

Natural Wine  
Specialists

**Portfolio**  
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[www.williamscorner.com](http://www.williamscorner.com)

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## WHO WE ARE

Williams Corner Wine is a wine importer based in Charlottesville, Virginia and a wholesaler selling wine to fine restaurants and wine retailers in Virginia and Washington, D.C. Our goal is to source and sell authentic expressions of a place, whether it be the steep, terraced hillsides of the Wachau or the rocky, windswept landscape of Roussillon. We seek out artisans who aim to achieve the utmost quality through ecologically and environmentally friendly vineyard practices and winemaking techniques. Similarly, we seek to complete this cycle by transporting and distributing these wines sustainably and with a constant eye toward improving our practices and those of our industry.

## OUR WINES

Williams Corner grew out of a friendship and shared appreciation for wines and a realization that well-known labels, big scores, and long-established regions rarely guarantee enjoyment. Rather, we found delight mostly in wines that challenged and surprised us with their finesse, balance and uniqueness. We search out producers who:

- Use Natural Yeasts to Initiate Fermentation
- Curtail Yields
- Hand Harvest
- Recognize That Living Soil and a Biodiverse Ecosystem Benefit the Vine
- Realize Only High Quality Grapes can make High Quality Wine
- Use Sulfur Appropriately and Only When Necessary
- Do Not Filter or Limit Filtering
- Respect Their Terroir, but Aren't Afraid to Experiment
- Produce Dynamic, Drinkable, and Food-Friendly Wines

## QUALITY AND SERVICE

Wines are alive and must be carefully handled and stored so that they are at their best when they reach our customers. All of our wines are transported in climate controlled environments from the moment they leave the winery to the time they are delivered to restaurants and retail stores. These environments include air conditioned trucks in Europe, refrigerated shipping containers, our climate controlled warehouse, and finally our air conditioned delivery van.

When we select our wines, we do so with the goal of satisfying the eventual wine drinker. This requires constant attention to the quality and value of the wines we carry. We always seek to exceed our customers' expectations by providing wines that offer an excellent balance of quality to price. In addition to transmitting value, we also wish to transfer our passion for wine to our customers. Through tastings, dinners and our informative website, we hope to facilitate the success of our wines on the market by cultivating an educated customer base.

We speak from experience with each and every one of our wines. In many cases we have tasted these wines in the cellars of the winemakers and would always proudly serve them at our dinner tables. We view intimate knowledge of the wine, winemaker and site as a prerequisite to sales.

## **OUR PARTNERS**

To allow us to bring you the best available wines, we are proud to work with several accomplished partners in addition to the wineries we import directly. In their own words, some more about these partners:

### **LOUIS/DRESSNER SELECTIONS**

Louis/Dressner Selections is a portfolio of over 60 vigneron in the Burgundy, Mâconnais, Beaujolais, Loire, Bugey, Jura, Languedoc-Roussillon, Southwest and Champagne regions of France; in Piedmont, Friuli, Veneto, Tuscany, Sicily and Puglia regions of Italy; and in the Douro of Portugal. LDM Selections is a partnership of Denyse Louis, a native Burgundian, Joe Dressner and Kevin McKenna. Collectively, they spend nearly nine months a year in Europe working with their growers and selecting wines for importation to America.

They have no brands and are not looking for them. What they do have is a group of often fanatical growers who are doing their best to make wines that are original because they are honestly crafted. These might seem old-fashioned, but in the present context it is almost revolutionary....

There are no gobs, no exaggerations, no over-this and over-that. There are no fruit bombs. There are a group of growers who work their vines and make their wines with honesty, passion and humor.

### **MONIKA CAHA SELECTIONS**

Founded in 2003, Monika Caha Selections is a portfolio of high quality Austrian wines that represent excellent value. Today, the portfolio consists of more than 70 wines from 9 boutique producers, some from wine regions never before represented in the US. All of the wines are hand selected by founder Monika Caha, herself a native Austrian. She meticulously chooses wines that consistently demonstrate the balance and elegance to marry well with food, combined with just the right degree of complexity, structure and finesse.

Monika believes that winemaking is a craft, an art wrought of nature. Her appreciation for passionate and dedicated winemakers led her to travel extensively throughout Austria, tasting, researching and developing relationships with these artisans. Rather than representing only one or two regions, Monika has built a critically acclaimed portfolio of the finest artisanal vineyards, with the goal of representing each of the sixteen diverse wine regions. Currently representing nine regions, Monika Caha Selections reflects the extraordinary range of terroir throughout Austria. Monika has exclusively selected family owned vineyards, whose estate grown grapes are hand-picked. Their commitment to natural wine making methods range from sustainable agriculture to biodynamic. As a native Austrian, Monika has a long standing knowledge of these winemakers consistent performance as quality producers, many of whom come from generations of wine producers.

### **MOSEL WINE MERCHANT**

Mosel Wine Merchant (MWM) is an exporter based in Trier, Germany. Their portfolio includes artisanal domaines whose wines reflect their terroir.

Sans work papers, money, and outlook, Lars Carlberg was occupied with chez Knebel's 2005 harvest when entrepreneur Alexander Rinke approached him with the proposal to export wines from the Mosel Valley to the United States. Together they founded MWM, and, with the help of Knebel winemaker Gernot Kollmann, made contact with various growers to represent as their clients.

**DOMAINE SELECT WINE ESTATES**

Domaine Select Wine Estates began as an importer in 1999. The wineries in our portfolio have been carefully selected to represent true character, diversity, tradition and expression, matching the philosophy of our company. We are fortunate to share close relationships with these families and continually share dialogue with them so that we can best represent their interests in the U.S. markets.

## OUR PRODUCERS

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- Karl Lagler - Wachau
- Weingut Meinhard Forstreiter - Kremstal
- Weingut Reinhard Waldschuetz - Kamptal **Organic**, transition to **Biodynamic**
- Weingut Anita & Hans Nittnaus - Burgenland **Biodynamic**
- Weinberghof Fritsch - Wagram **Biodynamic**
- Wimmer-Czerny - Wagram **Biodynamic**
- Weingut Stadlmann - Thermenregion
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- Albert Seltz – Alsace **Organic**
- Larmandier-Bernier - Champagne **Biodynamic**
- Philippe Pacalet - Beaune **Organic**
- Paul Pernot & Fils - Puligny-Montrachet
- Domaine de Roally - Macon **Organic**, not certified
- Domaine Georges Descombes - Morgon, Beaujolais **Organic**
- Domaine Louis-Claude Desvignes - Morgon, Beaujolais
- Domaine Michel Tête - Juliéna, Beaujolais **Organic**
- Domaine Emmanuel Houillon - Jura **Organic**
- Domaine Renardat-Fâche - Bugey
- Domaine Franck Peillot - Bugey
- Thierry Puzelat - Touraine **Organic**
- Clos du Tue-Boeuf - Touraine **Organic**
- Les Vins Contés - Touraine **Organic**
- Domaine le Briseau - Jasnières **Organic**
- Domaine de Bellivière - Jasnières **Organic**
- Catherine & Pierre Breton - Bourgueil **Biodynamic**
- Domaine Bernard Baudry - Chinon transition to **Organic**
- Domaine du Closel - Château des Vaults - Savennières **Organic**
- Agnes et Rene Mosse - Anjou **Biodynamic**
- Domaine de la Sansonnière – Anjou **Biodynamic**
- Dard & Ribo - Northern Rhone **Organic**
- Eric Texier - Rhone
- Terres des Chardons - Costières-de-Nîmes, Rhone **Biodynamic**
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- Mauro Vergano - Piemonte **Organic**
- Az.Agr. I Paglieri - Alfredo & Luca Roagna - Barbaresco **Organic**
- Corte Sant'Alda - Veneto *transition to* **Biodynamic**
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- Az.Agr. Radikon - Friuli **Organic**
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## PRODUCER PROFILES

Below you will find the profiles of a number of our winemakers. Please be sure to visit the Williams Corner Wine website at: [www.williamscorner.com](http://www.williamscorner.com) for further information about our wines and winemakers as well as additional tasting notes.

### AUSTRIA

#### Weingut Johann Donabaum - Wachau

Johann Donabaum may be only 28 years old, but he is a rising star of the Wachau. Despite his youth, he has been wine-maker of his family estate for a number of years. He already commands a wealth of knowledge and feeling for wine and wine growing, and is not even close to realizing his potential. Having trained for this all of his life, Donabaum graduated from the Krems School of Viticulture while still in his teens. Upon returning home, his father gave him the go ahead to “do it your way”, and the young man decided to bet on quality first and foremost. A seven-month apprenticeship with F X Pichler gained him a great deal of new ideas and insights into the practices of a great wine producer.



The house where the Donabaum estate is situated dates back to the 16th century, when it was used as a forge, or blacksmith workshop. A few centuries later, Johann Donabaum's great-grandfather began mixed agricultural farming and winemaking. In the 1960's Johann's father began concentrating primarily on the wine, opening a Heurigen (wine tavern), and bottling and marketing the wine for the first time. In 1996, they decided to focus almost exclusively on sales and marketing, though the Heurigen is still open seasonally.

The vineyard gives birth to the quality of the wine. Only with careful cultivation is it possible to create wines of the highest standard. The wines should be mirrors, reflecting origin and terroir, and the meticulousness and signature of the vintner himself. For example, each of the three quality designations of the Wachau -- “Steinfeder”, “Federspiel” and “Smaragd” -- should reflect its own potential and unique characteristics. Despite the difference in price, Steinfeder and Federspiel are not inferior in quality to Smaragd, just different. Johann Donabaum is particularly taken with Grüner Veltliner, because of its extraordinary versatility, and makes many different styles.



Donabaum believes traditional knowledge combined with a modern way of thinking is the key to the highest quality wine. Some of his ideas for the near future include:

- Returning to vinification of Smaragd in big wooden barrels
- Using yeast stems originating from his own vineyards to increase the complexity and shelf life of the wines
- Increasing cultivation of the Neuburger grape, by diligence and selection, to showcase its amazing, inherent potential. His goal is to make Donabaum's Neuburger the ultimate representative of this powerful grape varietal
- Expand his base by further lease and purchase of vineyards

#### Sites

Spitzer Graben is a small narrow valley at the western end of the Wachau, leading into the Waldviertel. Because of low level irrigation, the high potential of the soil of Spitzer Graben was unknown until vintage 2000 when drip irrigation was installed. The wines of this region are influenced by the chilly air masses of the autumn nights and the terroir of bare mineralic primary rock soil. Donabaum realized his goal of making a variety of distinct, delicate, aromatic, mineralic and fruit driven wines, reflective of this unique terrain. The most important vineyards in Spitzer Graben are: Spitzer Point, Spitzer Offenbergl, Spitzer Setzberg, Spitzer Biern



#### Karl Lagler – Wachau

The Lagler family has lived on this beautiful estate at Rote Torgasse since 1789. Yet, it was only in the late 1970s that the Laglers decided to go from winegrowing to winemaking. Instead of selling his grapes, Karl Lagler began producing first class, fruit-driven wines. His

vineyards are found at top locations in Spitz like Steinborz, Tausendeimerberg, and Burgberg where old vines combined with natural farming techniques and other quality-oriented measures to yield excellent results. All work is done by hand, including harvest. Today, the Lagler family is known as one of the most charismatic families in the Wachau and their wines command respect among top restaurants worldwide. These wines represent the true character of the western area of the Wachau. The winery is centered around its 180 year old cellar which is accompanied by a small hotel, a great starting point for wine travel in the Wachau.

### **Weingut Meinhard Forstreiter - Kremstal**

The vineyard of 25 hectares/63 acres is situated in Krems-Hollenburg in the Kremstal, along the right bank of the Danube River, across from the Wachau. There has been wine production in and around Hollenburg since the Roman Empire.

The Forstreiter family has been making wine here since 1868, but it is the current owner and cellar master, Meinhard Forstreiter, who has brought the vineyard to a new level of quality and reputation.

The single vineyards, Kogl, Tabor and Schiefer produce the most outstanding and unique Grüners and Rieslings. Cru Tabor, with 150 year old grapevines, is the home of Austria's oldest vines. Cru Schiefer is the oldest vineyard of Hollenburg, dating back to 1364.

Most of the vines grow close to the Danube on south or east facing terraces on conglomerate comprised of different layers of loess, clay and sandy soil. This "Hollenburger Konglomerat," was formed during the Ice Age, when gravel from the banks of the Danube was pressed together under enormous force. The unique soil formations and microclimate of this area produce exceptionally fruity, spicy and peppery wines with lots of minerality.

### **Weingut Waldschütz - Kamptal**

The Waldschütz winery, managed by Reinhard Waldschütz, is part of the top wineries of the Kamptal wine growing area. The efficient and accurate processing of physiologically ripe grapes allows Reinhard Waldschütz to unfailingly produce first class wines. His wines offer extreme clarity, freshness and finesse, with charisma and feeling. Sandy and profound loess and loam soil, weathered primary rock soils, and desert sand stone comprise the basis of his terroir. Reinhard has been farming organically for some time now and is currently in conversion to Biodynamics. Apart from the GV I Liter, all of the wines are available in extremely limited quantities.

### **Weingut Anita & Hans Nittnaus - Burgenland**

The Nittnaus family has been in the town of Gols since 1684. The current Nittnaus estate was established by Hans' grandfather Johann Nittnaus in 1927, and continued by his father Johann Nittnaus. Hans (short for Johann) completed his education at the Klosterneuburger wine school so that he would be able to take over the management of the vineyard, but he had a dream of being a musician. In 1982 he began his music studies at the University of Vienna. While in Vienna, he met Anita, who was studying at the University of Agriculture. After serious deliberation, he decided to devote himself fully to the winery of his parents, and both he and Anita took over the vineyard in 1985. Anita devoted herself to managing all financial and administrative aspects, including running the tasting room and the estate's direct sales, while Hans took over all responsibility as the winemaker.

Hans Nittnaus' philosophy is complete devotion to making natural wines reflecting the origin and terroir of the area. The vineyard is currently in the process of converting to bio-dynamic methods. In the cellar Hans works with spontaneous yeast fermentation, adds no enzymes and does not chaptalize. He curtails yields to achieve tightly concentrated and voluminous wines, in which he extends the standing time for the must. Nittnaus is trying to replace more and more small barriques with 500 liter barrels made of Austrian and Eastern European oak to reduce the new oak influence as well as to create a unique Pannonian style.

### **Weinberghof Fritsch - Wagram**

Karl Fritsch believes that quality originates in the vineyard. He learned this philosophy from his father, Karl Fritsch, Sr., who carefully cultivated the foliage and has green harvested since the 1970's. After graduating from the Krems School of Viticulture, Karl Fritsch, Jr. became the winemaker.



The Fritsch estate is situated in the Donauland wine region, about 50 km northwest of Vienna, along the Danube River. During ancient times powerful winds blew fine particles of sand creating a huge barrier of loess soil with pockets of loam and gravel under the surface – these became the hills of the Wagram. More than a third of Fritsch's 17 hectares of vineyards is planted with Grüner Veltliner (including the two single vineyards, Schlossberg and Steinberg) and each parcel is vinified separately, according to the location of the site. The grapes are estate grown and, as of vintage 2006, the winemaking is following biodynamic rules and methods.

