



MARTINEZ
WINES

Famously Independent

NOBLE ROT

The newsletter of
Martinez Fine Wine

Spring 2002



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In this issue... Champagne and song night... New wines... South African Pinotage debate... Wine fair review... Our man in France... Trinity Hill dinner in Ilkley... Corked wine debate...

We're back! Despite the very wet and blustery start to 2002 in Yorkshire we bid you all a warm welcome to the year's first Noble Rot. We've picked some delicious new wines from the series of tastings we've attended and, hot on the heels of the successes of the dinners and wine events we held last year, there's news of an exciting date planned for the calendar. Get your diary handy and have a good look at what's inside...

Jacquesson Champagne and Music Night at Harewood House, Friday May 10th, 7.30 p.m.

We've got together with the nice folks who supply us with Jacquesson Champagne to present a tasting like no other!

An array of different cuvées will be on show and accompanying each one will be music and song. We've selected a series of drinking songs that fit the bill perfectly – you can expect one or two fun surprises thrown in for good measure but we won't say more than that! We'll have the chairman of Jacquesson present who will introduce each Champagne as well as provide some information and insights into the various cuvées shown. This promises to be a unique opportunity to discover the differences between quality Champagnes as well as being a lot of fun. Don't think we'll leave you gasping after every sip as we've carefully paired each Champagne with a different **Paxton and Whitfield cheese** – these are a sublime food and wine match and should keep those tummies from rumbling too much! Tickets are priced at £45 per person and are available through our shops.

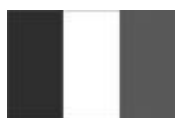


STOP PRESS! Jacquesson et Fils has been voted Champagne Domaine of the year 2002 by Les Guides des Sommeliers!



On the shelf...

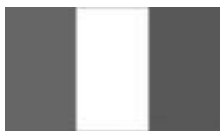
We've had a couple of highly contrasting staff tastings this year. The first left us somewhat confounded as just about every wine on show was undrinkable – a very rare occurrence it has to be said! Undeterred we sent for more samples, soldiered on and we're delighted to report a success rate that surprised even us – so many fabulous bottles that we took quite a while working out which ones to reject. The wines about which you are about to read are the winners and what beauties they are, with just about every style covered. So read on and start planning your spring drinking...



What better way to start the new listings than with a sparkler? Most of you will be familiar with the **Claude Cazals** Champagne house – we've been proudly selling their excellent fizz for years. New to their range, and ours of course, is their **Cuvee Vive Grand Cru N.V. (£16.99)**. This is an Extra Brut Champagne, so it's a level higher on the dry scale but what depth of flavour and what a clean finish – it's terrific stuff! So fresh flavoured and wonderfully crisp you'll wonder why we don't see more drier styles in this country. Also from France is a lively white from the Loire Valley: **Domaine des Ballandors Quincy 2000 (£7.99)** is 100% Sauvignon Blanc. It has classic asparagus and pea pod aromas with lots of zesty ripe fruit (and more asparagus) on the palate and a wonderful mineral-laden finish. A nice Sancerre alternative. Another good bottle that's new to us is **Max Aubert's Domaine de la Presle Cotes-du-Rhone 2000 (£6.99)**, a red full of jasmine spice and attractive peppery notes. It shows the French can make top value mid-priced reds as well as anyone! On the Burgundian front we've got a tasty new white; **Michel Briday's Rully Premier Cru 'La Pucelle' 2000 (£10.75)** is classic Chalonaise Chardonnay – minerally, flinty, and with a hint of spice rippling through the butterscotch and melon character.

Moving on to New Zealand there's two new bottles. First up is a delicious sparkler, **Cellier Le Brun's 'Terrace Road' N.V. (£9.99)** which is a delightfully soft and creamy style of fizz and shows some serious value for under £10. It's great as a lively drink in its own right but doubles nicely as a base for your Buck's Fizz or Kir Royale. **Kim Crawford** is a name we've been happy to associate with and new to us is his excellent **Sauvignon Blanc 2001 (£8.99)**, complete with new 'Stelvin Closure' (that's 'screw cap' to you and me! See back page for more!). Typically zesty and with an attractive grassy, herbaceous character as opposed to blockbuster fruit it's sure to please fans of great Sauvignon





Blanc.

