



NOBLE ROT SEPTEMBER 1999

The newsletter of
Martinez Fine Wine



For your pleasure...

The return of some classics

Lots of new wines

Great En Primeur offers

Ridge wine dinner reviewed

Our laying-down tasting

Ilkley shop move

Italian tasting/booksigning

Isn't it nice to welcome back old friends?

We love it when some of our favourite wines make a return to the Martinez shelves... Unfortunately they never seem to stay for as long as we'd like them to, so make the most of them while they are around.

The mighty **Ridge Monte Bello 1996** (£69.99) flexes its considerable muscle in customary fashion. The latest vintage of what is often referred to as the Chateau Latour of California, and a candidate for the finest New World red, has recently arrived. Paul Draper regards this as one his finest yet, with an explosion of fruit and complexity rarely seen outside France. Top wine writers such as Serena Sutcliffe (Sotheby's Wine Dept), Richard Neill (Daily Telegraph) and Steven Spurrier (Decanter magazine) have recently sung its praises and compared it to First Growth claret. Patience is required, but by the time this wine is at its peak it will be largely unavailable and commanding First Growth prices...

Another legendary wine is Spain's **Vega Sicilia**. Generally regarded as the greatest Spanish red wine, it is very hard to find, and more than fulfils ones expectations.

We have two vintages of Vega, **1981** (£110.00) and **1986** (£76.00). The scale of fruit concentration is a marvel, and once tasted it is never forgotten. John Radford, Spanish wine guru, describes it as 'one of the finest wines in the world'.

(And a warm welcome to some new friends too...!)

Here's something new, both for fans of the unusual (they'll like the label) as well as fans of white Australian wine. From the consistently reliable Miranda vineyard we've got **White Pointer** (£4.99 – buy 2 and get £1 off!), a sumptuous blend of Chenin Blanc and Muscat. It has a delightful floral angle as well as a crisp and refreshing feel on the palate. The label is an underwater scene with a rather impressive 3D effect. Plus it has the first ever heat-sensitive label! When the bottle is chilled to the correct temperature (12C) a White Pointer shark appears on the inside of the back label. Looks cool, tastes nice.

We've raved about Clos De Caillou's red Cotes-du-Rhone before, and rightly so, but we think that the vast majority of our customers won't be familiar with **Clos De Caillou's white** Cotes-du-Rhone (£8.99). Not often seen, but super powerful and with masses of body and classic white Rhone characteristics, this is a must for fans of white Chateaufort or Hermitage. We should also add that all Clos de Caillou's wines are 100% organic.

Many of our Australian wine connoisseurs have been supping **Ironstone** wines for some time. Made by the folks at the mighty Cape Mentelle winery, these are fantastic wines for the price. Sadly the magnificent late-picked **Zinfandel** rarely lasts more than a day or so, such is its power and concentration (and, we should add, immense popularity!). But we've started stocking their delicious **Semillon/Chardonnay** (£6.75) once more. It's a good value crisp and zesty white with excellent character – a nice combination of citrus and fresh fruit flavours, backed up by subtle oak complexity. New in is the **Shiraz/Grenache** blend (£6.75). This is a big juicy-fruited number, with plummy ripe Shiraz combining brilliantly with the delicious cherry-pie sweetness of old vine Grenache. Concentrated spice and berry fruits were all very noticeable on the palate. We think it is top value and a welcome addition to our mid priced Aussie reds.

Many of you will have become very fond of Giuseppe Inama's ex-

traordinary Soaves. Any bad press Soave may have got in the past was completely blown away by these wines. Well we recently got in his top of the range **Vigneto du Lot Soave 1996** (£14.95). With even more concentration, even more depth, and an even richer finish, this is extraordinary stuff. It's well complemented by Inama's other passion, Sauvignon Blanc, which he makes as a wine to lay down. The **Vulcaia Fume Sauvignon 1997** (£16.95) is a huge wine; it's dominated by powerful oak at the moment, but the idea is for both the oak, and the lively acidity (which is also at the fore front of the palate) to recede to leave a wine of elegance, whilst still retaining the power it has at the moment. The unmistakable aroma and flavour of fresh coffee makes this truly unique.

Chauvenet Chopin's Nuits St. Georges 1996 (£17.99) is serious quality red Burgundy, with classic smoky, vegetal tones. When a brilliant producer in Burgundy gets a great vintage to play with the results can be glorious, as illustrated here. It's great with food at the moment, but will develop with age into a complex and richly fruited wine. Made in that traditional French style, its elegant structure leaves many of those New World gushy types standing.

Patrick Javillier's reputation for making marvellous white Burgundy may not be news to many of you, but its worth reminding everyone just how good he is. His **Bourgogne Blanc** (£13.99) is a rich and classic example of competitively priced French Chardonnay, and his **Meursault 'Les Clous'** (£27.95) is a genuine marvel, with wonderfully toasty flavours, creamy feel and whopping finish. These are wines of serious structure and deserve respect and patience in order to gain the maximum benefit.