Fritsch also makes powerful Rieslings as well as red wines. All Fritsch wines shine with the fruit and finesse that can only be expected from a master of the art of winemaking. In 2006, he added a Riesling and Zweigelt Windspiel to the already very successful Grüner Veltliner Windspiel to provide a complete line of easy drinking wines for the value oriented consumer.

### **Wimmer-Czerny - Wagram**

The Czerny family has been working this land, about 50 miles west of Vienna on the Danube River, and winery for over 250 years. Hans Czerny, who took over from his father Johann in 1987, is extremely committed to practicing minimal intervention in the vineyards and in the cellar. No additives are ever added, only natural yeasts are employed, filtering is kept to a minimum and the wines are left for long periods in contact with the lees in order to maintain the identity and the personality of the wines. Additionally, Hans Czerny converted to organic production with the 2003 vintage as his first certified organic harvest and has embraced biodynamics earning certification by the Demeter society. Furthermore, Hans's dedication to his land and vineyards are reflected in old vine Grüner Veltliner, Riesling, and Traminer that fully express the potential of the Wagram and these varieties.

### **Weingut Stadlmann - Thermenregion**

The House of Stadlmann's history of wine growing dates back to as early as 1780 when its founder Johann Stadlmann I dedicated himself to the production of high-quality wines. The knowledge of winemaking has been handed down and developed by seven generations. After his education in the Weinbauschule Krems School for wine-growing, the current Johann Stadlmann gained experience in wine-growing estates in Alsace, Germany and Aldo Adige, Italy. He trusts in his feeling, his palate, his experience and that of his predecessors. No manipulation, but harmony with nature, this has been and will always be the credo of all the members of the Stadlmann family.

The wine-growing area Thermenregion stretches from the outskirts of Vienna along a chain of hills into the plain south of the town of Baden. Its name is derived from the thermal springs rising here along a fault line. Wines from the Thermenregion are among the most sought after Austrian vintages.

Only vine varieties that harmonize with the soil and the climate of the Thermenregion are cultivated on twelve hectares of vineyards. When planting his new vines, it is predominantly Stadlmann's own vine material that is selected and grafted.

The Zierfandler (Spätrot) and Rotgipfler varieties are indigenous to Thermenregion. They date from the days of the Hapsburg Empire, and were both known by the name of "Gumpoldskirchner". Served in royal courts throughout Europe, "Gumpoldskirchner" was called, "the wine of kings and the king of wines".

Rotgipfler produces full bodied wines that are capable of aging. At its best it is very expressive with marked acidity, herbal, fruit and spicy aromas, and golden color. The word Rot (red) comes from the fact that the drive tops turn reddish and bronze in the fall. Genetically it is related to Traminer and Roter Veltliner (Malvesier).

Zierfandler will always be Stadlmann's hallmark wine. What makes this grape special is the combination of acidity and sweetness, due to the characteristic of the grape: While ripening, the Zierfandler grapes turn light red on the side exposed to the sun, giving them a high sugar content. On the shady side, however, the grapes are yellowish, crisp and acidic. The best Zierfandler site in the Stadlmann wine-growing estate is the "Mandel-Höh". The Zierfandler vines in the Stadlmann wine-growing estate are more than 40 years old, which is an additional guarantee of quality.

In the Stadlmann estate, the Zierfandler is always fermented and aged in large wooden barrels, which emphasises its unmistakable character. The Zierfandler is an expressive, full-bodied and enormously dynamic wine, characterized by a powerful body with a unique fruity acidity. Having a golden yellow color, it has a flavor reminiscent of quince, honey, citrus notes and sweet raisins in harmony with bitter almonds, and it is crisp, sweet-sour on the palate. TBA and Auslese

wines are aged in small, old acacia barrels. Zierfandler that is fermented dry can be stored up to ten years. Sweet Prädikatsweine will be a revelation even after twenty years. The Stadlmann Zierfandler reflects the tradition of the grape, the closeness to the region and its careful maturation.

### **Lackner-Tinnacher - South Styria**

In the town of Gamlitz, Fritz and Wilma Tinnacher quietly run their tradition-rich family winery with indefatigable energy and enthusiasm. Concentrating on varieties that thrive best in the area, they vinify high-quality wines from fruit sourced exclusively from estate vineyards. The winery possesses exceptional mountainous sites on the Eckberg and in Steinbach. Lackner-Tinnacher is known for an extremely elegant range that exhibits ravishing fruit brilliance with delicate feminine nuances. No muscular powerhouses, these extremely long-lived wines evolve superbly during bottle aging. In addition, the new cellar facilities of Fritz and Wilma demonstrate how modern, efficient architecture can be smartly integrated in rural areas.

## **FRANCE**

### **Laurent Barth - Alsace**

Laurent's vines are located in the village of Bennwhir, in the area north of Colmar with a particularly felicitous microclimate, home to the most famous wine villages in Alsace. The village itself is hardly picturesque, having been almost entirely destroyed during the battles for the liberation of Colmar at the end of WWII.

Laurent took over his father's estate in 1999 and for five years brought his grapes to the local cooperative, as his contract required. 2004 was the first vintage he made and sold his wines.

Before coming home, Laurent had spent several years as a travelling winemaker around the world, in Lebanon at Château Kefraya in the Beeka plain, in South Africa at Bergkelder in the Stellenbosch vineyard area, in California at Porter Creek in Sonoma, in India at Champagne India in Maharashtra, and finally in Australia at Delatite Winery in Central Victoria.

He now he tends 3.5 hectares planted with the seven traditional Alsatian varieties, on 27 different plots. The soils go from very heavy clay and marl to super light alluvial soil of sand and pebbles; Grand Cru Marckrain is marl and limestone, Rebgarten is limestone to clay and limestone with lots of rocks (limestone, sandstone and quartz), Pinot gris and Pinot blanc thrive on sandy-limestone soils with some clay. There can be up to 10 cuvées in his cellar each vintage.

The vineyards are plowed one row out of two, on the second one natural grass is left to grow, alternating each year. Treatments are sulfur, copper, magnesium, calcium and algae, rich in oligo-elements, used in solutions to spray the foliage. Organic compost is used in the fall according to the soils' needs. One of the main jobs of the growing season, after pruning, is a severe ébourgeonnage in the spring, to leave 8 to 10 grapes by vine ("debudbing" is the removing, at an early stage, of the fruit bearing buds that are superfluous, in order to restrict yields.)

Laurent aims for an average 40HL/HA overall, while the legal limit in Alsace is 80HL/HA (55HL/HA in the Grands Crus.) In 2004, a very generous vintage after the heat of 2003, his overall yield was less than 40HL/HA. Another way of limiting yield is by planting at a higher density: for example, a plot of Pinot gris he planted in 2001, with vines from sélection massale, has 8600 vines/HA. The norm in Alsace is 4500 to 5000 vines/HA.

In order to achieve maximum ripeness, Laurent uses a double Guyot (two major shoots for each vine) that increases the proportion of foliage per vine. He also keeps as much foliage as possible by training the boughs up between the trellissage wires and letting them shoot as high as they can, without any trimming.

His wines are bright, pure, very satisfying. The cuvée he calls Racines Métisses is a blend of the pressed juices from all his varieties, except Gewürztraminer; a delicious type of Edelzwicker that deserves not to be called by that often pejorative name. The free flow juice goes into the single-varietal cuvées with intensified grape and soil character, more aromas and more minerality. The slow process of natural fermentation adds depth to the wines, but involves some risk of higher volatile acidity, and of malo-lactic fermentation. When the malo occurs, although he does not desire it, Laurent does not dose his wines to stop it. His idea is that natural winemaking may result in some imperfections, but those are part of the wine's identity, and are always better than technical and analytical perfection. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

## **Albert Seltz – Alsace**

Albert Seltz is situated in the heart of Mittelbergheim in the Bas-Rhin of Alsace. Albert Seltz, the 14th generation owner and winemaker, took over from his father in 1980 when he was only 19 years old. At that time, Albert had already developed a sense of the potential of his estate and a passion for the variety of Sylvaner. Immediately, he reduced the production by two thirds, reduced the yields, and converted to strictly sustainable organic agricultural practices. In the cellar he practices minimal intervention, employing indigenous yeast and sur lie aging. In Alsace and beyond, Albert is known for his love of Sylvaner. So much so that he was instrumental in the national institute of Appellation d'Origine's decision to allow a Grand Cru Zotzenberg Sylvaner. 2005 is the first vintage that will bear this distinction.

## **Larmandier-Bernier - Champagne...Arriving Fall 2008**

We recently announced that Louis/Dressner Selections is now the national importer for Larmandier-Bernier Champagne in Vertus. We worked with Sophie and Pierre Larmandier years ago, starting at the same time they began working with the new Terry These Champagne book.

We were drawn to them years ago because they have great sites, make wine from natural yeasts, work their land organically, plough their fields, keep yields low and work at low or no dosage. It's not that we believe in Grower Champagne as a category. A small estate in Vosne-Romanée is not better than Jadot, for instance, just because it is smaller. We carry small estates all over France and Italy because we have found vigneron dedicated to the hard work needed to express terroir in the bottle, not in promotional pamphlets. We don't believe that estate-bottled is better than négociant wine simply because it comes from a single estate.

We stayed friendly with the Larmandiers over the years. Recently they grew tired of being grouped in a Grower Champagne category with colleagues who don't really work any differently than the larger houses, even though their American trading partners are honest and hard working. They want to work with partners who understand their work and explain that work to the consumer. That's why we've decided to work together again.

For us, the low dosage at Larmandier is one of the most appealing aspects of their wine. Champagne is one of the rare regions where a winemaker gets to legally manipulate twice – by adding yeasts and enzymes during the fermentation and during the dosage. Years ago, we visited Anselme Sélosse who explained how his colleagues added a broad range of flavorings, both legal and not, during the dosage. So the modern trend toward higher dosage and higher sweetness is not simply the Yellowtailing of Champagne.

High dosage, along with other manipulations, allow the R-M or the négociant to mask the flaws of their wine. Larmandier is able to work at no or low dosage and still gets a rich wine because the work has been done in the vineyards to produce great wine. There is no Coca-Cola secret formula but a cutting purity that is both refreshing and elegant. We've always been great fans of their Terre de Vertus bottling, which is made without dosage, but all the bottling share this sense of beauty and are clear expressions of why Champagne ought to be a wine of terroir. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

## **Philippe Pacalet - Beaune**

“Philippe Pacalet is a vigneron of the young generation in Burgundy. He is 41, was formerly estate manager at the Domaine Prieuré Roch (until 1999), he now rents a collection of vineyard plots in the Beaune area and expertly vinifies his natural wines in 3 different chais a few kilometers from each other. His wines are now widely appreciated, in France and abroad. We visit his first location, in Beaune. There, Pacalet, in an old building in the historic part of the town, he vinifies for Domaine Sabre from the grapes of a 2,5 hectare vineyard surface, scattered over a number of plots : Generic red Burgundy ( Pinot Noir of course ), generic white ( Chardonnay ), a little of Bourgogne Aligoté, Pommard (1 hectare) and Beaune 1er Cru. Even when working for Sabre, he puts his personal imprint on the wine, and the labels say “Domaine Sabre - Philippe Pacalet”. The chai is on the street level, with a large wooden double door opening on the street through a high porch. Underneath is the cellar, composed of several connected rooms. He shows us around. On the street level, an horizontal press, resin vats, cement vats, a 40 hectoliter tronconic cask. Nicolas Luquet, himself a caviste, helps him today and rolls down empty casks to the cellar. Otherwise, he works alone, and has all the work in the vineyard done by a viticultural service company that sends workers on demand for the different tasks along the year. He says in France everything pushes for zero employees, like the dissuasive taxes adding up the paycheck Pct\_n\_lqt\_1 (that easily double the cost for the employer), strict work regulations, limited hours. And new layers of costs and regulations have kept piling up since 30 years ...His viticulture philosophy is close to biodynamic principles, but he prefers not to follow fixed rules or integrate any official certification organization.” from the blog, Wine Terroirs by Bert Celce

“As [Marcel] LaPierre’s nephew, he had an early indoctrination into natural winemaking. He says he makes wine like his grandfather did, but with more consciousness. So, here we are, old barrels, indigenous yeasts. Instead of battonage he rolls the barrels, he sulphurs but only at bottling.

Some random Philippe-isms:

1) Fermentation is transformation. I was reading a 12c book on compost and it talks of preparing the earth of a deforested section of the woods for grape growing and warm, fermenting compost was the key. Fermented compost transforms the soil just as fermented grape juice transforms man.

2) You cannot talk about terroir if you use yeast. You cannot talk about terroir if you use new oak. You cannot make a terroir wine when you mix grapes.” From Alice Feiring’s blog *In Vino Veritas*

### **Paul Pernot & Fils - Puligny-Montrachet (Arriving Spring 2009)**

The wines from the Pernot family in Puligny-Montrachet are well-known throughout the world for classic Puligny and Bâtard style. They have rich concentration and fruit, but more importantly, good acidity that allow them to age gracefully and harmoniously.

Paul Pernot and his sons, Paul and Michel, produce a range of white and red Burgundies. They are the largest owner of Puligny-Montrachet 1er cru les Folatières, and their lineup includes Bourgogne Blanc, Puligny-Montrachet AC, Puligny-Montrachet les Folatières, Puligny-Montrachet les Pucelles, Bienvenue-Bâtard-Montrachet and Bâtard-Montrachet. Pernot prefers subtle oak flavors, although he has begun a new system of using more new oak for les Folatières and Bâtard-Montrachet. This was initiated with the ultra-rich 1995 vintage. The estate sells an important portion of its harvest to a Beaune négociant, who holds the exclusive on its Puligny Clos de la Garenne.

Over the years, the estate has enlarged its holdings in Pinot Noir, and produces Bourgogne rouge, Santenay Biéveau, Volnay les Carelles, Pommard les Noizons, Blagny la Pièce-sous-le-Bois, Beaune Teurons and Beaune Clos de dessus les Marconnets.

### **Domaine de Roally - Macon**

Tasting Henri Goyard’s Mâcon-Viré for the first time was a true revelation. We were stunned: the local coops’ wines were correct at best, the handful of estate-made Mâcons we had tasted, a notch superior, and even the barrel-fermented Chardonnays from the Côte d’Or had not prepared us for this experience.

This wine was rich, lush, intensely fruity and fat, with marvelous weight and length. It was powerful, yet fresh and lively, and its aromas of buttery, roasted nuts lingered on. We tasted here for the first time in 1986 and a year later we were in the wine business. If wines this good were not available in America, we decided there was a role for specialist importers.

Henri Goyard’s estate is 14 acres and his wines, in worldwide demand, are allocated in miniscule quantities. Goyard’s vines date back to his grandfather, and he works the land in a traditional fashion—minimal use of fertilizers and chemical treatments, low yields, manual harvesting late in the season, and bottling a year after the grapes are picked. Goyard does not age in oak, because he prefers the fruit of the Chardonnay to show on its own. His wine’s strength, its intense flavors of toasted bread and grilled nuts underlying the fruit, prove that no wood is needed here. Goyard’s wine often takes months to finish its alcoholic fermentation, and there is usually some residual sugar that nicely complements a good acidity level and makes for a fresh and mellow mouth. Delicious in its youth, the wine also ages gracefully, acquiring more intense roasted notes, and sometimes, the deeply mineral character often associated with Riesling, rather than Chardonnay.

