

NOBLE ROT
MAY/JUNE 1999
The newsletter of
Martinez Fine Wine

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The summer laying down tasting...

Most of you will be familiar with our annual laying down tasting, which takes place around the end of June. We've been planning this year's wine selection, and think it looks pretty impressive already. The idea is to taste some wines that have some room for keeping; some will be drinking rather well already, but almost all of them will improve over the next few years - our staff can advise you as to how long you should keep these wines. We've got some excellent bottles from Spain, France, Italy, South Africa and Australia (among others). Tickets are obviously limited and are priced at £10 per person. This fee is refundable against a minimum 12 bottle purchase per person. If you'd like to come please contact your local Martinez shop for more details. The dates are as follows:

Ilkley – Tuesday 29th June
Harrogate – Friday 2nd July
Halifax – Thursday 17th June
Horsforth – Thursday 1st July

SOME EXCITING NEW BOTTLES IN STOCK!

We keep writing and recommending the Alsace region of France although we have a suspicion that only wine merchants drink the stuff! Anyway, here we go again... We have found these three superb examples from the great producers **Domaine Schlumberger**. 1. **Pinot Blanc 1997**, £6.99. 1997 is one of Alsace's great years, and the ripeness and richness in the generally less regarded Pinot Blanc grape shines through here. Broadly flavoured with hints of pear, apples, almond and caramel. The balance is crisp yet rich, and makes a great alternative to more oaky styles of Chardonnay. 2. **Princes Abbes Pinot Gris 1996**, £10.75. Rich and thick with terrific perfumed fruit of citrus peel, spice, smoke and honey, together with excellent acidity to counteract the weight. Mega fare with all types of pates or terrines. 3. **Gewurztraminer Grand Cru Kessler 1997**, 50 cl, £10.95. Benchmark Gewurz from one of the top Grand Cru sites, so so concentrated with aromas and flavours of lychee, spiced peach, dried apricot and grapefruit. Semi-sweet but immaculately balanced and clean, fresh and pure tasting. God knows what to eat with it – we'd recommend nothing except a quiet corner and yourself for company (you won't want to share this with anyone – give them your last Rolo instead!). Also due in is **Piere Sparr's Riesling, Grand Cru, 1996**, £14.75. It isn't the steely lay down for 5 years job – more like an opulent, spicy, almost floral drop, and, would you believe, *ready to drink!* A steal for a Grand Cru.

From Southern Italy comes **Graticciaia 1993**, £17.95. An Amarone/Recioto taste-a-like. Not as dry as Amarone, and not as sweet as a full-blown Recioto, this is flavoursome and

satisfying. Southern France just gets more and more interesting, and **Domaine Cauhape's Jurancon Sec 1998**, £9.99, proves the point. It comes from one of the regions best Domains, and is a real summer pleaser. Made mainly from the Petit Manseng grape, its full bodied and overflows with ripe citrus flavours. Petite Syrah is a grape variety that's been missing from the shelves for too long, and we think we've found the best Chilean example yet in the excellent **Carmen Reserve 1997**, £8.49. Deep, almost opaque, lots of dark fruit, with a chocolate edge and very long finish. A star of our recent tasting, and amazing value when compared to a lot of those pricey Californian bottles. White Rioja has always been a favourite of ours when it's as good as **Campo Viejo's Dominio de Montalvo Viura 1995**, £6.99. This barrel fermented bottle has a superb balance between the oxidative oak-ageing effect and creamy honeyed fruit. It is a wonderful example of modern 'classic' winemaking. We're all familiar with white Sancerre, but its lesser known red cousin is often overlooked; **Domaine Vacheron's Belle Dame 1996** is a silky, cherry and cassis flavoured wine, with an attractive, clean Pinot nose and persistent finish – good value Pinot is rare nowadays, but at £12.75 this is very nicely priced. **Roussette De Savoie** (£7.75) is a distinctive, big and weighty wine. It is similar, but not to be confused with, Roussanne. Hints of lemongrass, cloves and honey, it has a rich feel with good acidity. **Guitian**, £8.49, from Valdeorras in Spain is made from the local Godello grape by top producer La Tapada. Very different, medium weight, with a lovely grapefruit acidity. The label is a must for devotees of 1930s Art Deco or totalitarian iconography.

Spirits Of The Age...

