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WINE MERCHANT

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OPEN • TUESDAY–SATURDAY 11 A.M. TO 6 P.M.    CLOSED • SUNDAY & MONDAY

NOVEMBER 2005

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## — NEW ARRIVALS —

### 2004 LE PIGEOULET EN PROVENCE *ROUGE*

Medium dark, medium body, huge pleasure.

It smells so pretty and so Provençal. And there in the middle of the lovely Grenache fruit is a delicate spiciness, very fine and unexpected.

No, it is not a Gigondas or Châteauneuf substitute. It is an unpretentious country wine that satisfies, the perfect “old reliable” to keep around by the case.

Another surprise is the way it seems to land lightly on the palate with no heaviness or hotness, yet the flavors persist and penetrate.

This is made by the Brunier brothers, who make Les Pallières and Vieux Télégraphe.

**\$12.95** PER BOTTLE

**\$139.86** PER CASE

### 2003 IROULÉGUY *ROUGE* DOMAINE ETXEGARAYA

Most winemakers don't know what an Iroulégy is, which is just as well, because Iroulégy is an appellation that does not produce much wine. But I know Iroulégy well enough to tell you that 2003 is the ripest, richest vintage since 1990, and like the 1990 the nose is not explosive. No, it is deep, and instead of it leaping out at you, you dive into it. (Decanting releases the bouquet, by the way, and only takes a minute.) There is luscious ripeness on the palate to enjoy, too. This is a Malbec, Cabernet Franc, and Tannat blend from the Basque region, and it would be cool if you could have your first taste with some Spanish ham.

**\$17.95** PER BOTTLE

**\$193.86** PER CASE

### 2004 BARDOLINO • CORTE GARDONI

And this red offers another inexpensive burst of pleasure, this time from the Lake Garda region in northern Italy. Here the berry/cherry aroma comes out to meet you before you can get your nose to the glass.

In France this summer I had asked the winemaker to send me a sample to check out after the bottling. He graciously sent me half a case. None remained by the time my wife and I headed back to California. It is “down-home” wine, the kind you can drink on a wood table out of a water glass if you are in the mood, and sometimes I am. In these days of marketing strategies, price “positioning,” and two-hundred-dollar bottles, a water glass of good red can remind you that wine is, above all, the best beverage with food.

**\$9.95** PER BOTTLE

**\$107.46** PER CASE

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2004 CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE BLANC  
DOMAINE DU VIEUX TÉLÉGRAPHE

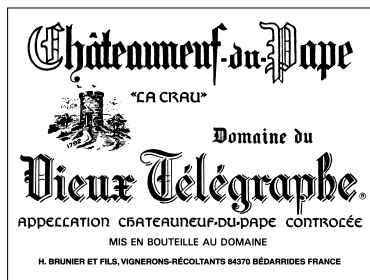
As I re-taste VT's latest white, I have Prokofiev's Classical Symphony Opus 25 on the phonograph. Both wine and symphony are a lot of fun. The Prokofiev is a romp and the dry white is the wine that could convince any oaky Chardonnay addict to explore further. It does do some Chardonnay-like things, so it might work: the fruit is sweet and ripe to the nose; it has luscious body and low acidity, with no sharpness or hardness.

The bouquet, however, is not oaky, even though the wine was raised in oak. The bouquet smells like wine, a wine you have never tasted before. (Where did that ravishing lime-like touch come from?) An oaky Chardonnay addict might be amazed by how expressive and singular wine can smell if it is not hidden by oak.

And that mouthwatering touch of lime. Imagine how perfect it is with shellfish, seafood, sushi, sashimi, Oriental cuisine, and so on.

**\$36.00** PER BOTTLE

**\$388.80** PER CASE



2003 PIC SAINT LOUP "CUPA NUMISMAE"  
CHÂTEAU LA ROQUE

Is this the best bottle of La Roque we have ever offered? Well, the best for what? For aging, for picnics, for high media scores? For serving with Richard Olney's "Figs in Red Wine" recipe, for seducing weightlifters? See what I mean? You cannot call something the best wine without answering the question, "Best for what?"

This is the best La Roque to taste now, then buy enough to enjoy three or four bottles per year until 2020.

Syrah, Mourvèdre, barrel-aged, unfiltered, a model of power, finesse, and great flavors.

