



NOBLE ROT

The newsletter of
Martinez Fine Wine.

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Inside... A working web site... A new face... Alsatian dinner... Shop tastings... Georg Riedel and Marc Kent at Harewood House... New wines... '99 Burgundy offer...

www.martinez.co.uk (part 36)

Okay, okay, we know we've got all excited about a Martinez web site in the past and we'd be the first to admit that we haven't got things quite right. But that's all changed, as we are now operating our web site ourselves rather than using an outside contractor. This gives us a more 'hands on' feel and means we can swap and change things around at the drop of a hat. The *even newer and improved* Martinez web site looks and feels very different to anything we've done before and we are very pleased with it. Our launch date for the new site is set for the end of May and you can expect the site to be developed more and more as time goes by. There will be regular updates so it's worth keeping an eye out to see what's new at your favourite independent wine merchant. Simply click on **www.martinez.co.uk** and browse away. And should you need to contact us directly over the web simply direct your emails to **editor@martinez.co.uk**. Your humble



A new signing for Martinez United.

We announced a new member of the team in Halifax in the previous Noble Rot and we'd now like to welcome **Andy Langshaw** who takes over the captain's armband in Horsforth. We've admired Andy's silky skills for quite a while – he has been in wine retail for a number of years and we're very pleased that he's transferred to Martinez. Sadly we say goodbye to Tony Young who gets a free transfer under the Bosman ruling... He has spent the last 2 ½ years running Horsforth, we wish him every success in the future and thank him for his contribution.



Georg Riedel and Marc Kent at Harewood House on Tuesday November 13th

Take the finest glass maker in the world, add South Africa's most exciting young winemaker and blend together in one of the most beautiful settings in Yorkshire and you have what must be seen as a candidate for the

year's highest profile wine event.

In November 1998 **Georg Riedel**, a name familiar to many and a past winner of *Decanter Man of the Year*, came to Yorkshire and conducted what proved to be a genuinely fascinating tasting event for Martinez. His exquisite glassware is regarded as the best there is and we are very pleased to bring him back for another evening's entertainment on **Tuesday November 13th** to show off his new *Vinum Extreme* range. He will demonstrate just why the wine world is in such awe at his ability to produce glasses that genuinely get more flavour and character out of the wine.

Marc Kent is the winemaker at the esteemed **Boekenhoutskloof** estate (loosely translated as Beech Wood Ravine) in South Africa and it will be his wine that will fill the Riedel glassware that night, with Marc discussing each wine as it is poured. Marc's reputation as a leading light in New World winemaking continues to grow; Robert Joseph of *The Sunday Telegraph* recently described his Semillon as 'arguably South Africa's top white'. Unsurprisingly our recent shipment of Boekenhoutskloof wines didn't stay on the shelves very long. This will also be the first time his new vintages will be on show, so it's a bit of an exclusive too.

The event will be held, as last time, in the spectacular **Gallery at Harewood House**, a room containing a magnificent collection of works of art as well as Chippendale decorative carvings. It promises to be a very special evening.

At the last Riedel tasting we held, Georg captivated over 90 Martinez customers for over two hours with just *four wines!!!* We could have filled the room twice over last time, so early bookings are advisable. Lord Harewood, who attended the previous tasting, described it as being 'like a conjuring trick'. Enough said we think.

If you'd like to come along please get in touch with any of our four shops, who are already taking bookings. The cost of the evening is

Alsatian Dinner in Leeds on June 4th

We are delighted to welcome **Jean-Marie Winter**, the winemaker at the outstanding **Domaines Schlumberger** in Alsace, who will present a selection of his fantastic wines at a gourmet dinner at the superb **Rascasse Restaurant** in Leeds on



Monday June 4th. The Alsatian region is one of the major areas where local food and wine complement each other better than just about anywhere else in the world. In that tradition we've chosen the evening's dishes very carefully so they make the most of the wines on show and Jean-Marie himself will introduce each wine as it is served. Domaines Schlumberger produce some of the finest wines in the area and we've selected some real stars for this dinner. We held a Schlumberger event a couple of years ago and it was a big success. Tickets are £49.50 per person for a full four-course meal and all wines.



If you'd like to come along to this one then why not contact any of the shops, to make sure you don't miss out. Quite a few people did last time...

Wine Tastings at Martinez in June



We're having an informal tasting in each shop in June to show the new range as well as some old favourites. This is an ideal chance to plan your summer drinking, so why not pop along to your local Martinez outlet for a relaxing evening?

We'll be on hand to answer any questions you might have on the wines. **Admission is £5** (fully refundable on purchases of 3 bottles or more) and special discounts will be available on the night. The dates and times are as follows:

Harrogate – Tuesday June 12th, 6.30 – 9 p.m.

Halifax – Wednesday June 13th, 6.30 – 9 p.m.

Ilkley – Thursday June 14th, 6.30 – 9.30 p.m.

Horsforth – Thursday June 14th, 7 – 9.30 p.m.

On the Shelf...