Travelling back into Europe we visit Italy next. **Poderi Aldo Conterno's** wines are dished out in very small allocations indeed and this year we are lucky enough to get hold of some of his **Barbera d'Alba 1999 (£19.99)**. A much maligned grape variety that makes very ordinary wines when handled poorly. Well taste this! Dark black cherries and damsons, great balance of fruit and acidity, it's an absolutely huge mouthful. There is not much to go around so be quick. *(Ed's note: If you are interested in some of Conterno's Barolo, then please register your interest sooner rather than later)* If it's high extraction Italian reds you're into we've got a biggie lined up. Everybody has been waiting for the 1997 Brunello's and as far as we are concerned **Fossacolle's Brunello Di Montalcino 1997 (£29.99)** was the pick of the bunch. Fantastic colour and without doubt one of the most inviting wines on the nose we've encountered for a long time (Phil called it 'the best Brunello I've ever tasted'), great intensity of fruit and an excellent balance and length. It's a must for any wine lover's cellar but, as we discovered on the day, is fantastic right now.

Despite the rather unfashionable tag German wines are still trying to shake off there's a few truly delicious bottles about and the sumptuous **Selbach-Oster Riesling Spatlese 1998 (£12.49)** is no exception, with its pleasing slate character and mineral extracts it is positively bursting with ripe fruit and has a juicy splash of lime on the finish. This is one to savour on its own or with a mild terrine.



Back to the southern hemisphere and into Argentina. Bonarda is a grape variety many of you (and us!) were less familiar with. It's Italian in origin and **Casaterra's Bonarda 2001 (£4.99)** is a nice New World example. Full of ripe red fruits and with a somewhat wild, spicy finish, it's excellent value and well worth stocking up on for everyday drinking.

Moving across the border into Chile... Many Martinez customers have been enjoying a wonderful Merlot from the Carmen winery. Its sister wine, **Carmen's 'Insigne' Sauvignon Blanc 2000 (£5.99)** is not only benchmark Sauvignon



but a fabulously zippy example of this passion-fruit scented grape variety. Its wonderfully grassy aromas are backed up by a dry and crisp core with ripe gooseberry flavours on the palate. It's also fantastic value (just like the 'Insigne' Merlot). The South Americans are giving a few New Zealand winemakers sleepless nights!



We're about to take delivery of lots of new Australians. We're fans of their 'Rhone Ranger' wave of big spicy reds and we start proceedings with one of those. St Joseph from Australia? Well, almost! Victoria's **Craiglee Shiraz 1999 (£17.49)** packs in more cracked green peppercorns than you'd believe! It'll out-spice your steak au poivre (if you'll let it!) but once the crunch of the peppermill has subsided a fantastic mulberry presence is revealed. A star wine and highly individual for an Aussie. The biggest monster we found recently is **Clonakilla's Canberra District Shiraz 2000 (£23.99)**. A gigantic red of Amazonian proportions that not only oozes great dollops of capsicum, black cherries and red currants but manages to display an extraordinarily elegant, feminine character. Unobtrusive tannins and a rich, spicy finish complete the picture.

What's amazing is how drinkable a wine of this seniority can be at this age. Fantastic. **Balnaves Cabernet Sauvignon 1998 (£19.99)** is a classic Coonawarra red but with an extra ripple of quality rarely found. Despite growing grapes since 1970 the Balnaves family only began to bottle their own wines in 1990. Aussie wine guru James Halliday awarded this eucalyptus



and blueberry-driven beast a staggering 95/100 and when we tasted it we saw why. The dregs of our tasting sample sat on Mark's kitchen counter for 3 days and still tasted good after all that time! To round things off we've got one of the more unusual dessert wines we've ever tasted in the form of **Mount Horrocks Cordon Cut Riesling 2001 (£14.99)**. With its intense peach and mango core it envelopes one's palate but still leaves your mouth feeling fresh. Skilfully made and designed for quicker drinking this is brilliant stuff and very different from the norm. Finally we welcome a classic Australian sticky from Coonawarra, which comes in the form of



Hollick's 'The Nectar' 1999 (£8.75 per 37.5 ml). This is a surprisingly intense and powerful mouthful of mainly Riesling with a splash of Semillon and Sauvignon to keep things balanced. Lots of marmalade-driven botrytis notes, a smooth feel and huge finish show what a great buy it is.