**\$22.00** PER BOTTLE

**\$237.60** PER CASE



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— NOVEMBER ONLY —

## CHAMPAGNE DISCOUNT

**A**TTENTION NEWCOMERS: It has become our tradition to offer a special price to those who have the foresight to stock up on Champagne before the madness of the holiday season. When December rolls around, prices return to normal, so see if it works for you to *save now*.

First, the classic Champagnes from PAUL BARA in Bouzy. Bouzy is Pinot Noir country, rated 100% *grand cru*.

In *The New France*, Andrew Jeffords wrote, “The Champagnes of Paul Bara and his daughter Chantal are essential references for anyone who wants to enjoy the ripe, dry richness of Bouzy where their eleven-*hectare* domaine is situated and about which Bara has written a book. Value is very good here.”

The value is even better if you take advantage of our 25% November discount. Divide the case prices by twelve to see your incredibly low per-bottle prices.

### CHAMPAGNE PAUL BARA

	REGULARLY	15% PER BOTTLE	25% PER CASE
BRUT RÉSERVE “100% GRAND CRU” . . .	\$42.00	\$35.70	\$378.00
BRUT RÉSERVE “100% GRAND CRU” <i>TENTHS</i> . . . . .	22.00	18.70	396.00
2000 SPÉCIAL CLUB “100% GRAND CRU” . . . . .	70.00	59.50	630.00
1999 BRUT “100% GRAND CRU” . . . . .	50.00	42.50	450.00
1999 BRUT “100% GRAND CRU” <i>TENTHS</i> . . . . .	27.00	22.95	486.00
1998 BRUT “100% GRAND CRU” . . . . .	48.00	40.80	432.00
1998 BRUT “100% GRAND CRU” <i>TENTHS</i> . . . . .	25.00	21.25	450.00
1998 SPÉCIAL CLUB “100% GRAND CRU” . . . . .	72.00	61.20	648.00
1997 COMTESSE MARIE DE FRANCE . . . . .	75.00	63.75	675.00

And from the lovely village of Chigny-les-Roses (yes, lots of roses there), Champagne J. Lassalle’s current releases are very impressive. Their non-vintage Impérial Préférence is the finest in several years. The nose is expressive, generous, stylish, mature, and the palate is remarkably elegant. This is the Champagne served at Domaine Tempier whenever one of the kids, grandkids, or great-

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grandkids gets married. If you are used to the big Champagne houses, the extra pleasures offered by this cuvée will shock you. When you taste it, note how the liveliness is from the pétillance, *not* the acidity. It is a caress going down!

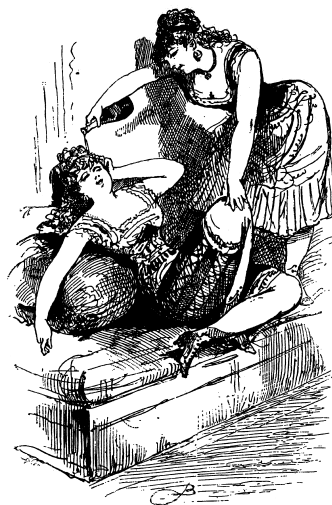
If you like old Champagne, cellar the 1997 Brut. It is a beautiful *vin de garde* that will age as long as you like. I think it will match the 1959s and 1962s.

Lassalle's 1996 Cuvée Angéline is drinking beautifully. It is Champagne made from Pinot Noir grapes. It has a very winery perfume, good richness, and an elegant, wavering bead. You will enjoy the length of the perfume on the palate.

Lassalle's Champagne Rosé is very pale in color with strawberry and raspberry perfume in the subtle bouquet. No, it doesn't shout, and red wine was not added to color it. It grows on you—a connoisseur's rosé, and it is bone dry!

