



AWE
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Chairman's Column

by

Heather Dougherty

Come 1st January each year, we are always happy to celebrate the arrival of nothing more momentous than a new year, so it is only right that a 25th anniversary should merit something more than the usual celebrations.

2018 marks the 25th anniversary of the Association of Wine Educators and we will be celebrating this milestone in style by holding our AGM this coming May, in Champagne. You should all have had an initial "save the date" message asking for expressions of interest. Planning for the event is already well under way and more information about it will be coming out shortly – but in the meantime, please put 16-18 May in your diaries, if you haven't already.

Anniversaries like this prompt thoughts of the early days of our association. One of the motivating forces which drove the founding members, some of whom we are privileged to still have as part of AWE, was to put wine education on a professional footing.

Then, as now, anyone with more than a passing interest in wine can call themselves a wine educator. By demanding the WSET Diploma as a minimum entry requirement and by assessing every candidate in a live education situation, we can confidently say that our members really are professionally qualified and effective communicators about wine. Our mission to create and recognise a professional body of wine educators continues into our next 25 years and – I hope – beyond.

I hope that 2018 is a happy and prosperous one for all our members and I hope to see many of you in Champagne in May.

CONTENTS

3 - Revisiting Jerez by Carolyn Bosworth-Davies

8 - Tai Rosso in the Colli Berici - Paul Howard

10 - Wine Descriptions - John Ducker

12 - A Winemaker Dinner in the Alto-Adige - Paul Howard

15 - Pignoletto - Susan Hulme MW

16 - VDP Grosses Gewächs Tasting - Richard Bampffield MW

17 - Laimburg Research Centre - Nancy Gilchrist MW

19 - Joseph Perrier visit - Paul Quinn

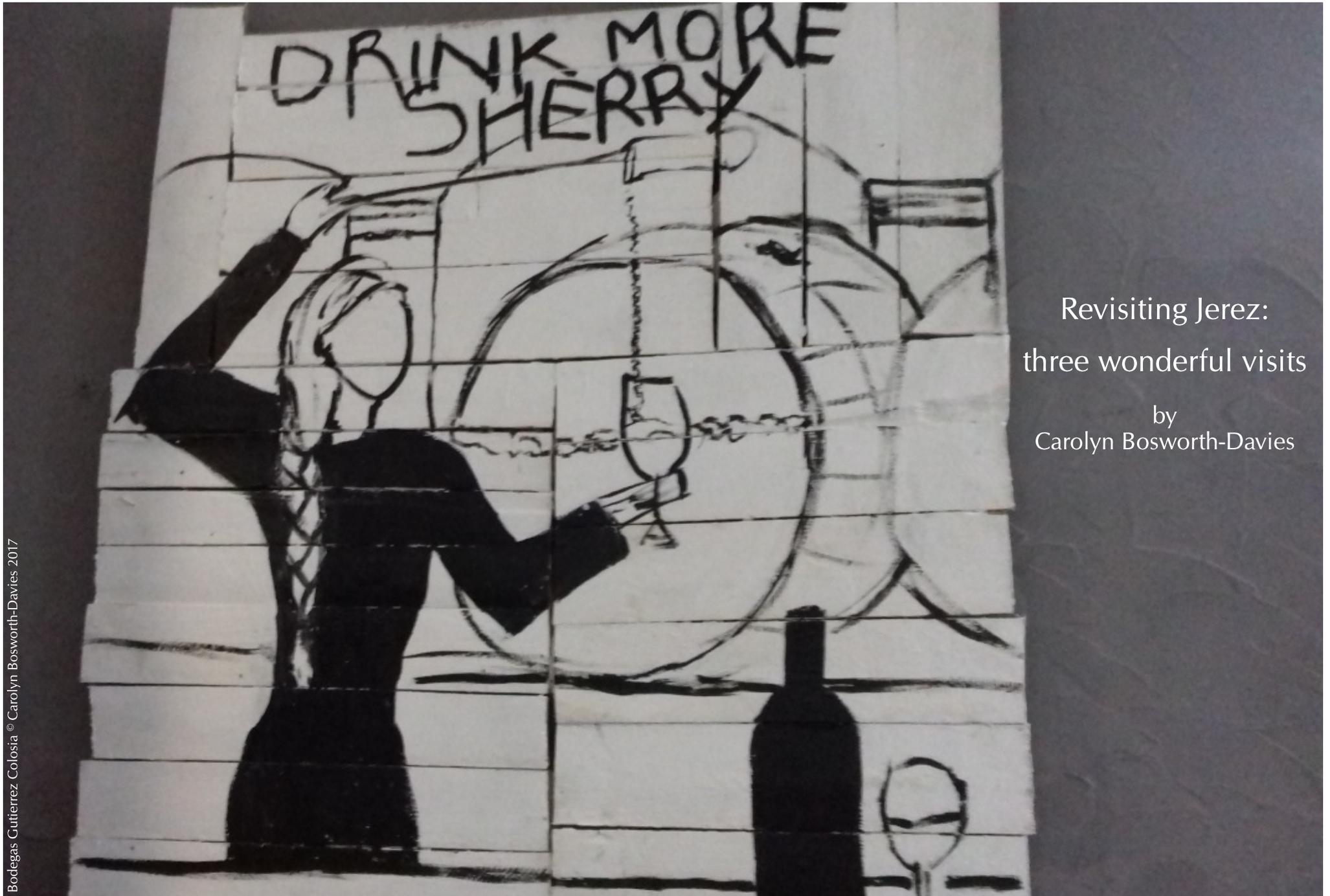
20 - In Search of Sekt - Heather Dougherty

21 - A River Runs Through It - Heather Dougherty

23 - Lost In Collio - Benjamin Spencer

26 - Bordeaux Grands Crus Classés 1855 by Hugh Johnson and Franck Ferrand - Review by Paul Howard

28 - Member News



Revisiting Jerez:
three wonderful visits
by
Carolyn Bosworth-Davies

My route into Wine Education came via the wine trade itself. Amazingly as it seems now, thirty seven years ago I went to work for a sherry company called Edward Butler Vintners. Edward Butler was an associate of José María Ruiz-Mateos, founder of Rumasa, whose company dominated the Spanish sherry and wine trade (and much more) during the 70s and 80s.

This was followed by a move to an independent wine merchant called City Vintagers. During that time we represented the agency for one of Osborne's portfolios of sherry, known as Duff Gordon. This resulted in our having our annual sales conference at Osborne in El Puerto de Santa Maria one year, which I have to confess now, is a faint and rather blurred memory.

I had not been back to Jerez until this September when I travelled with my husband Rowan to Seville, Jerez and Cadiz. This was primarily a private holiday but I wanted to revisit the sherry region and take in some of the bodegas that were neither mainstream, nor very commercially driven in the UK market.

As most fellow educators may know, Jerez the town is dominated by Gonzalez Byass. The town itself now is a little run down from its former glory. The effects of the recession on the buildings, shops and streets are clear to see. The old town is home to some of the smaller boutique bodegas, rather than the bigger boys with cellar door and tour guide facilities.

My first visit was to Bodegas Tradicion located close to the old city walls. Its name reflects its mission and the styles of sherry which it produces, rather than its age as a

producer. It was founded in 1998 by Joaquin Rivero, (a billionaire real estate magnate) whose ancestors ran one of the oldest houses, Bodegas CZ-J M Rivero, from 1650.

Along with two other partners from old Jerez sherry producing families, including Domecq, they bought and restored an old abandoned 19th century bodega and then set about, through their contacts, acquiring old wines and stocks dating back to the 19th and even 18th century from abandoned or bankrupt bodegas. With their experience they then created their own fine aged soleras. The aim was to create a concept and reputation for producing fine wines, rooted in the old family tradition of sherry production. Hence the name Bodegas Tradicion, where traditional styles and artisan processes are maintained. Everything is done by hand, from refreshing the soleras to the labelling and lacquering of the bottles.

The focus is therefore on VOS and VORS with the soleras being topped up with externally bought sherry with at least 10- 15 years of age. They also have Añada wines going back over 40 years.

This is a boutique operation, so you do not see the vast scales of criaderas in cathedral-like buildings. The samples we had direct from cask were clear, bright and fresh with great intensity of flavour. When bottled these are simply drawn en rama from the solera, un-chill-filtered, using only 10/20 fine paper plate discs for filtering; they are not cold stabilised.

Their range is narrow compared with others but ten years ago they expanded the Bodegas to produce a fino. This is unlike other finos on the market. It comes from a 12 year old solera – and yes, they say the flor does last that long.



Añada © Carolyn Bosworth-Davies 2017

It is taken en rama from the cask and has minimal filtration. With much more colour than commercial finos, it is nutty, earthy and full bodied, with a bold after-taste. This can keep longer after opening than your average fino.

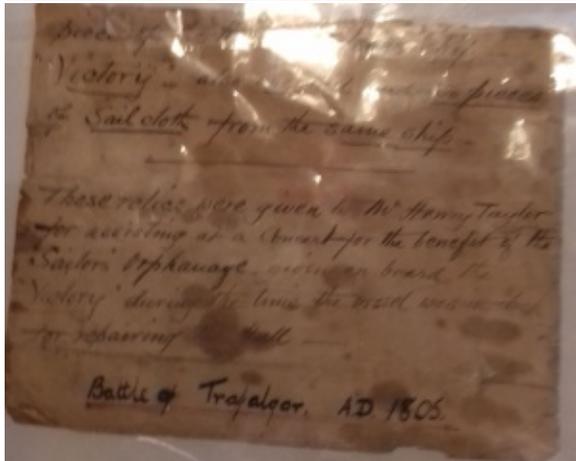
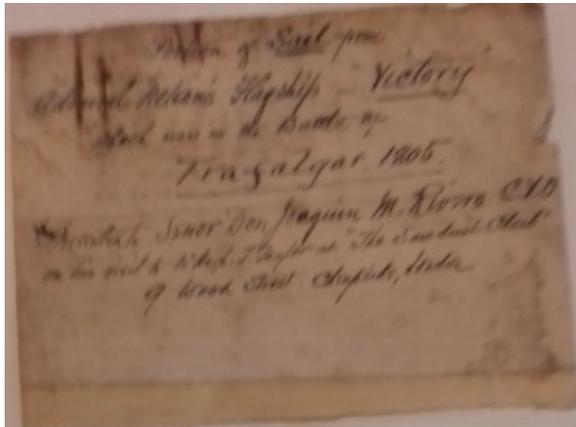
The aged oxidative Tradicion sherries are splendid. Serious, elegant and full of grandeur. Along with the Fino we were also treated to the Palo Cortado, Oloroso, Amontillado and PX VORS, which were 35, 50, 40 and 25 years old respectively.