These wines are either in stock or due in the coming weeks. Please contact your local Martinez shop for further details.



South African Pinotage – A Bittersweet Symphony?

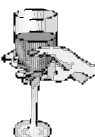
It's come to our attention that many of South Africa's recent Pinotage efforts have been, for want of a better word, 'bitter'. We've been scratching our heads as to why this should be so – we're used to that deep and gamey character with its subtle sweet finish but a hint of sourness and an acrid taint kept appearing in Pinotages we were tasting. The progress made with Pinotage since its development way back in 1925 (and first bottling in 1961) is considerable but a few recent vintages have disappointed fans of the great South African grape variety and we include ourselves in that category. It's therefore something of a relief to announce that two recent returns to Martinez shelves hark back to a rich, juicy and highly attractive style. These are **Clos Malverne's Pinotage 1999 (£7.49)** and **Morgenhof's Pinotage 1999 (£9.99)**, both of which showed really well recently.

The Martinez Annual Wine Fair 2002, Queen's Hotel, Leeds.

What can we say? This was without doubt one of the most memorable and successful events in our history. Having learnt many things from last year's fair we think we put on a pretty good show. If the evidence of the hundreds of people who turned up to sample not only wine but beer, sherry, madeira, port, champagne and single malt whisky is anything to go by we got most things right. We can't begin to thank everyone for their fantastic support on what must be one of the biggest and most significant events of its kind ever held in Yorkshire – from the fifteen suppliers who showed a superb selection of their portfolio to the general public who attended the fair. At times the Harewood suite of the Queen's Hotel was jam-packed with people – we hope everyone managed to sample the drinks they wanted to amongst the crowds of tasters that filled the room. But the fair was more than just a tasting of wine and related products; we managed to raise **over £900** for the

British Epilepsy Association, a fantastic gesture which is down to the generosity of those who attended the event. Thank you for your kind support, and roll on next year!

Congratulations to Mr D. Anderson, Mr. A Brown and Ms. C Lucas who were the prize winners in our blind tasting.



British Epilepsy Association
making the difference

Our man in Burgundy...

We recently sent Andy, manager of our Horsforth branch, off to Burgundy on a field trip. The only catch, we warned him, was that he'd have to tell Noble Rot readers about his time in France. Over to you, Andy:



As we travelled to Burgundy my anticipation started to build on what was to be a whirlwind visit to some of its most famous vineyards. After a brief stop in Chablis we soon found ourselves in Beaune – the very heart of Burgundy. Beaune is a lovely town epitomising everything that is French and after a fantastic meal (accompanied by the inevitable bottles of wine) I found myself captivated by its beauty in the twilight.

The next day we made a visit to growers in Meursault and Nuits St. Georges. I was very impressed with Jean Chauvenet and his wines. Grape bunches are 100% destemmed resulting in a wine that can be macerated for longer which gives the wines a touch more concentration and a remarkably silky texture. We'll certainly be seeing more from him!

Onwards to Macon and Beaujolais and after trying a local delicacy ('andouillette', a sort of tripe sausage) washed down with a bottle of wine (or two) we stopped off at Pouilly-Fuisse, Morgon and Regnie.

Over dinner that night we inevitably found ourselves discussing the pros and cons of the wine trade and setting all the wine world's problems to right; discussions went on long into the night! Bright and early we arose for an all day tasting of some of Burgundy's giants: Georges Lignier, Machard de Gramont, Jean Claude Belland, Edmund Cornu and of course Jean Chauvenet. Cornu goes from strength to strength (check out the superb Ladoix bottles we stock) and we expect big things from him in the future (although he's already a Parker 'darling'). The same goes for the enduring qualities of Chauvenet – what a star he is! If you don't believe us give any of his beautiful wines (all available as we went to press) a gander. It's worth it.

