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- **NEW ARRIVALS**
- **PRE-ARRIVALS**
- **THE SPIRIT OF WINE**
by **Jim Harrison**

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

MARCH 2007

VALUE OF THE MONTH: ROSÉ

2006 GRIS DE GRIS • DOMAINE DE FONTSAINTE

Value of the Month? Of the Year? Of the Decade?

And I don't single out Fontsaïnte's 2006 for special honors. Every vintage I have tasted is right on the mark, deserving a Value of the Year award. Well, except the one I ordered on the beach near Narbonne one sunny afternoon. That one was so-so. I called the winery, but they said not to worry, that it was not the one they sell to us, but a cuvée produced expressly for the summer tourists who invade the beaches.

When I see that nowadays there is never enough Fontsaïnte Gris de Gris to last until the next vintage, I remember back to the days when I could barely find customers for twenty-five cases a year. "Rosé? God no, not for me." That was the attitude we had to overcome.

This rosé speaks aromatically, and it seems to say, "Live it up, pleasure is good for you, too."

\$12.95 PER BOTTLE **\$139.86 PER CASE**

2005 CÔTES DU RHÔNE ROUGE CUVÉE SÉLECTIONNÉE PAR KERMIT LYNCH



I guess you *can* have everything. This smells ripe, *perfectly* ripe. Rhône ripe. Blackberry, cassis, and black cherries all thrown together, all mingling in the bouquet with, guess what? Oh, just a gorgeous hit of stony *garrigue*.

The palate is notably ample this year, almost of Gigondas-like proportions. It is loaded with flavor and Provençal character. So why did I say that we *can* have everything? Because even though it is ample, generous, intense, and stuffed full to the brim, it seems almost sort of weightless.

\$11.95 PER BOTTLE **\$129.06 PER CASE**



— PRE-ARRIVAL OFFER —

2004 GRANGE DES PÈRES

THE LAURENT VAILLÉ STORY might as well begin with his family's vines up on a broiling, impossibly stony terrain near Daumas Gassac. He set out and somehow earned a place working and learning in the cellars of Chave, Trévallon, and Coche-Dury. Then his first release received one of the highest scores Robert Parker has ever awarded a Languedoc wine.

Vaillé is quite a connoisseur, a great taster, and easily as opinionated as I am, so my visits always include a robust discussion of what is happening in the world of fine wine. If I refer to a 1995 Raveneau Chablis, for example, he knows what I'm talking about, because he has tasted it, probably with Monsieur Raveneau.

2004 BLANC. The Grange des Pères white has always struck me as Hermitage-like, so I was pleased when Dixon Brooke wrote to me that this 2004 has "an Hermitage-like grandeur."

The nose is complex with suggestions of honey and honeysuckle, pit fruits, and something resembling volcanic stone. The palate is clean and elegant with a pleasant vein of acidity at the core of the honeyed richness.

It is a beautiful creation, a great white with a long future ahead for us.

PRE-ARRIVAL PRICE **\$747** PER CASE

2004 ROUGE. Vaillé's red blends Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Mourvèdre. Each contributes to the whole, and sometimes describing the bottled wine can sound contradictory. In this case, contradictory is just a plus, a way of saying that there is a lot going on at once. No one has ever accused Vaillé's red of being simple or uninteresting.

He commented that the pure Syrah in barrel seemed Pinot Noir-like. If so, it is the biggest, spiciest Pinot Noir I've seen in a long time. It gives tons of fruit to the intense perfume and great length on the palate.

The Cabernet's presence is in the vegetal/smoky complexity, and the rigor to the tannic structure.

And then the Mourvèdre crowns it all off beautifully. Ripe, fresh, sweet-smelling, with dark black depths to explore, the Mourvèdre here has velvety tannins that complement perfectly the Cabernet's more architectural tannins. This is one of Vaillé's best.