The Amontillado, which they sell to Fortnum and Mason in half-bottles was rich with Seville orange fruit, nutty and salty, hugely layered and complex, with a terrific length. The Palo Cortado too was exceptional with an array of flavours that assault and linger in your senses. So very rich, creamy, almondy, salty and full of dried fruits. Wonderful.



As if tasting the sherry at Bodegas Tradicion was not fascinating enough, we were also shown an archive of historical Sherry documents and order books that Joaquim Rivero, who now owns Tradicion exclusively, is supporting. It is fascinating to see orders and requests for sherry for the survivors of the Battle of Trafalgar!

A visit to Tradicion is a must and a visit to the Bodega also includes the opportunity to see the wonderful Art collection that Rivero has accumulated, and is unassumingly displayed in a gallery just behind the casks of ageing sheries. Drawn from an entire collection of over 350 Spanish works of art from Goya, Zurbaran, El Greco and Velazquez, the paintings are rotated for display and those we saw were truly amazing. The wines are not widely distributed – they are expensive and production is small – starting from £40.00 per bottle for the Fino to £90.00 for the Palo Cortado! (On Amazon!!!)



Bodegas Tradicion archives © Carolyn Bosworth-Davies 2017



El Greco at Bodegas Tradicion © Carolyn Bosworth-Davies 2017

Not a five minute walk from Bodegas Tradicion is Bodegas Rey Fernando de Castilla, another relative newcomer from the 1960s and so named from 1972. This is a boutique operation producing not only sherry but also brandy. We were shown around by Javier Domecq, who explained its history and gave us a wonderful tasting across the range of their premium sheries.

Brandy was the initial focus, but Jan Pettersen, who had worked with Osborne for 15 years, bought the bodegas in 1999, and soon also bought out a neighbouring almacenista and decided to focus entirely on high-end, complex sherry, usually single-solera. Such has been the success that specialists such as Equipo Navazos buy butts from them for their own prestigious range.

The sherry at Fernando de Castilla is divided along two lines: the Classic range, aged for 2-9 years and bottled at Sanchez Romate, with whom they work closely; the Premium range is called Antique and wines are aged up to 30 years old. All are manually bottled and labelled with only one drawing from the soleras in the year. Critically the significant point of difference with the aged sherry at Fernando de Castilla is that they have not adopted the VOS or VORS classifications. This is because Jan Pettersen believes it is too vague, too broad, and doesn't accurately reflect the quality of the sherry. Most of his sherry would qualify for classification but he prefers to state that they are 20 years old or 30 years old.

To preserve the purity and distinctiveness of the wines, the Antique range has no filtering or cold stabilisation. Fernando de Castilla were also the first producer to introduce clear bottles for their sherry to show off their wonderful colour.



Their Antique Fino is an older style, or winter fino, with its fuller body. It has had extended ageing in oak for around 8 years and has a pure salty and citrus notes. The Antique Amontillado comes from a very old Fino (8 yrs old) which is refortified from 15.5% to 18.0% ABV and introduced into a solera of Amontillado where it spends a further 12 years. It is very dry, almost austere, and is lifted by orange peel and brazil nut flavours and great concentration and length. It's a serious and sublime wine which you can buy in the UK at Waitrose Wine Cellar for 50cl £23.69. The Oxford Wine Company has three from the range.

I decided to revisit El Puerto de Santa Maria to see if any memory from my visit over thirty years ago might return!

We travelled there from Cadiz on the catamaran ferry to El Puerto - something I would highly recommend. The ferry ride really gives you a clear understanding of the proximity of the sea and the salt marshes that surround the area and its influence on the bodegas in El Puerto. The town is dominated by Osborne, which now has a very smart and slick cellar door and tourist facility.

Although we did pop our heads into Osborne, which is impressive, we had an appointment with the family-run Bodegas Gutierrez Colosia based right on the dockside at the mouth of the River Guadalete. This was a truly special visit and the time and generosity of Carmen Pau and her daughter (also a Carmen) was overwhelming.

As with most El Puerto producers, Gutierrez Colosia specialises in biological-aged wines but they do also have aged oxidative soleras as well. The Bodegas was built in 1838 and housed several producers until the Gutierrez family took it over completely in the early part of the 20th century. Juan Carlos is the great grandson of the founder and Carmen is his wife.

She explained to me that although everyone calls them an almacenista, having previously supplied Williams and Humbert, Osborne, Lustau and Gonzalez Byass, her preference is to call themselves criaderos – those who bring up sherry, not merely stockholders. They became shippers in their own right when the regulations changed. Before 1996, a bodega was required to maintain at least 12,500 hectolitres in its cellars to qualify as a shipping bodega. This was reduced to a mere 500 hectolitres, which made it easier for almacenista bodegas to start selling under their own name.

The Bodegas itself is very close to the mouth of the river Guadalete, probably the closest of all in the region. The location, the mild winters and fresher summers, plus its high level of rainfall particularly in the spring, makes it a perfect environment for flor to develop. This together with both the dry Levante and humid Poniente winds helps to regulate the moisture and exaggerates the aromas of the sea and sea weed.

The cellars, which are based on the traditional nave cathedral cellars with high arches that are typical of the town, are strikingly different in that the floor is stone. This is because they want the humidity to be completely natural, unlike cellars where water is sprayed on to sandy floors.



Carmen Pau, Bodegas Gutierrez Colosia © Carolyn Bosworth-Davies 2017

Carmen's daughter stressed that this made their flor much thicker and longer lasting than those of Jerez and even Sanlucar. Indeed they have one fino solera where the alcohol has reached 16.5% and the flor is still there.

After half an hour the humidity really does get to you - although the temperature is not above 23 degrees - with 30 degrees outside. This is however 7-10 degrees cooler than Jerez.

They have two ranges, the Colosia Range and the Solera Familia range, which are their aged sherries, and for which they too do not use VOS or VOSR. The cask samples of the 70 year old Palo Cortado and the 100 year old PX were amazing in their expression of dried fruit, orange peel etc, while demonstrating huge freshness.

After a fabulous tour of the cellars we did not taste their

range in the tasting room for visitors, but as their honoured guests at their own restaurant 'Bespoke', two minutes along from the Bodegas. This they have recently acquired, and the family have given this over to their daughter Carmen to design and manage. She had previously studied at Art College, and now as well as working in the business, she uses her artistic talents to give a modern take on sherry. To give you an idea, just look at this Youtube clip entitled 'All you need is sherry'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjhEoY3fSng>

The restaurant is bright and buzzy. More importantly the food was delicious and Carmen (Snr) guided us through the range, using large wine glasses rather than copita, which certainly gave the sherry fuller and broader aromas. The food and sherry matching really did show how versatile sherry is and what great value too.

Colosia's sherries, especially their finos are delightful -



Bespoke Restaurant © Carolyn Bosworth-Davies 2017

fresh, salty and so drinkable. In the UK, Alliance are now their agents and Direct Wines also import them. Laithwaites has some of their range, as does Stone, Vine and Sun.

We really loved our time at Colosia - there is a real sense that this truly is a family business, not only committed to producing quality sherry but also supplying sherries to local restaurants, who come and fill their little barrels up at the cellar door, as well as trying to 'modernise' the image of sherry with their innovative restaurant. It was a delight, uncommercial and unspoilt, and I can't thank both Carmens enough for their kindness.

Thank you too to Angeline Bayly from Bespoke Media for setting up these visits on my behalf.

Photos & text © Carolyn Bosworth-Davies 2017

The Story of Tai Rosso in the Colli Berici

by
Paul Howard

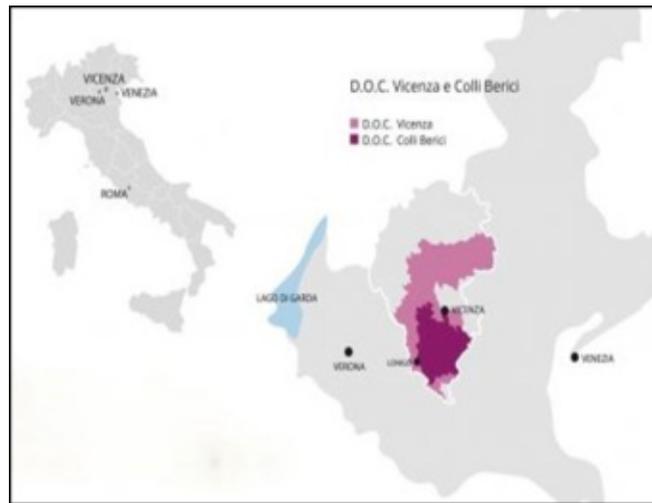
Last year I spent some quality time in the Colli Berici in northern Italy. These are the hills that rise out of the flat plains, between Vicenza and Verona. Here, in central Veneto, the Colli Berici was my countryside base for visits to these historic cities. As usual, the local DOC wines attracted my attention, and I vowed to return and find out more.

In September 2017 I did just that. So this is my story about the lovely Colli Berici and its unique red grape, Tai Rosso. Tai makes authentic premium quality wine, yet neither this area or its unique grape are well known. In a region famous for Valpolicella, Amarone, Soave and Prosecco, welcome to the Veneto's best-kept secret.

Where and what are we?

Tai Rosso is the Grenache Noir of France and Spain. It's also the Cannonau of Sardinia. However, this grape has gone native in the Colli Berici. Indeed, it's believed to have been here for hundreds of years. Grenache is commonplace around the world. Strangely, the Colli Berici is virtually the only place in northern Italy growing it.

Why it's here is a mystery. Some think that it arrived from Avignon in France, the home of Chateaufort-du-Pape. The Cardinals of Vicenza supported and visited the



Colli Berici DOC, the home of Tai Rosso

Avignon Popes during the Papal schism. Hence it's possible that cuttings of the Grenache vines returned with them. Fact or fiction? It sounds plausible, but we may never know for sure.

Tai Rosso has a clear identity

There is no doubt though that Tai Rosso has its own clear identity. It has bigger grape berries and thicker skins than Grenache in France or Spain. It seems to produce higher acidity, less sugar and has a paler colour.

Correctly speaking, Tai Rosso is a biotype of Grenache Noir and Cannonau, meaning they are genetically identical. However, there's been years of local adaptation in the Colli Berici. That means Tai Rosso has the same DNA but a different look and taste.