Goyard is a reserved and feisty person, who has made many enemies in this village of coop growers by challenging the coop’s vine-tending and winemaking philosophy. He is also very generous, and always accepts busloads of elderly tourists looking for a free tasting, even if that means putting his customers on yet smaller allocations.

This is an expensive wine for the Mâconnais but it is exceptional and a testimony to the fame Viré historically enjoyed as the leading wine village in the area. So it is particularly ironic that Goyard and his friend Jean Thévenet in Clessé should be prevented from using the Viré-Clessé AOC recently created by the INAO; but they are, and Goyard’s Viré is now

labelled: Mâcon-Village. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Domaine Georges Descombes - Morgon, Beaujolais**

“Everyone who knows the Beaujolais talks about the Morgon Gang of Four – Marcel Lapierre, Jean Foillard, Guy Breton and Jean-Paul Thévenet. Actually, there are five vigneron making non-sulphured, non-filtered Morgon and we are now working with that fifth vigneron -- Georges Descombes.

“Descombes vinifies with an extreme cold carbonic maceration that takes up to 30 days. The wine is raised in relatively newer barrels without using sulphur, except at bottling time, a style of wine which Descombes prefers drinking. Descombes tasted with Lapierre when he first started out and found Lapierre’s Morgons a model of lushness, purity and pleasure – he decided on the spot to work in a similar style.

“What is different at Descombes is the lengthy aging of the wines. The wines often go through a year of raising and are then held back in bottle. Descombes has only recently released the 2005 Morgon, since he feels that working without sulphur and filtration requires extra élevage to guarantee that the wines are not only delicious but also stable. The Régnié is the only early release, as it is vinified quicker to make a fruitier, more forward wine.

“Georges Descombes is not to be confused with Jean Descombes, a grower who sells his entire production to Georges Duboeuf. This is a totally separate estate which Georges Descombes took over in 1988 with 1/2 hectare from his father.” - Louis/Dressner Selections

### **Domaine Louis-Claude Desvignes - Morgon, Beaujolais**

Louis-Claude Desvignes is of the sparrow-type Beaujolais vigneron: raven-black hair that is, more often than not, standing in various directions, bright eyes and prominent nose, and a well-pitched, humorous cackle. His energy level is also twittery, and he barely stands still for a minute during a tasting in his cellars, offering a bottle of this and a bottle of that: various experimentations, filtrations, or finings, perhaps an older vintage of something educational. The seriousness of his winemaking, however, is never in doubt.

His vineyards came to him by inheritance and the Desvignes family, as the name suggests, has been making Morgon for generations. The vineyards are on the Montagne de Py in the center of Morgon, the fruit of which is of far superior quality to that produced in the outlying areas of the appellation. If there were a classification of vineyards in Morgon, Côte-de-Py would be a premier cru and Javernières a grand cru. They are located on the best exposition of the hill, with soil of decomposed schist, and Javernières is a plot within the Côte-de-Py with a little more clay.

In the past years, Desvignes has been picking the fruit later than the other vignerons in the area with a mind to get fruit of optimal ripeness. The wine is vinified by the traditional cru Beaujolais method with a grille to keep the cap submerged. Recently, the fermentation has been longer and more controlled than in the past in order to extract the color and material that are the most obvious virtues of this wine.

Morgon is, along with Moulin-à-Vent, the most age worthy of the Cru Beaujolais and Desvignes wines are fine examples. The wines age terrifically well and take on the character of Pinot Noir, or pinotize (the term used in Beaujolais). When young, the character is of dark cherry, raspberry and blackcurrant. With age, the wines become more earthy, velvety with cocoa and coffee tones. At our request, the wines are bottled unfiltered some years or at most lightly fined. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Domaine Michel Tête - Juliéas, Beaujolais**

In the Cru Beaujolais region, only a minority of producers bottle their own production. Domaine Michel Tête is one of the rare estates where this has been done for two generations of vignerons, since Michel’s father already bottled and sold his wine himself.

Domaine du Clos du Fief, the formal but rarely used name of the estate, is made up of some of the best plots in Juliéas. The steep slopes where the vines grow form a geological circus, an almost circular basin creating and retaining very high temperatures in summer, and ensuring Juliéas grapes good ripeness and early harvests. A few years ago, Michel Tête enlarged his holdings by purchasing Beaujolais-Villages vineyards, part of the Château de Jullié estate, in the village of the same name west of Juliéas.

Tête doesn't make any claims to organic viticulture, but his ways are old-fashioned enough that they could qualify for the label. As a winemaker, he follows quasi-Burgundian techniques for his Beaujolais-Villages and Juliéna, with a semi-carbonic maceration where the cap of skins is kept submerged in the juice, and remontages break it several times a day. His top cuvée, called Cuvée Prestige, is made from a selection of his oldest vines, macerated in open vats with remontages and a half of it is barrel fermented and aged for 10 months.

Tête's wines are fleshy and generous, have intense color, lively berry aromas, and notes of black pepper. The Beaujolais-Villages and Juliéna are bold and forward, and very pleasurable even when young. The Cuvée Prestige is aromatically backward in its youth, and its dense, velvety matter develops harmoniously with some bottle age. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Domaine Emmanuel Houillon - Jura**

"These are remarkable wines. With their distinctive flavours, they aren't for everyone; nor are they cheap. But they are alive, and full of interest. They hail from the Jura, a mountainous and beautiful region that is part of France, but abutting the border with Switzerland.

A word about the name. These wines used to be labelled Pierre Overnoy, but Emmanuel Houillon took over Pierre Overnoy's domain when Overnoy retired. Houillon makes wines in the same way: totally naturally (and bravely), without the addition of sulphur dioxide (the almost universally used preservative in winemaking). Of course, vineyard are also managed naturally, and there are no additions or unnecessary manipulations in the cellar. The result of this oenologist's nightmare are actually rather wonderful." from Jamie Goode's blog [wineanorak.com](http://wineanorak.com)

### **Domaine Renardat-Fâche - Bugey**

The Bugey, halfway between Lyons and Geneva, is one of the tiniest and most obscure wine areas in France. Although the altitude is modest, the terrain is very mountainous, the roads are steep and winding as in the Alps, and the villages are built for cold winters – the houses made of gray/white limestones all bunched together on narrow streets.

The vineyards are hard to detect, little patches here and there on steep slopes looking southeast or southwest, lost in the midst of fields with grazing cows, and dense forests. The total Bugey acreage in vineyards is 170 hectares. The varieties are many, borrowed from all the surrounding areas: Gamay, Poulsard (a grape from Northern Jura), Roussette, Mondeuse (both from Savoie) and Chardonnay. Many still wines are produced, but the region's star wine is the Cerdon Méthode Ancestrale, a semi-dry, pink bubbly made by spontaneous, but incomplete, fermentation.

Alain Renardat is a respected vigneron in Cerdon, and he has been a long-time supplier of Alain Chapel's restaurant, in the Dombes. The Dombes, which, like the Bugey, is in the Ain department, is an area of ponds and marshes, known for its fish and small birds. Alain Chapel, who died several years ago, was a chef beloved among chefs, and famous for his love of wine and winemakers. A winemaker and his wines selected by Chapel are guaranteed to have great personality. (The restaurant still exists, run by his widow, and the winemakers he brought together have become friends and still meet about once a year.)

Alain and his son Elie make their Cerdon from Gamay and Poulsard, and follow the technique called "ancestral method" (in wider use is Méthode Champenoise, or else plain carbonation, the preferred method used for supermarket wines). The grapes are picked by hand, pressed and fermented in cold vats until the alcohol reaches about 6 degrees. After a light filtration that leaves most of the active yeast in the unfinished wine, it is bottled and continues its fermentation in the bottle, reaching about 7.5 or 8 degrees of alcohol and retaining a fair quantity of its original sugar. It is more vinous (with grapey primary aromas) than most Champagne, since there is neither dosage nor addition of yeast before the second fermentation.

Cerdon is to be consumed throughout the year following the vintage. It is fragile and requires excellent cellaring and transporting conditions. Renardat's is delicate, berry-scented, refreshing, and makes a delicious aperitif or dessert wine (even chocolate goes well with it). (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Domaine Franck Peillot - Bugey**

Montagnieu is a village south of Cerdon, with premières côtes overlooking the Rhône valley, and most of its production is a white sparkling wine made from Chardonnay, Roussette de Savoie, Gamay and Jacquère. The grape Roussette is called Altesse locally, and it survives in the Bugey in a few patches of old vines, for it is not as hardy, reliable and pro-

ductive as others. Only two young winemakers in Montagnieu, Franck Peillot and Benoît Dumont, produce still wines exclusively from this grape. By law, the wine, Roussette du Bugey, can contain any white varietal, in any proportion. That's why Peillot's is labelled 100% Altesse.

Peillot, who took over his family estate five years ago, carries on the work of 4 generations before him. Although he makes a sparkling Montagnieu from Chardonnay, Altesse, and Mondeuse, he vinifies all of his Altesse old vines as a still wine. With low yields and high ripeness, he is set to revive the wine that Jules Chauvet (a Beaujolais négociant, eminent taster and writer who has inspired a whole school of "natural winemaking", notably in Morgon) put on a par with Château Chalon, Château Grillet and Yquem. Exaggeration aside, the varietal is thought to be a cousin of the Hungarian Furmint of Tokay fame, and, even when vinified dry, it retains a fair amount of residual sugar. Peillot is also a believer in the quality of his Mondeuse grapes, and is the lone vigneron in the village who obtained the appellation Montagnieu Mondeuse with his red wine in the 1997 vintage. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Thierry Puzelat - Touraine**

Thierry Puzelat is the younger of the two brothers who run Clos du Tue Boeuf, their family estate in Les Montils. In the 90's, the estate had to contend with several difficult years of tiny crops, caused by late frost, mildew, hail or general bad weather, and revenues were tight. Thierry would have liked to expand the estate, by renting or buying more vineyards. Jean-Marie, single and in his late forties, did not want to add more vineyard and cellar work to his already heavy schedule. So Thierry started a négociant business, set up a winery in the village of Monthou-sur-Bièvre, and sourced excellent vineyards and vinetenders to buy their grapes.

True to his conviction that good wine is made from healthy grapes, he has selected vine growers who farm their plots organically, in bio-dynamie for some. He now offers a range of local wines, both from Touraine and Cheverny.

One of his most reliable sources is an estate tended in bio-dynamie by a neighbor and friend of the owners of Clos Roche Blanche in the hamlet of La Tesnière in Touraine. From vines growing on a soil of clay with silex over hard limestone, Puzelat buys Chenin blanc, Menu Pineau and Pineau d'Aunis grapes at harvest time. Menu Pineau, also called Arbois, is an old Loire varietal that survives in some areas, but is rarely vinified on its own. Puzelat is very familiar with it since the Clos du Tue Boeuf grows some (Touraine Brin de Chèvre), and he likes the grape for its originality, its mineral and spicy character with apple and apricot pit aromas.

Pineau d'Aunis, sometimes called Pineau rouge, is another obscure, ancient varietal that survives in Touraine, most of the time used in blends with Cabernet franc to produce rosé. Even when vinified as a red wine, as is the case here, it is very light in color, body and alcohol and is deliciously refreshing, spicy, lively and aromatic.

Arriving soon in this country are: a Pétillant naturel or sparkling wine made with Chenin blanc in méthode ancestrale (the Cerdon du Bugey method); a vin de pays Romorantin from the Cheverny area and a Cheverny white made with a high proportion of Chardonnay (30%) and Sauvignon Blanc. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Clos du Tue-Boeuf - Touraine**

Since the Middle Ages, there have been records about the lieu-dit "le Tue-Boeuf" and its excellent wines which were enjoyed by the local nobility and the kings of France. The family name Puzelat is mentioned in 15th century documents.

History, though, is not the story here. It's about two brothers, Jean-Marie and Thierry Puzelat, who tend their 10-hectare family estate in Les Montils (in the Cheverny AOC) and rent 6 hectares in a village nearby, in the Touraine AOC. The region, near the hunting grounds of Sologne, has always used a wide variety of grapes. Since the 60's, the Puzelats' father had been making his own selections of vines to replant, and left them with vines of Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Menu Pineau (or Arbois), Pinot Noir, Gamay, Cabernet Franc and Côt (or Malbec).

Jean-Marie (the older brother by 10 years) was joined on the estate by Thierry in the early 90's and they began converting their vines to organic viticulture. When the Cheverny AOC was created with the 1993 vintage, some varietals became outlawed from the blends, and the brothers started a yearly struggle to get their wines accepted under their appellation. Now, when a wine is rejected, they sell it under a Vin de Pays or Vin de Table label; their customers know and trust their work and methods.

So, a visit to their cellar (under the watchful eye of Jean-Marie's Beauceron dog) feels like a tour de France of varietals,

each wine with its distinct personality, lovely label and wonderful name. Some cuvées are so small that there is never enough to go around. Of the wines which have made it to these shores, there are several Touraines: Le Buisson Pouilleux, a Sauvignon Blanc from old vines - bright, very mineral, with notes of verbena and honeysuckle; Le Brin de Chèvre, from Menu Pineau grapes - floral, light and citrusy; La Guerrierie, a sturdy red made with Cabernet Sauvignon and Côt (Malbec) - spicy, peppery and requiring some bottle age and a red Cheverny La Caillère, Pinot Noir with Gamay - juicy, fruity and round. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Les Vins Contés - Touraine**

Olivier Lemasson is a sommelier who encountered natural wines when he worked for an early proponent of those wines, the retailer Eric Macé in Rennes, Brittany. Lemasson became passionate about these odd wines, and trained at Marcel Lapierre's winery in Morgon, Beaujolais, first by picking grapes four years in a row, then by working for a whole year in his vines and cellar. After a brief stint as a retailer at Square Trousseau in Paris, Lemasson's passion definitely took over, and he settled as a winemaker in Chitenay, Touraine.

The story of les Vins Contés is that of a retailer meeting a winemaker. In 2002, Hervé Villemade, owner of the 12 HA estate Domaine du Moulin in Cellettes (Cheverny AOC), was looking to start a negociant business (i.e. buy grapes from other growers to vinify them.) He picked Lemasson to be his partner and les Vins Contés drew from their complementary talents.