PRE-ARRIVAL PRICE **\$747** PER CASE

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

MORE FROM SOUTHERN FRANCE

2004 SAINT-CHINIAN “CAUSSE DU BOUSQUET” MAS CHAMPART

Catastrophe struck when I showed up late and missed the chance to lunch with Isabel and Matthieu Champart. I love her homespun cooking, and I am not letting this happen again! A saucisson sandwich (baguette with a skinny layer of sliced saucisson) and a glass of beer in a roadside bar did not compare.

Causse means limestone plateau. The cuvée is Syrah (65%), Grenache (20%), and Mourvèdre. It shows a noir-ish aroma with *réglisse*, ripe black cherry, and something sort of blueberry-ish. Also, hints of fig and plum. Also, hints of black olive and thyme. It has so many flavors, tasting it I felt like a hockey goalie in the midst of a flock of pucks. Well balanced, with an elegance rare for the south.

\$19.95 PER BOTTLE **\$215.46** PER CASE

2005 CÔTES-DU-RHÔNE VILLAGES ROUGE “BEAUMES-DE-VENISE” • DOMAINE DE DURBAN

Don't forget to appreciate the visuals: bright and deep, dark but not black ink. Wine-colored.

The nose is a feast of Provençal fruits including cherry, apricot, and peach.

The palate is fresh with a lovely texture and a tannin that seems to gently swell and crescendo. For a full-bodied, intensely flavored wine, it shows almost a light touch. Will that be the hallmark of the 2005 vintage in the south?

Very long on the palate; good drinking now; can age well.

\$16.95 PER BOTTLE **\$183.06** PER CASE

2004 CÔTES-DU-RHÔNE ROUGE “BOIS DES DAMES” • CHÂTEAU DU TRIGNON

I bought this one on faith last year, even though it wasn't showing much. It just seemed dense and dumb, yet I had to consider: great vintage, great vineyard, and the stony Bois des Dames character must be buried in there somewhere. It will emerge someday, right? I tasted one recently and gave the order to ship. Here it is. See what you think.

\$16.00 PER BOTTLE **\$172.80** PER CASE

THE SPIRIT OF WINE

by Jim Harrison

I HAVE LONG SINCE publicly admitted that I seek spirituality through food and wine. In France, Italy, and Spain, I seem more drawn to markets and cafés than to churches and museums. Too many portraits of bleeding Jesus and his lachrymose Momma make me thirsty. The Lord himself said on the cross, “I thirst” and since our world itself has become a ubiquitous and prolonged crucifixion it is altogether logical that we are thirsty.

Yesterday afternoon I was far up a canyon near the Mexican border trying to shoot a few doves to roast when I came upon a calf who was willing to be petted, perhaps because she had no previous contact with brutish humans. While scratching her pretty ears I segued to a tangled group of emotions toward wine. Why does Bordeaux make me feel Catholic, crisp and confident, an illusion indeed; while Burgundy causes an itchy, sexy, somnolent mood? With my day-to-day Côtes du Rhône I am a working writer with vaguely elevated thoughts of my responsibilities, but also with my mind’s eye on a plumpish waitress at a local Mexican restaurant.

Heading back down the canyon with the calf following me, I recalled some splendid wines I had drunk at a private home in Malibu during my manic days in Hollywood. The collector’s house red was a 1961 Lafite, a pleasant substitute for a pre-dinner martini. I was in the kitchen one evening preparing dinner and drinking a bottle of Romanée-Conti from the fifties when a fashion model asked, “How can you drink that shit. It makes me dizzy.” She properly mistook me for a servant and asked for a “Jack and coke” (Jack Daniels and Coca-Cola), surely an inscrutable drink, but then so is taste in general. On Friday nights in college two of my best friends would drink an entire case of beer apiece and didn’t seem to mind the ensuing vomiting. I was the driver and of limited means so my weekend binge only meant a seventy-cent bottle of Gallo Burgundy. Both of these friends, of course, are now dead and I’m still on the lid of earth rather than under, and drinking wine daily.