To add further confusion, Tai Rosso was once known as Tocai Rosso. However, Hungary claimed global precedence for the name Tokaji. So in 2007, it was

necessary for all other grapes called Tocai to change their names. Hence Tai references the old name and keeps a separate identity from Grenache, Cannonau or Alicante.

Terroir

In 1973 the Colli Berici received DOC status. It's well away from the pre-Alps to the north. Hence this warm and mild terroir is different to any other in the Veneto. The local geology is an old limestone sea-bed. Around 60 million years ago, pressure from volcanic magma welling up under the limestone pushed these hills up. Geologists call that process Bradyseism. It also added basalt rocks into the mix. The hilly terrain has rich, red clay soils full of fossils, called Terra Rossa.

The vineyards

The best vineyards are on free-draining and south-facing slopes. At an altitude of around 300 metres, they avoid the risks of frost and fog. Vines can get water-stress in summer. It's particularly true this year, where a lack of rain and intense heat spikes have meant considerable challenges across Europe.

Being Italy, Tai Rosso cultivation is either on traditional Pergola Veronese or "modern" Guyot systems. Unlike the Grenache in other countries, you won't find it cultivated as a stand-alone bush vine.

The vineyards tend to be small, family owned and interspersed with olive groves and natural woodland. Being near to Vicenza, magnificent Palladian Villas dot the Colli Berici landscape. These enhance the natural beauty of this rolling land.



Tai Rosso in the Colli Berici © Paul Howard 2017

Barbarano

Within the Colli Berici DOC is an even tinier enclave, a sub-zone around the village of Barbarano. Blink, and you'll miss it. It's exclusively Tai Rosso land, and is perhaps where the first plantings were. Some Barbarano producers don't use the Barbarano name as they consider the Tai Rosso name to be more memorable. From an international perspective, it's a moot point.

Colli Berici DOC grape varieties and styles

There are plenty of international and local grape varieties here. The internationals include Pinot Nero, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Cabernet Franc/Carménère in red. Pinot Grigio, Pinot Bianco, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc are the whites. Indeed, the DOC can boast that it was the first Italian DOC for Cabernet Franc in the whole of Italy!

Local grapes include red Tai Rosso, but also white Tai Bianco (Friulano), Incrozio Manzoni and Garganega. This enormous variety means there is wine made here in every style imaginable. There is Charmat and Metodo Classico fizz, white, red and rosé wines, plus sweet passito and even Vin Santo.

The potential for quality wine here, particularly in red wine, is enormous. For example, famous Soave producer Inama expanded into red wine growing. They chose to locate in the Colli Berici rather than in Valpolicella. Those reds are superlative, especially their Carménère. By the way, their 12 ha Oratorio vineyard is the largest single Carménère vineyard in Europe.

Wine Production

The DOC has only 830 hectares under vine (80 of which are Tai Rosso), with some 850 growers. This area remains a quiet place of mountains, rivers and forests.

In 2016, those DOC vineyards made a total of 49,000 hectolitres of wine. 63% of it was red, primarily Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Because of bulk wine sales via the large cooperatives, there were only 1.7 million bottles of DOC wine produced. Of this, just 350,000 bottles



Typical terroir in the Colli Berici © Paul Howard 2017

were Tai Rosso. Production of bottled Tai Rosso is therefore tiny. It's only the equivalent of one smallish winery, so no wonder it isn't better known!

The variety of grapes and styles from such a small area means the DOC hasn't yet established a clear identity. However, I think that despite the suitability of the Bordeaux red varieties, the USP of this place is Tai Rosso. It's uniqueness, quality and versatility are hidden strengths. Tai Rosso is of this place, and virtually nowhere else.

Back to Tai Rosso

Tai Rosso is highly versatile. It can be a blending partner, a chilled light red resembling a Rosato (Rosso Chiaro?), or make Charmat and Metodo Classico fizz. However, the best expression is as a Riserva. That's a serious red, frequently maturing in oak barrels. Large old oak casks suit it perfectly; new barriques would drown it.



Red clay soils in the Colli Berici © Paul Howard 2017

Usually a light ruby red colour, Tai Rosso has a full aroma, typically of cherry, raspberry, red flowers and violets. In the mouth, there's plenty of those fruit flavours and a herb character. There's an aftertaste of almonds and notably, rose hips. A striking point is its acidity and moderate alcohol. That imparts a welcome freshness and elegance.

Visiting the Colli Berici

It's easy to make winery visits here. Start at Lonigo (where the headquarters of the Consorzio are) and follow the Colli Berici's Strada dei Vini (wine road), created in 2001. It's a lovely journey, with wineries, vineyards, Palladian Villas and small villages en route.

Oh, and all this wine talk's made me hungry! Nothing better to go with a glass or two of Tai Rosso than with the local cold cuts; Sopressa Vicentina DOP and Prosciutto

Veneto Berico-Euganeo DOP. Oh, and don't forget olives and the Grano Padano and Asiago cheese.

This article was written for International Grenache Day 2017.

© Paul Howard 2017

Wine Descriptions

by
John Ducker

Maybe I'm on a loser here as a describer of wines, as not everyone smells and tastes wine uniformly. Just as in eyesight, where one's perception of colour may vary to a subtle degree – both one's nose and palate are subject to a number of variables for a multitude of different reasons. One might well wonder if the taste of a Grand Cru Burgundy from the Côte de Nuits evokes the same kind of taste-comparison sensations to a Burgundian vigneron as to a purchaser of the same wine in, say, Hong Kong or Tokyo, where a completely different daily range of taste sensations may prevail.

I was struck by a local tasting I attended many years ago which was led by a wine industry professional whose job it was to write descriptive back-labels for his company's wines. I recall that his audience was hard put to reconcile what they found in the glass to the descriptions he had written across the bottles he had brought with him, and I think my own view at the time was that he

might well qualify to be shortlisted for the Man-Booker Prize for Fiction! The French have an expression 'chacun à son goût', of course – 'everyone to his own taste' – though I suspect it was originally coined to reflect wider preferences beyond our perceptions of the finer nuances of wine.

As a wine educator I believe my job is to help enable tasters to furnish and broaden their own sensory-memory banks. Maybe one could make a start simply by taking a comparative sniff across whatever kitchen spices you have to hand - or taking time out to scent the fresh fruit and veg in one's supermarket (I guess this is safer than doing it at a market stall where local traders may take umbrage) – but then, compare the way we British buy fresh produce un-tested to, say, the French, who have no qualms about sniffing, pressing, poking and testing for freshness as of right as a daily shopping ritual, no questions asked.

The eleven officially recognized categories of smell and taste in a glass of wine may well offer a challenge to our sensory organs yet we may be able to pinpoint a certain flavour which we can then further define in terms of freshness, degree of ripeness, or even 'process', to take tinned tomatoes or strawberries as an example.

One glamorous if somewhat well-endowed student of mine announced she had found 'melons' in the taste of the wine she was sampling – and when I asked in all innocence 'how ripe are your melons?' I had no idea that both she and the class would dissolve in immediate hilarity!

Tasting practice is the key, and fundamentally we do need words to help frame the multitudinous sensations we may meet in wine – but do the words connect with smells and sensations we already know?

The distinguished wine guru the late André Simon was once interrupted at an important wine tasting by a colleague who rushed up to him excitedly and said “André – you simply must try what I have here – it tastes just like violets”. André’s response was uncompromising: “How would I know? I have never eaten a violet”. So – a lesson for all of us, me included – speak or write of what you know at first hand.

This leads me on to the lavish description given on the back label of one of the wines I had once written-up for this website, a wine I did happen to taste at first hand. I hasten to say I wasn’t responsible for what follows: “Willing Participant” Yarra Valley Pinot Noir 2010 - ‘A spicy nose with star anise, violets and pink peppercorns. Briary, wild blackberries and toffee apples. On the palate, blueberries, boysenberries and pomegranate. Dark cocoa powder, tarry and earthy. Plush and silky, settling into a long palate.’

I am certainly not going to challenge the cornucopia of a description above save to say that it may have been the opinion of the label-writer at the time he/she wrote it up...particularly if there looked to be a yawning space on the page that needed filling up. The wine may or may not have been all of those things, of course, and doubtless it spoke for itself, and it will be as YOU find it regardless of the context of what a ‘wine professional’ has signalled lies within the bottle.

The only hazard I can see in the event of over-florid descriptions of wines (or restaurant menus for that matter) is that they can so often lead to unfulfilled expectations. ... and perhaps ultimately a slight sense of disappointment assuming one hasn’t managed to capture every last sensory nuance that was advertised!

Private Eye’s Pseud’s Corner doesn’t enter the picture here, thankfully. I myself could happily vouch for this wine and its fragrant complexity having tasted and enjoyed it both at source at the Giant Steps winery in Healesville, Victoria, and again as I was once writing the same wine up at home. My first instinct was to put it with a good triple-cream French cheese like a Champenois ‘Vignotte’ or a Délice de Bourgogne – and perhaps to serve it alongside a simply grilled just-pink fillet of lamb ...but then you’ll have me down as a hedonist!

If we’re serious about tasting wine, let alone enjoying it socially for its own sake, it is worth considering against the background of its particular cultural context. Italy, with all its diversity and regional variability being a case in point. For Italians at table the ‘star of the show’ is always the local food, and the wines of the locality which share the same microclimates, soils and centuries of local tradition add their own authentic touches to the picture as a whole, helping create something that is ‘more than the sum of the separate parts’ of the meal.

Contrast this with France where although at the more artisan level the local wines chime in excellently well with the local cuisine, the cachet value of the nation’s top growths carries arguably more importance as a matter of

cultural consciousness. Market forces impinge slightly differently, witness the exclusivity and stratospheric expense of its vinous treasures (especially from Bordeaux and Burgundy) where the ‘wine as investment’ market can have rival importance to that of wine bought purely for drinking for pleasure.

Not wishing to be left out, Italy, too, has more recently created its own special category of exclusives, the Super-Tuscan wines, destined for long cellarage although not necessarily covered by the DOCa quality legislation.

Obviously the above comparisons I make are not set in stone, but they lie deep in the cultural consciousness of each country. Remember, any wine we taste will reveal the truth about itself if we know where to look for it, building up our own repertoire of sensory comparisons thereby.

Forgive this corny payoff – but maybe you remember the story of the lost little old lady asking directions of ‘one of New York’s finest’. “Officer”, she says, “Can you tell me how I get to Carnegie Hall?” “Lady”, he says, “You gotta practice!” So it is with wine tasting!

