

T H E
W I N E R Y

April Tasting *Fulham* 24.04.24

sparkling

Pet’Nat L’Amour du Risque 2022, Château Peybonhomme (Bordeaux) BIODYNAMIC 21.99

Pet’Nat. *Pétillant Naturel*. We could all be forgiven for thinking Pet’Nat is a new form of sparkling wine discovered by hipsters in the last decade. Turns out that it predates Champagne. In France it can also be called *Méthode Ancestrale*. It is a simpler recipe – bottling before the wine has finished its fermentation – but, as a result, less predictable and less controllable. When you get it right it is a soft, refreshing, easy-going sparkling wine.

The Hubert family have been committed biodynamic wine growers since 2000 at their two Bordeaux estates at the western end of the Right Bank: Château Peybonhomme in Blaye and Château La Grolet in the Côtes de Bourg. *L’Amour du Risque* (the love of risk) is 100% Cabernet Franc, Bordeaux’s third red grape, picked very ripe.

Biodynamism is the extreme end of organic viticulture, where decisions are made according to the lunar calendar, based on the teachings of Maria Thun, Rudolf Steiner and traceable back to Hildegard of Bingen, the 12th century mystic nun.



white

Blanc de Bonhomme 2022, Château Peybonhomme (Bordeaux/France) BIODYNAMIC 22.99

Picked by hand early in the morning, Semillon 45%, Sauvignon 45%, Colombard 10%. Whilst Colombard doesn’t bring much character, it does provide freshness and keeps the alcohol lower. Fermented and raised in older barrels and cement tanks with much stirring of the lees to add texture and mouth-feel. Nice sense of fruit in the tail. Stylish.

Vom Buntsandstein Riesling trocken 2022, Borell Diehl (Pfalz/Germany) VEGAN 15.99

Immediately south of Rheinhessen, the Pfalz (aka Palatinate) is sheltered by the forests of the northern Vosges on its western flank. The region is warm and fertile. Fruit and vegetables grow easily here – as do vines. Growers tend to have a very wide range of varieties to satisfy as many visitors’ palates as possible. We are fixated on dry Riesling, so, as long as they have some to offer, that’ll get us through the door!

We met Daniel Nett, who has a guesthouse in the outskirts of Neustadt an der Weinstrasse in the Pfalz, when he came to a Winery tasting with Johannes Landgraf of Becker-Landgraf. When the call to visit the Pfalz again after a decade became impossible to ignore, it was obvious we would have to base ourselves at Daniel’s. He told us we should check out Borell Diehl. Good call!

The Borell Diehl family have multiple dry Riesling bottlings from different soils including Muschelkalk (limestone, thick with fossil deposits) and vom Buntsandstein (from the colourful sandstone). Exotic, slightly waxy nose – banana/lime. Full fruit salad in the mouth, good weight and body.

Alte Reben Riesling trocken 2022, Peter Jakob Kühn (Rheingau/Germany) BIODYNAMIC 29.99

The Kühn family makes striking biodynamic Rieslings in the Rheingau. Peter Jakob Kühn had a complete change of direction in 1999, was certified organic in 2004 and then went the whole way to biodynamism.

The Kühns’ wines are utterly distinctive - standing quite apart from other Rheingau wines. They can even challenge our idea of how Riesling should taste. The aromas can evoke incense, orange peel and hedgerows. There’s an oiliness without ever being cloying. Occasionally you might get a sense of tannin – something you expect in red wine but not in white. We often recommend putting their top Rieslings in a decanter several hours before serving. The Alte Reben (the wine formerly known as Rheinschiefer) is an old vine selection from the Grand Cru Hengelberg vineyard between Hallgarten and the Steinberg which, unusually for the Rheingau, has a high proportion of Devon Slate.