During a general state of rebellion in my early teens I went to the Baptist church though our family was Congregationalist, a kind of lower-case Episcopalian. I told my dad who was an agriculturalist that the Baptists claimed that in biblical days the wine was simple grape juice. He said, “Bullpoop,” adding that they had been making true wine in the Middle East for four thousand years, and that non-drinkers liked to spread lies about alcohol. He said that when St. Paul maintained, “A little wine for thy stomach’s infirmities,” he was talking about actual wine, not grape juice. Since then it has occurred to me that if Christianity offered a six-ounce glass of solid French red for Communion, churches would be happier and consequently more spiritual places.

In the early seventies during a hokum banquet in Ireland I drank several goblets of mead and was ill for a week with ravaged intestines. The physical mischief caused by bad forms of alcohol is infinite. I have posited the idea, perhaps fact, that heavy beer drinkers must find a type of sexual release in their relentless peeing. One warm day in my favorite saloon in a village near my former cabin in the Upper Peninsula, an old man drank thirty-eight bottles of Pabst Blue Ribbon. This is clearly too much, and he just as clearly endangered his body during his dozens of walks to the toilet. This amount comprises twenty-eight pounds of liquids which cannot be retained indefinitely by the human body, thus the walks to the toilet were a necessary peril. Another friend in the area, a huge mixed-blood Chippewa, wasn't feeling well drinking two fifths of whiskey a day and under my wise counsel reduced it to a single fifth. Last summer in Montana I advised an unruly friend that after a hot day of fishing a quintuple martini might be unwise as the alcohol will shoot through the dehydrated body and land on the brain pan like an ICBM. In the remoter areas of the country my advice is sought whereas on our two dream coasts everyone is smart, albeit petulant, and I am considered a bumpkin. Also a slow study. It took me three years of hard work and unfathomable will power to make a bottle of wine last an hour. Sipping seemed quite unnatural to a mouth disposed toward gulping.

In a lifetime of thousands of visits to country taverns, I have noticed that beer drinking causes fist-fights and wife beating. A French theologian, Michel Braudeau, has suggested that heavy beer drinking cleared the moral way for Germany to begin World War I and World War II. Beer drinking is at the root of the lugubrious sentimentality that makes murder for an idea logical. Conversely, drinking nothing at all is equally dangerous. Try to imagine Washington D.C.'s infamous Beltway as a moral Berlin Wall within which low-rent chiselers concoct wars and other forms of our future suffering. I recently read that there are sixty lobbyists per member of Congress. Think if liquor and beer were forbidden within the Beltway and each day the lobbyists gave each member of Congress a good bottle of French wine. Grace would return quickly to our bruised Republic. I would also like to remind those teetotaler fundamentalist titans, Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, who are so enamored of political power, that the Catholic Church has maintained its political power nearly two thousand years no doubt because the leaders drink wine. I well remember a group of bulbous priests at a Roman trattoria quite literally pouring down wine. I asked the waiter what they were celebrating and he said enviously that they did it every day. They were drinking Antinori Vipera which is scarcely cheap plonk. Come to think of it, I would gladly contribute to a church that offered a full glass of Côtes du Rhône for Communion.

At a wonderful local Mexican restaurant called Las Vigas, I often begin a meal with a shot of Herradura tequila, a Pacifico beer, and an ample bowl of chicharones which, of course, are deep-fried intestines, after which I have a plate of machaca and beans (Mexican reconstituted dried beef laden with chiles). I hosted

a feast for twenty-five friends last April in this restaurant which included a whole wild pig spit-roasted, giant Guaymas shrimp (eight to a pound), and platters of machaca, Herradura and Pacifico. Wine simply isn't appropriate for these flavors. We also had a couple of divine mariachi singers who had a dulcet effect on the crowd, singing their melancholy plaints about love and death which neutralized any strident effects of the beer.

Curiously, New York City is the only place on earth where I feel an urgent need for a vodka martini, actually a raving desire. A day of back-to-back insignificant meetings and the sight of thousands of nitwits milling around talking on their cell phones deeply enervates me. My soul becomes splenetic and I need to Taser myself before a pre-dinner nap. A bar next to my hotel on Irving Place is kind enough to serve me a martini for only thirteen dollars, a price at which you can buy four in Montana. In New York City, however, you can hear expensively dressed career people talking about themselves at a speed that will remind you of the old Alvin the Chipmunk phonograph records. You leave the bar in a hurry, thinking that Castro had some good ideas, and take a snooze after planning the evening's wines.