© John Ducker 2017

A brilliant Winemaker Dinner in the Alto Adige

by
Paul Howard

One of the best Winemaker Dinners that I've been to was earlier this year in the Alto Adige (Südtirol), where Italian and German cultures meld together. The Winemaker Dinner took place in the town of Merano, some 30 kilometres north of Bolzano in Italy at the "Ansitz Plantitscherhof".

It's one of the 29 Vinum Hotels in the region, an association of private hotels owned by wine-lovers. Some of these, like the Ansitz Plantitscherhof, also make wine.

This hotel's imposing, deep cellars date all the way back to 1277. The four cellar rooms house an impressive 21,000 bottles. Naturally, many of these are from the South Tyrol. However, I was particularly impressed by the great bottles stocked from around the world. There's something here for everyone, including "natural" wine lovers. What a splendid venue.

The Hotel Ansitz Plantitscherhof

The hotel's modern spa area, spacious suites and 36 rooms offer South Tyrolean charm and a strong sense of style. You can even rent a classic Alfa Romeo from here to tour the vineyards. Gastronomers are of course well catered for, with superb food by Chef Norbert Hanifle.



Hotel Ansitz Plantitscherhof © Paul Howard 2017

Indeed, this entire region is a gourmet paradise, with I'm told, six Michelin 2-star and eight Michelin one-star restaurants! Hotelier Johannes Gufler of Ansitz Plantitscherhof is also a qualified Sommelier. Hence it was a pleasure to tap into his knowledge of this beautiful region. In fact, the Winemaker Dinner was set in one of the ancient cellars, hosted by Johannes.

Surrounded by bottles, we met with Armin Gratl, Managing Director of the Eisacktaler Kellerai/Cantine Valle Isarco, and Martin Aurich of Unterortl/Castel Juval in Val Venosta. They had brought a selection of their wines to pair with the menu. Both were also incredibly generous in spending time away from their busy harvests.

Some explanation about each of these wineries is in order. Both are from steep mountain valleys located in the far north of the Alto Adige wine region. They have many contrasts in their approach to winemaking, but the results at both are spectacular wines.

Winemaker: Unterortl/Castel Juval

Unterortl is in the Val Venosta. This valley stretches from Merano into the western Dolomites, and is home to heroic viticulture. No wonder Reinhold Messner of mountaineering fame owns this property. The vineyards fall precipitously below the castle eyrie, at between 600 and 850 metres altitude.

Martin Aurich and his wife Gisela are the tenants at Castel Juval, and responsible for the winery and distillery. They created these densely planted vineyards from scratch in 1992. They involved a great deal of research – Martin is a Professor of Oenology. There are four hectares of vines, making some 30,000 screwcapped bottles in a typical year. They produce Pinot Bianco (Weissburgunder), Müller-Thurgau, Riesling and Pinot Noir (Blauburgunder). Grapes brought in from other growers in the valley help supplement production, including the rare Fraueler.

Winemaker: Eisacktaler Kellerei/Cantine Valle Isarco

As the name implies, Cantine Valle Isarco is a cooperative in the Valle Isarco, (the Eisacktal), which runs north-east from Bolzano up to the Brenner Pass and thence the Italian/Austrian Border. It's the youngest cooperative in the region, dating from 1961. The modern winery was re-established after an avalanche crushed the original. They represent 130 growers, with 150 hectares of vineyards and make 800,000 bottles per year.



Martin Aurich and Armin Gratl © Paul Howard 2017

Eisacktaler Kellerei makes a multitude of wines as their growers come from all parts of the valley. It means that in the vineyards of the northern Isarco you have mainly Müller-Thurgau, Kerner and Riesling grown. Meanwhile, Sylvaner, Pinot Grigio, Gewürztraminer and Grüner Veltliner come from the middle section. Finally, there are Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Bianco, Pinot Nero, Lagrein, Zweigelt, Blauer Portugieser and Schiava.

Those are from the lower and warmer southern part. The Kellerei uses high-quality DIAM cork. There is even production of fizz and passito sweet wines. Despite their vast range, the winery is no stranger to top international awards and accolades.

Time to dine

First, aperitivo, paired with Juval's Weissburgunder 2016 and Eisacktaler's Sylvaner 2016. The Weissburgunder had crystalline purity and iodine minerality. The Sylvaner was equally delicious and refreshing, with alfalfa notes. Both were superb examples, especially with cream cheese.

Starters

There were two different starters. Sashimi salmon with marinated artichokes and dried tomatoes came first. It came with topinambur terrine, made with Jerusalem artichokes. Juval's Riesling 2014 was splendid with this. It even stood up to the artichokes, a well-known wine-killer. The Riesling was dry, with fresh notes of peach, lime and grapefruit. It's all nerve and tension, with a little botrytis for extra complexity. A brilliant wine and a good argument for expanding Riesling plantings in the Val Venosta.

The second starter was Tortellini with a pumpkin and amaretti filling, accompanied by duck ragù and fried capers. I half expected a red wine. Instead, Eisacktaler presented a memorable white-wine; "Aristos" Kerner 2015 is from a single vineyard at 950 metres, the highest of all the Kellerei vines. It had fabulous aromatics, leesy power and a superb acid spine with peach and mango fruit that made for a terrific food match. In short, it was one of my top ten wine picks from the Alto Adige during my visit.

Main course

Now for the main course. Veal fillet in an olive crust on a bed of braised pearl onions and fried potato balls. It needed something ultra-special to drink with it. Juval's Pinot Noir 2012 (Blauburgunder) seemed made for the task. A beautiful alpine style Pinot Noir; wild berries, autumn leaves, a classic. Moreover, this is a perhaps the best Italian Pinot Noir I've ever had. Naturally, it's also one of my top ten Alto Adige picks. In an evening of fantastic wines from both wineries, this bottle stood out for me. Luckily for us, Martin Aurich had also bought a bottle of 2009.

Dessert

After a brief but highly animated break, it was time for dessert. If you can suggest anything more delicious than a warm Valrhona chocolate soufflé, then please let me know. Moreover, there were vanilla, pineapple and mango sorbets on the side.

Now a hush had descended on the room, which tells you what we all thought of the dessert. As we needed a sweet wine, Eisacktaler delivered a gem; Guwürtztraminer passito "Nectaris" 2014. With 228 grammes of residual sugar per litre, this was a superb passito wine. It was fresh and clean, without any noble rot. Just a bed of rose scents followed up with honeycomb and tangerines. It's rare, as there are only 1,000 bottles per year, with the grapes coming from just one grower. Wicked!

A great advertisement for the Alto Adige

The Winemaker Dinner was a superb advertisement for all the joys of the Alto Adige. The location, the hotel, the dining room, hospitality and food. And of course, each



Hotel Anstiz Plantitscherhof © Paul Howard 2017

winemaker showing their brilliant wines in turn. The next time I'm in Alto Adige, I'll be visiting Unterortl/Castel Juval and Eisacktaler Kellerei/Cantine Valle Isarco for sure. Lastly, if you're planning a trip to the Alto Adige, then I recommend you check out the Vinum Hotels for your stay. The entire experience at Anstiz Plantitscherhof was memorable, and it's a perfect base from which to explore. I look forward to returning to just as soon as I can.



The wines © Paul Howard 2017

Text & Photos © Paul Howard 2017

Pignoletto

by
Susan Hulme MW

One of the most exciting discoveries I have made in Italian wines in the last few years is the quality and character of Italy's many and varied sparkling wines. Aside from the hugely popular Prosecco and super-trendy Franciacorta, Italy is producing many exciting sparkling wines from top to bottom.

In the far north in Alto Piemonte and the Veneto there is the intriguing Erbaluce variety and Trentino is home to some really high quality sparklers from world-class producers Ferrari and Cavit. On the slopes of Etna in Sicily, the distinctive Carricante grapes produce surprisingly excellent fizz. The centre of Italy has its own share of stunning sparklers such as Pecorino from the Abruzzo, sparkling Verdicchio from the Marche and, one of my real favourites, Pignoletto from Emilia-Romagna – Italy's famous food capital and the home of Lambrusco.

The beauty of Pignoletto is that it comes in a variety of styles, from fully sparkling (Spumante) to semi-sparkling (Frizzante) and it also makes bone-dry characterful whites; there is even a small amount of sweet white wines available. Best of all, Pignoletto is already widely available in our market. Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose all have decent examples and some of the wines at the top end of the quality sector are also available.

Pignoletto is in fact the Grechetto Gentile grape (also known as Grechetto di Todi and Alionzina). It is to be found in neighbouring regions such as Lazio and Umbria but in a special hilly corner of Emilia-Romagna, it takes its name from the locality where it is grown - Pignoletto. In 2010 the producers of Colli Bolognesi (the hills of Bologna) were granted a DOCG which protects the name and ties it to this specific location.

As for what it tastes like, it has lively and fresh citrus and apple aromas and flavours, together with a salty, savoury finish that almost reminds you of the sea. It makes some deliciously quaffable sparkling wine with more character than the average Prosecco and less of its confected, pear drop notes. It makes some really delightful Frizzante styles which, to my mind, show the variety at its best because they combine the fuller flavour and character of a dry white wine with that extra little lift and spritz from the bubbles.

I recently gave a Pignoletto seminar for the trade at 67 Pall Mall, with a contribution from friend and CWW member Carla Capalbo. It was followed by a walk-around tasting of over 100 Pignolettos in a range of styles. There were so many really enjoyable, characterful wines; here are just a few of my favourites to look out for.

Chiarli Vecchia Modena Spumante Pignoletto - deliciously, drinkable, dry but lively, fruity wine with bright apple flavours. Waitrose £7.99

Manaresi Pignoletto Spumante, fresh, lively, understated with a super-clean style. Great introduction to Pignoletto.

Montevecchio Isolani Pignoletto. This is the wine of Francesco Cavazza Isolani, president of the Consorzio Colli Bolognesi. Lively and crisp, Pignoletto in a very characterful style with a lingering, mineral, savoury, Chablis-like finish.



Gordon Stuteley CEO G.S.Wines, Susan Hulme MW, Clare from Sipp Wines, Carla Capalbo © G.S. Wines 2017

Orsini Vignetto San Vito Sui Lieviti Frizzante – One of the most exciting versions of Pignoletto. This is a super-characterful style made in a traditional way which involves a second fermentation in the bottle in which the wine is sold. Expect some fine lees in the bottle. Sold with a crown cap closure. It can be shaken to maximise the effect of the lees or drunk without shaking to reduce it. Characterful but seriously fun too.