Brandy fans will be interested to know that we are due to restock **Pierre Ferrand's** marvellous Cognacs. These delicious bottles are produced in the Grande Champagne region of the Cognac district – the source of the finest cognacs. Normally demand for grapes far outstrips supply, so many houses blend lesser quality grapes into their cognac. Ferrand remains one of the few houses which specialises in old cognacs from Grande Champagne. Despite French law stipulating a minimum of 2 1/2 years ageing for VS cognac, 4 years for VSOP and 6 years for XO cognac, Ferrand's cognacs are aged for 10 years. No caramel, sugar or boise (oak extract) is added, with all flavours and colours entirely naturally developed in cask. Soon to arrive are Ferrand's *Ambre* (average age 10 years, £23.95), and *Selection Des Anges* (average age 30 years, £54.95). Those lucky people attending the Draper evening at Harewood House will be served the *Selecion des Anges* as a digestif after the meal.

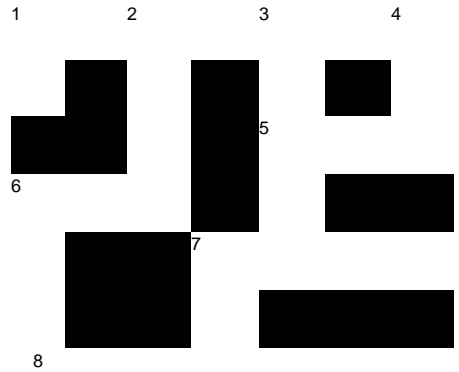
We are also taking delivery of some very fine Armagnacs from the **Maison de Cerbois**. This is the region south of Cognac and makes brandies that can be a little sweeter and fuller than those of its more famous neighbour. The *Grand Bas* region is where the finest Armagnacs are produced, mainly due to soil type, and this is where Cerbois is based. Expect to see soon their Fine Armagnac (£17.99) and their VSOP Armagnac (£21.95). See below for some rather special gift ideas...

For the Gin connoisseur comes Citadelle French Gin (£14.99). Made in the Cognac region to an authentic recipe from the Middle Ages, it is made with 19 spices, and is distilled four times for an elegant smoothness and crisp, clean finish.

Stuck for a gift? Try these vintage Armagnacs!

We're proud to be able to offer two very special Cerbois Armagnacs. They'd make a perfect gift for the discerning spirit fan. The **1959** comes in at £39.99, and the **1969** at £36.99. Both are 35 cl size (that's a half bottle). Vintage Armagnac of this age is a rare treat and we don't expect the small quantity we have to last long.

Now, for all those who attempted our Christmas crossword and struggled over one particular clue... OK, we'll come clean. Due to an error in Mark's spelling (and literacy) department the puzzle wouldn't fit. The 'scale measuring grape sugar density' is not, as stated, 'Oeschle', but, more accurately, 'Oechsle'. Sorry about that. Thanks to Melvynn Crann who, among others, pointed this out to us. By way of apology we have decided to print his own crossword, which, he says, reflects the situation rather well... We have to agree, but would like to point out that we're not giving away a prize for correct solu-



Clues across:

- 1. Scale measuring sugar grape density (7)
- 5. Embarrassing breakfast dish (3)
- 6. What answers to Noble Rot crossword won't do (3)
- 7. Should adorn the wrist of Noble Rot crossword compiler (4)
- 8. Eventually you should be

Clues Down:

- 1 & 6. Location of embarrassing breakfast dish (2, 4)
- 2 & 3. Characteristic of Noble Rot crossword compiler (4, 5)
- 4. Just to rub in 5 across (3)
- 6. See 1 down
- 7 *Not* the 4th and 5th letters of 1 across (3)

Interesting Alsace Vintages

We've already told you about the great 1997 vintage in Alsace. Here are some less successful years...

- 585 – Poor vintage
- 1129 – Crop destroyed by frost
- 1234 – Crop destroyed by hail
- 1246 – Crop eaten by caterpillars!
- 1272 – Most of the crop eaten by wolves!
- 1315 – Continuous rain between May and November!
- 1339 – Crop eaten by huge plague of grasshoppers!
- 1349 – Bubonic plague
- 1436 – Continuous rain – crop destroyed by rot
- 1572 – Snow in June!

SHERRY OFFER – MIXED 6 PACKS

Following the success of our Christmas Sherry offer we are once again offering you the chance of getting your hands on some rare and unusual sherry. Sherry country is centred around the 3 towns of Sanlucar de Barrameda, Jerez de la Frontera and Puerto de Santa Maria. Our special presentation pack will include 6 half bottles of sherry (two from each of the 3 towns mentioned) as follows:

Jerez	Fino de Jerez	Oloroso Viejo de Jerez
Puerto	Puerto Fino	Amontillado de Puerto
Sanlucar	Manzanilla Papirusa	Manzanilla Amontillado.

