

T H E  
W I N E R Y

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October Tasting *Fulham* 23.10.24  
*featuring* Nacho León - Demencia & Taruguín

*sparkling*

**Cuvée Réserve Brut, Amyot (Champagne/France)**

**34.99**

Champagne is vast. The northern sections fan out from Épernay; north across the chalky Montagne de Reims towards the city of Reims, west along the Marne Valley towards Paris, then due southwards, the Chardonnay slopes called the Côte des Blancs. Continue south and you find the Aube, also known as the Côte des Bar. Here, off the beaten track, the tiny village of Loches-sur-Ource is the very rural home of Champagne Amyot. They speak an impenetrable local dialect: it took us the best part of a decade to understand what we were saying to each other. Their entry-level champagne has been our biggest selling item in The Winery for 25 years. Their Reserve is a blend of 80% Pinot Noir, 10% Chardonnay and 10% Pinot Blanc from three vintages, 2016, 2017 and 2018.

*white*

**Riesling trocken 2022, Fred Prinz (Rheingau/Germany) BIODYNAMIC**

**17.99**

The Rhine takes a sharp turn west at Mainz before turning north again at Rudesheim. The south-facing slope on the north bank between the two is the Rheingau, thick with castles, convents and vineyards. This is the classical home of Riesling. Evocative names like Steinberg, Marcobrunn, Johannisberg, Hochheim - the home of Queen Victoria's "Hock", back when German wines were the most expensive in the world. In contrast to wine made in historic castles and convents, Fred Prinz made his wine in the garage below the flats where he and his family live in the village of Hallgarten. Having started as a hobby in 1991, demand became so great that he had to give up his day job and rent another cellar nearby, thereby freeing up space in the garage for a mid-life Harley-Davidson motorbike.

We have been importing Fred's dry Rieslings since our first buying trip to Germany in 2002, watched him outgrow his garage and have seen his vineyard holdings grow from 1.5 to over 10 hectares. His wife Sabine has always been involved and they have now been joined by their son Florian who has been experimenting with some hardcore Natural cuvées. This 'entry-level' dry Riesling is classic Rheingau Riesling: yellow fruits, opulent and expressive - a blend from three different soils: sandy loess, slate and quartzite.

**Nonnberg Riesling trocken 2023, Flick (Rheingau/Germany) ORGANIC/VEGAN**

**23.99**

Reiner Flick lives in a renovated 13th-century mill in the village of Wicker. It is part of the east end of the Rheingau next to Hochheim where the River Main meets the Rhine and from whose slopes you can watch the planes on final approach to Frankfurt airport. Wine has been in the Flick family since 1775. Reiner is well-known at The Winery as the maker of Victoriaberg, Queen Victoria's favourite wine. He also has other vineyards around Wicker and Hochheim.

The entire Wickerer Nonnberg belongs to Reiner. Nonnberg (*Nun's hill*) is on the hill at the edge of the village and overlooks his home and winery. There's a sandstone statue of a nun in one corner, the original Abbess of the monastery which owned the vineyard in the late 1200s. Reiner has worked hard with the chalky, clay soil and has introduced mixed flowers, grasses and herbs between the rows of vines. His Nonnberg always produces impressive Riesling with explosive minerals, depth and concentration. We love the succulent yet dry 2023.

*red*

**Pyjama 2021, Demencia (Bierzo/Spain) ORGANIC/LOW INTERVENTION**

**17.99**

It's Pyjama Time! Don't be alarmed - Pyjama is a red wine made by Nacho León who joins us tonight. Nacho started making Demencia, one of Castilla y León's very finest cult reds, in 2006 in the corner of a friend's cellar on the Pilgrim's Trail to Santiago de Compostela in lush, hilly Bierzo, northwest Spain.



*continued*

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*Pyjama continued*

Mencia is the name of the grape; an old, indigenous variety being brought back to life by young winemakers in this corner of Spain. When we first visited Nacho, he showed us pretty much every one of his twenty-five tiny parcels of beautiful, gnarly, old bush vines in villages outside Ponferrada. In 2011 he added a new bottling – Pyjama - also Mencia from the same vineyards as Demencia but at first using his ‘younger’ 50 year-old vines. Pyjama is now a selection from all Nacho’s vineyards (average age 80 years-old) fermented with wild yeasts in larger tanks before being moved into used barrels for ageing. The results: a sumptuous red with saturated, brambly fruit, ripeness and freshness.