You'll find a variety of new wines to choose from at Martinez this spring, with all sorts of goodies available...



Kicking off with Australia, there are several gems available. **Miranda Opal Ridge Semillon Chardonnay 2000 (£4.99)** is a tasty little number, with its creamy texture, bundles of tropical fruit and very attractive price tag. Great for parties and informal settings, it goes down a treat. Staying with Miranda, their **High Country Cabernet 1997 (£7.75)** is a highly enjoyable wine, with some excellent sweet fruit and a smooth vanilla toned finish. **Mount Horrocks Semillon 1999 (£11.99)**, a grape variety currently enjoying considerable popularity, is a great example of something a little different. It's fresh on the palate with a decidedly different smoky character all rounded off by a rich honeyed finish. From the famous **Mount Langhi Ghiran** winery we have their **1999 Riesling**, positively bursting with character; a winner with fish as well as spicy oriental food. Another Riesling, albeit with a very different character, is also due in, this time from **Hollick**, whose 2000 release (**£8.49**) is a terrific perfumed wine, with lovely hints of apple blossom and citrus – just wait until the sun comes out to get the most out of this beauty! **Hollick's 2000 Chardonnay (£8.99)** completes our Australian selection; lots of pineapple fruit and a lovely whiff of fresh coconuts and vanilla make a wine of some class for its price tag.



Spain is producing as good a bottle as ever, particularly from the Ribero del Duero region. Proof of this comes in the form of the astonishing **Prado Rey 1999 (£6.99)**, which is packed with the area's spicy character. It's full, round and one of the best value wines we've found this year.



There's a great white drop due in from Chile – **Limari Valley's Sauvignon Blanc 2000 (£4.99)** is a lively little number with plenty of fruit and a crisp mouth-watering feel. A seriously good value sunshine-orientated wine.

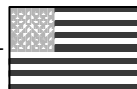


We've been searching long and hard for some quality German wines for some time now. The 'Life Beyond Liebfraumilch' brigade will be delighted by our **Johannisberger Ern-tebringer Riesling Kabinett 1998 (£6.99)** which is fresh, lively and

works brilliantly with a bit of paté or as an aperitif. If it's a sweeter German white you're after then have a pop at the **Urziger Riesling Spätlese 1998 (£9.99)**, a wine of sheer class that not only offers impeccable balance but some power too – it really is gorgeous.



We must get on to France at some point so here we go... More and more value-orientated wines are appearing from the southern regions and you'll know the excellent Belfontaine Grenache Blanc, a Vin de Pays d'Oc. Add to this their **1999 Syrah (£3.99)**, which is a little stunner with hedgerow berried fruit complemented by a gentle softness and spicy finish. Also in is their **2000 Viognier (£3.99)**, which shows that it *is* possible to make cheaper wine from this tricky grape. Aromatic and soft, its core of fresh peaches and apricots make it a star buy. Whilst we're talking Viognier, one of the best examples of this varietal we've tasted recently is **Domaine du Chene's Condrieu 1999 (£18.95)** which is a highly complex wine – hints of violets and jasmine combine with big and spicy mouth-filling fruit. We offer a welcome return to **Olivier Dumaine's Crozes-Hermitages 1999 (£9.95)**, a fabulous red with bags of spice and a great smoky bacon flavour. Its rich and classy with brilliant Rhone character.



The quest for quality American wine is constantly derailed by poor value for money but occasionally we find something where the quality is so good that a higher price is acceptable. Into this category comes **Jade Mountain's Les Jumeaux 1996 (£12.99)** which is a blend of Mourvedre, Cabernet and Syrah. It's a big wine, with lots of dark jammy fruit and a persistently spice-ridden finish that can't fail to impress. We've also found a genuinely classy Pinot Noir from California. Never cheap, constantly intriguing, good Pinot is always a thrill for the folks at Martinez. **Au Bon Climat's 'La Bauge' Pinot Noir 1998 (£20.99)** is truly magnificent. Reminiscent of a good Bonnes-Mares from Burgundy, it epitomises the 'iron fist in a velvet glove' style of Pinot. Our tasting notes read 'big, elegant, brilliant, fantastic, Burgundian' before the squabbling started as to who got to take the remains of the sample bottle home...

Our Italian section is boosted by the following selection which caters for every budget. If it's a quality



bargain you want then look no further than **Il Saporito's Merlot Sangiovese 2000 (£3.99)** which has positive aspects of both grape varieties it contains – it's unmistakably Italian and brilliant value. **Feudi d'Alba's Montepulciano d'Abruzzi 1998 (£4.75)** has an attractively supple and round feel, while showing a terrific earthy tone on the finish – a great wine for the money. **Tedeschi's San Rocco 1997 (£8.49)** was one of the highlights of a recent tasting; a Ripasso we felt was worth double the price. This is a style of wine which is made when young Valpolicella is refermented with, or *passed over*, Recioto lees to pick up extra body and ripeness. It drinks like good Amarone, except it's *much* cheaper! At the top of the Italian tree sits **Carpineto's Brunello di Montalcino 1995 (£24.49)**, which is a mature wine with bags of flavour and an invitingly seductive character. Despite its full bodied style it's got elegance and finesse to make it something for that special occasion.