In 2006, they parted ways so that Villemade could concentrate on his estate again. Lemasson continued with Vins Contés and also took on 2HA of vines in the AOC Touraine to tend and harvest. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

The wines of Les Vins Contés:

- Vin Nouveau: Vin de Table, Gamay nouveau
- Le P'tit Rouquin: Vin de Pays du Loir-et-Cher, 20 to 60-year-old Gamay on clay with silex
- R6: VdP du Loir-et-Cher, 70% Côt (40 years), 20% Grolleau (70 years) and 10% Gamay (30 years) on clay with silex
- Poivre et Sel: VdP du Loir-et-Cher, 50% Gamay (20 years) and 50% Pineau d'Aunis (60 years) on sand with silex
- La Cheville de Fer: VdP du Loir-et-Cher, 20 to 50-year-old Côt on heavy clay and clay with silex
- Gama Sutra: VdP du Loir-et-Cher, 80-year-old Gamay on clay with silex
- Pinoir de Soif: VdP du Loir-et-Cher, 30-year-old Pinot noir on clay with silex

### **Domaine le Briseau - Jasnieres**

Christian Chaussard, like the proverbial cat, has had several lives already. For years, he worked in public works, before learning viticulture and oenology, then teaching those in a professional school while running his estate in Vouvray. A series of climactic hardships forced him to abandon his estate, so he also quit teaching and decided to be a winemaker in the "new world."

Before accomplishing that goal, he met Nathalie Gaubicher, a Swiss actress with a oenologist and sommelier diploma, and they set out to find vines somewhere in France. Their search took them all around the country and to all wine regions. In 2002, they settled in the Jasnieres/Coteaux-du-Loir area in northern Touraine. The area is 155 miles south-west of Paris between the cities of Le Mans and Tours, 28 miles north of Vouvray. The entirety of Jasnieres covers 80 hectares of vines, and Coteaux-du-Loir about 200 hectares. The soils are largely all clay and silica over a subsoil of limestone and Domaine le Briseau was started with 4 hectares of vines planted mainly with Chenin Blanc and Pineau d'Aunis.

In 2007, the estate had grown to 11 hectares. All vineyard work is done according to the principles of organic viticulture (with the certification of Qualité France): no pesticides, insecticides or chemical fertilizers are used; nettle and horsetail decoctions are sprayed on the foliage; copper is used in modest quantity (less than 5kg/HA); the vines are plowed and grass allowed to grow in the rows. In 2006, the estate started its conversion to biodynamic principles.

Apart from biodynamic viticulture, the following harvesting and cellar practices are followed:

- The harvest is done by hand in 10kg boxes.
- The white grapes are pressed lightly and slowly.

- Débourbage (first racking to separate solid matter from juice) takes place after 24 hours, then the must goes into barrels for the alcoholic fermentation (none of the barrels are new, but rather 4 to 8 year old.) Malolactic fermentation usually follows and is not stopped by any means.
- Nothing is added: there is no chaptalization, no selected yeasts, no sulfur, no enzymes, no de-acidification, no fining.
- There is one racking to get rid of the wine's gross lees, and then aging for several months, according to each cuvee.
- There is a light filtration and addition of 2g/HL of sulfur at the time of bottling.
- The red grapes are treaded by foot before going into maceration vats.

Maceration occurs under the protection of CO<sub>2</sub>, in a semi-liquid stage (semi-carbonic maceration) and lasts 1 to 3 weeks. The musts are then pressed and go into barrels for their alcoholic and malolactic fermentations. Again, nothing is added to the wines and the same principles are used at bottling. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

Wines of Domaine le Briseau:

- Les Blandelières: Coteaux-du-Loir AOC, full south exposure, shallow soil of gravelly clay, 5 to 40-year-old Chenin vines.
- Le Briseau: Coteaux-du-Loir AOC, shallow soil of gray clay over perrons (silex blocks weighing several tons), 15 to 30-year-old Chenin vines.
- Les Mortiers: Coteaux-du-Loir AOC, limestone plateau with gravelly clay, 25 to 30-year-old Pineau d'Aunis, 15-year-old Côt and 15-year-old Gamay.
- Les Pies...tites bulles!!: Coteaux-du-Loir AOC, lower slope, north-east exposure, gravelly clay, 60-year-old Pineau d'Aunis; pétillant naturel with residual sugar.
- Patapon: Coteaux-du-Loir AOC, a blend of several plots, all Pineau d'Aunis of varying ages.
- Galimatias:VdT, south exposure, gravelly clay with large surface silex stones, 15-year-old Chardonnay.
- Clos des Longues Vignes: Jasnières AOC, south exposure on mid-slope, shallow soil of red clay with silex, 10 to 15-year-old Chenin.
- Kharaktêr: Jasnières AOC, east and west exposure on high slope above Clos des Longues Vignes, shallow soil of eroded, coarse clay, 50-year-old Chenin.
- St-Jacques: Jasnières AOC, south exposure, deep soil of red clay with coarse stones, 10 to 15-year-old Chenin.
- La Gaudriole: Coteaux-du-Loir AOC, deep soil of water-retaining clay and limestone on a plateau, 15 to 50-year-old Chenin; pétillant naturel with residual sugar.
- Les Longues Vignes: Coteaux-du-Loir, medium deep soil of red clay and silex, 10 to 40-year-old Pineau d'Aunis.

In 2005, Christian and Nathalie started a small négoce called Nana, Vins & Cie, for which they buy grapes on the vines and harvest them with their team. These grapes are vinified the same way as the estate's grapes, in order to produce totally natural wines.

- La Pangée:VdT from Coteaux-du-Loir area, 50% Gamay and 50% Pineau d'Aunis
- You Are So Nice!:VdT, blend of Gamay and Côt.
- You are So Beautiful!:VdT, blend of Côt and Pineau d'Aunis.

### **Domaine de Belliviere - Jasnières**

The AOC Jasnières and Coteaux-du-Loir were, until very recently, languishing; the vines had been all but wiped-out by the intense frost of 1956, and only a handful of tenacious owners held on to their vines, usually keeping the wine they made for their personal consumption, while making a living thanks to other agricultural revenues. Located about 30 miles north of the city of Tours, these small vineyards (37 and 48 hectares re-spectively) are isolated, at the edges of three provinces, Maine, Anjou and Touraine. They are also the most northern viticultural areas in the west of France (in the east, only Chablis, Champagne and Alsace are further north). Fortunately, the river Loir replicates some of the micro-climactic conditions of its big sister, the Loire (watch your French: le Loir, along with la Sarthe and la Mayenne, form le Maine, a tributary of la Loire which it joins in Angers).

In the 1970s, the winemaker Joël Gigou pioneered a renewal of Jasnières and Coteaux-du-Loir as viticultural areas. Eric Nicolas, who is a city kid without any roots in either the region or in agriculture, developed a passion for vines and

wines, and after studying oenology, he looked in the Loire to acquire vineyards, mainly because he had met several passionate winemakers there.

Seven years ago, Eric and his wife Christine found an estate with some vines, but mostly grazing fields, trees and grains. They nurtured the existing old vines and did a lot of planting, to get to their current 9 hectares, scattered over the territory of 6 villages (hence the name of their cuvée of Coteaux-du-Loir Vieilles Vignes Éparses or Scattered Old Vines). They now use sélection massale (cuttings from old vines) rather than clones, and plant at a density of 9,300 vines per hectare. They also planted an experimental plot where the density is 40,000 vines per hectare, to observe the development of the root system and the influence of terroir on botrytized grapes (one grape per vine).

In Jasnières, only white wine from Chenin Blanc is produced. Les Rosiers is sec, a blend of all terroirs, and in favorable years, Nicolas makes a moëlleux called Discours de Tuf and a late harvest called Elixir de Tuf.

In Coteaux-du-Loir, the white cuvées are VV Éparses (the vines are 50 to 80 years old), and L'Effraie (the Owl, a denizen of the farm), made with younger vines.

For his red, called Le Rouge-Gorge (the Finch), Nicolas is partial to the varietal Pineau d'Aunis, an old local varietal of great finesse, which he is replanting. Nicolas is also replanting small parcels of Cabernet Franc and Côt (or Malbec). (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

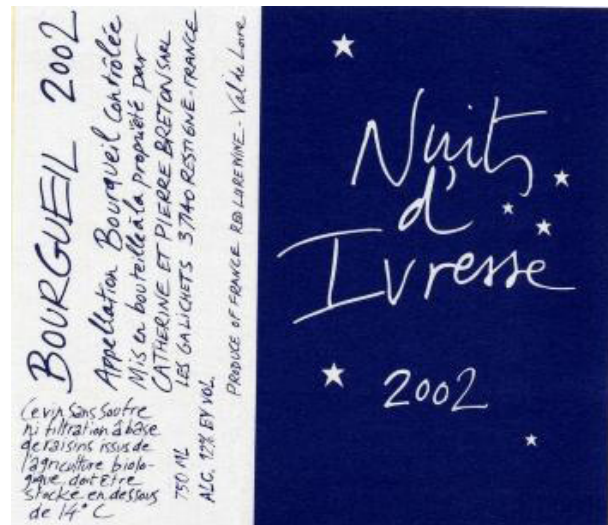
### Catherine & Pierre Breton - Bourgueil

Cabernet Franc from the Loire Valley is finally receiving long overdue respect. Remarkably juicy, textured, versatile with food, and immensely age worthy, the Cabernet Franc wines of Bourgueil, Chinon, Saumur and St-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil are both a traditional staple and a rediscovered rage on the Paris bistro/wine bar scene. Chief among the best Loire red winemakers is Pierre Breton (whose last name is also the name for Cabernet Franc in the local dialect.)

Pierre and Catherine Breton's wines are served at virtually every hot wine bar in Paris. Pierre makes several cuvées from various vineyard sites and his cuvée of plain Bourgueil is his most accessible wine, meant for immediate drinking pleasure. Breton calls it a "wine of fruit" for this precise reason, and vinifies it in stainless-steel. This wine comes from small yields of 32 hectoliters/hectare and is bottled unfiltered. Pierre Breton practices organic viticulture and uses only a minimal dosage of sulfur. The wine is classified as made from "organic agriculture".

He makes two very special types of Bourgueil. The first, Trinch!, (In French, this is the sound of two classes clinking) is a wine for drinking immediately, chilled not cold. It is delicate and refreshing with an uncanny ability to go well with a range of food, but with salmon it is a perfect match. The second is called "Nuits d'Ivresse", or The Drunken Nights, is from a selection of fruit that is vinified completely without the use of any sulfur, accordingly to the vinification principals outlined by the late Jules Chauvet. There is a tiny amount added before the bottling to keep the wine stable in shipping, but it is so minimal as to be undetectable in testing.

His other cuvées are vinified according to their character (defined mainly by the soil and the vines' age). Bourgueil les Galichets, from 50-year-old vines on gravelly soil, Chinon les Moulins de Beaupuy (8 years) and Chinon Beaumont (50 years), from clay and limestone, are made in stainless-steel vats. Bourgueil Clos Sénéchal (15 and 30 years, clay and limestone over tufa) is vinified in steel vats and aged in barrels for 5 months. Bourgueil les Perrières (50 years, on clay and silica over limestone), Bourgueil Grandmont (35 years average, on clay and limestone) and Chinon les Picasses are fermented and aged in barriques for 20 months. The age of the oak barriques varies, and some new wood is used for the biggest wines.



In 2002, Pierre and Catherine released a bottling from vines that Pierre planted five years ago in one of his choicest spots of limestone clay. These vines are what are termed “Franc a Pied” or ungrafted onto American pest-resistant rootstock (or foot). He propagated these vines from cuttings from his own vineyards and has found that the formation of the stems, the shape of the leaves, the amount and spacing of the fruit are vastly different from the same plants the cuttings were taken from. More importantly, he has found that the fruit is remarkably different, too. The cuvée from these vines is called “Franc a Pied”. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Domaine Bernard Baudry - Chinon**

Bernard Baudry is one of the newer stars of the Chinon scene. A graduate of the Lycée de Beaune, Baudry created his 25-hectare estate out of family parcels and purchased land. He quickly rose to prominence in the appellation for precise, textured Chinon. Baudry is now assisted by his son Matthieu.

We work with four estates that produce Chinon (not to mention the numerous other of our estates that produce different appellations for Loire Valley Cabernet Franc). Each of these Chinon has a separate identity defined by the winemaker's style. Baudry's style exemplifies rich, precise fruit picked at perfect ripeness levels and vinified cleanly using state-of-the-art equipment.

The first release and most youthful wine is the Les Granges. This is from young vines (10-15 years old) planted on alluvial soil and gravel near the riverbed. When the Vienne river floods in some springs, Baudry may be found pruning the vines from a boat. This is a wine that is supple and fruity with smoky cherry fruit and is meant to drink young. It is a perfect wine for simple foods and cheeses.

The Cuvée Domaine is a blend of parcels of older vines (30-35 years old) planted in alluvial gravel bed and hillside clay. It has bigger structure and can use a short aging period in bottle before drinking. The wine has deep, dark ruby color and is beautifully extracted.

The Les Grézeaux is from vines of 40 years on average, planted on gravelly soil with a bedrock of limestone and clay. The wine is aged in barrique for a time depending on the power of the vintage. It is a beautifully colored wine with lots of extract and supple, velvety tannins. The flavors are cassis and sour cherry with a hint of cigarbox, textbook Chinon without rusticity. This wine has deservedly acquired a cult following throughout France and in the United States.

Along with the wines of Domaine Joguet, Baudry is at the vanguard of a new approach to traditional Chinon: purity and extract. In *A Wine & Food Guide to the Loire Valley* (the most comprehensive guide to Loire Valley wines yet written), Jacqueline Friedrich writes, “My interest in Loire wines hadn't gone much further than the tasty “petits Chinons” I habitually drank in the wine bistros of Paris. In four days I changed my mind completely. Not only did my thirst grow for the mouth watering little Chinons, but I found the “serious” versions made by vigneronns like Charles Joguet and Bernard Baudry exhilarating.” (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Domaine du Closel - Château des Vaults - Savennières**

Michèle de Jessey is a formidable character in the appellation of Savennières. Her great-great-grandfather was the Chamberlain and Chief Memorialist to the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. She inherited the estate in 1961 when her aunt, Madame du Closel, the former proprietor/winemaker, searched for a successor throughout her extensive family. Madame de Jessey was chosen for her love and respect for the wine, vineyards and traditions of Savennières: a love that is evident in her wines. She went on to become much respected for her technical expertise and served as the first woman in France to be President of an Appellation Contrôlée.

The estate -- historically the Château des Vaults and its lands -- consists of 12 hectares of Chenin Blanc vines, 4 hectares of which are in the Clos du Papillon. The soil is shallow sandy topsoil on a deep bed of schist and volcanic rock. The vines are rigorously pruned to produce 4 to 6 buds on two canes. This keeps the yields low, from 20 to 40 hl/ha in any given vintage. The microclimate is defined by the protecting hillsides, and the best hilltop vineyards are exposed to high winds that keep the grapes cool and free of rot. The grapes are picked by hand under selection, or tri, and the vinification is slow under controlled temperatures. There is no doubt that, given the microclimate, soil and fruit produced, Savennières is overall the finest and most unique expression of Chenin Blanc sec in the world.

The Savennières les Caillardières (formerly known as Cuvée Spéciale) is Madame de Jessey's creation. Most Savennières are totally dry wines, but this cuvée is a vin tendre, slightly off-dry and mineral. In great years, it is an easy, accessible

introduction to Savennières with great concentration of fruit and slatey mineral tones. Best served as an aperitif wine, it takes on further nuance and complexity with age.