Fattorie Vallona Pignoletto Ammestesso Classic Pignoletto DOCG. No oak, 4 years minimum maturation. This time Pignoletto is presented in a still, dry, richly-textured and concentrated style from one of the best producers. Definitely one to try, for aficionados.

Text © Susan Hulme MW 2017

Photos © G.S. Wines 2017



Pignoletto producers © G.S. Wines 2017

Colli Bolognesi produce © G.S. Wines 2017



PIGNOLETTO FACTS

- 15 years ago - around 3 million bottles/year of Pignoletto (DOC & DOCG)
- From 2011 – increased international interest in Italian sparkling wines. Now 12 million bottles/year (11 DOC and 1 DOCG)
- Forecast in the next 5 years: increase between 5 and 6 million bottles.

Characteristics:

Light body & a thick, phenolic skin

High acid:

Frizzante: average 6 – 7 g/L, pH 3.10

Still: 5.5 – 6 g/L , pH 3.40 – 3.50

Colli Bolognesi DOC - Established 1975.

The name 'Pignoletto' only allowed in the following:

Colli Bolognesi Pignoletto DOCG (from 2010)

620 ha of Grechetto Gentile / 8000 growers /100 wineries

Colli Bolognesi Pignoletto Classico Superiore DOCG

Pignoletto DOC (from 2014) / 860 ha of Grechetto Gentile

(expected to increase by 500 ha in next 3 years)

Frizzante & Spumante

85% Grechetto Gentile / Max. yield 12 ton/ha

Pressure: 2.5 bar (frizzante) / 3+ bar (spumante)

Min Alcohol: 10% (frizzante) / 9.5% (spumante)

Superiore

85% Grechetto Gentile / Max.yield 11 ton/ha / Min alcohol 11%

Classico Superiore

95% Grechetto Gentile / Max.yield 9 ton/ha / Min alcohol 12%

Released after 4th October of the year following the harvest.

VDP Grosses Gewächs Tasting

by

Richard Bampfield MW

The annual VDP Grosses Gewächs tasting in Wiesbaden is a remarkable event - an unrivalled opportunity to try the latest vintage of Germany's top dry wines, accompanied by levels of organisation and service that could probably only be encountered in Germany. This year, we were tasting whites from the 2016 vintage and reds from 2015 - very much a privilege to attend.

Compared to the ripe, very accessible 2015s, the 2016s offer a return to a cooler, more classic vintage. Levels of acidity are high but are more than balanced by extract and, in the majority of cases, intensity of fruit. The Rieslings from the Mosel are marked by crisp fruit and laser-sharp purity - not always easy to taste now, but with great promise for the future. I only tasted a limited number but enough to find stunning wines from Van Volxem and Nik Weis - St Urbans-Hof in particular.

The Nahe Rieslings also looked strong, not surprisingly showing more weight and ripeness of fruit. I particularly liked the line-up from Dr Crusius - wines that are classically-styled and highly expressive, giving every indication that they can be enjoyed earlier than many others. For those looking for wines to lay down, the selections from Kruger-Rumpf, Dönnhof, Emrich-Schönleber and Schäfer-Fröhlich were all outstanding.



VDP Grosses Gewächs Tasting © Richard Bampfield MW 2017

I was also struck by the admirable consistency and top quality of the wines from the Felsenberg vineyard in Schlossböckelheim.

Rheinhessen was also of high quality. There were predictably strong showings from Keller and Wittmann, and it was refreshing to find beautiful Rieslings from three

producers new to me, KF Groebe, Kühling-Gillot and Battenfeld-Spanier. I tasted a limited selection from the Pfalz, where Knipser excelled, alongside a fabulous flight from the Forster Kirchenstück vineyard, including a 2015 ringer from Reichsrat von Buhl that some saw as the wine of the tasting.

I didn't get round to tasting the Rheingau, largely because I was distracted by a sensational flight of Franken Rieslings which showed tremendous depth of flavour and character for the vintage. Rudolf Fürst, Horst Sauer and Rainer Sauer all stood out.

2016 also looks an excellent vintage for Franken Silvaner, led by particularly fine offerings from the Sauer estates and Michael Fröhlich, and highly consistent wines from the Am Lumpen 1655 vineyard in Escherndorf.

Curiously enough though, the revelation of the whites for me was the quality of the Weisser Burgunders. Generally they were less austere than the Rieslings whilst still showing admirable vitality and freshness. They struck me as perfect for relatively early drinking and highly versatile with food. Highlights were the wines from Knipser, Messmer and Bernhart in the Pfalz and a wonderful, oaked, Burgundy-style 2015 Gips Marienglas from Gerhard Aldinger in Württemberg. Not surprisingly the Chardonnays were reminiscent of Burgundy too, with especially strong efforts from the 2015 vintage offered by Bernhard Huber and Dr Heger.

Given the warmth and ripeness of the 2015 vintage, I had high hopes for the Spätburgunder and tasted all of these. Overall the vintage was not as consistent as I had hoped: many wines, especially from Rheinhessen (a sensational Morstein 2014 from Keller excepted), Pfalz and Württemberg, were either a little simple or betrayed levels of extraction or oaking that somehow stifled the natural spring of the variety. As Pinot Noir producers around the world will testify, balance in wines made from this grape is often tantalisingly out of reach.

My conclusion is to stick to the proven high achievers and, if necessary, to pay the extra. In the Pfalz, Knipser and Philipp Kuhn are both producing attractive, highly flavoursome wines. For those looking for more age-worthy wines, those of Friedrich Becker have a strong following. In Franken, there is little reason to look beyond Rudolf Fürst, a genuine master of Spätburgunder/Pinot Noir. In Baden, there were some beautiful wines from Huber, Dr Heger and Franz Keller. A new name on me, Ernst Dautel, stood out in Württemberg and, last but certainly not least, there was a spectacular showing from Meyer-Näkel and JJ Adeneuer in the Ahr. There is no doubt that the best of these 2015's merit a place at the top table of international Pinot Noir.

Just one final thought. Both wine professionals and the public, in the UK at least, have become conditioned to thinking of white wines in terms of whether they are dry or sweet - and anything in the middle is condemned to a Room 101 scenario where the word "medium" is strictly forbidden. The wines in this VDP tasting are Grosses Gewächs and therefore, by definition, dry. However I was struck by the fact that the words dry or sweet featured relatively rarely in my tasting notes and, when they did, were attached to the less successful wines. The best German wines (and I would make the same argument for Alsace) have a natural balance and mouth-watering fruit quality that over-ride any notion of dryness or sweetness. If somehow these wines could be served more often in fine dining environments, without prejudice or preconception, I am sure that they would find favour with a new generation of wine drinkers.

Photo & text © Richard Bampfield MW 2017

Laimburg Research Centre: planning for the future in Alto Adige/Sud Tirol, and beyond

by
Nancy Gilchrist MW

Entering the Laimburg Province Winery which lies at the foot of Monte di Mezzo in South Tyrol (NE Italy), feels like entering a James Bond film set. The winery is cut deep into the massive hillside and once you pass through the original small cellar you find yourself in a huge, bare rock cavern. Complete with high-backed designer chairs that would suit Spectre and his white cat admirably, it is used for conferences and corporate entertaining.

Although there is a long history of viticulture and wine trade in the region (a recent discovery found 2,400-year-old grape seeds near the Laimburg Castle ruins), the Laimburg Research Centre most definitely has its mind focussed on the future.

Founded in 1975, it now employs about 200 staff working in eight research areas of which viticulture and wine cellar management are some of the most dynamic. It owns several vineyards in addition to the winery which is positioned just south of Bolzano, the small regional capital. Somewhat improbably, this not very remarkable town can occasionally lay claim to being the hottest city in Italy. Forget Naples or Palermo; on some days in July and August it's Bolzano that can simmer at well over 40C

due to the static air caught in the natural amphitheatre of the surrounding hills. And harvest dates have been creeping earlier and earlier. The same sugar levels at harvesting are now being reached up to 3 three weeks earlier than 30 years ago.

Not surprisingly therefore, when I met Professor Barbara Raifer, head of viticultural research, in July 2017, we discussed the impact of climate change on viticulture and some of the research the LRC is undertaking to tackle the consequences.

2017 saw the launch of two new EU funded projects: one on Pinot Bianco; the other on Pinot Noir. This last is exploring the potential of Pinot Noir for the production of sparkling wine. Research is focussing on cross-breeding and propagating clones that will lead not only to increased disease resistance but also better acidity retention and minimal increase in alcohol production. According to Barbara the most disease resistant genes in both red and white grapes come from the States for it is here that are found the oldest diseases - and the resistance to go with them. Currently Laimburg are monitoring 30 vineyards ranging in altitudes from 230m to 1150m. The results and analysis of this project should become available in 2019/2020.

The Pinot Bianco project is hoping to breed grapes that develop ripe flavours earlier in the season whilst still preserving natural acidity. Laimburg is working in partnership with Corinthia/ium? in Austria and also with Wurtemberg in Southern Germany. Pinot Bianco is being monitored in all three countries in vineyards grown at three different altitudes: 300m, 500m and 700m. Initial

results should be available by 2020 and there will be some interesting comparisons to be made about viticultural conditions on both sides of the Alps.

We tasted a trial Pinot Bianco 2015 grown on porphyry and alluvial soils at Schloss Tirol near Merano in Val Venosta that showed characteristic honeyed pear and wet pebble aromas, a full mid-palate and then a striking liveliness and drive, finishing very fresh although admittedly the 13.5% alcohol appeared a little warm. The vines were 15 years old but Barbara said that Pinot Bianco over 10 years old is very much the exception in the region purely because quantity tends to drop off. Typically Pinot Bianco has been planted at 400-600m but over the last 10 years vineyards have been moved to altitudes of 700 to 900m and away from south-facing slopes which increasingly are producing too much alcohol. The 'creep' up the mountain sides is, says Barbara, very evident and dramatic. The same is true of Pinot Noir.

In Eppian St Paul, a little to the South of the Research Centre, there is an ancient Pinot Bianco vine of 110 years old that is still producing grapes with high natural acidity and low sugar in spite of an alarmingly hollow trunk. It also appears to be resistant to Esca (die-back) and so not surprisingly is of considerable viticultural pathological interest.

Traditional local grapes may also have much to offer. Almost forgotten varieties such as Fraueler, Weissterlaner and Blatterle all produce wines with naturally high acidity and low sugar. Laimburg is working to integrate these innate qualities with those of more internationally

recognised varieties. They are also looking into the potential of using such grapes in the blends for sparkling wine.