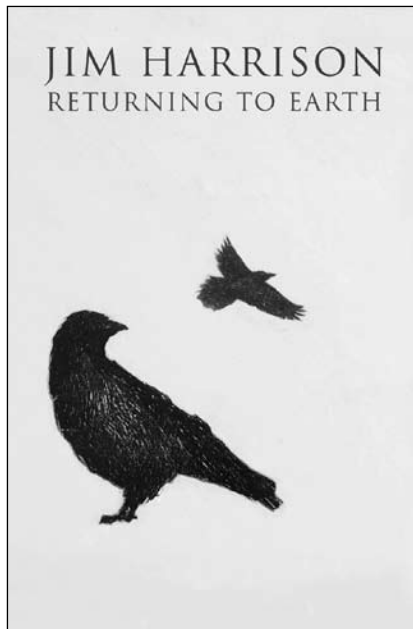
Life is rarely instructive. One of the wisest and best writers I know, Peter Matthiessen who loves good wine, once said, "I have never learned from experience." Put that in your pipe and smoke it. Anyway, a Hollywood studio had put me up in the Hôtel Plaza Athénée for a significant meeting about the fate of a hundred-million-dollar movie. I was stressed and jet-lagged over the nastiness of the business world which is as morally compromised as the literary world, and went into the hotel bar for a double shot of V.O. Canadian whiskey which was forty-two dollars, a tad stiff price-wise. I'm not comfortable in the Plaza Athénée in Paris or The Ritz in my collection of fifty-dollar sport coats. I've been easy-going about taking friends out for a seven-hundred-dollar meal but it would be unthinkable to spend that much on an article of clothing. I said to the Plaza Athénée barman, "Are you f----g kidding" and he poured me a four-dollar glass of Côtes du Rhône saying that it was the solution to all the problems in life.

I rarely feel spiritual in New York or Paris except when I've stopped at the old church across the side street from Les Deux Magots on St. Germain and lit candles for the liver of my friend, the renowned gourmand Gerard Oberlé, who caught hepatitis in Egypt and couldn't drink wine for two years. His suffering was incalculable and on several occasions I lit five bucks' worth of candles which brought about his recovery.

The other day on a very warm border winter afternoon, I was sitting on the patio with my wife Linda, sharing a bottle of delightful Bouzeron. We were watching a rare pair of hepatic tanagers at the feeder. These birds evidently don't get hepatitis. It was all very pleasant and I recalled again a passage from the journal of a Kentucky schizophrenic who had escaped from an asylum. He wrote, "Birds are holes in heaven through which a man may pass." I had this little

epiphany that wine could do the same thing if properly used. We all have learned, sometimes painfully, that more is not necessarily better than less. When Baudelaire wrote in his famed “Enivrez-Vous,” “Be always drunk on wine or poetry or virtue,” he likely didn’t mean commode-hugging drunk. Wine can offer oxygen to the spirit, I thought, getting off my deck chair and going into the kitchen to cook some elk steak and dietetic potatoes fried in duck fat, and not incidentally opening a bottle of Domaine Tempier Bandol because I had read a secret bible in France that said to drink red after dark to fight off the night in our souls.

Jim Harrison has recently published a novel, Returning to Earth, with Grove Atlantic.



As surely as any celebrity chef touting extra virgin olive oil to the masses, the novelist and poet Jim Harrison has made a vocation out of appetite. But the hungers he addresses are as much those of the spirit as the belly, not that he makes much of a distinction between the two. For Harrison, to tuck into a slab of bacon is to feed the soul. His books glisten with love of the world, and are as grounded as Thoreau’s in the particulars of American place—its rivers and thickets, its highways and taverns. Bawdily and with unrelenting gusto, Harrison’s forty years’ worth of writing explores what constitutes a good life, both aesthetically and morally, on this planet.