Regulars will be familiar with our fondness for big Portuguese reds.

Quinta das Castas 1997 (£17.99) must be a candidate for the biggest yet. A Touriga Nacional charged monster, with beautifully balanced acidity, fruit and tannins, and a long complex finish. Gorgeous now, but with great cellaring potential.

A top value southern Rhone red has come our way; **Georges Darriaud's Cotes du Ventoux** (£4.75). Mainly Grenache based, this fruit driven glugger is like a Beaujolais with the volume turned up!

From the **Perdeberg (Horse Mountain) Cellar** come another couple of bargain wines. The **Cinsaut** (£4.75) is a medium-bodied wine with

pleasant varietal spiciness, ready to drink and could even be served slightly chilled on a hot summer's day! The fuller-bodied **Cabernet/Merlot** (£5.75) blend tastes of ripe plums and is a great quaffing wine. Both are top value and slot into our budget-priced Cape reds very nicely.

We're big fans of **Boschendal's Le Pavillon** wines. This is possibly the most visited estate in South Africa, and we've got two great value bottles in stock. The white is a **Semillon/Chardonnay** blend (£4.99), glinting lime green in colour, with a juicy texture and zesty finish. The **Red** (£4.99), which is due to reappear soon, will be more familiar with some of you. It's a glorious blend of Cabernet, Merlot and the increasingly popular Ruby Cabernet. Proof that the Cape is making more and more value orientated wines.

Finally we must just add a note on the **Stellenzicht Syrah 1995** (£28.95) we sang and danced about a couple of issues ago. Yes we know most of you thought the ship had sunk, but it has finally arrived. If you ordered some pop in and collect it soon. The added bonus is that we managed to secure some of the '97 vintage (no '96 was made), so those of you who'd like to put some away for a couple of years are in luck. Again the allocation is minute, so contact your local Martinez branch – *we promise no delays this time!*

En Primeur a go-go!

Niepoort's 1997 Vintage Port...

This could well be the year when Dirk Niepoort is catapulted to Port superstardom. His 1994 was a stupendous vintage, and the latest, 1997, promises to be just as good. Dirk regards it as the greatest wine he has ever made. America's *Wine Spectator* awarded the barrel sample 95-100 points, the maximum possible. Only four other Ports were scored as high, with Taylor's noticeably absent! Surprisingly enough the Niepoort is a great deal cheaper than the other four. We have an allocation of 6 packs available for purchase. This is a great opportunity to grab some quality Port to lay down for yourself, a (very close!) friend, or as an ideal Christening present. There's not too much of it, and at **£29.99 a bottle** (with duty, shipping and VAT all included) it really is great value. Please contact

your nearest Martinez branch to secure some of this fortified nectar!

Chateau de Pez, St. Estephe 1998...

Considering the rather bullish prices being asked by many a great chateau in 1998, one wine we tasted recently struck us as being in the 'bargain' category, which is somewhat rare nowadays. Chateau de Pez is generally regarded as one of the best non-classed growth chateaux in the Medoc, and this was reinforced in 1995 when de Pez was purchased by top Champagne house Louis Roederer, whose intention is to return it to the top echelons of wine production in the St. Estephe region (anyone who knows the outstanding quality of their Champagne will realise this is no idle whim). Large scale investment in the vineyard and cellars is now paying dividends in the wine's quality, and Roederer feel the '98 is the best to date since they took over the chateau. The high percentage of Merlot (which shows best in this vintage) makes the 1998 an exciting wine. It is marked by a fine and intense nose of fully ripe red fruit aromas and hints of toast. There is genuine depth on the palate, with ripe and mellow tannins. Excellent concentration and balance make this an exceptionally priced wine. **We are offering this at £135 per 12 bottle case**, which is payable at the time of ordering. Insurance, duty and shipping (approx. £18.50) plus VAT will be levied when the wine arrives in Spring/Summer 2000. Let us know if you're interested in ordering some.

For those interested in the more technical side, the make-up of the wine is as follows...

Soil – gravel overlying clay.

Average Vineyard age – 35 years.

Grapes: Merlot 46%

Cabernet Sauvignon 43%

Cabernet Franc 8%

Petit Verdot 3%

Vinification – 90% de-stemmed, 21 days fermentation on the skins at 29-30C

Maturity – 50% in new oak, 40% in 1 year old casks, 10% 2 year old casks, 18 months ageing (all in small oak barriques)

Production – 10,000 cases.

More En Primeur...

