

T H E
W I N E R Y

December Tasting 04.12.18

featuring Becker-Landgraf and a visit from The Lord Mayor of Westminster

The Christmas trees are up again in Clifton Road and the lights are on in time for our December tasting. Tonight we are delighted to be joined by Johannes Landgraf of Becker-Landgraf, who makes our best-selling Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) and, as if that wasn't enough, we are also expecting a visit around 18.00h from the Lord Mayor of Westminster, Lindsey Hall, as she opens the Christmas season in Clifton Road.

SPARKLING

Prosecco "Tapo Spago" NV, Bosco del Merlo (Veneto/Italy) ORGANIC

13.99

This is The Winery's top-performing, favourite Prosecco for a decade and a half. Carlo and Milly Paladin have been making organic wines under their Bosco del Merlo label for many years. They have a spread of vines over the flat plains at Annone Veneto northeast of Venice, the Alps visible in the background. It's an area rich with Roman history - the old Roman road, the via Postumia runs right by the estate. This Prosecco is made in a *frizzante*, lower pressure style, under a normal cork. Gently floral in the nose, crisp, lean and fresh.



WHITE

Bergerac Blanc Sec 2016, Chateau de la Malleville (Southwest France)

11.99

It was a fascinatingly oily, aromatic, dry white wine called Montravel that originally brought us to a hill in Bergerac, a short drive east of Saint-Émilion and Castillon in Bordeaux. Repeated visits followed.

While it is often a battle to calm Thierry Bernardinis' oversize and very vocal Alsatian guard dog, the tasting that follows is always a joy. Each wine in their range (Montravel, Bergerac in white and three reds at different levels) is packed with character, thoroughly enjoyable and punching well above its weight.

The Bergerac Blanc is a grassy, lively Sauvignon Blanc with a splash of Semillon. Thierry talks about a walk in a spring forest when describing this wine.

Grauburgunder trocken 2017, Becker-Landgraf (Rheinhessen/Germany)

14.99

This may come as something of a shock. It is widely known that we are dry Riesling Fundamentalists at The Winery but we simply couldn't stop ourselves with this Grauburgunder – *aka* Pinot Grigio/Pinot Gris. Becker-Landgraf make our top-selling Spätburgunder (also in the line-up tonight) and excellent dry Riesling, which also frequently appears on our shelves. In common with many in the very fertile, gently undulating region of Rheinhessen, they don't stop at our favourite two grapes in Germany.

When we visited recently in preparation for tonight's tasting, we were impressed by this creamy, broad-flavoured Grauburgunder and couldn't quite believe, given the texture and weight, that it was raised 100% in stainless steel.

Riesling trocken 2017, Becker-Landgraf (Rheinhessen/Germany)

14.99

Lime blossom, limey entry, lime jelly, fresh limey finish. Yes, this is a zingy, bright, mouth-filling (did we say limey?) dry Riesling.

Johannes and Julia are fixated by quality, starting in the vineyards with specialist pruning and foliage techniques. They work with their soil tirelessly to encourage natural, living humus. No irrigation or artificial fertilisers are used. As a result, the roots of the vines grow deeper underground to seek water and nutrients which also gives their vines strength to withstand any climate extremes.

The attention to detail finds its way into the bottle and, ultimately, your glass.

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RED

Gau-Odernheimer Spätburgunder 2016, Becker-Landgraf (Rheinhessen/Germany) 18.99

Spätburgunder is German for Pinot Noir. All the smoky flavours of autumn. Silky.

A Rheinhessen grower threw a party early last decade, hoping his daughter would catch Johannes Landgraf's eye. Unfortunately, it didn't quite go according to plan and Johannes made a bee-line for another winery's daughter, Julia Becker. So, in 2004, Becker-Landgraf was born and they embarked on their plan to make top-class, cool-climate, dry Riesling and silky Pinot Noir slap bang in the rural centre of the region. Johannes and Julia outgrew the basement below their house, where they would scuttle around with bended heads, checking their gleaming tanks and a handful of barrels. Space was so tight that, when we first rocked-up at their door during the 2009 harvest, they were pressing and fermenting their harvest in a tent. Their spacious new cellar (with plenty of headroom) has been built and was finished just days before the 2015 harvest began.

This fabulous, autumnal, smoky Spätburgunder comes from old parcels of vines planted by Julia's Great Grandfather on the Petersberg, the only hill for miles around, just outside the rural village of Gau-Odernheim.

Muschelkalk Spätburgunder 2014, Becker-Landgraf (Rheinhessen/Germany) 28.99

This bottling is up a level in Julia and Johannes' range. It's from even older parcels of old vines planted on Muschelkalk (literal translation = *mussel chalk*) - limestone, thick with fossils, mainly crustacea from when Rheinhessen was the north shore of the Mediterranean millions of years ago.

This wine is held back for later release and has more layers, weight and density. If you want to try an earlier vintage, we have the last few bottles of the 2013 which Johannes and Julia put to one side for us.

Barbera d'Asti Boschetto Vecchio 2013, Guasti Clemente (Piedmont/Italy) (magnums 49.99) 22.99

One of the highlights of a trip to northern Italy a few years ago was stumbling across a ridiculously good Barbera d'Asti in Le Due Lanterne, a restaurant in Nizza Monferrato in Piedmont. We were there to visit the iconic Scarpa winery and were wading through a bottle of their delicious Barbaresco 1999 when we asked the restaurant owner if he could recommend something else from his winelist that was in a similarly unreconstructed and old-fashioned vein. He thought for a moment and said, "there is just one other wine I can think of". He disappeared and came back with a bottle of Barbera d'Asti Fonda San Nicolao by Guasti Clemente. It was excellent. Plump, deep, dark autumnal fruit with a whisper of truffles and distant bonfire. The following day, after a wonderful tasting at Scarpa, we hot-footed it around to meet Andrea and Alessandro Guasti and to be dazzled by Andrea's incredibly mobile and expressive hand gestures - and the wines. Fonda San Nicolao and Boschetto Vecchio are adjacent vineyards and hard to tell apart. Alessandro tells us they have stopped bottling the San Nicolao for the moment. BTW we also have this wine in magnums. Check out the wide selection of their Barbera d'Asti Superiore which just arrived; 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2004 and 2006.



OLIVE OIL

Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Heredad Pangua Sodupe (Rioja/Spain) 500ml - 13.99

In addition to making Rioja in red and white, Roberto Pangua also bottles his own olive oil.

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

Just arrived – Pure Vino Nobile di Montepulciano from Il Macchione, Rieslings by Von Othegraven, Gut Hermannsberg (more of that irrepressible Niederhäuser 2014), Bischel, Studert-Prüm (check out the 2006 Beerenauslese!), Clemens Busch. Chateau La Haye Saint-Éstephe. Churchill's Port, Madeira from d'Oliveira.

Arriving soon – biodynamic Côtes-du-Rhône Villages from Coriançon, more Burgundy, Rioja, Single Cask Whiskies.

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