To Barbara's considerable disappointment however, interest in Gewürztraminer seems to be minimal from both growers and consumers. Usually known for its tendency towards ungainly weight and high alcohol, this grape would seem to be adapting better to climate change than might be expected. Unlike Pinot Bianco and Pinot Noir it is not climbing the terraced hillsides in search of cooler climes. Rather, it is continuing to produce well-balanced wines of notable quality from the region around Traminer - which is after all its recognised 'birth place'. Barbara would wish to see more of this variety planted but 'administrative problems' are blocking experimentation and local producers are unwilling to gamble with a variety that still has reluctant sales internationally. Whilst in Alto Adige we tasted some exceptional sweet Gewürztraminer including the Cantina Kurtatsch Mitterberg Bianco Passito which is a 70% Gewürztraminer 30% Moscato Giallo passito – co-fermented blend. An extraordinary wine with intense aromas and luscious flavours of exotic fruits. Mouth-filling and moreish with a fresh and beautifully-poised, very extended finish.

The jury may be out as to which grape variety or varieties will best represent the region but what is without dispute is that the intensity of weather extremes is increasing. The past two years (2016 and 2017) have seen more frost damage due to earlier budding and more ferocious hailstorms. These have had devastating effects not only on one year's harvest but, due to damage to the actual

structure of the vine, on the following year's crop also. As one viticulturalist quipped: "It would be a good time to invest in netting" - referring to the increasing vineyard area placed under expensive protective covering.

And of course Alto Adige is not alone; Burgundy, Champagne, Bordeaux are other high profile regions suffering similarly. The research results from the Laimburg Research Centre will have implications and, hopefully, benefits for many wine producers far beyond its regional horizons.

© Nancy Gilchrist MW 2017

Joseph Perrier Visit, 5th-6th October 2017

by
Paul Quinn

Thursday October 5th

We arrived at Paris Charles de Gaulle at noon and were met by Philippe, the occasional driver for Joseph Perrier, who was to take us to the old press house at Cumières. In the taxi, on ice, was our first wine of the day: **Joseph Perrier Cuvée Royal Brut NV** - 35% Chardonnay, 35% Pinot Noir, 30% Pinot Meunier and 20% reserve wine. Complex with notes of apple and peach.

Joseph Perrier was established in 1825 in Châlons-en-Champagne and was the appointed supplier to Queen Victoria and King Edward VII, hence the Royal Cuvée. The house has been managed by the same family for over five generations.

The Manor at Cumières does not press grapes anymore but has a few acres of Pinot Noir vines just directly behind the house. There we tried our second wine with a quick lunch - **Joseph Perrier Cuvée Royal Brut Rose NV** - 25% Chardonnay, 75% Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. Violets on the nose, elegant with a long finish with just a touch of menthol.

We then set off to have a look at the vines of Joseph Perrier. All of these are in Vallée de la Marne and are classified 93% Premier cru. Unfortunately the vintage was very early this year with picking at the end of August; this has only happened a couple of times in the past 30 years. The vintage had been good until the end of July when they had a wet and stormy August that brought some botrytis to the region. So this was not going to be good vintage year and they would be adding some of their reserve stock to the champagnes, but at least the Chardonnay was in good condition.

At night we stopped in Reims for an evening meal at Au Petit Comptoir and had a brilliant Joseph Perrier Cuvée Royal Brut Blanc de Blancs NV - 100% Chardonnay with around 15% coming from reserve wines. Selected from Grand Cru vineyards in the Côte des Blancs with some of their own fruit from Cumières. Fresh citrus notes, great acidity with a touch of vanilla and brioche.

Friday 6th October

At 9.00am Jean-Claude was waiting outside our hotel. He had just flown in from the UK that morning to take us to Joseph Perrier. We met Elodie for a tour of the cellars, before having a taste of the full range.

The Tasting

Joseph Perrier Brut (see above notes)

Joseph Perrier Cuvée Royal Brut Vintage 2008 - 50% Chardonnay, 41% Pinot Noir, 9% Pinot Meunier. Aged for at least 6 years. Beautifully balanced with honeysuckle, ginger and apricot notes.

Esprit de Victoria Brut Blanc de Blancs Vintage 2010

100% Chardonnay from Premier and Grand Cru vineyards. Aged in bottle for at least 6 years. Hawthorn, acacia, grapefruit on the nose with hints of warm pastries and a complex finish.

Joseph Perrier Blanc de Noirs 2009 Brut Nature - 100% Pinot Noir from a single Premier Cru parcel named the Côte à Bras, aged for an average of 6 years. Hints of iodine and salt turning into honey and mirabelle plum.

Ripe and delicious with hints of dried cherries and kirsch. **Joseph Perrier Josephine 2008** - 52% Chardonnay, 48% Pinot Noir, all from Premier and Grand Cru sites. At least 7 years aging. Fresh and soft with butter, soft spices and dried fruit on the nose. A mineral backbone with a vinous finish.

Esprit de Victoria Brut Rose Vintage 2008 - 33%

Chardonnay, 61% Pinot Noir, 6% Pinot Meunier. All from Premier and Grand Cru villages. Aged for at least 6 years. Wild violets and Morello cherries followed by hints of blackcurrant with a touch of vanilla on the finish.

Joseph Perrier Cuvée Royal Demi Sec NV - 35% Chardonnay, 35% Pinot Noir, 30% Pinot Meunier, with 20% of this from reserve wines. 20 different villages used for this blend. Rich and generous, flavours of yellow peach, apricot jam and toasted brioche.

Thank you to Stainton's Wines and Joseph Perrier for putting this together. © Paul Quinn 2017

In search of Sekt... and Riesling and Silvaner: AWE members join the German Wine Academy trip

by
Heather Dougherty

The German Wine Academy runs regular trips open to wine educators, and this September AWE members Heather Dougherty, Vivienne Franks, Steve Hovington and Alison Moller were part of a multi-national group to visit the Pfalz region, with a quick extension to the Rheingau.

The trip combined visits to producers with lectures at the German Wine Academy's campus in Neustadt. You can read a more detailed account of the trip on the AWE website blog, (<http://www.wineeducators.com/category/wine-members-blog/wine-trips/>), but here are a few highlights.

- Germany is now the world's third largest producer of Pinot Noir (after France and the US). But the Pfalz region is also capable of making delicious, ripe and ageworthy Cabernet Sauvignon.
- We met German wine royalty, the form of Anastasia Kronauer, Pfalz wine queen. This annual competition crowns a young woman queen of each of the 13 German wine regions. This year's ultimate victor and German wine queen 2017/18 is Katharina Staab, from the Nahe.



Romana Echensperger © Heather Dougherty 2017

- Tasting the impact of different soil types on the taste of Riesling – proof that Riesling rocks!
- A chance to discover some of the less well known German varieties – Lemberger, Moskateller, Würzer and Cabernet Carbon – this latter is known as a PIWI, ie a fungal resistant hybrid variety. These PIWIs are being grown, largely experimentally, in the search for varieties which might be able to cope with the warmer, more humid conditions likely to develop as a result of global warming.



Solter Sekt © Heather Dougherty 2017

- Speaking of global warming, if temperatures continue to rise on their current trend, by 2040 Baden could be growing Grenache!
- We were able to sample the freshest Riesling juice, directly from the press at Weingut Pfeffingen, before walking through their vineyards, discovering the rare mutation, Red Riesling.
- We confirmed that sommeliers have more stamina than wine educators, as none of us made the late night trip to the Bad Dürkheimer Wurstmart – despite the name, the biggest wine festival in the world.
- Sekt could be the next big thing to come out of Germany – but consumers need to look for “Deutscher Sekt” to ensure that they are drinking wine made from grapes grown in Germany, rather than imported in bulk from other countries. Most Deutscher Sekt (85%) is made using tank method, but the real quality and excitement is from the small band of traditional method producers.
- Silvaner plantings have fallen off a cliff since the 1960s and is mostly now confined to its Franken and Rheinhessen strongholds. For many years damned as simply “Spargelwein” (wine to serve with asparagus), passionate supporter Romana Echensperger MW showed us the versatility and quality Silvaner is capable of.
- Walking through the vineyards of the world famous Rheingau, from Schloss Johannisberg to Schloss Vollrads, is the best way to appreciate the terroir – especially fortified with a glass of Riesling.



Walking in Rheingau © Heather Dougherty 2017

- At Weingut Allendorf our minds were blown as a glass of Riesling in our hands changed flavour, depending on the colour of light projected around us – this has to be experienced to be believed!

The trip was very well organised, the quality of the lectures and lecturers was second to none and we would heartily recommend all AWE members to jump at the chance of joining one of these trips in the future.

Photos & text © Heather Dougherty 2017



Xavier Amirault's cellar © Heather Dougherty 2017

A river runs through it: a quick tour of the Loire Valley

by
Heather Dougherty

During an unusually hot few days in June this year a small, but perfectly formed, group of AWE members set out on a tour of the Loire Valley, taking in Anjou, Saumur, Chinon, St Nicholas de Bourgueil, Vouvray and Touraine's newest sub-region, Chenonceaux. You can read our detailed report of each of the visits on the AWE blog (<http://www.wineeducators.com/category/wine-members-blog/wine-trips/>), but here is speed tasting version of what we encountered.

At Château de Bellevue in the Chaume area of Anjou we met “human Swiss army knife” François Bardel, where we had our first of many tastes of that jewel of the Loire, Chenin Blanc.

We then headed to Antoine Leduc-Frouin, a great exponent of rosé and whose wines demonstrate the joy to be had in a full-flavoured off-dry rosé d’Anjou made from Grolleau grapes which have been shown respect and grown in the right place. Antoine’s wines were served over a picnic lunch – a moveable feast indeed, as the table retreated into their troglodyte cave to escape the sun.



Xavier Amirault © Heather Dougherty 2017

At Langlois-Château in St Hilaire St Florent, almost a suburb of Saumur, the usual order of things was reversed, as after a quick tour of the vineyards we were unusually keen to make an extensive tour of the producer’s 3km of cellars, if only to escape that fearsome heat. The “Bollinger of the Loire” makes some of the most quality-conscious traditional method sparkling wine in the Loire.

The weather broke overnight and cooler conditions prevailed for our visit to Xavier Amirault in St Nicholas de Bourgueil. Xavier is a luxuriantly coiffed organic and biodynamic grower who clearly knows every inch of his vineyards inside out – as well as underneath – he is evangelical about the influence of the soil, subsoil and bedrock on his vines and Cabernet Franc based wines.

