a protected, pre-historic site used by human civilisations from 35,000-10,000 BC. Pre-historic humans used the rock for hunting, driving herds of wild horses over the edge of the cliff. Lovely. Its profile was raised in the 1980s by France's then President, Francois Mitterand, who would make an annual ritual ascent to the summit.

Less than 2kms away, as the crow (or pterodactyl) flies, is La Roche de Vergisson, a rock with a friendlier history. Between the two is an amphitheatre-like bowl which cradles the vineyards of Pouilly-Fuissé. Slap bang in the middle of the bowl with a view of both rocks is the Drouin family's home and winery. Thierry Drouin and his son Charles split the workload.

“Le Vieux Puits” means “*the old well*”. No sign of the well nowadays. This is very classy Mâcon with body, texture and freshness. With our third hit, we have now officially cleared them out until the 2017 is bottled.



Riesling trocken 2015, Lubentiushof (Mosel/Germany)

21.99

We now find ourselves in the suburbs of Koblenz, where the Mosel joins 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 so 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 caught the attention of Daniel Deckers and Stuart Pigott who both write for in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and has been collecting rave reviews ever since. Since 2005 he has also been winemaker at the historic von Othegraven estate on the Saar.

With Andreas' trademark winemaking style - tiny yields, very late harvesting, natural yeasts - you can really taste the old vines and the minerality of the steep slate vineyards.

The Lower Mosel has enjoyed a status recalibration thanks to growers like Andreas, Matthias Knebel and Reinhard Heymann-Löwenstein: it is now known as the *Terrassen-Mosel* (the Mosel Terraces).

Nonnberg Riesling trocken 2016, Flick (Rheingau/Germany)

17.99

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.

Wine has been in the Flick family since 1775. Reiner, his family and assorted animals, live in (or around) a renovated 13th Century mill in the village of Wicker at 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.

The entire Wickerer Nonnberg belongs to Reiner. Nonnberg (*Nun's hill*) is on the hill at the edge of the village and overlooks his 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.

RED**Bourgogne Pinot Noir 2014, Guillemot (Burgundy/France)****22.99**

Three generations of the Guillemot family live in (or just off) the village square in Savigny-lès-Beaune just north of Beaune. When we visited them first 7 or 8 years ago, grandmother, mother and grandsons were bottling and packing cases while father Pierre was scrambling here and there to prepare everything for the imminent, early harvest. Grandfather was having a lie-down. Grandson Philippe, then fresh out of the local wine college (the Lycée Viticole in Beaune), took us through the entire line up. We have been buying from them ever since.

The Guillemot family make fragrant, pure, unfiltered Pinot Noir in Savigny-lès-Beaune. Week before last, we saw both sons, Philippe and Vincent, and crammed as many cases of their 2014 Bourgogne Rouge as we could fit in the van.

We handed Vincent a magnum of Amyot Champagne as a gift for his forthcoming wedding. He is super-excited to be marrying Séverine, whose family has 30 hectares of oak trees touching the Allier forest. He showed us several pictures of trees that they plan to cut, season and have made into barrels for aging their wines in the future. They don't use much new oak at Guillemot, so it could take a few decades to make the change!

Pyjama 2016, 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.

**Roccamora 2015, Schola Sarenti (Puglia/Italy)****15.99**

The Men in Black are back! In fact, they are never far away. We had a Godfather moment when we were sniffing out new wines in Puglia a decade ago.

"We'll meet at 17.00h in the square."

"How will we recognise you?"

"Don't worry, we'll find you."

Men in black, following a black car along remote country roads, horses heads in beds, we experienced them all - apart from the horses heads. Puglia's hot southernmost corner is known for its big juicy reds. This is 100% Negroamaro - a traditional Puglian variety evoking the southern sun-baked land. Made from 30 year-old vines, Roccamora is rich, earthy and savoury.

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 **Fruit Day**.

Our **next tasting** at The Winery will be on **Tuesday 24th April**.

Music Diary Dates - the excellent Berkeley Ensemble, who run the annual Little Venice Music Festival, have been holding a series of one hour concerts on the last Tuesday of each month at St Saviour's. The next is on Tuesday 27th March, at 18.30h/6.30pm.

Just arrived - (at long last!) **Pascal Chalon's** Petite Ourse, Grande Ourse and Ursa Major from the southern Rhône. Finest Burgundy from **Paul Pernot**, **Michel Lafarge**, **Guillemot** and **Mugnier**. Many of you have been clamouring for **CASSIS** from **Baccate**, so we scooped some up while we were in Beaune. We also stopped in Épernay on the way back to see Christian Coquillet and load up more of his **Saint-Chamant 2005 Blanc de Blancs Champagne**. **Becker-Landgraf's** Gau-Odernheimer **Spätburgunder** arrived yesterday. **Demencia**, **Pyjama**, **Adrede** and **Cachican** (btw catch-it-while-you-can) by Nacho León.

Coming soon - Fred Prinz's 2016 Rieslings, more Bordeaux, Casteggio (yes, plenty of Barbera).

Join us for our Monthly Tastings

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