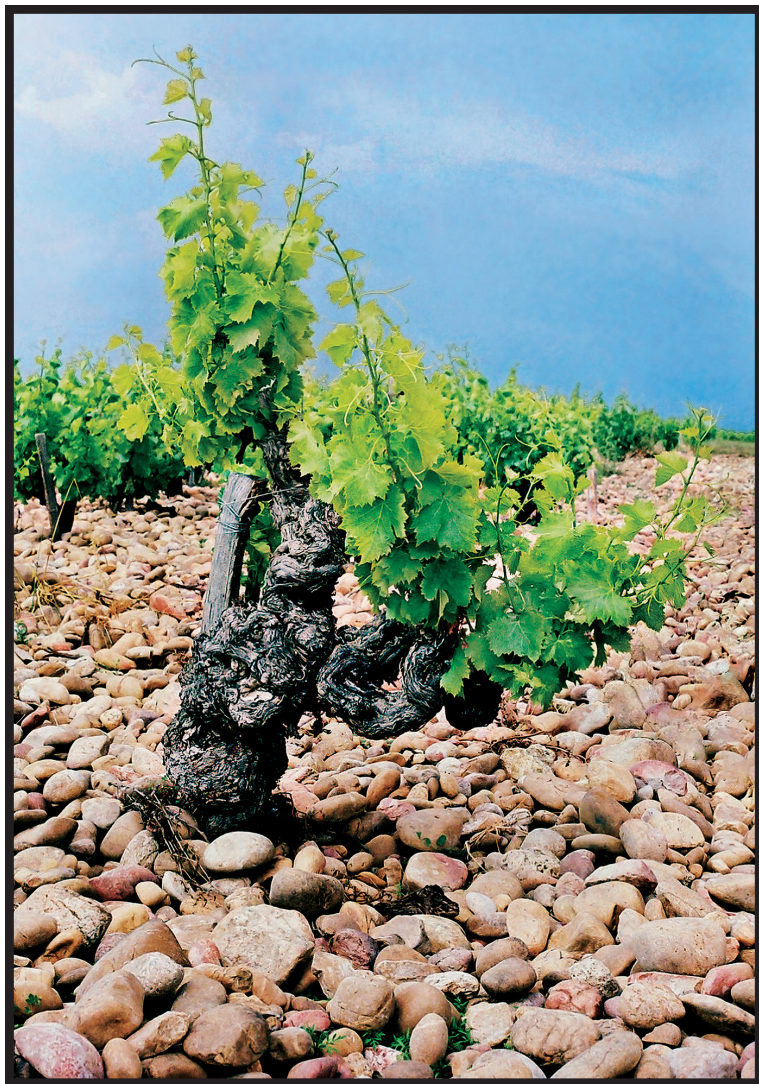


KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

SEPTEMBER 2023



The Piedlong vineyard, Châteauneuf-du-Pape

© Madison Brown

DISPATCH FROM PROVENCE • VALUE OF THE MONTH
CHATEAUNEUF BLANC & ROUGE • ROSÉ TIME CONTINUES

CÔTES DE PROVENCE

CLOS SAINT-JOSEPH

by Kermit Lynch

THE MOST INTERESTING WINES come from a great terroir in the hands of a great talent. François Raveneau at Chablis, for example. That has to be one of my favorite discoveries, the austere decomposed oyster shell soil and the cranky demeanor of old man Raveneau. And now I present somewhat the same sort of combination, this time from a hidden corner of Provence. Hold on, here we go! Let's begin with the punchline: When I tasted the dry white from Villars-sur-Var's Clos Saint-Joseph, I said to myself, "If Raveneau had vines here, this is what his wine would taste like." (Notice, I did NOT say that it tastes like a Raveneau Chablis.)

Once upon a time, north of Nice, an inland sea dried up some 150 million years ago and left behind sedimentary layers of sea creature remains. Tectonic movement provoked violent upheavals that churned up strata, including marl. Layers were exposed that had been squeezed upright to vertical

by various natural forces. Here and there, rocky formations like petrified innards spilled up and out of the earth's surface. As I gazed in wonder at the dramatic landscape, it felt like those same forces were still at work, alive and kicking. I imagined grapevine roots digging deeper and deeper into such a geological gumbo.