## CHAMPAGNE J. LASSALLE

	REGULARLY	15% PER BOTTLE	25% PER CASE
BRUT ROSÉ . . . . .	\$47.00	\$39.95	\$423.00
BRUT RÉSERVE CACHET D'OR . . . . .	30.00	25.50	270.00
IMPÉRIAL PRÉFÉRENCE BRUT . . . . .	39.00	33.15	351.00
IMPÉRIAL PRÉFÉRENCE BRUT MAGNUMS . . . . .	85.00	72.25	382.50
1997 SPÉCIAL CLUB "PREMIER CRU" . . . . .	62.00	52.70	558.00
1996 VINTAGE BRUT JEROBOAM . . . . .	391.00	332.35	N/A
1996 CUVÉE ANGÉLINE . . . . .	56.00	47.60	504.00



## 2005 BEAUJOLAIS NOUVEAU

**T**HE OLD FRENCH SAYING that years which end in 5 make exceptional wines is not very dependable. No argument with 1945, and 1955 wasn't bad, but then, oops, rain and rot in 1965, and 1975 was no great shakes except at Domaine Tempier. Then 1985 and 1995 were quite successful.

Here is what our Beaujolais producer, Damien Dupeuble, wrote to me about 2005 the other day:

*We attacked the harvest, eighty of us, on September 12. What a joy to pick such marvelous grapes. Not a spot of rot, excellent maturity, no chaptalization, the hands of the harvesters were stained purple. The Nouveau is an intense violet color with a fruitiness that makes you think of raspberries, cassis, and well-ripened black cherries. The wine is very long on the palate. It has a solid structure with persistent, rounded tannins. For us, it is a very great vintage.*

Wow. I have never heard Damien so enthusiastic.

Our Nouveau arrives Thursday, November 17th by plane. Café Fanny next door will start serving it in the morning by the glass, with one of their great breakfasts if you like. Here in the store we will have it available by the bottle and the case.

## BEAUJOLAIS FEAST

**T**HEN IN OUR PARKING LOT on Saturday the 19th we will live it up with the appropriate cuisine, which will be in the talented hands of Christopher Lee of the restaurant Eccolo down on Fourth Street. We will have tents and tables to ensure comfort, and the price, as always, will be painless.

The cool, almost *frizzante* Beaujolais will flow, and the music will be live, too.

BE THERE OR BE SQUARE  
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19  
11 A.M. TO 4 P.M.

EVENT PRESENTED BY CAFÉ FANNY



## BE THE FIRST ON YOUR BLOCK

**J**UDGING BY MY 2005 HARVEST at Domaine Les Pallières and other reports I have had from producers, most of France enjoyed an excellent vintage in 2005. Be the first on your block to taste one. Our ultra-natural Beaujolais Nouveau will also be available at the following sites starting November 17:

BERKELEY  
Arlington Wine and Spirits  
Berkeley Bowl

DAVIS  
Valley Wine Company

LOS GATOS  
The French Cellar

MENLO PARK  
Beltramo's

MILLBRAE  
Vineyardgate

MILL VALLEY  
Vintage Wine & Spirits

NAPA  
J V Wine & Spirits

PALO ALTO  
Vin, Vino, Wine

PLEASANTON  
The Wine Steward

SACRAMENTO  
David Berkley Fine Wines

SAINT HELENA  
Saint Helena Wine Merchants

SAN FRANCISCO  
San Francisco Wine Trading Company

The Jug Shop  
PlumpJack Wines Fillmore  
John Walker & Co.  
Wine Impression

The Wine Merchant at Showplace  
Square

SAN JOSE  
Vintage Wine Merchants

SANTA ROSA  
Traverso's Gourmet Food and Wine

STOCKTON  
Wine Wizards

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# LA VIARTE MEANS SPRINGTIME

## THE LA VIARTE SAMPLER

**L**A VIARTE IS THE NAME of the winery. It means springtime. The word comes not from the Italian, but from the original language of the region, Friulano. Proprietor Giulio Ceschin visited me and my family with bottles of his 2004s in Provence this summer. We met at Domaine Tempier first and tasted their 2004 out of cask, just for the fun of it, then went up to my place for lunch with glasses of his various dry whites. If you prefer to buy wines made by nice guys, he qualifies. In fact, when he drove off after lunch, my kids informed me that they had voted him their Favorite Winemaker.

He's a young fellow who does not seek freakish levels of oak or extract. His whites have all the positives associated with springtime: freshness, liveliness, fleeting perfumes of fruits and flowers, but above all they possess that invigorating spirit nature designed us to experience as we emerge from the dark of winter into the brilliant light of springtime, that period when the sap begins to rise.

The wines are not expensive to begin with. Furthermore, Giulio offered us a discount to help introduce them to the States, and we are adding yet another discount for this Sampler, so you have the best value on the planet for fine dry whites.