Will Blythe, The New York Times Book Review

2005 KUENTZ-BAS HUSSEREN-LES-CHÂTEAUX

We were blessed last year by the discovery of several new domaines in France and Italy, plus the continuing progress in quality at Kuentz-Bas. Tasting through the young winemaker's 2005s, I was starstruck. Why? His style or imprint is invisible. You will enjoy fresh fruit and pristine varietal character, impeccable balance, purity, and integrity. I'd call his style timeless and classic.

2005 PINOT GRIS "COLLECTION"

I don't mention our wines' medals and scores and awards much, but this one I like: Most Typical Pinot Gris of the Year award. The competition takes place in Alsace every year, and the judges are local wine people. Indeed, the smoky, peaty aromatics that attract us to the grape variety are in abundance here.

\$30.00 PER BOTTLE **\$324.00** PER CASE

2005 PINOT GRIS "COLLECTION RARE"

The above is dry and fabulous; this one is sweet and fabulous. Treat it as the centerpiece of an evening with like-minded tasters. Serve it all by itself. No distractions. The grapes were produced biodynamically. Kuentz-Bas is busy converting all their vineyards.

\$35.00 PER BOTTLE **\$378.00** PER CASE

2005 RIESLING "COLLECTION"

Don't worry about getting what you pay for. This is loaded with class, the best Kuentz-Bas Riesling since I've been working with them (fifteen years). The noble bearing might be due to the presence of *grands crus* in the blend. It is dry, full-bodied, with backbone and length. Great Riesling character.

\$23.00 PER BOTTLE **\$248.40** PER CASE

2005 GEWURZTRAMINER "COLLECTION"

Loads of fruit, floral and spice perfume, all presented with unusual freshness. How can it seem so deep and electric at once? Elegantly balanced (rare for the Gewurz) and a haunting, never-ending aftertaste.

\$29.00 PER BOTTLE **\$313.20** PER CASE

*(In order to tempt you to try the new Kuentz-Bas style,
buy all four bottles and receive a 20% discount.)*

— PRE-ARRIVAL OFFER —

2005 WHITE BURGUNDIES
DOMAINE BRUNO COLIN

WHEN THE TWO Colin brothers decided to work separately, I felt bad for Michel, their father, because I know how hard he worked to build a domaine large enough to support three families. When I discovered his cellar in 1976, he only had three wines—Chassagne, Chassagne les Vergers, and Puligny les Demoiselles—and enlarged the holdings slowly over three decades.

But it turns out I am happy with the situation because we have wine now from three Colins, each with talent and individuality.

As for Bruno's 2005s, I have only one advice, buy as much as pocketbook and cellar permit. Both Raveneau and Coche told me that 2005 is one of the all-time Burgundy vintages.

Bruno Colin's 2005s? BEAUTIFUL. That's the best word, as long as it does not exclude the words pretty and gorgeous. These are picture-perfect, definitive renditions of each *terroir*, seductive as wine can ever be, with toasty Chardonnay fruit, minerality, depth, and aging potential.

	PER CASE
2005 BOURGOGNE CHARDONNAY	\$168.00
2005 SAINT-AUBIN <i>PREMIER CRU</i> "LE CHARMOIS"	309.00
2005 CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET <i>PREMIER CRU</i> "LA BOUDRIOTTE"	516.00
2005 CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET <i>PREMIER CRU</i> "LES CHENEVOTTES"	516.00
2005 CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET <i>PREMIER CRU</i> "LES CHAUMÉES"	516.00
2005 CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET <i>PREMIER CRU</i> "LA MALTROIE"	516.00
2005 CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET <i>PREMIER CRU</i> "EN REMILLY"	546.00
2005 CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET <i>PREMIER CRU</i> "LES VERGERS"	546.00
2005 CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET <i>PREMIER CRU</i> "MORGEOT" . . .	516.00
2005 PULIGNY-MONTRACHET <i>PREMIER CRU</i> "LA TRUFFIÈRE"	756.00

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

BURGUNDY

2004 BOURGOGNE *BLANC* • ROBERT CHEVILLON

Chevillon's Chardonnay vines are on the outskirts of Nuits Saint George, but his 2004 seems downright Chablis-like. It is dry, crisp, minerally, and vibrant. From oysters to salmon, you'll find it useful.