My son, Anthony, came up with the lead, and both of us drove to the exotic landscape of the Côtes de Provence appellation at Villars-sur-Var—Villars on the slopes above the river Var—to investigate, and convince proprietor Roch Sassi, even though everything was sold out, to add us to his customer list. Unlike Raveneau, Roch is far from cranky.

Red, white, and rosé: see what we have in stock (p. 4) and ask our staff about older vintages.

As for Roch's rosé, you will not find a Côtes de Provence rosé closer to satisfying my particular palate. Nary a hint of artificial or enological bullshit to be found.

Villars-sur-Var





Roch Sassi, vigneron at Clos Saint-Joseph

© Gail Skoff

CLOS SAINT-JOSEPH: IN STOCK NOW

by Anthony Lynch

2022 CÔTES DE PROVENCE ROSÉ

From the very first gentle, stony sip of Roch's rosé, we knew we had something special. This is a terroir-driven rosé brimming with class.

\$42.00 PER BOTTLE **\$453.60** PER CASE

2021 CÔTES DE PROVENCE "BLANC DE BLANCS"

The cool 2021 is what Roch refers to as a *millésime alpin*, and indeed, the bright, pure wines born from it are more Alpine in character than Mediterranean. You will taste the abundant limestone in the soil, as well as the chilly winds that blow down from the surrounding mountain ridges, in each glass of this refined blend of Rolle, Ugni Blanc, Sémillon, and Clairette.

\$55.00 PER BOTTLE **\$594.00** PER CASE

2020 CÔTES DE PROVENCE ROUGE

Traditional southern grapes including Syrah, Mourvèdre, Grenache, and Carignan yield a mid-weight, violet-scented red on the rocky slopes of Villars. You'll experience an elegant, soft-spoken side of Provence you never knew existed.

\$55.00 PER BOTTLE **\$594.00** PER CASE

2020 SYRAH "LES PLANCHES DE LA GARDIVOLE"

A pure Syrah, vinified with whole clusters and aged eighteen months in *demi-muids*. Dense and chewy, with floral notes and gravelly tannins, it is one of the great Syrahs of the south. Give it time to breathe, or better yet, tuck it away for a few years before indulging.

\$76.00 PER BOTTLE **\$820.80** PER CASE

2021 GRASSENCE "LES PLANCHES DE LUNEL"

In a mixed parcel planted by his great-grandfather in 1925, Roch identified a long-lost local variety called Grasse. He took cuttings and replanted a few rows to yield a single barrel of this delicate, low-alcohol red characterized by intoxicating notes of white pepper and rose petals. It's a rare and special wine, best served chilled, that I will be savoring throughout summer and beyond.

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

VALUE OF THE MONTH

A HUMBLE CÔTES DU RHÔNE

by *Dustin Soiseth*

IN THE BREAK ROOM at our Berkeley shop, a “wall of fame” features the empty bottles of some of the most memorable wines tasted there over the years. That wall contains some legendary names—Romanée-Conti, Verset, Quintarelli, Vieux Télégraphe, de Montille—and the vintages represented reach back decades. There is also a bottle of 1985 Kermit Lynch Côtes du Rhône. I wondered why, so I asked my colleague Michael Butler. It turns out that a customer brought it in in 1995, and when Kermit and the staff pulled the cork, they found, in Michael’s words, an elegant red with hints of *réglisse*, herbs, and fading black cherry. That humble Côtes du Rhône, which sold for \$5.75 (\$14.81, adjusted for inflation), had aged incredibly well.

The grapes for our Côtes du Rhône are sourced from the commune of Châteauneuf-de-Gadagne, whose vineyards are chock-full of *galets roulés* similar to those found in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. It is vinified by Jean-François Pasturel at Terres d’Avignon, a co-op founded in 1929. Vinification takes place in cement vats with natural yeasts only, and the wine is bottled unfinned and unfiltered. The wine is Grenache-based, but the exact blend varies each year. The current vintage has a big dollop of Syrah along with Mourvèdre, Carignan, Marselan, and Cinsault. The blending process can be arduous, with individual lots tasted and sample blends created again and again until balance is achieved.