New Zealand whites are represented by the beautiful **1999 Zell Chardonnay** from **Goldwater's Waikato Island (£16.99)** with its wonderfully integrated spicy oak, opulent tropical fruit and butterscotch finish – definitely one of the best Kiwi whites we've found for a long time and showing the considerable talent of this highly rated producer..



Rounding things off is our regular visit to the Cape. **Nitida** is a new name to our ever growing South African range. From the up and coming region of Durbanville (nowhere near Durban!), just a few miles outside Cape Town, we have their **Cabernet 1999 (£8.99)**, which is crammed full of blackcurrants and simply oozes class. Its lovely now but there's no need to rush as it'll be drinking brilliantly for some time. Bear in mind that only 200 cases were made so it's in somewhat short supply. Also in is the **Calligraphy 1999 (£8.99)**, a Bordeaux blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot, which exhibits the character of all three varieties – plums, green pepper and blackcurrant – wrapped up by smooth oak and integrated tannin. It's as good a sub £10 Bordeaux blend as we've found, with some toasty oak, ripe fruit and lovely rounded tannins. Again it's limited, with only 500 cases produced,

so if you fancy either of these two beauties you'd better grab some before it's all gone. Lastly, from the **Weltevrede Estate** come two new offerings. Firstly just for those long summer days, we have the **River's Edge Colombard 2000 (£5.49)**, a wine so fruity it's almost off-dry. Light-bodied with melons, guavas and citrus flavours in a super fruity, fresh, light and very easy drinking style. Just the thing to drink outdoors or as a lunchtime treat (or indeed both!). Also from Weltevrede comes one of South Africa's best fortified dessert wines. The **Cape Muscat 2000 (£5.99)** is rich, opulent and concentrated but not overpowering. Made from the Muscat de Hambourg grape it has layers of milk chocolate, rich caramel and toffee flavours. A real mouthful and quite stunning with a good chocolate mousse. That's quite enough for now. Several of these wines will be on show at

Burgundy 1999... An outstanding vintage...

You may have read about the magnificent vintage enjoyed in Burgundy in 1999, with both red and white wines reaching truly remarkable standards of quality. It's been compared to the legendary 1989 and 1990



vintages which are both regarded as classics, with many of the top wines from those years still to reach their peak. The wines from 1999 show everything that's required for a top vintage – structure, balance, depth and with fantastic cellaring potential.

The time to ensure you get the wines you want is now and we are pleased to be in a position to offer a comprehensive selection of both white and red wines from carefully selected growers. A recent field trip to Burgundy by Martinez staff gave us the chance to actually taste these extraordinary wines so everything on offer has passed through our quality control department. You can therefore rest assured that we've cherry-picked only wines which combine quality and value. We don't have enough space to list everything we've found here but if you'd like to find out more about which wines are available please get in touch with one of our shops for a full list bearing in mind that quantities of many are extremely limited with only a case or so on offer in some examples. With allocations of many wines already sold out in several wine merchants we know, we'd advise anyone who's inter-

Biodynamic winemaking – what's that?

We keep getting asked what appears to be a simple question: 'What does biodynamic mean?' Unfortunately the answer isn't quite as straightforward as you'd hope for...

Biodynamic winemaking is a combination of several techniques involving only natural compost instead of synthetic fertilisers, homeopathic plant sprays, the position of the planets and er... cow's horns filled with dung. If you think this sounds a bit weird you're right. It is pretty weird but the fact that several of the wine world's top producers (Domaine Leflaive, Leroy and Domaine de Comte Armand in Burgundy and Chapoutier in the Rhone for starters) have been using biodynamic techniques for some time indicates that there is some benefit. The whole thing was started by an Austrian named Rudolph Steiner who, in 1924, outlined the principles for biodynamic farming. His concept views the farm as a self-sustaining organism within the surrounding ecosystem.

The intention is to make vines more resistant to disease and pests by using more natural methods of agriculture. The sprays used to treat various problems are made up of extracts of vegetable matter such as nettles, dandelion, oak and camomile. If pests are found in the vineyard the idea is to collect as many of them as possible, burn them (!) and then spread the resultant ash on to the vineyard. Now, how do cow's horns filled with dung come into the equation? Well what you do is to bury said horn in the vineyard. Simple, eh? Now, one last crucial thing is that these processes need to be done at certain times in the astrological calendar, when certain planets are lined up etc., plus the organic mixtures made to be sprayed onto the vines need to be stirred in a certain way to give them energy. It's all a little complicated.

However far-fetched and bonkers all this may sound, there is substantial evidence to show that it works. Biodynamic winemakers report stronger, healthier and more disease-resistant vines as well as better quality grapes and wine.

The list of converts who enthuse about the techniques involved continues to grow, as does the list of wine-drinkers who seek them out.

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