The twelve-bottle sampler includes:

### 2004 PINOT GRIGIO

America's favorite Friuli white, and the range of successful Pinot Grigios is impressive. It is a safe, sure choice on restaurant lists in the region.

Quantity at La Viarte is limited, so I encouraged Giulio to plant more Pinot Grigio. His 2004 is perfection. In fact, 2004 seems a perfect vintage in Friuli.

**\$13.95** PER BOTTLE

**\$150.66** PER CASE

### 2004 TOCAI FRIULANO

This is a top example of the Friuli's own favorite grape variety. They appreciate its versatility at table. From salami to seafood to game birds, Tocai works.

Giulio told me that Tocai never wins blind tastings, but afterwards it is always the first bottle emptied. His 2004 seems aromatic yet subtle, full yet ethereal, showing lots of zing followed by whispery length. It has a long good-bye.

**\$14.95** PER BOTTLE

**\$161.46** PER CASE

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## 2004 PINOT BIANCO

You could call this the most Chablis-like of the group. There is a dry, crisp mineral character, and it seems the most austere on the palate, following a very typical, floral perfume. Old vines in marl; impeccable vinification.

**\$14.95** PER BOTTLE

**\$161.46** PER CASE

## 2004 INCÒ BIANCO

In spirit this tasty quaffer reminds me of our first rosé at Pallières: fresh, generously aromatic, easy drinking, thirst-quenching, untiring.

It is a blend of all his varieties, but mostly Tocai, the remainders after he selects the cuvées for his pure Tocai bottling. It is one hell of a bargain.

**\$9.95** PER BOTTLE

**\$107.46** PER CASE

## 2004 RIBOLLA GIALLA

Giulio says that the Ribolla is the Friuli's most ancient grape variety. In the Middle Ages it was the Friuli's most expensive wine. He says that Boccaccio warns against Ribolla in a tract against gluttony, so watch your step.

It is the locals' seafood wine. Even picked at peak maturity it still has the nervousity we like with seafood. He says the acidity comes from the grape skins. The skins also give the wine almost a chewiness on the palate.

And for those of you who might have smelled soapwort petals, Giulio says that is what this Ribolla smells like.

**\$13.95** PER BOTTLE

**\$150.66** PER CASE

## THE TWELVE-BOTTLE LA VIARTE SAMPLER

NORMALLY  
PER BOTTLE

3 BOTTLES 2004 INCÒ BIANCO . . . . .	\$9.95
3 BOTTLES 2004 PINOT GRIGIO . . . . .	13.95
2 BOTTLES 2004 PINOT BIANCO . . . . .	14.95
2 BOTTLES 2004 RIBOLLA GIALLA . . . . .	13.95
2 BOTTLES 2004 TOCAI FRIULANO . . . . .	14.95

*12 Bottles • Normally \$159.40*

SPECIAL SAMPLER 25% DISCOUNT

**\$119.00**

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—PRE-ARRIVAL OFFERS—

## 2003 CORNAS & CÔTE RÔTIE

One of the two or three top bottles of the year for me happened in Jasmin's cellar when he opened a 1978 Côte Rôtie. It was coincidentally the first vintage I purchased chez Jasmin, and it remains a marvel today with its deep nose of black truffle and faded violets. I wish I had saved more for myself back when I imported it, but I couldn't afford much.

Do I need to go into detail about the famous 2003 vintage and its record heat? I don't think so, except perhaps to point out that the two from Côte Rôtie are the most *terroir*-driven wines I tasted in the northern Rhône, and Clape made the chewiest, brawniest Cornas of his career. All growers, small family affairs, had to raise prices because 2003 produced half a normal crop!