Chateau L'Enclos, Pomerol 1998

1998 is generally regarded as a superb vintage for Pomerol wines. A few merchants are comparing it to the dizzy heights achieved in 1982 and 1990. Chateau L'Enclos have produced a superb 1998, and we have a few cases on offer to those who appreciate the earthier Pomerol style. This chateau is often compared to fifth-growth standard, making En Primeur prices very attractive. Robert Parker describes L'Enclos as 'an unheralded property that produces very fine wine.' He goes on to add that 'in most vintages L'Enclos needs only 3-4 years bottle age to reveal the opulent, rich, silky fruitiness, yet the wines hold up very well in bottle'. And Bob really is spot on. The wine is most inviting and shows itself to continually be one of the best value in the area. Production is at a level (4,400 cases) where the quality is never compromised, and the resultant style is dense, succulent and fruity, with satisfying amounts of dark-berried fruit coupled with delicious chocolate and cherry aspects. The plump body and suave Merlot character are truly outstanding, and the overall feel is of an exciting wine with great accessibility but still retaining some room for cellaring.

L'Enclos is priced at £165 per case, with insurance, duty and shipping (plus VAT) payable at a later date. Please contact your local Martinez branch if you'd like some...

A few words of wisdom for you all:

"Quality is never a choice but always the result of intelligent effort" - John Ruskin, 1890 (he must have been a wine lover!)

*"There is many a reason for drinking
And one has just entered my head
If a man cannot drink when he's living
How the hell can he drink when he's dead?"* - Anon

Footnote: One of our customers recently described the sublime **Domaine Cauhaupé's Jurançon Sec** as being '*more satisfying than seeing John Prescott in a traffic jam*'! Now that's a thought!

Ridge Vineyards/Pool Court dinner at Harewood House...

On May 22nd we presented a memorable evening of food and wine in the Gallery at Harewood House, where we brought the food of Pool Court together with the wine of Ridge Vineyards of California. Paul Draper, the winemaker at Ridge Vineyards, presented six examples of his superb wine during a four course dinner. We enjoyed the following: 1996 Santa Cruz Chardonnay, 1997 Bridgehead Mataro, 1996 Petite Sirah, 1997 and 1990 Lytton Springs Zinfandel blend, and 1996 Cabernet Sauvignon. Mr Draper described his philosophy as attempting to get the wine to 'taste of the area and soil it was grown in rather than the team who made it', and went on to demonstrate the point superbly throughout the course of the dinner. A tremendous evening was had by all – fine food, extraordinary wine and dazzling surroundings combined to make one of the nights of the year...

Don't forget that we stock several of Paul Draper's Ridge wines, including Lytton Springs Zinfandel, Geyserville Zinfandel, Bridgehead Mataro, York Creek Petit Sirah, Santa Cruz Chardonnay, plus, of course, Monte Bello.

THE MARTINEZ LAYING DOWN TASTINGS, JULY '99...

These sort of tastings can be a fascinating insight into what a wine might just do in the future, and we're particularly pleased with the selection of wines we put together this time, as they really were prime examples of wines built to last. We can picture the scene in a few years time, with those fortunate folk who stocked up on these bottles grinning smugly as they immerse their palates in their now fully mature wine. The fashion may be for fast-drinking wines nowadays, but we still think there's plenty of room for the slowburners, and our laying down tastings are testament to that... Australian Chardonnay rather stole the show on the white front – **Chain Of Ponds** (£15.95) and **Howard Park** (£14.95) both needed a bit of time, but hey, that's what a laying down tasting is all about. Surprisingly it was the heavier styles which dominated the reds. **Jade Mountain's Mourvedre** (£18.45) was a glorious bundle of juicy fruits with a delightful sweet twist, and the Syrah from **Chateau des Estanilles** (£10.95) was seriously powerful. For those that missed out, we are still able to order some of the wines mentioned above should you be interested.



Please take note...

Two important events are due to take place involving the Ilkley shop:

On The Move!

Since the 'to let' sign went up outside the shop at 36 The Grove we have had a touching number of requests for assurance that we are not closing, leaving etc. As is often the way, the explanation is simple. Our lease expires on December 31st and we have secured our future in Ilkley by taking on a new building. The current plan is that we shall open at 35A The Grove very early in January 2000. Further details of the move will appear in later editions of Noble Rot.

Tutored Italian Wine Tasting and Book-signing!

Following our excellent evening with John Radford and the wines of Spain we are seeking to arrange an evening devoted to Italian wines. As before, we intend combining with The Grove bookshop – this time to secure the services of Nicholas Belfrage MW, whose book *Barolo to Valpollicella* has just been published by Faber and Faber. We are working on a date around the middle of October. If you would like us to send you full details of the event please contact Jim Bird on 01943 603241. We expect ticket sales to be brisk.

36 The Grove,
Ilkley.
01943-603241



The Ginnel,
Harrogate.
01423-501783

87 Town Street,
Horsforth.
0113-281-8989

20-22 Powell Street,
Halifax.
01422-320022

Did you know... (# 1 in a series) The correct name for a collector of wine labels is a 'Vintitulist'.