Across the Loire from St Nicholas de Bourgueil, we tasted different expressions of Cabernet Franc at Domaine de la Noblaie. The bottlings, named for their single vineyard origins, underlined the very evident differences in the

wines: Les Blancs Manteaux on limestone soils contrasting perfectly with the more clay-y Les Chiens Chiens.

Vouvray is a wine geek’s pleasure dome, with its singular focus on Chenin Blanc in all its incarnations from bone dry to lusciously sweet, not forgetting sparkling. We visited Bernard Fouquet, whose elegant and precise wines were a perfect end to the day – and a wonderful illustration of the versatility of Chenin Blanc.

Our final visit was to the Loire’s newest sub-region, Touraine Chenonceaux. Touraine’s sprawling region deserves some markers to point out areas of interest and Chenonceaux includes vineyards on the best sloping sites on both sides of the Cher, literally in sight of the river. The whites, based on Sauvignon Blanc, have a sense of Sancerre about them; reds must include some Côt (Malbec) and emphasise fruit over oak. Meeting proud, motivated growers enthused by the creation of this little



Bernard Fouquet © Heather Dougherty 2017

sub-region was a real pleasure and a wonderful finishing point of our packed few days in the Loire.

Thank you to InterLoire for supporting the trip and to our own Dr Helen Savage, who masterminded the trip and drove us all every kilometre of the way from the UK and safely home again.

Photos & text © Heather Dougherty 2017

Lost in Collio

by

Benjamin Spencer



I didn't realize that I had crossed the border until I was already in Slovenia. It was my first visit to Gorizia, in northeast Italy. I was walking around the thousand-year old village after dinner, studying the streets and architecture, the way one time period merges with another, rarely revealing any hard edges.

One century ago, the heart of the Collio was a mix of moments and ideas. Due to its unique geographic location, in what is now the heart of Friuli-Venezia e Giulia, merchants were able to court Eastern and Western European appetites. Collio's white wines from Friulano, Ribolla Gialla, and Picolit have long been known for their staying power. However, red varieties excel here too.

The rolling hills, between the Isonzo River and the border with Slovenia, benefit from a warmer climate due to its proximity to the Mediterranean Sea. In Collio, it seems, you can plant anything.

Today, it remains one of Italy's most capable wine regions. White and red wines do well in the local sandstone-marl, which everyone calls ponca. Where ponca, or flysch, is a dominant part of the terroir, the red and white wines are tight, mineral and racy, nearly unapproachable within a year after the harvest.

As the wines begin to relax, Collio whites and reds offer a procession of aromas and flavors that develop in the bottle long after the vintage.

Of course this wasn't always the case. Shortly after the Second World War, co-operatives in the area encouraged



industrial cultivation. The wines were glamorous but short lived, intended for the value wine market and sold in bulk.

Farmers who resisted the commercial push began talking. There were better ways to do things. Year after year, they focused their attention on training schemes, lowering yields, and modifying protocols in the cellar. By the time the Collio DOC was finalized in 1968, there were 17

varieties allowed in the appellation, but only four of them were local grapes—Friulano, Ribolla Gialla, Malvasia Istriana, and Picolit.

Since then there have been 13 modifications to the law. This has left Collio in a bit of a quandary. The territory has become less known for its native varieties than its capability to produce consistent delicious wines. The Collio DOC is banking on this reputation as they apply

for DOCG classification for the whole of Collio.

The wines, they propose, are based on a new evolution in thinking. If approved, the new DOCG wines will be made in exemplary vintages and carry the name Gran Selezione Collio DOCG. The white blend is currently based on a minimum of 40 to 70% of Friulano. To that can be added Ribolla Gialla (max 30%) and/or Malvasia Istriana (max 30%). Elevation can be in wood or stainless steel for a minimum of 24 months, including six months on fine lees. Wood containers will be limited to tonneau or larger. Wines divided between stainless and second/third passage vats will likely have a leg up on those made exclusively in one or the other.

Apart from the proposed Friulano-based DOCG blend, there are two outliers in Collio. The white Pinots—Pinot Bianco and Pinot Grigio—remain stunning examples of complexity and longevity. Though only 3% of production is dedicated to Pinot Bianco, compared to Pinot Grigio's near 30% hold on Collio, the two wines expand the region's appeal far beyond the confines of current or proposed legal blends. Under the new DOCG, Pinot Grigio will be eligible for Superiore status.

Monovarietal bottlings of each variety have great potential for extended ageing long after the DOCG target of two years. When cared for in the vineyard and the cellar, the wines can develop for more than a decade in bottle. Pinot Bianco produces heady, lush white wines that are ready for drinking when young and evolve to liquid gold over time. When vinified as a white wine, Pinot Grigio can be austere and mineral. As a pigmented wine, it goes several steps in another direction.

The highland valley of Oslavia is the capital for Collio's orange wines—white wine grapes fermented like red wines, on their skins. It's easy to see the attraction to these blush wines, especially when they are made well. Oslavian Pinot Grigio and the local Ribolla Gialla wines are brimming with fresh ripe fruit and territorial bravura. The best can easily age for a decade or two, gaining complexity as they go.

This is not a fad. It's tradition. The hills around Gorizia have been making short-maceration wines for centuries. All these new blends and laws, they're a relatively new addition to Collio's story.

Maybe all we need is a sign here. It could be something simple ... "Collio: White wines with incredible ageing potential" or "< White wines this way | Orange wines that way >" or perhaps "You are now leaving Italy | Welcome to Slovenia" ... Unfortunately, I think we're going to have to wait. Precise directions are still in the works.

Benjamin Spencer is a writer, winemaker, and educator. He is the director of The Etna Wine School, in Sicily, and the author of the forthcoming book "The New Wines of Mount Etna: An Insider's Guide to the History and Rebirth of a Wine Region."



White Blends

- Castello di Spesa — Collio Bianco Riserva del Castello 2010
- Gradis'ciuta — Collio Bianco Bratinis 2015
- Pascolo — Collio Bianco Agnul 2013
- Primosic — Collio Bianco Klin 2011
- Sturm — Collio Bianco Andritz 2015
- Tenuta di Angioris — Collio Bianco 2014

Single Varieties

- Mauro Drius — Friulano 2016
- Alessio Komjanc — Friulano 2016
- Polencic — Friulano 2016
- Carlo di Pradis — Friulano 2015
- Skok — Friulano Zabura 2016
- Terre del Faet — Friulano 2015
- Venica — Friulano Ronco del Cime 2016

Angoris — Pignolo Riserva Giulio Locatelli 2012

Castello di Spessa — Pinot Bianco Di Santarosa 2000
 Ferruccio Sgubin — Pinot Bianco 2016
 Toros — Pinot Bianco 2015

Angoris — Pinot Grigio 2016
 Carlo di Pradis — Pinot Grigio 2015
 Collavini — Pinot Grigio Villa Canlungo 2016
 Fiegel — Pinot Grigio Orange 2004
 Primosic — Pinot Grigio Orange 2015
 Dario Princic — Pinot Grigio Orange 2013
 Radikon — Pinot Grigio Orange 2014
 Roncanda — Pinot Grigio 2015
 Zorzon — Pinot Grigio 2016

Ca'Ronesca — Ribolla Gialla 2016
 Carlo di Pradis — Ribolla Gialla 2015
 La Castellada — Ribolla Gialla 2004

Borgo Conventi — Sauvignon 2013
 Casa delle Rose — Sauvignon 2016
 Castello di Spessa — Sauvignon 2016
 Livio Felluga — Sauvignon 2016
 Russiz Superiore Sauvignon Riserva 2012
 Fiegel — Sauvignon 2016
 Alessio Komjanc — Sauvignon 2015
 Simon Komjanc — Sauvignon 2015
 Kurtin — Sauvignon 2016
 Orzan — Sauvignon 2016
 Tercic — Sauvignon 2015
 Toros — Sauvignon 2007
 Zorzon — Sauvignon 2016

Bordeaux Grands Crus Classés 1855 by Hugh Johnson and Franck Ferrand

Review by Paul Howard

The Bordeaux Grands Crus Classés 1855 gave official recognition to the best wines of the Médoc and Sauternes. 163 years later, it's still a compelling listing, though hardly without flaws. This handsome new book about this classification claims to be the essential reference for wine aficionados. Does it live up to this billing?

Background

First, a little scene-setting. 1855 was the year the Daily Telegraph began and when the drug Cocaine was first purified. David Livingstone became the first European to see the Victoria Falls in Africa. Meanwhile, his Queen had already reigned over Britain for 18 of her 63 years.

In 1855, Emperor Napoleon III ruled France after seizing power in a coup d'état four years earlier. Allied with Britain, both were fighting against the Russians in the Crimea. The phylloxera blight was still in the future, as it would not reach Bordeaux until 1869. From 1875, the vineyards would lay in ruin.

The Exposition Universelle de Paris

Meanwhile, 1855 was also the year of the Exposition Universelle de Paris. This industrial fair attempted to surpass Britain's Great Exhibition of 1851 held at the

Crystal Palace in London. Some say Napoleon III demanded a new classification of the best red and white Bordeaux wines for the exhibition. Napoleon III's involvement is doubtful. However, wine brokers chose 61 red and 27 white Châteaux. They used trading prices as a proxy for quality rather than rely on the subjective opinion of tasters.

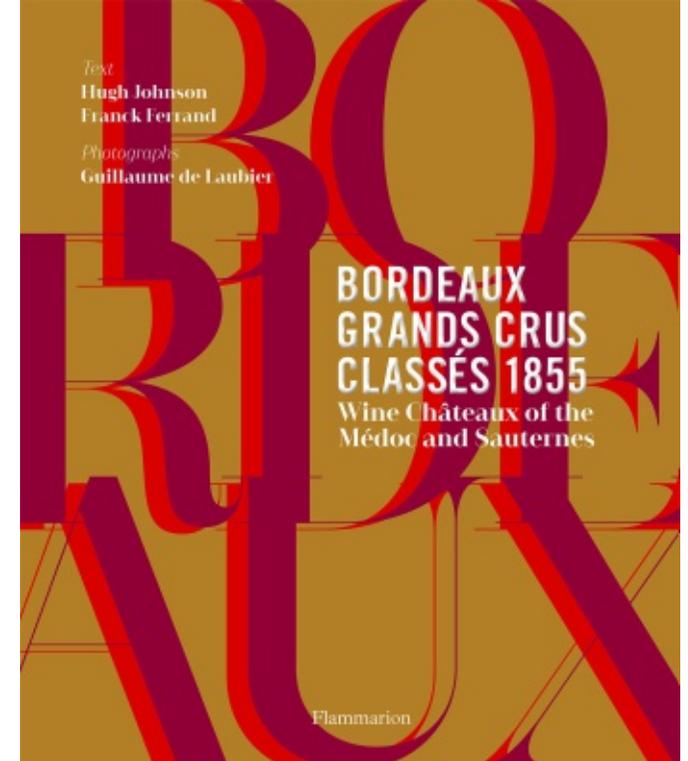
The reds formed a hierarchy, from First to Fifth Growths. In other words, the five levels of Grands Crus. Except for Château Haut-Brion from Graves, all of the reds on the list came from Médoc. The brokers chose the sweet whites of Sauternes, on three levels. These are Superior First Growth (Chateau d'Yquem), First Growth, then Second Growth.