The exemplary Almacenista, Emilio Lustau, bottles all the wines. The cost of this splendid pack will be £42 and stocks will go quickly. We sold our Christmas allocation on the day it arrived so please let us know if you would like us to put a pack aside.

Whilst on the subject of Spanish wines we should register our thanks to John Radford who gave a bravura performance when he visited Ilkley recently. The event combined a book signing with a tutored tasting and John proved himself a consummate speaker mixing just the right amount of technical detail with some splendidly irreverent humour. We fully expect that he will be prepared to provide an encore at some

NEW MAIL ORDER ARRANGEMENTS

We have recently changed carriers to offer a new and improved service for customers. All deliveries are now on a 24 hour service (weekends excluded) and are priced as follows:

1st case – £9.99

Additional cases to the same address – £6.99

Although this is a slight increase we feel it offers a quality service (and its still cheaper than most other wine merchants!).

This applies to UK mainland only.

A VERY SPECIAL SUPER TUSCAN EN PRIMEUR OFFER!

We are delighted to be able to offer *exclusively* to Noble Rot readers a very special wine from Tuscany's superb 1997 vintage. **Fattoria Montellori** is owned and run by Alessandro Nieri in the Chianti region to extremely high standards, and is renowned for the quality of its wines. Above all it is recognised for its 'flagship' red **Salamartano**, a blend of 50% Merlot and 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, which were vinified separately. In the January following the harvest the wine was placed in Allier oak barriques and matured for 15 months. Blending will take place in early May 1999 and the wine bottled and rested until shipment in November 1999. The grapes are sourced from the communes of Empoli and Cerreto Guidi, and yields are no more than 30 hl/hc. An early blend cask sample showed a dense and rich well-styled wine of extracted fruit and ripe well-integrated tannins. Concentrated berry flavours predominate, with complex aromas of tobacco, plums and cedar. The finish and length were exceptionally long. It is obvious that this is a very special wine. An indication of its pedigree is the 1995 version (which as a vintage was excellent, but not quite as exceptional as 1997). Salamartano was voted top wine in Italy's most prestigious wine publication *Vini Italia*, beating more lauded examples such as Sassicaia and Tignanello. It compares favourably with 2nd Growth Bordeaux. When considering the inflated prices of top Bordeaux this wine offers quite exceptional value and superb drinking from 2005 onwards. We are the only merchants in the country to offer Salamartano En Primeur and would recommend early purchase – when it is released on the market in November/December 1999 the wine will be not only more expensive but virtually unobtainable! Salamartano is offered at £96 per 6 bottle case, which is payable at the time of ordering. This price excludes insurance, duty, shipping and VAT. Insurance, duty and shipping will be approximately £10 per 6 bottle case. These charges will be levied when the wine is shipped in late November. Please contact us for further details.

MARTINEZ FINE WINE

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MARTINEZ FINE WINE

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£11,000 on a bottle of wine? Are you serious?

After our Johnny Depp article, we asked what wine you'd buy with eleven grand. Perhaps the best reply we received was from Keith Hartley, who would buy a bottle of 1898 Chateau Lafite, and provides detailed tasting notes, which are as follows:

Grapes – Cabernet and Merlot harvested in Elysian Fields by Aphrodite, trodden by the feet of Moses, Michelangelo and Mother Theresa.

Colour – A Saharan desert sunset, one second after the fall of Icarus. The dried blood of an Ibex, illuminated in a single shaft of sunlight down a deep, deep well excavated by Leonardo's own hands.

Viscosity - The consistency of blackcurrant lava flowing from volcanic peaks to enslave Pompeian taste buds, with the substance of a Sumo wrestler on a sparrow's back.

Aroma – The plummy scented sweat stained sheets of the Grand Hotel in Nice, from a balcony overlooking the Cote d'Azur after an afternoon of passion and reading Proust.

Body – An aesthetic, succulent Racquel Welch emerging from the fragrant body of a Kate Moss chrysalis.

Length – Back through billions of years, past Pluto and Des O'Connor to the Big Bang.

Balance – No tightrope act this wine. As confident as a fakir walking over a river of red hot, flowing steel, or Tony Blair dancing with Gordon Brown.

It certainly sounds like £11,000 worth to us. Mr. Hartley isn't into the bubbles in Champagne; he says he prefers the taste of his bath water, so we decided to follow his example, and can thoroughly recommend the persistent flavours of either Badedas or Matey bubbles... Any vintage will do.

MARTINEZ FINE WINE

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MARTINEZ FINE WINE

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