**Fuente de San Lázaro 2018, Demencia (Bierzo/Spain) ORGANIC/LOW INTERVENTION 27.99**

A mutual friend who worked for the Castilla y León Junta introduced us to Demencia back in 2007. The witty yet edgy name was enough to get our attention. Demencia – *of Mencia* (the name of the grape) – *demented*, get it? Grown in Bierzo, the westernmost part of Castilla y León and eastern parts of Galicia, Mencia is a total contrast to many other northern Spanish reds, usually producing a crisp, fresh red with low tannins - a breezy, crunchy, glugging wine. In Nacho’s hands, however, it is deep, powerful and serious.

“I am working organically because I believe that’s the way to get better, healthier wines. We are working mostly in the vineyards in order to get the best fruit with the characteristics needed for aging and to avoid adding products or other oenological materials. I believe in minimal intervention to get the most honest wines that show better their origin and ‘terroir’. In the vineyards, we are not using herbicides, pesticides, chemical fertilisation. The vines are old and produce very low yields. Although not certified, our wines have been organic since 2010.” If you get a chance, ask Nacho about plant intelligence.

Not one to stand still, Nacho has this new bottling called Fuente de San Lázaro (*Fountain of Saint Lazarus*) from a single south-facing vineyard on a clay-loam plateau at an altitude of 600m. The vines were planted in 1905 and are surrounded by peach, pear, apple, almond and cherry trees, as well as lavender and other aromatic plants. 666 bottles were made.

**Demencia 2018 (Bierzo/Spain) ORGANIC/LOW INTERVENTION 31.99**

Demencia is where it started in 2006 – Nacho León’s benchmark wine. Built on the idea of reviving very old vines and working by hand, just 1,924 bottles were made of the 2006. Although volumes haven’t increased much over the past decade, Nacho now has 4 hectares of vines dotted around Ponferrada with parcels planted in 1905, 1920 and 1940. He has added a few Demencia bottlings to his line-up: Villegas, Cabarcos, Fuente de San Lázaro, Cachicán (a blend of multiple other grape varieties found in his vineyards, some identified, some not), plus a white Godello and not forgetting Pyjama in red and white. 2018 was cool and mild until a late heat wave. A beautiful rich nose, sumptuous mouthfeel without being heavy. 1,998 bottles were made.



**Taruguín 2019 (Ribera del Duero/Spain) ORGANIC/LOW INTERVENTION 21.99**

Nacho was driving back from Barcelona to Bierzo in 2010 and had taken some back roads through the villages near Soria at the east end of Ribera del Duero. “I was really surprised to see some very old vines and decided to take a walk through them. It was marvellous and exciting because I knew this area lots of years ago. A close friend from my childhood has family there and I used to spend some weekends with him and his friends.

I was thinking about the wines that I tasted in Barcelona and was looking for another profile of Ribera del Duero wine - more altitude, more fruity sensations, more acidity. Maybe vines like these could help us? I told my friend Julio and we began working on the idea of making a different type of wine from his parent’s land. We chose some vineyards in the area and, thanks to his family, were able to start work right away.”

Taruguín is made from Tempranillo (known as Tinta del País locally) with a splash of Albillo, a white varietal. “We took the grapes in a van and brought them here (to Bierzo) where I can work easier. Nine months in French barrels and the result - a pretty wine that sold out in three weeks!” *Pretty* might imply that it is light and fruity whereas we would describe it as bold and wild, rich and powerful, fleshy and deep.

When we visited Nacho last April, he showed us his wonderful old vineyards and the compact Taruguín winery at the edge of San Esteban de Gormaz. He says the area has eleven months of invierno (winter) and one month of inferno each year. We were there in April and it seemed pretty hot to us!

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

Our next tasting will be on **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November** at **The Winery Maida Vale**, when we will be joined by **Gerrit Walter** with Riesling and Spätburgunder from the Mosel.

**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)**