Not all inexpensive wines have to be consumed in their youth, just as not all expensive wines benefit from aging. The fundamentals that often result in age-worthy bottles—quality terroir, sound winemaking, balance, structure—are not the exclusive province of the well-heeled. Our Côtes du Rhône is built on these fundamentals, and while it will certainly give immense joy as an everyday drinker, don’t forgo the opportunity to lay a few bottles aside for the future. They may end up on your “wall of fame,” too.



2021 CÔTES DU RHÔNE SELECTED BY KERMIT LYNCH

\$14.95 PER BOTTLE

\$161.46 PER CASE

BRUNIER BENCHMARKS

Châteauneuf-du-Pape

by Jane Augustine, KLWM NEW YORK

2021 CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE *BLANC* “CLOS ROQUÈTE” • FAMILLE BRUNIER

A leaner vintage, 2021 lended itself to *blancs* with a more marked minerality than is typical for Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Harvested on a sunny morning in late August, grapes from La Roquète—equal parts Clairette, Roussanne, and Grenache Blanc—turned out as elegant as ever: ripe with juicy stone fruit, a lovely bitterness, and more delicate aromas like jasmine and anise. Enjoy this white with anything from a goat cheese tart to a platter of prosciutto, or with a favorite white fish entrée—prepared *amandine*, perhaps?

\$66.00 PER BOTTLE

\$712.80 PER CASE

2020 CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE “PIEDLONG” FAMILLE BRUNIER

Historically, the Bruniers’ La Crau bottling has been their flagship wine, their *grand cru* of sorts. In 2011 they decided to isolate the fruit from a promising vineyard with *galet*-littered soil from a separate plateau known as Piedlong, which lies at the summit of the appellation. This bottling might be—in essence—their other *grand cru*. Piedlong is a vineyard inherited from Daniel and Frédéric Brunier’s grandmother over thirty-five years ago, but the fruit was always blended into other wines. For various reasons, some unexplainable, fruit from Piedlong ripens about two weeks later than on La Crau, which gives it an immediate advantage, as a slow ripening process allows grapes to gain in complexity. The resulting *cuvée*—made from 90% Grenache—is therefore a kind of tribute to the grape and its ability to express *terroir* with purity. While visiting the domaine recently, we tasted one of the first vintages, a 2012 that was refined and elegant, and a beautiful pairing with spit-roasted lamb. I got the sense that Daniel is truly proud of what his family is building with this *cuvée*, as if somehow the wine will be the future of the domaine and, in many ways, the legacy of his generation. Not surprisingly, the 2020 vintage drinks like something even more ethereal than you’d expect from a southern red: it’s mineral and structured but with delicate aromas of rose petal, currants, and *réglisse*. Piedlong is a new classic.

\$73.00 PER BOTTLE

\$788.40 PER CASE

SHOWSTOPPING ITALIAN WHITES

by Tom Wolf

2021 VINO BIANCO “MODESTU 999” GIOVANNI MONTISCI

For this dazzling *bianco*, Giovanni Montisci pairs organic Vermentino planted in granite soils at an incredible thousand meters above sea level, in the mountainous interior of the island of Sardinia, with a three-day-long skin maceration. This turns out to be the perfect amount of time, as it dials up the zesty and herbal flavors of Vermentino and gives this bottling just the right amount of texture to pair with lobster for an epic late-summer feast.

\$76.00 PER BOTTLE **\$820.80** PER CASE

2019 VENEZIA GIULIA BIANCO “MORUS ALBA” • VIGNAI DA DULINE

Even though the next wine on this page is made from Chardonnay, this is arguably the most Burgundian *bianco* of the three here. Once Lorenzo Mocchiutti and Federica Magrini of Vignai da Duline blend old-vine Malvasia Istriana and Sauvignon Blanc, they age the wine in old oak barrels and allow it to complete its malolactic fermentation. This gives it a mesmerizing, Meursault-like tension between fuller body and almost creamy texture on one hand and high-acid, citrusy flavors on the other.

