

T H E  
W I N E R Y

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# April Tasting 24.04.18

## SPARKLING

### **Cruasé Metodo Classico Rosato NV, Cantina di Casteggio (Lombardy/Italy) 14.99**

The little-known region of Oltrepò 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. 100% Pinot Noir, Cruasé is a true *Methode Champenoise*, fermented and aged for 18 months in bottle.

## WHITE

### **Verdejo 2016, Adrede (Rueda/Spain) 14.99**

Rueda is a small region two hours' drive northwest of Madrid, the high, flat plains north-west of Segovia in the former Kingdom of Castille. Although the region is fairly small, it is one of Spain's best known areas for white wine: home to Sauvignon Blanc and the local speciality Verdejo. We mistakenly believed that Verdejo is a synonym for Verdelho. It seems to be related to Savagnin (from Jura in eastern France) and Castellana Blanca (a grape which is hard to trace and, awkwardly, shares its name with a breed of sheep). There is even a suggestion Verdejo originated in North Africa.

Adrede was a recommendation from Nacho Leon who makes Demencia, Pyjama and Taruguín (which we will also be tasting this evening). It is made by his friend JR, Jose Román, who is a wine distributor in Madrid. JR sources his grapes from the higher altitude, southern part of the region near Segovia and, coincidentally, makes his wine in the cellar of Viñedos de Nieva who we used to import until they were swallowed up by a larger company in 2009. Small world! JR has made a classic Verdejo: herbal and zesty, evocative of fresh cut grass, mint, lime blossom and camomile flowers.



### **Riesling trocken 2016, Fred Prinz (Rheingau/Germany) ORGANIC 16.99**

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 in 1991, demand became so great that 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 motorbike.

We have been importing Fred's dry Rieslings since our first buying trip to Germany in 2002, watched him outgrow his garage and have seen his vineyard holdings grow from 1.5 to 9.5 hectares. We were very impressed by his 2016s. Bright, blackcurrant leaf, expressive and with hints of lime in the mouth.

### **Hallgartener Riesling trocken 2016, Fred Prinz (Rheingau/Germany) ORGANIC 19.99**

Despite his small scale, Fred has been a member of the VDP (the German Winegrowers Super-League) since 2005. The VDP recently restructured the hierarchy of German wines, so today the “quality pyramid” is similar to Burgundy. Regional wines are the entry level, next up are Village wines (Ortswein), above which are Erste Lage (equivalent to 1er Cru) and, at the pinnacle, Grosses Gewächs (GG or Grand Cru). We thought it might be helpful to try two levels tonight. Hallgartener is Fred's village level – early selections from his grander vineyards in Hallgarten– Schönhell and Jungfer.

**RED****Chateau Valade Bordeaux Supérieur 2012 (Bordeaux/France) 13.99**

Tunde Thompson (who we first met when he was working for the Rivière brothers in Saint-Émilion) came from Bordeaux to see us a couple of months ago with his new-ish boss Xavier Belliard. Xavier is an oenologist – he owns a number of Chateaux across the region and handles several more. The other thing you notice about him (although one probably shouldn't) is that his personal grooming is at a level that you might classify as unachievable.

Chateau Valade has a herbal, minty, cedary and yet juicy nose. With supple tannins and a silky mouthfeel, it leans towards the modern end of the spectrum. *Beaucoup de Bang for your Buck*. Surprisingly for its location - in the lush green countryside at the eastern edge of the Entre-Deux-Mers, close to Duras and Bergerac - it is 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Merlot (the proportions here are usually reversed).

**Chateau La Fon du Berger Haut-Médoc 2012 (Bordeaux/France) 19.99**

La Fon du Berger is in the Haut-Médoc a kilometre west of Pauillac, in the commune of Saint-Sauveur. The Chateau sits on two terroirs. One is on Pauillac gravel and is (unsurprisingly) labelled Pauillac. The other terroir is sandier and labelled Haut-Médoc. Some might say that this Haut-Médoc is the more elegant of the two. In any case, this is a *Cru Bourgeois*. *Cru Bourgeois* has been a moving target since 1932. Originally designed to classify 444 Médoc Chateaux that missed the *Crus-Classés* classification in 1855, it became horribly complicated with multiple tiers and was never officially ratified. The system was annulled in 2007. Since 2010 it has been revised and now seems to have some meaning as a mark of quality. Each year any Médoc Chateau can apply and, following several professional panel blind tastings, a list of wines that have achieved the status is published.

A blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 5% Cab Franc and 5% Petit Verdot, this is what one hopes for from a Left Bank Bordeaux: elegance, structure and finesse.

**Taruguín 2015 (Ribera del Duero/Spain) ORGANIC 19.99**

Nacho León (of Pyjama & Demencia fame) was driving back to Bierzo from Barcelona and had taken some back roads through the villages near Soria. Nacho, what's the story of Taruguín?

"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."

Taruguín 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!"

2015 is the fourth vintage and we love its depth, density, verve and sheer thrust.

**OLIVE OIL****Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Il Mercante di Delizie 500ml - 14.99**

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

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

Our next tasting at The Winery will be on **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> May**.

Join us for our Monthly Tastings  
The Winery, 4 Clifton Road, London W9

mailinglist@thewineryuk.com  
020 7286 6475

[www.thewineryuk.com](http://www.thewineryuk.com)

[info@thewineryuk.com](mailto:info@thewineryuk.com)