PER CASE

2003 CORNAS • AUGUSTE CLAPE . . . . .	\$816.00
2003 CORNAS • AUGUSTE CLAPE MAGNUMS . . . . .	834.00
2003 CORNAS "RENAISSANCE" • AUGUSTE CLAPE . . . . .	567.00
2003 CORNAS • THIERRY ALLEMAND . . . . .	885.00
2003 CÔTE RÔTIE • PATRICK JASMIN . . . . .	600.00
2003 CÔTE RÔTIE • GUY BERNARD . . . . .	438.00

*Pre-arrival terms: Half-payment due with order, balance due upon arrival.*

## DOMAINE ZIND-HUMBRECHT

### 2003 PINOT GRIS "CLOS JEBSAL" SGN

Extremely aromatic and intense, perfectly balanced in terms of extreme sweetness and acidity, loaded with exotic fruits and Jebstal's characteristic minerality, this astonishing wine, ZH's only SGN in 2003, will never be available again unless it hits the auction market. Here is what the *Wine Spectator* says:

*A seductive mouthful of smoke, apricot, orange marmalade and honey ride along bright structure and smooth texture in this seamless SGN. Concentrated yet seemingly lighter than air, the finish goes on and on. To be released April 2006; drink through 2025. 85 cases made.*

PER BOTTLE

2003 PINOT GRIS "CLOS JEBSAL" SGN FIFTHS . . . . .	\$195.00
2003 PINOT GRIS "CLOS JEBSAL" SGN TENTHS . . . . .	100.00

*Pre-arrival terms: Half-payment due with order, balance due upon arrival.*

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The **Wines** of the  
**Northern Rhône**



*John Livingstone-Learmonth*

Foreword by KERMIT LYNCH

**JOHN LIVINGSTONE-LEARMONTH**

So my kids picked their favorite winemaker, and now I get to pick one of my very favorite wine people, the English author John Livingstone-Learmonth. In fact, I wrote the introduction to his amazing new volume from UC Press, *Wines of the Northern Rhône*.

Join us if you can after we close shop on Wednesday, November 16. John will be signing his new book (normally \$55, but you will pay \$45). We will open some Rhône wines and taste with him, see what he has to say. You can question John, the fellow who knows more about the wines of the Rhône than anyone else.

Wednesday evening, November 16, at 6:30 p.m. Space might be a problem, so call us and put your name down to ensure a place. Telephone 510.524.1524.



**2003 GIGONDAS AT  
PRE-ARRIVAL PRICES**

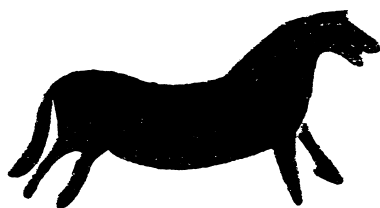
Because both domaines saw a need for longer aging in oak, the 2003 Pallières and Cayron (Faraud) were bottled later than usual. They arrive soon, so there is still an opportunity to order at our low pre-arrival prices. I tasted Faraud's recent bottling the other day: awesome!

PRE-ARRIVAL PER CASE

2003 DOMAINE LES PALLIÈRES . . . . .	\$276.00
2003 DOMAINE DU CAYRON . . . . .	198.00

*Pre-arrival terms: Half-payment due with order, balance due upon arrival.*

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— VALUE OF THE MONTH —

2003 COTEAUX DU  
LANGUEDOC ROUGE

CHÂTEAU DE LASCAUX

**T**HE HORSE LOGO on the Lascaux label is from the prehistoric cave paintings at the Grotte de Lascaux in the Périgord. The wine, however, is from the Languedoc north of MontPELLIER.

Here's how it happened: winemaker Jean-Benoit Cavalier, mindful of the part played by his stony, chalky soil called *lascaux*, liked the horse on the walls of the Lascaux cave and sort of said, "Hmm, Lascaux this and *lascaux* that, why not put the horse on my label?" His logic is not seamless, but his wine and label aren't bad at all, good enough in fact to keep me going back for more, ever since the 1991 vintage.

His ancient, funky stone château has its own underground caves or cellars extending labyrinth-style even under the village church. In 1991 the cellars were a dangerous, un-used mess, but Cavalier's success during the nineties allowed him to put the superb series of cellars into shape. *Worth a visit.*

Our Value of the Month has a dark color and a nose of roasted coffee beans, tobacco, dried thyme and rosemary, *réglisse*, and spice . . . you know, the aromas of southern France under a nice, hot sun. It has a tannin worth noticing that is fun to chew around.

This characterful red is going to bring you a lot of pleasure this winter: falling leaves, rainy days, a fire in the fireplace, something sizzling over the coals . . . I may be a summer kind of guy, but the right winter food with winter wine makes the colder months more of a treat.

**\$12.50** PER BOTTLE

**\$135.00** PER CASE

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