The main thing I found reassuring was just how good the 1999 vintage is – the wines have immense depth and look set for a great future (*still quite a few to choose from on the shelves at Martinez – Ed*). As for 2000... the white wines are certainly worth close inspection, so keep an eye on our shops over the coming months. As we settled in for another dinner and yet more copious amounts of wine I reflected on my first visit to the region; I couldn't help thinking how much Burgundy has to offer the world and long may that continue. I certainly plan to return – and sooner rather than later I hope!



You can taste a few of the wines Andy discovered at your local Martinez shop. We're currently studying the 2000 vintage...

Trinity Hill dinner, The Farsyde Restaurant, Ilkley, May 14th

New Zealand's **Trinity Hill** has been a staple part of our stock for a while now so we're very pleased to announce that we've enticed the estate's winemaker, **John Hancock**, as guest of honour at a gourmet dinner at Ilkley's finest restaurant **The Farsyde**. Award winning chef Gavin Beedham will prepare a sumptuous array of dishes to match the delicious wines of Trinity Hill and we can't wait! Winemaker John Hancock has won the **World's Best Chardonnay Award** not once but *twice* and his magnificent **Gimblett Road** wines are some of the finest in New Zealand. This promises to be a memorable event; John's expertise in both vineyard and winery is much admired by many wine makers as well as wine drinkers. *Tickets are available at £45 per person directly through The Farsyde*



Restaurant.

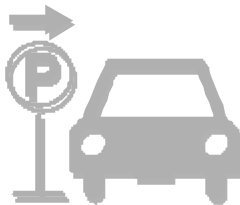
Please contact Zoë at the Farsyde on 01943 602030 to book.



Parking improvements in Harrogate

In January 2001 the car park just below the Har-

rogate shop was closed and turned into a building site whilst renovations to the baths and adjoining buildings took place. Although part of it still resembles a building site, the car park, now a slightly different shape, has returned. With parking a premium in Harrogate we thought all our customers visiting the town would like to know.



'The soft extractive note of an aged cork being withdrawn has the true sound of a man opening his heart.'

- *William Samuel Benwell, Journey to Wine in Victoria, Melbourne.*

'Wine ... the blood of grapes.'
-*Genesis 49:11.*

'Wine is the blood of France.'
Louis Bertall, La Vigne, 1878, quoted in The Essential Wine Buff. (well thank goodness we've got that straight! Ed)





Corked Wine – the debate goes on

Much is said about corked wine and wine corks with many arguments as to which is the best way to seal a wine bottle. A great many wines now come with plastic corks, and screw caps (or 'Stelvin closures') are now being used for some pretty serious wines. The latest batch of wines to hit Martinez with Stelvin closures is from the **Kim Crawford** estate in New Zealand. This is quite a bold move as previous attempts to change the wine drinking public's perception of the humble screw cap have been very unsuccessful, even though screw caps are a more expensive way to seal wine, as well as offering drinkers the option of storing their wine upright. The claims that 10% of wine bottles are affected by 'cork taint' (i.e. corked) suggest that alternatives should be considered. Mr Crawford's choice of a screw cap is backed up by considerable research into the subject by the *Screw-cap Wine Seal Initiative*, which the winery is heavily involved in. This combined with the public's heightened awareness that a screw cap doesn't always equal 'bottle of plonk' has resulted in a strong movement away from traditional cork stoppers. Some argue that the best reason to continue using corks is to keep the cork-producing industries in Spain and Portugal alive. Whether drinkers will accept that they must sacrifice 10% of their wine purely to keep an industry afloat is perhaps the most thought-provoking point in the entire debate. What do you think? If you knew an alternative method of closure would guarantee to eliminate cork taint from your wine you'd almost certainly accept it. The biggest barrier to cross is psychological – people prefer their wine to have a genuine cork in it; even those reconstituted corks are too much for some. The idea of a bottle of Petrus or Romanée Conti with a screw cap is genuinely unthinkable to many but if the *Screw-cap Wine Seal Initiative* has its way this may well happen, and sooner rather than later...



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