

T H E  
W I N E R Y

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July Tasting *Maida Vale* 09.07.24  
*featuring Pascal Chalon, La Grande Ourse*

*sparkling*

**Champagne Tradition Brut NV, André Fays (Champagne/France)**

**32.99**

In the depths of lockdown in March 2021, hotels that were open in France were few and far between. Particularly any that had a good kitchen and wine-list. We did however find three between Calais and Beaune. One of the most useful was (and still is) the Val Moret, conveniently close to the autoroute just east of Troyes. It may look like a motel in the US Midwest, complete with a fluorescent sign visible from the autoroute, but the rooms are good and they have a wine-list which draws heavily on champagne growers from the southern part of the Champagne region – the Côte des Bars. A Solera Champagne by André Fays caught our eye. Solera? Champagne? Solera system, like for Sherry? It was inevitable that we would then go to Celles-sur Ource to meet Marie Fays, current owner and granddaughter of André. What we weren't expecting was the high quality and sheer deliciousness of her other champagnes: Tradition, Réserve, Prestige, Rosé and Étincelles (a local peculiarity, being 100% Pinot Blanc). Boom. In the van and on our shelves. More than once. Most recently week before last on our Emergency Champagne run. Marie's Cuvée Tradition is a blend of 85% Pinot Noir, 10% Pinot Blanc and 5% Pinot Meunier.



*white*

**Riesling Revival trocken 2021, Martin Müllen (Mosel/Germany)**

**24.99**

After a few paperwork hiccups (do not mention the B-word!), we have revived our relationship with Mosel winemaker Martin Müllen of Traben-Trarbach and stepped up our visits. Martin and his son Jonas make thrilling dry Riesling in a very traditional style and remain the only winery on the Mosel who still vinify their entire range of Rieslings in large old wooden barrels rather than stainless steel. Having worked for decades in extremely cramped conditions in their tiny cellar below their house in the centre of Traben, they have moved into a larger old cellar on the other side of the river Mosel. Their beautiful label is taken from a vineyard map of the Mosel from 1897, originally made for tax purposes, which subsequently helped to inform the later classification and hierarchy of vineyards. With the single vineyard wines the location is highlighted in gold and GPS coordinates are provided. Revival is a blend from various vineyards in Traben-Trarbach and Kröv, so several vineyards are illuminated.

A gently herbal nose, a helter-skelter ride of freshness and fruit in the mouth and an exhilarating finish.

**La Grande Ourse Blanc 2021, Pascal Chalon (Rhône/France) BIODYNAMIC**

**22.99**

Now to tonight's headliner. Drum roll..... It is 17 years since we stumbled across Pascal Chalon making biodynamic Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages in his granny's garage not far from Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Well-known at The Winery for his big, fragrant, constellation-themed reds, Pascal's range has expanded over the past 17 years to include a couple of equally big white wines. First up from Pascal is a broad, nutty, oily, powerful white made from 45% Grenache Blanc, 45% Roussanne and 10% Bourboulenc. Fermented using wild yeasts, then aged in parts: oak barrels, inox and an egg-shaped cement tank. The vines are young, from an abandoned vineyard that Pascal replanted six years ago. Young, yes, and vigorous.

**Ursa Major Blanc 2022, Pascal Chalon (Rhône/France) BIODYNAMIC**

**33.99**

80% Grenache Gris and 20% Grenache Blanc aged in demi-muid (large 600 litre oak barrels) and, intriguingly, a porcelain jar. We'll have to ask Pascal how big the jar is. Having touched on the vessels, it never ceases to amaze us what a variety he has: oak barrels in various sizes and configurations, inox (glass fibre and steel tanks), different types of amphora, egg-shaped cement and now porcelain.

And the wine? White fruits, nuts, a hint of smoke. Mouth-filling, powerful, a touch of salinity. Graceful for such a big wine.

### What is Biodynamic Wine?

*Biodynamic? Biodynamism is organic viticulture taken to the extreme, ruled by the lunar calendar - man, moon and earth in perfect harmony - a self-sustaining, self-nourishing system. Its roots can be traced through Maria Thun back to Rudolf Steiner and much further back to Hildegard of Bingen, the mystic nun and composer (1098-1179).*

*The Lunar Calendar? Depending on the position of the moon and planets, the lunar month is divided into four types of days. Fruit, Flower, Leaf and Root. Today is a Fruit Day, a day on which, in our experience, younger wines present as fruit forward.*

*Biodynamism captures the imagination with its strange-sounding rituals, such as dynamising rainwater or burying a cow horn filled with cow manure through the winter, and its widespread use of yarrow, nettle, and dandelion.*

### red

#### La Petite Ourse 2022, Pascal Chalon (Rhône/France) BIODYNAMIC 21.99

To recap, we discovered Pascal Chalon in 2007 when he was making his wines in his granny's garage in the hot and windy southern Rhône valley. We had to clamber over apples and a dusty old Renault to get to his few barrels. As soon as we had tasted his entire range, which consisted of two red wines, 'La Petite Ourse' and 'La Grande Ourse', we were quick to back the van up and load the last cases he had.

In the meantime, Pascal has built his own, larger winery and extended his range to include Ursa Major, a couple of whites and, recently, new bottlings from Visan and Suze La Rousse. The wines are always pure, biodynamic Rhône heaven. Fragrant and gutsy.

La Petite Ourse is a rich blend of 60% Grenache and 40% Syrah from vines in Visan caressed (some might say ravaged) by the Mistral wind. All Pascal's red evoke the *garrigue*: the aromatic, warm, bushy scrubland which dominates the region, thick with wild lavender, juniper, thyme, sage and rosemary. The 2022 has bright, ripe, saturated fruit and floral violet notes. A sense of integrated tannin.



#### La Grande Ourse 2021, Pascal Chalon (Rhône/France) BIODYNAMIC 21.99

*Full name: La Grande Ourse Rouge Suze La Rousse Côtes du Rhône villages 2021, La Grande Ourse*

This year's Grande Ourse is a deep, meaty blend of 55% Grenache, 30% Mourvèdre, 10% Syrah and 5% Terret Noir. Terret Noir is one of the lesser-known varieties allowed in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, also in Corbières and Languedoc. Pascal raised the wine's separate components in amphorae and oak barrels.

We always love the dark richness and herbal flavours of the Grande Ourse, evocative of the lavender and thyme-laden local landscape. We also had a sense of blackcurrant pastille and blackberry. High-toned and herbal.

#### M 2021, Pascal Chalon (Rhône/France) BIODYNAMIC 25.99

*Full name: M Suze La Rousse Côtes du Rhône villages 2021, La Grande Ourse*

M is mainly Mourvèdre with some Grenache. Mourvèdre may be best known as the grape of Bandol, Provence's finest red wine, but it also forms part of the palette of varieties in the southern Rhône valley. It produces very dark-coloured wines with ample tannins and occasionally gamey notes. M comes from parcels on a slope in the commune of Tulette, Pascal's home village, including some vines over 50 years-old planted by his grandfather. As with all Pascal's reds, it's approachable now but will age effortlessly for 10-15 years.

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

Our following tasting will be at **The Winery Fulham** on **Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> August**.

Join us for our **Monthly Tastings**  
The Winery, 4 Clifton Road, London W9  
[www.thewineryuk.com](http://www.thewineryuk.com)

[mailinglist@thewineryuk.com](mailto:mailinglist@thewineryuk.com)  
The Winery, 797 Fulham Road SW6 5HD  
[info@thewineryuk.com](mailto:info@thewineryuk.com)