red

Château La Grolet 2021 (Bordeaux/France) BIODYNAMIC 20.99

It's 12 years since we came across that rarely-seen animal: biodynamic Bordeaux. Bordeaux is very conservative and until recently there were just a handful of estates which had switched to Bio. Jean-Luc and Catherine Hubert and their grown-up children Guillaume and Rachel have two Chateaux at the west end of the Right Bank, Peybonhomme-Les-Tours in Blaye and La Grolet in the Côtes de Bourg. Both have been Biodynamic since 2000. Guillaume makes the wine in a lighter style and with clean, clear textures. La Grolet has the extra structure that you find in many on the Côtes de Bourg. Peybonhomme is an oddity as the only estate outside the Médoc allowed to include 'Cru Bourgeois' on its label. Catherine's Grandfather won the right back in the early 1900s, pre-dating the Blaye appellation. The Médocians took him to court and he won, so the judgment stands.

La Grolet is a 70/30 blend of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon with a splash of Malbec and Cabernet Franc on a clay and gravel soil over rock, which encourages the roots of the vines to burrow deeper for moisture. 50 year-old vines. We adore their nostalgic labels.

Château Lalande Gravelongue 2014 (Bordeaux/France) 15.99

Unlike most other wine regions, we find that much of Bordeaux is about business – it's a region of merchants, courtiers, dealers: a system that evolved over centuries. Tunde Thompson, who has roots in USA, Nigeria and France, approached us first over a decade ago, when he was working for the Rivière brothers who own Châteaux Clos des Menuts, Lavagnac and Picampeau. We were very clear about what kind of wines and vintages we might buy and that's exactly what he shows us from the several negociants and property owners he has worked for since. Cherry-picking, why not? Tonight we introduce this super, classic 2014 Médoc from Château Lalande Gravelongue in the Médoc. Cigar box, cedar nose, touch of sweat, surprisingly juicy, some savoury notes and a sense of tannic structure in the finish. Punching way above its weight.



Irpinia Aglianico Cinque Querce 2020, Salvatore Molettieri (Campania/Italy) 25.99

We have a bit of a thing for Taurasi, the so-called "Barolo of The South". The grape is Aglianico and here, an hour's drive into the volcanic hills east of Naples, Aglianico is untamed, tannic and often grand. The Molettieri family has been making wine for four generations in Montemarano, in the southern part of the zone. In 1983, instead of selling grapes to Mastroberardino (who was widely credited with bringing Taurasi onto the world stage), Salvatore Molettieri decided to make his own wine.

Salvatore, now in his mid 70s, is joined by his four sons Giovanni, Giuseppe, Luigi, Paolo and their families. Giovanni, who studied enology, plays a leading role. Salvatore and his wife Angela had hoped to have a daughter but their Doctor told them they might need twelve children before getting a girl. They called it a day at four.

The Irpinia Aglianico Cinque Querce is a junior Taurasi, with some of the density of fruit, the adult tannic hit, weight and texture of its senior.

We saw Salvatore at Vinitaly in Verona last week. He was proudly carrying a massive medal around his neck - a decoration for Grand Merit in Viticulture. Bravo Salvatore!

LUNAR CALENDAR OBSERVERS – today is a **Flower Day**.

Our **following tasting** will be at **The Winery Maida Vale** on **Thursday 30th May** when we will be joined by **Marta Galli** of **Le Ragose** showing her family's **Valpolicella** and **Amarone** from the hills above Verona.

Just arrived – Raimbault Sancerre, Champagne Amyot, Guillemot & Sirugue from Burgundy, Peter Jakob Kühn from Rheingau. Loads from Bordeaux: Bonnange, Peybonhomme, La Grolet, Lanbersac, Lalande-Gravelongue, Mascard, Haut-Vigneau, Mayne (Pomerol). Terre a Mano (Tuscany), Salvatore Molettieri (Campania). **Coming in the next few days** – Walter (Mosel), Clos des Poulettes (Burgundy).

Join us for our **Monthly Tastings**
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