Back to the book - there's a lot to like

This book is undoubtedly as sumptuous as many of the wines it portrays. Its hefty format uses heavyweight gloss paper between the hardcovers. It's also a joy to look at, with superb photography by Guillaume de Laubier throughout. He does justice to the magnificence and splendour of the subject.

The layout of the book covers Médoc first, then Sauternes. Every Château has a pen picture by Franck Ferrand. They appear in order of their cru classé. Slightly confusingly, the handy Châteaux addresses are in alphabetical order.

Hugh Johnson has written two brilliant pieces on Médoc and Sauternes. These alone are worth the price of this book. He sums up the 1855 classification in one sentence; that "it is not the last word, but it remains the



first". It's a subtle allusion. Apart from some minor alterations and a single revision, the Bordeaux Grands Crus Classés 1855 listing has never changed.

Indeed, every attempt made to update it has been unsuccessful, bar one. That was the promotion of Mouton Rothschild from Second Growth to First Growth in 1973. Author Franck Ferrand politely describes this as requiring "delicate diplomatic manoeuvring".

The Bordeaux Grands Crus Classés 1855 has often courted controversy

1855 is resistant to the possibilities of revision; there is no relegation or promotion. Hence the changes in ownership, vineyards, winegrowing, and market sentiment since 1855 are not reflected by it. Any ranking is a snapshot at the time it was made.

Without updating, the 1855 list is no longer an accurate crème de la crème. While no one doubts the eminence of the First Growths, the precise composition of the lower tiers is debatable. Today, 1855 is a cultural artefact concerned with the curation of prestige.

Warning – football analogy ahead

To use a football analogy, let's compare the English soccer first division in 1919 with the Premier League in 2018. Call this philistine or crass; the comparison is apt. In Bordeaux, as in football, the highest levels command immense wealth, prestige and power.

One distinction between them is that soccer has promotion and relegation based on performance. Only nine of 22 teams in the First Division of 1919 are in the Premier League of 2018. Eight are in the Championship (2nd tier), three are in League 1 (3rd), and one is in League 2 (4th). Pity poor Bradford PA. They currently play in the lowly National League North (6th). Meanwhile, many other teams have made it to the top in the intervening years. Some persist, while others can only dimly recall their glory days.

Back to wine

In modern times, fashion, Parker Points and en primeur investments mean 1855 doesn't reflect all great Bordeaux or price accuracy. Elsewhere in Bordeaux, official lists do enable revisions. Unfortunately, that has left a legacy of vicious legal battles driven by status and profit. Perhaps, therefore, we should be grateful that 1855 is unchanging.

This book would be a stronger reference work for addressing the issue. The late Alexis Lichine, once the

owner of Prieuré-Lichine (4th Growth), famously sought revisions and proposed alternatives. The Château entry is silent on this point.

More, please

VITICULTURE

The Médoc and Sauternes are, of course, blends. In the Médoc, it's predominantly from Cabernet Sauvignon, with Merlot and Cabernet Franc. On occasion, a little Petit Verdot also plays a part. But this wasn't always the case. The devastation caused by phylloxera brought the opportunity to restructure the vineyards. Then the previously commonplace Malbec and Carménère varieties all but disappeared.

This change must have fundamentally altered the wines, probably for the better. Those varieties still occasionally exist at some of the 1855 Châteaux. So it would've been interesting if the book showed where. For example, Carménère is at Mouton-Rothschild and Clerc Milon. Clerc Milon also has Malbec, as does Gruard Larose. Similarly, Muscadelle and Sauvignon Gris remain minor components of some Sauternes, alongside the stalwarts Sémillon and Sauvignon Blanc. Doisy-Védrières in Barsac is an example.

In short, including more viticultural details would be welcome.

VINIFICATION

Similarly, more details about winemaking would be useful too. Furthermore, showing the other wines also made at these Châteaux wouldn't be out of place. For example, "second" wines (some of which outperform

many classed growths) and dry white wines. As Hugh Johnson says, the métier of Bordeaux is about producing luxury wines. Most Châteaux offer more than one.

VINTAGES

The book also lists and rates each harvest from 1855 to 2015. However, this does not always differentiate between red Médoc and white Sauternes. Each has a different terroir and needs significantly different optimal conditions. In any year, stellar in one might be ordinary in the other.

Conclusions

This book omits the revision controversy at the heart of the Bordeaux Grands Crus Classés 1855. As an essential reference, this book should include it.

The Bordeaux Grands Crus Classés 1855 is somewhat like the Magna Carta, in that it is foundational. The endurance of this historic document is a remarkable feat. This book captures this very well and offers many pleasures to the reader.

If you are a Bordeaux lover, then you'll particularly enjoy Hugh Johnson's excellent pieces, luxury production and stunning photography.

Bordeaux Grands Crus Classés 1855; Johnson, Ferrand et al. Flammarion. ISBN 9782080 203250. RRP £40. Amazon £26.00.

A separate French version is also available.

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Member News

Neil Courtier

I am incredibly saddened and shocked to have to report the death of long-standing AWE member, Neil Courtier, at the age of just 59.

Neil had been suffering from a lung condition (pulmonary fibrosis) and was taken ill following a holiday in Italy this month. During his time as an AWE member Neil served on Council as Treasurer and was a great supporter of the association over many years. But he will be perhaps best remembered by many friends and colleagues for being a gentle, kind man with a great sense of humour, who was a genuine pleasure to spend time with.

If you would like to share your memories and appreciation of Neil, please send them to Andrea Warren on andrea.warren@btinternet.com. - Heather Dougherty

What a sad loss! A true gentleman and great wine communicator. Knowledgeable, informative, never condescending, hardworking with a deep love for wine and lifting the understanding of all who heard him speak. A longstanding and dedicated supporter of AWE. - Keith Grainger



Neil Courtier

Tony Keys

I am saddened to announce the death of honorary AWE member, Tony Keys, who passed away in Australia in the early hours of New Year's Day after a lengthy illness, aged 64.

Tony was an early member of the AWE, and moved to Australia before I joined the association, so I thank long-standing members Wink Lorch and Keith Grainger for helping to put together this summary of Tony's wine education achievements and memories of the man.

According to his own website, Tony was the proprietor and senior journalist of 'The Key Report', contributing journalist to 'Wine and Viticulture' magazine and author of 'Tales of Sixpence' (fiction for young adults of all ages).

Tony Keys entered the UK wine trade in 1973 via a group of upmarket London wine bars and gained experience in hotel management in Exeter and Salisbury. He joined the multi-award winning wine retailers, Oddbins, rising through the ranks to become senior manager for their largest London store. Tony then established Ostler's wine merchants in Clerkenwell, which specialised in Australian wines. During this period he picked up many accolades including Decanter magazine's 'Wine Merchant of the Year' and was appointed to the Académie du Champagne in 1989.

Tony worked on a freelance basis with the Australian Wine Bureau looking after education throughout the United Kingdom and occasionally in Europe. He was appointed facilitator for small wineries seeking entry into the UK market and worked with the Government of Victoria on various wine-based projects. In 1998 Tony moved to Australia and in 2002 established 'The Key Report', a subscription based newsletter for the wine industry.

Wink writes: "Tony lived for the past two decades in Australia, writing the outspoken Australian wine trade newsletter The Key Report. He originally worked in the wine trade in the UK and then moved into an educational role for the Australian Wine Bureau (now Wine Australia). He epitomised the entertaining, erudite and educated wine educator. Tony was a very early supporter and member of AWE in the 1990s, helping us in a very personal way through difficult times, when the very survival of our organisation was brought into question. His many contacts in the wine trade were hugely useful and his legendary outspokenness kept us on the right

track when it was really needed. Tony believed in wine education and everything he did for AWE was to further that cause, not his own. It was for all these reasons that when he emigrated from the UK to Australia we decided to make him an Honorary Member of AWE. No-one who met Tony was left unmoved as he was larger-than life: funny, energetic and controversial and yet he never hesitated to help anyone."

According to Keith Grainger, "He was always fun, totally irreverent, determined and selfless. He provided financial support for AWE when the coffers were totally dry, and helped secure our future. A really great guy."

I know that anyone who knew Tony will miss him. He is survived by his two sons. You can read a further appreciation of his life from an Australian perspective here: <http://winetitles.com.au/dwn/details.asp?ID=24932> - Heather Dougherty

New members

We are pleased to welcome the following members, since July 2017:

David Harker

14 Lassells Rigg, Prudhoe, Northumberland NE42 5QT

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Deborah Zbinden

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Mobile: 07505 013906

E-mail: deborah@wineconfidence.co.uk

Nicky Ladwiniec

67 Bird Hill Road, Woodhouse Eaves, Loughborough, Leics LE12 8RP

E-mail: nicky.ladwiniec@gmail.com

We were pleased to welcome back Nicky in September 2017 when she reactivated her membership having taken a sabbatical for maternity leave.

Corporate Member nominees

Welcome to Lindsay Holas, Lecturer in Wine Business and Greg Dunn, Programme Manager for Masters in Viticulture & Oenology who have joined the team at Plumpton College.

Contact detail amendments

Please note the following amendments to members contact details:

John Ducker has a new email address:

E-mail: contact@johnducker.co.uk

Helen Duddridge has a new website:

Website: www.suffolkwinecourses.co.uk

Keith Grainger has moved to:

39 West Street, Thorne, Doncaster, S. Yorks DN8 5QY

Mobile: 07956 004855

E-mail: keith@keithgrainger.com Website: www.keithgrainger.com

Anthony Stockbridge has moved to:

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Mobile: 07977 535 852

E-mail: antstock@aol.com Website: www.asa-training.co.uk

Carol Whitehead has relocated to:

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Email: carol@cdbizwine.com

AWE Inspiring News

This is the newsletter of the Association of Wine Educators. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Association.

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