\$19.95 PER BOTTLE **\$215.46** PER CASE

2004 BOURGOGNE PASSETOUTGRAIN ROBERT CHEVILLON

This is Chevillon's blend of Pinot Noir and Gamay. I would not call it awesome, folks, and it won't register much on the Richter scale. So, why drink it? Well, Chevillon is a master, and awesome is not the only song in his songbook.

Roast a bird, fry some fries, and get into it.

\$18.00 PER BOTTLE **\$194.40** PER CASE

2004 CHAMBOLLE-MUSIGNY FRANÇOIS BERTHEAU

One appreciation of the wines of Chambolle-Musigny from the old days reads: "A wine of silk and lace. Its supreme delicacy ignores all violence and cloaks its power."

The strength hidden by a cloak of delicacy. Nicely put. And one does sense the strength as the wine imprints itself firmly into the taste buds.

\$67.00 PER BOTTLE **\$723.60** PER CASE

2004 VOLNAY "LES CAILLERETS" PIERRE BOILLOT

My respect for Pierre Boillot increased a couple of thousand percent when I met his ravishing Italian bride—oops, I mean when I tasted his 2004s.

He is making wines in his wife's image, not in his own image. Thank you, Jesus. And who could blame Pierre. His 2004s are gorgeous and fleshy, deep and soulful, and of the brunette persuasion.

There are a lot of Volnays out there. Buy this one. You won't regret it, not tonight, not twenty years from now.

\$62.00 PER BOTTLE **\$669.60** PER CASE

2004 **GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN “LES CORBEAUX”**
PIERRE BOILLOT

I put these two *premiers crus* one after the other expressly, hoping you can serve them that way. You have two Pinot Noirs, same vintage, vinified identically . . . one Volnay, one Gevrey, so now you have the similarities and differences to ponder, which is not a bad way to spend some brain time. The two wines act differently because of the vineyard differences, but how will you describe the differences without having met Madame Boillot?

\$61.00 PER BOTTLE \$658.80 PER CASE

— **CURRENT INVENTORY** —

LOIRE WHITES

As I compiled this list, it occurred to me that the 2005 Loire whites from Sauvignon Blanc are the finest of my career. They are marked below by asterisks.

	PER BOTTLE	PER CASE
2003 MONTLOUIS “LES LUMENS” • MATHUR . . .	\$16.00	\$172.80
2005 MUSCADET • ANDRÉ BRÉGEON	12.50	135.00
2005 MUSCADET • CHÂTEAU FESSARDIÈRE	12.95	139.86
2005 POUILLY FUMÉ • JACQUES CARROY★	17.95	193.86
2005 POUILLY FUMÉ “VIEILLES VIGNES” RÉGIS MINET★	18.95	204.66
2005 QUINCY • DENIS JAUMIER★	16.00	172.80
2005 REUILLY “PIERRES PLATES” DOMAINE DE REUILLY★	16.95	183.06
2005 SANCERRE • DANIEL CHOTARD★	22.00	237.60
2003 SANCERRE “ORTUS” • HIPPOLYTE REVERDY	33.00	356.40
2004 SAVENNIÈRES SEC • CHÂTEAU D’EPIRÉ	16.00	172.80
2004 SAVENNIÈRES “CUVÉE SPÉCIALE” CHÂTEAU D’EPIRÉ	22.00	237.60
2003 SAVENNIÈRES SEC • CHÂTEAU D’EPIRÉ	16.00	172.80
2005 VOUVRAY SEC • DIDIER CHAMPALOU	14.95	161.46
2005 VOUVRAY “CUVÉE FONDRAUX” DIDIER CHAMPALOU	16.95	183.06