The Clos du Papillon is a legendary wine, from one of the top sites in Savennières, so named because the plot's shape resembles a butterfly. The picking is usually late, (October), and done in several consecutive passes in the vineyards so as to maximize the ripeness levels. This is a completely dry wine that serves forth an incredibly lacy mix of beeswax, roasted almonds, quince and apricot flavors with a lengthy slate mineral finish. Older great vintages of this wine attest to its potential to last and age beautifully.

Also made: Savennières la Jalousie (formerly les Coulées, or Cuvée Classique, i.e. dry) a classic Savennières from a stainless-steel cuvée of young and older vines from their steepest soils of pure schist; Anjou-Villages rouge; and, in very ripe years, Clos du Papillon Cuvée Spéciale (vin tendre, or off-dry) and Cuvée Coteaux (formerly Cuvée Isa), a rare moëlleux Savennières demi-sec. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Agnès and René Mosse - Anjou**

Agnès and René Mosse live and work in the village of St-Lambert-du-Lattay, in the Coteaux-du-Layon area of Anjou. The Layon is a small tributary to the Loire that lazily digs its way through well exposed and drained hills of schist and sandstone. Its micro-climate allows for a long hang-time, and when the mornings are foggy in the fall, with no rain, botrytis develops easily on the Chenin grapes.

Previously, the Mosse had owned a wine-bar/wine retail in Tours, and they credit the great vigneron they met there, among them Jo Pithon and François Chidaine, as the impetus to become winemakers. They studied viticulture and oenology at the agricultural lycée in Amboise where two of their teachers were Thierry Puzelat (Clos du Tue Boeuf) and Christian Chaussard (Domaine le Briseau).

They spent two years working in Côte-de-Beaune, then bought the estate in St-Lambert in 1999. They work 13HA of vines, most of them planted with Chenin blanc (9HA), and Cabernets franc and sauvignon (3HA), the rest is planted with Gamay, Chardonnay, Grolleau Gris and Noir.

They adopted organic viticulture techniques from the start, plowing between and under the rows, and use biodynamic preparations to treat the vines and soil. In their area of Anjou Noir (Black Anjou, so called because of the dark color of the soils of slate and volcanic rocks), the soils are shallow, with subsoils of schist and sandstone, and varying amounts of clay on the surface.

With all the efforts put into vineyard work, it is equally important to them to vinify in a natural fashion, and they are particularly attentive to minimizing manipulations and the use of sulfur. All the wines are barrel-fermented and aged, and usually the whites go through their malolactic fermentation. The barrels are renewed as needed: they are containers, not oak flavor providers.

### **Domaine de la Sansonnière – Anjou**

The rather small area of the Coteaux-du-Layon is fertile terrain for winemakers with strong personalities. There are Sugar Mavens Patrick Beaudoin, Philippe Delesvaux, Jo Pithon and their archenemy, INAO director René Renou, a Bonnezeaux producer. Many of the most brilliant and eccentric winemakers are newcomers to the area and the profession. Mark Angéli is one of them, a chemistry student turned stonemason who embraced viticulture as a form of environmental protection, a firm believer in bio-dynamie and in the wines that can be made from this method of culture.

He bought his estate in 1990, with 7 hectares of Anjou, Coteaux-du-Layon and Bonnezeaux. These last two appellations, planted by law entirely in Chenin blanc, are supposed to yield richly sweet moëlleux or liquoreux wines every year. The AOC rules do not admit any demi-sec or sec wine, as it does in Vouvray and Montlouis. Anything below a moëlleux loses the names Coteaux-du-Layon or Bonnezeaux, has to be entirely sec and becomes an Anjou blanc, the lowliest of categories in the area and the least remunerative too. So, every year early in the picking season, winemakers have to gamble that the weather in September and October is going to concentrate the grapes' sugar through noble rot or passerillage, and that they'll be able to make sweet wines.

After years of making celebrated Bonnezeaux, Angéli decided several vintages ago to reverse course, and make great dry (or semi-dry) wines from most of his plots, even in Bonnezeaux. Thus was created his Anjou blanc "La Lune", which

has the deep gold color of a sweet Chenin, and notes of dried, candied fruit on the nose; the mouth is rich, despite its minerality and lively acidity; the wine is totally dry, but with the weight and flavors of a moëlleux: in all, quite an astonishing feat of vinegrowing and winemaking.

His Anjou rosé, made from the local varietal Grolleau (or Groslot) gris, 20% Cabernet franc and 20% Gamay, is the opposite of what's expected from this usually unappealing category: the color is orangey-pink, the nose soft, ripe with red berry aromas, the mouth round, lively, fruity, and yes, there is a lot of residual sugar! Makes sense: it is made from botrytized grapes (all three varieties).

Other Anjou blancs, "les Fourchades", "Coteau du Houet", "les Blanderies VV" and "Vignes Françaises" are made in tiny quantities. Mark Angéli also produces apple juice and wholewheat flour. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Clos Rougeard – Anjou**

Just our luck. We have a cult estate. Every three-star restaurant in France hustles to get a small allocation. No one in America, outside of the lucky few, has heard of it.

This estate has been in the family for several generations. Basically, the Foucault brothers (Nadi and Charlie) tend exceptional vineyards, harvest at small yields, vinify in barrel, let the wines bubble for a couple of years in a glacially cold cellar and bottle without filtration. And what you get is some of the top red wines of the Loire Valley and in the very top of France as a whole. Charles Joguet, the great winemaker of Chinon, once said: "there are two suns. One shines outside for everybody. The second shines in the Foucaults' cellar." The rare Chenin Blanc from their vineyards (sometimes sec, sometimes demi-sec or even moëlleux) has been described by Michel Bettane as "the quintessence of Chenin". Bettane has tasted the 1921 and listed it as one of the most memorable wines of his life.

### **Dard & Ribo - Northern Rhone**

"It has been 25 years that Rene Jean Dard and Francois Ribo work together. They are wine producers that have gathered over the years a cult following among wine passionates, in France and as far as Japan. They now work on a 7,5 hectares vineyard split on 7 villages. The chai is located near Mercuriol (a short distance east of Tain l'Hermitage), close to the Autoroute A7 which connects Provence to septentrional France. They themselves live a few kilometers away. They work on 7 or 8 different terroirs with different soils. They use two types of pruning, goblet and tie-up, depending of the slope and other terrain conditions. Septentrional Cotes Du Rhone is the wine region where the vines need the most foliage, which in result needs the goblet pruning. Organic viticulture with something more. Their wines can be labelled "natural wines", and as such need careful transportation. Our host points to the seriousness of their japanese customers who respect strictly the imperative of careful transportation at controlled temperature all the way to the wine store. Their relationship with the japanese public is a long story. This is a country where big names are important, but also where new innovative winemakers are singled out by some wine experts looking more for quality and authenticity than fame. And a growing number of japanese wine amateurs are daringly exploring in this direction." (From Wine Terroirs blog)

### **Eric Texier - Rhone**

Eric Texier became a winemaker after a first career and without any family background in vines or wines. As such, his goals and methods developed not so much from his years of schooling, but from his readings, his visiting winemakers around the world, and working in Burgundy with Jean-Marie Guffens at Verget.

After giving up the idea of buying vineyards, which was too costly a proposition for a beginner with his ambitions, he started a small négoce where he selected particularly interesting vineyard plots and the sincere, hard-working farmers who grew the healthy grapes he wanted to buy and vinify. He rediscovered nearly forgotten areas of ancient fame, like Brézème in the northern Côtes-du-Rhône, and nurtured relationships with people who tend their vines with passion and care. He has since acquired plots in Côte Rôtie and Condrieu in the northern Rhône, and replanted several hectares in Brézème, with Syrah and Roussanne.

That's how he came to produce about 30 different wines, from 10 different origins, from Bussièeres in the Mâconnais to the northern Rhône and the southern Côtes-du-Rhône. The wines are vinified in their areas of production, which means a lot of juggling tasks and traveling at the time of harvest. When they have obtained their AOC, the young wines are transported to Charnay-en-Beaujolais, just north of Lyon, where Eric lives and has recently acquired a wonderful élevage cellar. This beautiful underground vaulted cellar was built in the 16th century, and temperatures stay cool and

stable through the year.

Like all good winemakers, Eric strongly believes that wines are made in the vineyard, and that his work, after the harvest, consists in following the lead of the vintage, and accompanying the wines so they fulfill their potential. Exact steps in vinification vary according to the varietals, terroirs and vintages, but the goal is always to provide the grapes, musts and wines with the best environment and intervene as little as possible.

His techniques for white wines include sorting in the vines and at the winery, whole clusters pressed in a vertical press (that's the old fashioned wood kind), no added yeasts, barrel fermentation (less than 10% new wood), aging on fine lees, malolactic fermentation for all dry wines, minimal use of SO<sub>2</sub>, no pumping, fining and filtration only when absolutely necessary.

For his red wines, he does the same sorting at harvest, 100% destemming most of the time, bringing the grapes to the press by conveyer belts, cold maceration under a CO<sub>2</sub> blanket for aromatic extraction, natural yeasts, pigeage and remontage twice a day, during maceration and fermentation. The temperatures are controlled not to exceed 34 degrees C (93F), aging is done in 2 to 5 year old barrels of 228L and demi-muids of 450L, with only limited use of new oak, no filtration and egg white fining only when necessary.

A Bordeaux native who has lived in or around Lyon since 1979, Eric is a jovial, energetic and fun-loving person who wants his wines to make their drinkers happy. He's always looking to innovate, and, since he loves German wines, he started emulating them in 2005 by vinifying Viognier grapes from Condrieu as if they were Riesling. Ô Pâle is 8 degrees of alcohol, sweet and light, with fresh acidity and delicate aromas. Unfortunately, in 2006 his Viognier grapes ripened so quickly that most were already too high in sugar when he started the harvest, and this delicious and whimsical wine is going to be even harder to acquire. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Terres des Chardons - Costieres-de-Nîmes, Rhone**

The Chardon family tends to 9 hectares of vines in the village of Bellegarde, situated between Nîmes and Arles. Since 1987 they have practiced organic agriculture (this extends to their fruit, nut and vegetable crops as well) and are certified by Ecocert. In 2004 the Chardons decided to convert to biodynamic methods with the goal of nourishing the soil so that the vine might achieve its full potential. The outcome, the Chardons believe, will be grapes and wine that more accurately reflect the terroir of the region, one that has been underappreciated for far too long.

The Chardons have 4.3 hectares of vines devoted to Syrah, 2.10 planted to Grenache Noir (used for red and rosé wines), and Clairette on the remaining land (used for the blanc sec and late harvest wines). The prevailing northern wind, the mistral, keeps the grapes dry and protects them from rot. Over time, the Rhone river has been responsible for depositing the large stones (locally called gress) that are the main feature of the soil here in Bellegarde. They absorb and retain the heat of the sun and radiate this into the vine canopy at night, helping the grapes achieve maximum ripeness. Vinification methods are traditional, with a mix of older, sustainably sourced Vosges barrels and concrete vats in use in the roman inspired cellars.

### **Henri Milan - Les Baux de Provence**

Situated in Provence since 1955 in an area known since antiquity, near Avignon a famed location that Van Vogh depicted so well in his painting. Inspired by the diversity of the soil from the Alpilles and the passion to make "Grand Vins", Henri has succeeded in elevating this formerly sleepy terroir that once produced the white wines for the Popes in residence. In 1986, he took in his hands the destiny of the estate with the ambition to make the best wine possible and above all the respect of the environment.

### **Mas des Chimères - Coteaux-du-Languedoc...Arriving Fall 2008**

For over 20 years, Guilhem Dardé meticulously tended his family vineyards and brought his grapes to the local coop to be blended with the overproduction of his neighbors. Finally, he bought winemaking equipment, scandalized the village and struck out on his own. With the 1993 vintage, he tasted his own wine for the first time.

A self-described paysan-vigneron, Dardé approaches vinification with enthusiasm. His Coteaux is a blend of about 70% Syrah, 20% Grenache and 5% each Cinsault and Mourvedre; the proportions vary according to the vintage. This wine is dark purple, with a ripe nose of cloves, cinnamon and coffee, is spicy and concentrated on the palate. The considerable amount of tannin is balanced by rich, soft matter and the finish is long, with notes of licorice, coffee and kirsch. This wine

is aged in barriques and bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. The abundance of pigments and solid matter results in a noticeable sediment in the bottle.

Traditional methods are used in the vineyards: plowing, only copper and sulfur treatments, and manual harvesting. In this remote corner of the Coteaux-du-Languedoc appellation, vines grow on strips of clay/schist/granite soils forming terraces on the arid, strikingly red slopes (which is decomposed basaltic slate, colored by iron). Poor soil and dry harsh weather conditions ensure low yields and high concentration.

The old Mas de Chimeres cave in Octon Dardé makes a series of other wines, but small quantities and success mean that none reach America. Among those, L'Oeillade, made from Cinsault, is light and fruity, perfect for a summer wine; L'Hérétique, a blend of Merlot and Cabernet, is a big, powerful, tannic wine; L'Ephémère, made with Carignan, Grenache, Cabernet and Mourvèdre, is ripe, light and round; Cuvée Marie & Joseph (named after Dardé's parents), from Carignan and Grenache, is big and spicy. The name of the estate means House of Chimeras, and aptly describes the amount of faith, dreaming and daring it took Dardé to change his life and become a winemaker. Finding great winemakers like Dardé makes this a fun business! (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Mouthes le Bihan - Côtes-de-Duras...Arriving Fall 2008**

Catherine and Jean-Mary Le Bihan became passionate winemakers by chance. They settled in 1989 in the Lot-et-Garonne, an area of mixed agriculture and the AOC Côtes-de-Duras vineyards. Situated South-East of Bordeaux, on the southern edge of Périgord and the Bergerac AOC, Côtes-de-Duras is a large appellation with 2200 HA of vines (5500 acres) that make largely forgettable wines targeted for supermarket sales in France. The area has never been thought of as a source for fine wine, although the appellation has existed since 1937, and lives in the shadow of Bordeaux, with which it shares many of the same grape varieties.

At first, the Le Bihans ran a service business for farmers, doing heavy agricultural work with big machinery. In 1997, they took over Jean-Mary's father's estate, which was mainly grains and grazing fields, but with 5 HA of vines. Jean-Mary and Catherine knew nothing about viticulture and winemaking and had to ask their neighbors for the most basic of help.

After three vintages of making wines they did not like, and sold in bulk, they were ready to sort their best grapes and pick them by hand, and they made their first six barrels of red and two of white. From then on, they changed all their viticultural methods, notably by pruning short, making the treillageage higher so that more foliage would be exposed to the sun, getting rid of superfluous bunches to keep yields low, and using exclusively organic fertilizers. They also started plantations of new vines at a much higher density than is common in the area, 5600 vines per hectare rather than 3000 vines, and selected low-yielding root-stocks.

They built a winery, bought vinification equipment and by the fall of 2000, they were able to pick their entire crop by hand. The average yields that year were 50HL/HA, and have since gone down to 30HL/HA in 2001 and 20HL/HA in 2002. Their vineyard acreage has grown to 16HA, and they still have other crops, soy, lentils, wheat, sunflowers, fava beans and prunes, all grown organically. Now they are phasing out the machinery business to concentrate on their vines and wines. Catherine also breeds Arabian horses, with a stable of 25.

The red cuvée Vieillefont is made from 20 to 30 year-old vines of Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec. The vines grow on a soil of boubènes, a local word describing siliceous clay, alluvial soils that are slow to warm up in the spring and are soft enough to allow the root system to go very deep.

The grapes are totally destemmed, left to macerate before fermentation, and vinified in small vats, by varieties and plots. Only pigeages (breaking down the cap of grapes skins above the juice) are used, to obtain soft extraction (i.e. avoid over extraction of color and tannins, which can make for harshness in the wine) and the maceration/alcoholic fermentation takes 4 to 6 weeks. Aging is done for 12 to 20 months in oak barrels, with a very low proportion of new wood. No or low doses of sulphur are added, and no racking is done all through the aging. Every batch is kept separate and the blending is done at the very end by barrel selection.

Their white wine, named Pérette et les Noisetiers (Pérette and the hazelnut bushes), comes from Sauvignon blanc vines planted between 1929 and 1939 on a clay and limestone soil. That plot also has vines of Sémillon and Muscadelle that are not used in this cuvée. The grapes are pressed immediately, and fermentations go very slowly (nearly a year in vintage

2001) without the addition of yeast or enzymes. Some of the juice is barrel-fermented and aged, the rest is made in stainless-steel vats. The wine goes through its secondary fermentation (malolactic) and 2001 was aged for 18 months without any racking or addition of sulphur. The cuvée was not fined but lightly filtered.

The estate's second red wine, plainly named "2", is a lighter wine, made with Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and only 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. The vines are around 25 years old, planted on a similar soil of boubènes. The grapes are vinified the same way as for cuvée Vieillefont, but remontages are used as well as pigeages (i.e. the juice is circulated from bottom to top once the cap is broken). The aging in oak barrels is limited to 9 months, with no racking or sulfiting.

We are delighted to have started with this exciting new producer. In the future, we hope to see special bottlings made only with Malbec, which we think has a great future in this area. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Antoine Arena - Corsica**

Antoine and Marie Aréna are beloved personalities of the natural wine scene in France. They are a little older than most of their colleagues in that loose grouping, and revered as pioneers in their isolated corner of Corsica for the delicious wines they coax out of unforgiving rocky soils.

Vines have been grown in Corsica since the Greek antiquity, but it was only in 1968 that the Patrimonio wine area received the first AOC on the island. The region is close to the port of Bastia in northern Corsica, but on the western shore overlooking the gulf of St-Florent. It is surrounded by mountains that offer good protection from the winds, and has soils of clay and limestone where the grapes Muscat, Vermentinu and Niellucciu prosper.

It is believed that the only true indigenous Corsican grape is the Sciaccarellu, grown further south in the region of Ajaccio. The other traditional red, Niellucciu, is San Giovese from Tuscany, and the white Vermentinu is known elsewhere as Malvasia or Malvoisie. Muscat "à petits grains" is a particularly aromatic type of the varietal, and is vinified as vin doux naturel, i.e. a muted wine.

Antoine Aréna is leading the resurgence of an ancient local varietal, Bianco Gentile, which was rediscovered by a viticultural lab when they took a census of all the varietals in existence on the island. Aréna has planted a plot and now produces a Bianco Gentile as a Vin de Pays or Vin de Table, because the grape has not yet been included in the list of allowed varietals by the AOC.

Their estate has 13HA under vines, on limestone and clay and limestone soils, and the Aréna clan, with sons Jean-Baptiste and Antoine-Marie, have converted their cultural methods from organic to bio-dynamic in the last five years. The vines are plowed and worked under the row with hoes, harvesting is done by hand in stainless steel trailers. The grapes are pressed gently and all aging is done in stainless steel vats.

Two major named plots produce both red and white wines. Grotte di Sole is exposed full south, Vermentinu and Niellucciu are planted at a density of 5000 vines per HA. Carco is the other lieu-dit, with a slope looking east and another looking west, planted with 4000 vines per HA. Their hamlet, Morta Maio, provides the name for their third red wine.

## **ITALY**

### **Les Crêtes - Aosta**

Founded in 1989 by Costantino Charrere and Jolanda Plat, Les Crêtes, one of the few privately owned commercial wineries and is the most well-known in the quaint region of Valle D'Aosta. In addition to producing what is often described as the best Chardonnay in Italy, they cultivate the intriguing indigenous varieties of fumin, petite arvine, and petite rouge. Until recently, their entire annual production was sold entirely within Italy. The winery is located in Aymavilles and vineyards are planted in five communes along the river Dora Baltea. The hills of Couteau La Tour compose the most precious vineyard of the winery, and one of the most beautiful in all of Valle d'Aosta.

### **Franco Noussan – Aosta**

Franco Noussan grows a scant few acres of Petit Rouge (and Fumin, Gamay, Petit Arvine and Pinot Noir) in the Valle d'Aoste. This idyllic region is Italy's smallest, roughly surrounding the Dora Baltea river as it winds through the mountains of Italy's extreme Northwest, an area wedged between France and Switzerland. During the creation of the modern

Italian state this region was “traded” with the French republic for the area surrounding Nice, hence the dominance of the French language and culture in the Valle d’Aoste and the proliferation of great pizza joints in Nice.

A handful of growers continue to work in this area: the relatively small amount of wine made here is mostly vinified by cooperatives. Vines are difficult to cultivate in this terrain: steep terracing is common to fully extract the sun’s warmth, and much of the arable land is honestly more suited to grazing livestock. The valley does have a diversity of quality grape varieties to choose from: being at the intersection of Italian, Swiss and French wine culture everything from Nebbiolo and Moscato di Chambave to Pinot Blanc and Grenache has been deposited in the fields of this zone.

In contrast to the co-ops Nussan does everything himself, with a dedication to traditional and natural farming methods. Yields are meticulously controlled to ensure sufficient ripeness for his relatively delicate wines. Franco begins fermentation with yeast indigenous to his vineyards to maintain fidelity to the distinct terroir of the zone, and his vine treatments and fertilizers are never of the chemical/synthetic variety. In short, this is real viticulture, based on farming with a maximum of effort expended to produce smallish quantities of fruit with character.

### **Weingut Mayr-Nusser – Alto Adige**

The Nusserhof estate lies directly beside the Isarco River facing south, practically in the center of the city of Bolzano. The Bolzano Valley Basin enjoys a fantastically warm climate and the deep alluvial soils are rich in eroded porphyry. It’s a perfect place to ripen grapes for a northern Italian climate

Elda & Heinrich Nusser are the latest generation of their family to work this land where the records date back to at least 1788. The Nusserhof gets its name from the hazelnut trees that once lined the house on the river side. Not so long ago they were torn out to put in a municipal bike path. This is typical of the recent history of Nusserhof. As the years have gone by, the urban environs of the city of Bolzano have more and more encroached the estate. And the city has systematically made it harder and harder for the Mayrs to continue their farming. In fact, it is believed that the only reason the estate is in existence is due to the fact that one of Heinrich’s relatives was an early opponent of the Nazi occupation and died as a Catholic martyr and conscientious objecter in a concentration camp.

On their estate of 2.5 hectares, the Mayrs cultivate Lagrein and Blatterle, two native grapes of the region. There is also a tiny bit of Teroldego. The vines are about 50% in guyot trellising and about 50% in pergola. The viticulture is organic, certified by the German agency Bioland.

Blatterle (the grape name has two t’s) is an old white varietal, indigenous to the area, which nearly became extinct. The grapes are golden and oval shaped – the name itself means “little leaf” in German. At one time the grape was used to produce either sweet must (to be served with roast chestnuts), or a light white wine for quaffing. The Mayrs produce a more serious wine by reducing yields, soft pressing and temperature controlled fermentations. It’s a wine that is very mouthfilling and easy. There is also a briny salinity to it.

Lagrein is a much older native grape, dating back at least 600 years. Heinrich’s Riservas are made with an idea to preserve the full-bodied, freshly aromatic woodland berry character of the grape. He does not use any barriques and the wine is bottled a year or so after the harvest and then aged in bottle before release. DOC law allows for a Riserva to be sold 3 years after the harvest at the earliest. It is a deliciously round wine that is served well by decanting for aeration. From older vintages we have tasted at the Nusserhof cellar, the wines age brilliantly.

There is also a limited amount of Lagrein Kretzer (Rosé) available each year. Like the white it is made from destemmed grapes that are immediately pressed and fermented in stainless steel at controlled temperature. It is a beautiful cherry pink color and also will age quite well over a few years.

It is a pleasure to bring such delicious, distinctive wines to the United States and we look forward to many more great wines from the Nusserhof in the Southern Tyrol.

### **Vittorio & Figli Bera - Piemonte**

You find good wine even when you are not looking for it. We often have a harder time when we go off searching for great wine but, this time, Alessandra Bera found us.

Late in 2002, we received some exuberant e-mails from a wine maker in Piemonte, Italy telling us we had to work with

her wines. She had been given our address by her good friends in France, like Pierre Breton of Bourgueil, Marcel Richaud of Cairanne, Jean-Marie and Thierry Puzelat in Cheverny and Claude Maréchal in Burgundy. All these French vigneroni, vigneroni we proudly work with, told Alessandra that her style of natural farming and natural wine would be a perfect fit for Louis/Dressner Selections.

Alessandra had our attention. We learned that she would be joining the festivities surrounding Catherine & Pierre Breton's legendary Dive Bouteille Tasting held every year the Saturday before the Loire Valley Wines Salon in Angers. We told Signora Bera that we would see her there.

Well, cut to a year later, and our second vintage of Moscato d'Asti Canelli and Monferrato Dolcetto Bricco della Serra have just arrived, along with a new wine for us, Barbera d'Asti Ronco Malo. We couldn't be happier. In fact, we are so happy that we will be spending the last week of January visiting similar vigneroni throughout Italy to try to find more great producers like Bera.

The estate dates back to 1785 when the Beras' ancestors originally purchased some of the land from the Knights of Malta. By this time, the cultivation of grapes -- and in this area particularly Moscato grapes -- was already well-established since the 13th century (and once again we are indebted to those reviled Crusaders for their faithful spreading of the word "Grape" to every corner of the known world they traveled!). By the end of the 18th century and into the 19th and 20th centuries, the fame of Moscato (read: Asti Spumante) spread worldwide -- and so did slipshod production methods. With few exceptions, the bulk standardization of this wine has been the norm ever since.

The Family Vittorio Bera is different. This was the first estate to bottle and market its own wine in the Canelli region. The estate lies in Sant'Antonio di Canelli within the region of Serra Masio, the most prestigious and ancient of the area's Moscato production. The grapes are entirely Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains and are cultivated on steep, southeast slopes of calcareous marl soil of ancient oceanic origins. All of the estate is cultivated in organic viticulture with an emphasis on creating an active, healthy ecosystem. All grapes are harvested by hand and their juice is fermented without yeast inoculations. All the winemaking is done by Alessandra's brother, Gianluigi Bera

They also grow Dolcetto and Barbera grapes -- planted more recently, but cultivated using the same careful techniques as for the Moscato. With the reds there is no fining or filtration. And some precocious white grapes: Cortese, Favorita and Arneis which they blend to make a fantastic white wine called Arcese. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Cascina 'Tavijn - Piemonte**

Nadia Verrua, la padronina of Cascina 'Tavijn works in an area of the Asti province of Piedmont long forgotten. Fortunately it is an area blessed with old vines, some completely abandoned, and unique varieties. Nadia is young, gifted and very professional. She has taken over the family's estate where her father still manages the vineyard work. The cellar, however, is all Nadia's.

For the moment, Nadia is working only with Barbera, Grignolino and Ruché, the latter two being native ignominious varieties of the area that have seen a small, cultish rise in popularity in recent years, and for good reason. Grignolino is a grape that makes a pale, light red of garnet color and, when finely made, shows the characteristic bitter cherry, or amarena, flavor that goes so well with lighter first courses of dried sausages and hard cheeses, like well-aged asiago. Ruché, on the other hand, produces a wine of saturated purple with plum notes and rose petal aromas. It is made to be drunk young and, again is a perfect wine for salumi, dried meats like bresaola or dried cacciorini and hard, aged cheeses.

Nadia uses traditional techniques to produce the wines. The grapes are hand harvested and vinified in large casks, or botti, of slavian oak. At the moment she does a light filtration at the insistence of her enologist and bottler, but we are hoping to convince her to forgo this in future vintages. She seems somewhat agreeable on this. Her mother, on the other hand, is all for it.

This is Nadia's first experience importing wines. She is very proud of the work she does, but, moreover, very gratified that there are winelovers on another continent that are pleased with the results of her efforts.

### **Teobaldo Cappellano – Piemonte**

Originally we had decided not to pursue an estate in Barolo. We wanted to concentrate our efforts in Italy on less exposed and controversial denominations in Italy. Wines that had more innate charm than pedigree. However, we stumbled

into the wines of Cappellano and the man himself and were immediately attracted to them.

Teobaldo Cappellano is a tall, pensive and imposing man, until you speak with him and realize that his genuine warmth and gentle passion show through in the wry smiles that often appear during his conversations.

But it would be wrong to mistake your impression. He is a maverick and a staunch Barolista. His family has been producing Barolo since shortly after the unification of Italy. He has only 3 hectares of vine and very small, hand-crafted production.

The estate produces 2 Barolos, 2 Barberas and a Dolcetto. In the late 1800's, Teobaldo's ancestor Dottore Giuseppe Cappellano invented Barolo Chinato, a medicinal tonic from a proprietary recipe of herbs, bark, sugar and Barolo wine that became fashionable in the Court of the Italian Savoy Kings and now remains the best and most sought after version, used as a digestive or a match for chocolate. Teobaldo guards the production of this wine and seems at the same time to love it and find it its success absurdly amusing.

The Incredible, Unique Baldo Cappellano

The Barolos, and one of the Barberas, come from the Gabutti vineyard of Serralunga d'Alba and referred to as Otin Fiorin, in reference to the vineyard tender for many years by the name of Fiorin. The two Barolos are differentiated by their vines. The first, Barolo Pie Rupestris – Per Nebioli, is from vines planted over 40 years ago on American rootstock (Rupestris). It is not certain which particular strain of Nebbiolo was planted then and so the reference Per Nebioli refers to its unidentified clone. The second Barolo, Pie Franco – Michet, is from vines planted 20 years ago by Teobaldo himself, without grafting onto American rootstock, hence Pie Franco (Franc de Pied, as it referred to in French), or “french foot”.

The wines are fermented along traditional lines for 2- 3 weeks, without added yeasts, in stainless steel (ones designed by Cappellano himself) and glass-lined cement vats. Then they go into barrels of indeterminate age for a minimum of 3 years, sometimes longer. They are bottled without filtration.

Each of the Barolos has this to say on the back label:

To wine “Guides” – humbly speaking: In 1983 I asked the journalist Sheldon Wasserman not to publish scores for my wines. Not only did he not publish the scores: he also wrote that I had asked not to be included in “classifications” in which a comparison becomes a divisive numerical term rather than expressing human toil. I have not changed my mind: my tiny farm producing 20,000 bottles of wine a year interests only a small number of customer/friends. I believe in freedom of information, even if the judgement is negative. I think of my hills as an anarchical arena, with no inquisitors or opposing factions, whose inner richness is stimulated by severe, thoughtful critics. I strive for community that can still express solidarity with whoever has not been so well rewarded by Mother Nature.

### **Az. Agr. I Paglieri - Alfredo & Luca Roagna - Barbaresco**

The fine estate of Roagna has long roots in the commune of Barbaresco, having been started very early in the twentieth century by Vincenzo Roagna. Vincenzo passed on the reigns to his son Giovanni Roagna, who in his turn saw his son Alfredo succeed him as the head of the estate. Today the property is run by the fourth generation of the family, Luca Roagna. Luca was born in 1980, and succeeded to the winemaking for the property soon after his graduation from oenological school in 2001. The style of the estate's wines has been consistently safeguarded down through all four generations of Roagna family members who have steered the property, with the wines made in a very traditional and classic style. These are deep, complex and structured wines that are built to age and handsomely reward cellaring.

The heart of the Roagna estate is its six and a half hectares of vineyards in the commune of Barbaresco, most of these lying in the fine cru of Pajè. From the Pajè vineyard the Roagna family makes two distinct cuvées, a Barbaresco “normale” labeled as Barbaresco “Pajè” and a Riserva labeled as Barbaresco “Crichèt Pajè.” In 1989 the family's long-held aspirations of owning top level crus in Barolo comparable to their Pajè holdings in Barbaresco came true, when they purchased parcels in a pair of superb vineyards, Rocche and Pira, in the fabled village of Castiglione Falletto. Rather than make two separate vineyard-designated bottlings from their separate holdings in Pira and Rocche, the Roagnas blend the production from the two parcels (a very traditional approach that echoes the practices of Bartolo Mascarello when he was alive) and make a normale Barolo and in top vintages also a Riserva. The wines are labeled as Barolo “Rocca el la Pira”- whether they be the regular cuvée or the Riserva.

The vinification techniques employed in the Roagna cellars have not changed a bit with Luca Roagna taking the helm. The fermentation still includes a full sixty day maceration before aging in large, Slavonian oak botti for anywhere from three to five years (depending on the quality of the vintage) prior to bottling. The wines are bottled unfiltered and unfiltered, and often the estate will also hold back the wines for several years of further bottle aging prior to release. In addition to their fine Barbaresco and Barolo bottlings, the property also makes a Nebbiolo Langhe Rosso cuvée from younger vines in their Barbaresco and Barolo holdings, a chewy and intensely flavored Dolcetto, and a white wine that is a blend of 95% chardonnay and 5% nebbiolo (vinified without the skins) which they label as Langhe Bianco Solea. The Langhe Bianco Solea is held for three years prior to release by the winery, and is a medium-full, fresh and pure white that typically offers up an aromatic blend of pear, flowers, a touch of honey and pastry cream.

But as noted above, the heart and soul of the Roagna domaine are its Barbarescos and Barolos. The Barbarescos are deep, pure and soil-driven wines that offer up fine depth of black fruit, strong signatures of terroir, notes of licorice and fresh herbs and a judicious base of tariness. On the palate both Barbaresco bottlings are full-bodied and structured, with firm, well-integrated tannins that demand some time in the cellar before drinking. They have a superb track record for longevity. The Barolos are a bit more robust and show some red fruity character to go along with their core of black cherry fruit, anise, autumnal soil tones, tar and woodsmoke. On the palate they too are full-bodied and powerful wines, with fine balances and the potential to easily evolve in the cellar for thirty or more years. Like many traditional Barolo or Barbaresco producers, the wines of Roagna improve immeasurably if decanted for a significant period of time prior to drinking, even when the wines have spent a number of years in the cellar. The estate has a long and successful history, but also seems likely to jump up a notch in quality under the perfectionist regime of Luca Roagna. One day soon the fame of the winery will catch up with the outstanding quality of their wines. –from Polaner website

### **Mauro Vergano - Piemonte**

Mauro Vergano spent many years making limited amounts of Chinati as a passion to give to like-minded friends while he kept his day job. A trained chemist and enologist, he first learned to make Chinati from a pharmacist relative. A few years ago, he decided to give more time to his passion and create these unique and delicious homebrew tonics.

### **Corte Sant'Alda - Veneto**

Since 1986 the dynamic Marinella Camerani has been revitalizing her family estate, located in the foothills of the Lessini Mountains, north east of Verona, with dedication and passion. She has tirelessly worked along with her family, rediscovering abandoned techniques, to produce wines that are authentic to and reflective of the territory of Mezzane. Recently Marinella Camerani has replanted some of her vineyards in albarello (free standing bush vines) to further improve the quality of the wines. She is also in the process of making the some vineyards biodynamic and to that end she has recently bought twin, rare breed Alpine cows, named Rosa and Roma, to work on the estate.

### **La Biancara di Angiolino Maule – Gambellara**

What force of nature brought Angiolino Maule to the vines? On meeting him, you would swear he was born to it, that he breathes it, that the vineyard is deeply a part of his soul. A man of true conviction in viticulture and viniculture, Angiolino actually started his working life as a pizzaiolo, or pizza maker, of some renown in Italy. But the earth and the vines were calling him all the while. Through his hard work and sterling reputation, Angiolino was able to save enough money to start his winery. He chose Gambellara and, principally, the Garganega grape to make his magical music in a glass.

Gambellara is ostensibly the extension of the Soave foothills in Veneto into the adjoining province of Vicenza where the wine changes its name, but not its general composition. The principal white grape is Garganega backed up with small amounts of Trebbiano. These hills are volcanic in origin, and have rich, dark mineral soils with good amounts of fine clay. They are south facing slopes that are protected from the blasts of Alpine northern winds by the southern Dolomites. The altitude here is between 150 to 250 meters.

Angiolino's estate, in the hamlet of Biancara, now covers about 9 HA. For more than 16 years now, he has plowed in his vines and not used any soil treatments, chemical or otherwise. Using biodynamic viticultural practices, Angiolino has created an organic, living soil and ecosystem for benefiting the health of the vines and their resistance to any form of malady. He is unwavering in his belief that great wines are the result of healthy, beautiful, handpicked fruit, and the only way to achieve this is through natural processes.

Furthermore, he believes that the work in the cellar -- vinification, aging and bottling -- must be consistent with the work in the vines and involve no additives that compromise the natural fruit material, for better or worse. The vinifications

are conducted without temperature control, the addition of sulfur, enzymes or yeast and without the use of fining or filtration. Annually the production is between 35 to 45K bottles.

“The wine is the fruit of the earth transformed by mankind; it is the oldest natural beverage known to us. The quality of a wine is that which is imparted by the vineyard; it is indispensable to return to a viticulture and viniculture without chemicals in order to make wines that are expressive of their origins, unique and inimitable and that rise above the standardization and homogeneity that defines the majority of wines commercially available today.” -Angiolino Maule.

### **Az. Agr. Radikon, Friuli**

Stanko Radikon is a maverick in a land of mavericks. The town of Oslavia, on a relatively tiny stretch of hills north of the border town of Gorizia in the Isonzo zone of Friuli, is home to a number of talented and individualistic wine makers. From Radikon's home, you can carry a plate of freshly cooked polenta to Edi Kante and Jasko Gravner, two other world-renowned winemakers, and still eat it piping hot.

Joe Dressner and I showed up on a bright, chilly morning in April at 7AM. It was hard to recognize Stanko in his vignaiolo duds. We had recently seen him wearing a natty suit and white button-down shirt at a counter-Vinitaly winetasting a few days before. Stanko was standing on the road watching for us because the sign for the winery had been removed years ago. Anonymity was the only way to get some work done and avoid waves of wine tourists.

Joe and I had an 11 AM flight from the nearby Trieste airport and it had been a long week, so we were hurried and tired, but excited to be at the winery. We had had a few memorable encounters with Radikon's wines stateside. They were interesting, complex examples of what had come to be known, in reference to the ancestral origins of the winemaker's working in this style and their geographic proximity to the neighboring country, as the “Slovenian” style of Friuli wines – namely hand-harvesting, extended skin maceration, large, older barrel fermentations without temperature control, no added yeasts or enzymes, and little or no use of sulfur.

The steep rolling hills surrounding the Radikon's home/winery are testament to Friuli's viticultural legacy. It was a particularly beautiful day to see the contiguous near 11 hectares of Radikon's narrowly planted vines, still without foliage, laid out on the steep slope of marbled limestone clay in front of the terrace between his home and winery.

The vineyards were originally planted by Stanko's grandfather Franz Mikulus with the local favorite, the Ribolla Gialla grape. In 1948, Stanko's parents, who had inherited the property from his mother's father, planted Merlot, (Tocai) Friulano and Pinot Grigio. Today, Stanko, his wife, Suzana and son, Sasa maintain their family's land.

We asked Stanko how he came to make the wines we had tasted earlier that week.-- these golden wines, rich with complex fruit aromas, notable for their length in palate and ability to age. Stanko simply said, “It's how my grandfather made wine in the 30's”, and shrugged.

That made sense to us. Radikon explains on their website:

“The winery's philosophy is to always make a natural, organic wine with the least human intervention possible and with the maximum respect for the soils and nature. In the vineyard, the vines are planted extremely tight (between 6,500 to 10,000 plants per hectare). We do not use any chemicals or synthetics and the treatments using absolutely innocuous, non-harmful products are minimized. Through careful pruning and selection at the time of harvest, the hand harvested yields are kept well below 2.25 tons per acre.

In the cellar, the grapes are de-stemmed and then macerated on the skins for 30 days more, with experimentation of 6/7 months for the whites, and 35 days for the reds. The pressing is done softly using a pneumatic press. All phases of the vinifications are in Slavonian oak barrels, first in wood vats and then in large barrels in which the wines are aged for about 3 years before bottling. The vinifications are done using only the natural yeasts present on the grapes. There is no sulfur added at vinification or bottling.”

Radikon, while extreme, has never thought much of the use of anfora, or buried terra cotta jars, for vinification. His idea of wine is an ideal taste of recent memory, not a renaissance of ancient winemaking arts. But not one to avoid controversy, Radikon, along with Kante, have initiated a new discourse on the ideal vessel for wine with the 2002 vintage releases. First, Stanko believes that the 750 ml size does not really provide the right amount of wine for 2 people to share at dinner – an argument not easily rebutted. Therefore, he wanted to bottle all of his wines in liters and half-liters

(because 2 people could then have a half liter of white and a half liter of red).

Following from this, in studies that he and Kante conducted with a cork manufacturer, they have devised what they think is the proper size of cork for these two bottle measures that gives the optimal surface-to-air permeability ratio for aging their wines. It is a narrower, smaller cork than the classic model. In deference to this cork, Stanko himself created a prototype bottle from silicon for the new liters and half-liters, and then had them manufactured at a local bottle factory. They are graceful, elegantly-necked bottles that were designed to fit in to most spaces where a 750ml bottle would.

The wines:

- 2003 Jakot (Friulano)
- 2003 Ribolla Gialla
- 2003 Oslavje (Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon, Chardonnay)
- 2001 Ribolla Gialla (750ml)
- 2001 Oslavje (750ml)
- 1997 Ribolla Gialla Reserva Ivana (750ml)
- 1997 Oslavje Reserva Ivana (750ml)
- 2000 Merlot (750ml or 500ml)

There is no difference in the vinifications of the wines, except that the Oslavje is vinified as a field blend with all varieties harvested and fermented together. It took us another year and some debate to convince Stanko that he should appoint us his new importer for the United States, but we are very happy to include these very interesting and distinctive wines in our portfolio.

### **Az. Agr. Cá de Noci – Emilia Romagna**

Cà de Noci was established in 1993 by the brothers Giovanni and Alberto Masini on their family's estate near Reggio Emilia. For more than thirty years, the family has had a walnut forest on the property (hence the name "Walnut Farm"). In the 700's the province of Emilia Romagna was known to have over 100 different grape varieties. The Masinis wanted to plant local traditional grapes that were slowly disappearing, among them the Spergola, Malbo Gentile and Montericco grapes.

The vines are planted in 5 hectares of rocky limestone soil along the Crostolo river. The dryness, and general poorness of the soils help give these grapes all their powerful flavor and minerality. At this estate all wines were planted in the 1990's and, therefore are fairly young. They are cultivated using certified organic methods and only minimal treatments of natural copper sulfate and decoctions from plant or animal sources are used.

The grapes are hand-harvested in small caskets at maximum ripeness, with healthy skins, then destemmed and left in vats in the cool outside air overnight for extraction. The caps are punched down in the morning and the maceration on the skins continues for a long period, for some wines more than a week. The grapes are then pressed on a manual press and then racked into wood barrels or neutral vats. The wines are aged without filtration or fining.

The Spergola grape, due to its high acid levels, has always had a reputation as fine material for sparkling wine. For many years it was considered a type of Sauvignon, but has now been genetically proven to be a grape variety of its own. The Masinis make two distinct wines that are 100% Spergola: First, there is a metodo tradizionale sparkling wine called Riserva dei Fratelli, which is refermented in bottle using only the lees of the wine and has no dosage. Secondly, the Querciole is a natural refermentation in bottle to give a frizzante style. It is unfiltered so may throw a sediment.

Another white wine, Nottediluna, is made in small quantities using Malvasia Candia, Moscato Giallo and Spergola with extended skin contact of 5 days and aged in large wooden barrels, or botti.

The Sottobosco is a wine from three red grapes: Lambrusco Grasparossa, Lambrusco Maestri and Malbo Gentile, distinctive grapes of the Emilia Romagna region. The grapes are macerated for 10 days on their skins. It is also a natural refermentation in bottle to produce a dry, frizzante wine, and is unfiltered. Because they are not in one of the delineated zones for DOC Lambrusco, the wine is simply vino da tavola. Like the La Querciola, the Sottobosco is unfiltered and may have some sediment.

Both wines should be served at cellar temperature (56 degrees F) and poured somewhat gently. Enjoy these with a range

of dishes, but fatty meats and dry sausages are winners.

### **Az. Agr. Donati Camillo - Parma**

The Donati estate is a family estate started in 1930 which is now run by the third generation of Donati -- Camillo Donati, his wife and their children. They cultivate 11 ha of vines (7 of which they own as Tenuta S. Andrea and 4 which are leased at Tenuta Bottazza) using organic and biodynamic practices. They are about 20 km away from Parma in the hillside at an altitude of around 250 m with an eastern exposition.

There are a number of diverse strains of the Lambrusco grape family, but the main Lambrusco grape of the Parma zone is Lambrusco Maestri and it is planted on flat plains because of its characteristic resistance to humidity and mildew, and also for its relative abundant fruit. For this reason, the Donati do a severe pruning to produce low yields of better quality.

The Malvasia Candia is historically from Crete, arriving in this part of Italy many centuries ago, and it is also one of the oldest known grapes. Up until 30-50 years ago it was only vinified in sweet and demi-sec style, but Donati now makes both a dry and sweet Malvasia.

The range of vines at the estate also include: aromatic Sauvignon Blanc, Moscato Giallo, and Barbera. They also have a little of Trebbiano, Pinot Blanc, Merlot and Cabernet Franc. All the grapes are vinified and bottled separately.

All the grapes, including the white, are fermented like red wines (with skin contact), without temperature control, and use no other controls or enhancers at fermentation, no fining, no acidification or de-acidification, no selected yeasts, etc. They make Malvasia Dolce (sweet) from a stopped fermentation by filtration through a sack filter and it remains at about 4-6% alcohol with a bit of natural sweetness balanced by acidity. The other wines are fermented dry, including the Lambrusco

The carbonation of these frizzante wines comes from the traditional method of refermentation in bottle, a method that does not require preservatives and which makes this wine, unlike those produced in charmat method, age better. The wines are not filtered and are topped with a crown cap (a traditional closure for some decades in this region). There may be resulting sediment and the bottles should be poured somewhat carefully without a lot of intense movement.

These are very delicate and natural wines that have immense glugability and unique character. They are meant to be drunk simply as you would a refreshing beer or cider at cold temperature (even the red) with simple foods. They go particular well with cold cuts, prosciutto and dry sausages (and gnocco – fried squares of dough – that are traditional in Parma).

### **Castell'in Villa - Toscana**

Castell'in Villa, a medieval hamlet dating back to the thirteenth century, is one of the oldest estates in Castelnuovo Berardenga. Owned and operated by Coralia Pignatelli della Leonessa, all of the wines are produced from estate grown fruit. She is dedicated to producing traditionally styled, high quality wines, from low yielding vineyards, and releases older vintages only when they are showing their best. The estate covers almost 300 hectares of vineyards, olive groves, and hunting ground for hare, pheasants and wild boar. Spread over eight different sites, the vineyards are some of the most picturesque in Chianti Classico and reflect the diversity of Toscana countryside both in soil types and microclimate.

### **Az. Agr. Montesecondo - Toscana**

In a previous life, Silvio & Catalina Messina were New Yorkers. There had always been this beautiful farm in Tuscany outside of Florence where Silvio's mother lived. They visited yearly. His father had planted vineyards there in the early 70's. Since his death, his mother looked after them and sold the grapes to a local negociant. In the mid-90's, Silvio's mother was ill and Silvio's family decided to move back to be near her. By this time, Silvio already had developed a passion for wine in the Untied States. With the certain impossibility of finding an affordable rent in New York and 3 growing sons, Silvio & Catalina decided to stay on after his mother's death, turning the Chianti Classico farm into their home with a portion of the farm converted as a half-year bed-and-breakfast. Silvio immediately began working on the vineyards himself.

The first vintage that Silvio estate-bottled was the 2000. There was a lot to learn and unlearn. He made friendships with only a few of the suspicious neighboring Tuscan vignaioli, but Paolo di Marchi of Isole e Olena, himself a foreigner (he's

from Piemonte) and his former agronomist Paolo Masi, were encouraging and helpful with practical matters.

Catalina had been from the beginning much against using any chemicals on the farm, insisting there must be a better way. Gradually through introductions to winemakers outside of the region who were using biodynamic vineyard practices (among them Nicolas Joly, Stefano Bellotti of Cascina degli Ulivi and, indirectly, Sandro Sangiorgio, the director of the wine magazine Porthos), Silvio began to lose his fears and have faith that it was possible. Their advice led the Messanas to take the leap into natural farming and seeking a way to make the wine without the use of added yeasts or other additives and enhancers. In the meantime, piece by piece, Silvio built a winemaking facility with his own hands (there was a small winemaking “garage” on the estate before) and things fell into place.

In the vineyards, Silvio has old and younger vines of Sangiovese and Canaiolo with plantings of Colorino, Cabernet and Merlot and even a little Petit Verdot. The vineyard is contiguous surrounding the farm and is on the south bank of a ravine, or borro, where there is sunlight on the vines all day long. 2003 was the first vintage fully vinified using only the grapes own yeasts. After the 2002 harvest which had frost in the spring and hail in the summer, the heat of 2003 was almost pleasant (it’s always hot here in summer), and the harvest was pretty normal, with good, healthy fruit. (Subsequent harvest reports are available in the HARVEST REPORTS section of this website.)

In the spring of 2004 while visiting Montesecondo, we tasted a vat of 2003 Sangiovese and Canaiolo that was still in tank (no wood). It was juicy, bright and delicious and, in every respect, it showed itself a Chianti. I mentioned that it would be delicious bottled like this; Silvio agreed, but shook his head. It would be complicated. Then a little later at lunch, I popped a Ruché from our producer in Colli Astigiani that was bottled briefly following a time in large, very neutral barrels (basically a tank wine). It was charming and incredibly drinkable, not simple, but not overly complex. Silvio was inspired by its unpretentiousness. I left their house that day, and Silvio was deeply considering the idea of doing a tank bottling of Chianti.

In the fall, Silvio told me that it was bottled. He also said it did not pass for DOCG status first for too much color and on the second submission for lack of color. Paolo di Marchi at Isole e Olena had submitted his Chianti Classico bottling twice and had been denied the DOCG for the same reason. Paolo de Marchi submitted a third time and his wine passed; Silvio decided to forgo the third attempt and bottle the wine as Toscano Rosso IGT. (It’s allowed to declassify Chianti Classico to Chianti, but this decision must be made by the end of November following the harvest. Past this deadline Chianti Classico can only be declassified to IGT Rosso.) On a more consistent note, his submitted bottles for Chianti Classico, with samples from oak barrels, have never had any problem receiving the DOCG.

The curious thing here is that now all sorts of nontraditional Chianti grapes – including Merlot, Cabernet and other non-indigenous types – and barrique treatments are allowed for DOCG Chianti Classico. At the same time a wine made just using Sangiovese and Canaiolo grapes grown in Chianti Classico soils and vinified in the method of older Chianti traditions (tank or large Slavonian oak barrels) are deemed “atypical” and are being denied the right to use the Chianti or Chianti Classico name. This is the state of the bureaucracy’s influence on the denominazioni of Italy (it’s an even bigger problem in some appellations of France) and how the idea of the DOCG’s identity, its “typicity”, is being reshaped to a new market-based ideal that has no bearing on the traditions of the region.

To watch a winery and winemaker grow and find their path, the way that Montesecondo and Silvio (with Catalina) have done so well, in a world that holds many differing views of what wine should be and how it should taste, has been one of the great pleasures of our career as importers. (From Louis/Dressner Selections)

### **Az. Agr. Arianna Occhipinti - Sicilia...Arriving Fall 2008**

Arianna Occhipinti is from the Vittoria region of Southern Sicily. She has been making wine for ten years under the tutelage of her uncle, Giusto Occhipinti, who owns the well-known winery COS.

Arianna, strong willed and independent, is building a winery for her own label, Az. Agr. Arianna Occhipinti. The young, exceptionally focused Arianna produces first rate wines from biodynamically grown local varieties such as Nero d’Avola and Frappato. Her Frappato is one of the best reds in the WCW portfolio! In her mid-20s, Arianna already seems to know exactly what she wants to do with her life. She is the sort of driven young winemaker who is bound to become an important figure in Sicilian wine.

### **COS - Sicilia**

School friends Giambattista Cilia (C), Giusto Occhipinti (O) and Pinuccia Strano (S) began making wine for pleasure and

ended up creating a company that would become one of the most well-known in Sicilia. Passion for their hometown and a mission to produce top quality Cerasuolo di Vittoria and Nero d'Avola lead them to found COS. They rented their parents' lands and began harvesting, pressing grapes (by foot), and making wine. They continue to operate with this independence of spirit, doing largely without an oenologist, basing winemaking decisions on their considerable experience and intuition. More than an ordinary winery, COS is a lifelong project of expressing the terroir, passion and culture of this part of Sicily in its truest form.

### **Gurrida – Sicilia**

This fascinating Sicilian estate is located near Randazzo, nestled in the Etna region on the east side of the island. The winery itself dates back more than 100 years and was used as a refuge for soldiers during the Second World War. Most remarkably, the vineyards are completely submerged in water, due to accumulated rainfall and snow, between the months of October and March, when the vines lie dormant. With the top of Etna just across the plain from Gurrida, the roots reach into the warm, deep volcanic soil. The property is also unique in that it is the only place to have plantings of Gracchio in all of Italy, with the exception of Sardegna. The cuttings were brought from Spain by Lord Nelson when he fought for England against Napoleon. Consequently, Gurrida's vineyards are comprised of some of the few prephylloxera vines still in production in all of Europe. Victory is in fact named after Lord Nelson's flagship in the battle of Trafalgar.

## **GERMANY**

### **Melsheimer – Mittelmosel**

For almost 200 years, the Melsheimers have been growing grapes in the quaint Mosel town of Reil. With 10 hectares of mostly steep vineyards, all work is done by hand, along with a large majority of their vineyards certified as cultural landscape. Thorsten and his wife Steffi have worked organically since 1995 and focus exclusively on Riesling, a rarity in the Mosel. The main vineyard Thorsten focuses on is the Muly-Hofberg, where slate dominates the landscape with terraced plots, along with extremely steep pitches. All of the work is done by hand and only traditional methods are used in the cellar.

### **Weingut Später-Veit - Mittelmosel**

Heinz and Silvia Welter have 7.2 ha (17.8 acres) in and around Piesport with the majority on steep slopes. The domaine-bottled wines come from top sites such as Piesporter Goldtröpfchen, Domherr, and Wintricher Ohligsberg. The dominating feature of the Piesport vineyards is their clayey Devonian-weathered slate that gives for the Mosel a relatively strong, almost opulent wine even in dry years.

The amphitheater-shaped Piesporter Goldtröpfchen has always been grand. Descending down the newly paved road that weaves through the steep vineyard, one has an incredible view of the village and the surrounding countryside. Although Goldtröpfchen was expanded after the 1971 German Wine Law, only the section from the foot of the hill to about mid-slope is considered a part of this cru. Its south-facing vineyard has deep clayey slate soils before reaching rock. "Lots of underground springs run throughout it," says Herr Welter. He prefers spontaneous fermentations and chooses to put the wines in stainless steel followed by a short period in Fuder before bottling. The touch of wood helps settle the wines and gives them some roundness.

The fully south-facing Piesporter Domherr lies on the foot of the slope, between the village area of Ferres and the old part of Piesport. The Riesling from this core site brings good aromatics and full body. Their vineyard mix also includes the often overlooked wines of Wintricher Ohligsberg, a stony slate-soil vineyard on terraces, which makes for delicate wines. The Welters' prune their small plot of old vines on wooden stakes in the traditional heart-shaped fashion. The vines produce small grapes that make for aromatic and fine wines. Among insiders this domaine is one of the best kept secrets along the Middle Mosel, producing traditional wines for a song. Do not let the whimsical label fool you—these are serious wines.

### **Weingut Moritz Gogrewe - Saar**

Moritz Gogrewe, who comes from the Eifel, has slowly pieced together small plots of land while trying to make ends meet. His lifestyle reflects his hand-to-mouth existence with neither outside investors to back him nor loans from the bank. He has an independent and outdoorsy spirit, working his steep vineyards all by hand. Expensive tools and machines are borrowed from fellow growers. He holds a total of 1.8 ha (4.45 acres) located mostly in Oberemmel Altenberg, which lies nestled in an idyllic side valley protected by woods from the easterly cold winds blowing off the Hunsrück hills.

Altenberg has a similar exposition to its more famous neighbor Scharzhofberg with south- to southeast-facing slopes. "The east exposition gets the morning sun, an advantage for drying out morning dew," says Moritz.

Riesling is divided into separate parcels spread out over the entire Altenberg. The majority are trained in the old method by wooden stakes. He leases most of his plots from now retired septuagenarian growers for a case of wine in return. Moritz is always debating whether to take on more land, hence responsibility. He wants to remain a one-man show. His holdings in Wiltinger Klosterberg lie in two separate parcels, Fallsgärtchen and Kelterberg. His wines are made in the vineyard; the cellar work tends toward laissez-faire, like the man himself, hence trying to let the wines make themselves with little intervention. He uses an old spinning press, then fermentation and ageing in used casks of various sizes. Following the harvest, the wines rest from November to June on their fine lees before being bottled.

### **Peter Jakob-Kühn - Rheingau**

The winery was founded by Jacobus Kühn in 1786. Today, Peter Jakob is the eleventh generation of winemakers in the family. Spread throughout the town of Oesterich, the Kühns cultivate 15 hectares of land organically while also applying biodynamic methods. The vineyards are planted on natural south-facing slopes along the Right Bank of the Rhein at an altitude of 70 meters and are well protected against the cool borealis by the foothills of the Taunus Mountains. A member of the VDP, an exclusive organization of the top 200 growers in Germany dedicated to quality production of indigenous variety, Peter-Jakob Kühn is at the forefront of winemaking today in Germany. Greatly treasured by the German public, his wines are very sought after for their expression and terrior. This is a winery truly in the style of hand-worked wines that count among the best in Rheingau and in Germany.

### **Würtz-Weinmann – Rheinhessen**

Dirk Würtz is an enigmatic young wine producers in Germany. Known as a fanatic for quality, Würtz gave up his job as winemaker for over 6 years at the acclaimed Robert Weil winery to begin his own project with his friend Hubertus Weinmann, from the Jakob Neumer winery in Uelversheim, in Rheinhessen. Dirk is focused on quality, price and ecological, sustainable agriculture. All the vineyards are farmed naturally and his yields are significantly lower than many of his neighbors. The winemaking philosophy is one of minimal intervention by means of fermentation with natural yeasts and limited pumping, fining, or filtration. His most renowned wine, the Riesling Geyerscheiss is always a head-turner.

## **SLOVENIA**

### **Movia – Brda**

Lying along the prime strip of land that adjoins the Italian and the Slovenian sides of the Collio, the Movia estate has been in existence since the year 1700. It was purchased by the Kristancic family in 1820 and is currently run by the iconic Ales Kristancic. Growing up in the vineyards and winery on many a late evening and Saturday afternoon when he would have preferred to play soccer, the new moon rose and Ales dutifully helped his father transfer wines from barrel to barrel. Today he passionately implements the rigorous biodynamic principles handed down to him while simultaneously experimenting to produce wines of unprecedented purity and authenticity. His distinct vision stems from the wisdom of eight generations spent among the vines and in the cellar coupled with a natural intuition toward to relationship between nature, soil, vines, and wine.

## **SPAIN**

### **Zarate – Galicia**

Bodegas Zarate is among the oldest family growers of Albariño in Galicia, with their first release in 1950. This tiny 7 hectare farm with very old vines and single vineyard releases is the most eclectic and terrior-driven estate in Galicia. Ernesto Zarate was one of the pioneers in the production of Albariño in the 1950s. Today, Eulogio Pomares Botana is equally dedicated to the Albariño variety and the estate's century-old vineyards, expressing the character of each vineyard in the wines. The 6.54 hectare estate is comprised of 11 vineyards located in the villages of Sisán and Padrenda which lie in the Salnés Valley (the northwest subzone of Rias Baixas). All of the family vineyards are planted with Albariño. This level of focus and dedication to quality puts the wines in high demand leaving only tiny quantities for markets outside of Spain.