\$57.00 PER BOTTLE **\$615.60** PER CASE

2012 VENEZIA GIULIA CHARDONNAY “LA BORA DI KANTE” • KANTE

If you thought the extended aging process Barolo enjoys before it reaches our shores is impressive, this northern Italian Chardonnay—aged for one year in French barrels, two years in stainless steel, and five years in bottle—takes things to a whole new level. This treatment is especially uncommon for white wines, because long aging can soften a wine’s acidity and tension—and yet, these qualities are on full display in Edi Kante’s most ambitious *bianco*. While the aromas and initial flavors yield a floral elegance, the intensely mineral and saline finish reminds you that this gorgeous bottle originates in the limestone soils of the Carso plateau overlooking the Adriatic Sea from eight hundred feet above. This is Chardonnay like you’ve never experienced it.

\$75.00 PER BOTTLE **\$810.00** PER CASE



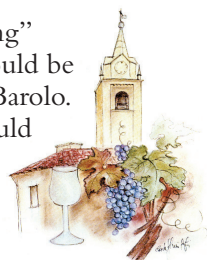
Massimo Benevelli

© Jimmy Hayes

BENEVELLI OF MONFORTE

by Dixon Brooke

MASSIMO BENEVELLI is a member of Barolo's "young" generation, which I would like to think means I could be included in the group if I were a winegrower in Barolo. He took over from his father Piero much earlier than he should have had to, and since then he has carved a worthy place for himself in the pantheon of Barolo traditionalists in the only way possible—hard work and lots of it.



2021 DOLCETTO D'ALBA "LA COSTA"

Massimo's Dolcetto is grown on a steep hillside right alongside his family home in Monforte d'Alba. His Dolcetto—an almost black wine with an intensely chalky backbone and meaty tannin—emphasizes structure above all else. It is as comfortable with the main dish as with the pasta course.

\$21.00 PER BOTTLE

\$226.80 PER CASE

2021 LANGHE NEBBIOLO

Traditionally, Massimo has aged his Langhe Nebbiolo exclusively in stainless steel tank, but beginning with the 2021 vintage he has begun to give it a few months in large oak cask as well to soften its edges a bit before release. Vintage 2021 is fresh, bright, and vertical, a beautiful expression of young Nebbiolo that can be enjoyed immediately.

\$29.00 PER BOTTLE

\$313.20 PER CASE

2019 BAROLO "MOSCONI"

The newest addition to Benevelli's Barolo repertoire, Mosconi is one of the southernmost vineyards of the Barolo zone in Monforte d'Alba, surrounded by Ginestra, Le Coste, and Ravera di Monforte. Massimo crafts his most tender Barolo here, which to my palate recalls the *cru* of Bussia to the northwest. It is a pleasant reminder that there are many sides to the kaleidoscopic Nebbiolo grape, even within one small subzone and one cellar—the differences lie hidden underground and only reveal themselves through wine!

\$79.00 PER BOTTLE

\$853.20 PER CASE

ROSÉ TIME CONTINUES

by Jane Augustine, KLWM NEW YORK

2022 VINO ROSATO • ELVIO TINTERO

This crisp palate opener from Marco Tintero blends the juice from red-skinned Barbera—a Piemontese staple—with a touch of local white varieties that Marco grows for other bottlings: his Arneis and floral Moscato. While “lifelong wine-maker” would be enough to decorate his résumé, Marco also happens to be a *salumiere* hobbyist, meaning he makes homemade pork *salumi*, which pairs particularly well with his Rosato. Seasoned with sweet spices like clove, cinnamon, and peppercorns, the *salumi* is the perfect foil to a Barbera-based quaffer like this one.

\$12.00 PER BOTTLE

\$129.60 PER CASE

2022 VIN DE CORSE “LE ROSÉ DE PAULINE” DOMAINE DE MARQUILIANI

Anne Amalric of Domaine de Marquiliani wins the proverbial prize for making the palest rosés we import. So much so with her 2022 vintage, I wondered whether “Pauline” was, in fact, really a rosé! But then I tasted it: white strawberry, melon, sea spritz—there is no mistaking it. For this bottling, a majority of Sgiaccarellu grapes with small amounts of Vermentino and Syrah chill down after harvest, then undergo a delicate press cycle, giving us a rosé whose color may be understated, but whose impact is both bold and balanced.

\$32.00 PER BOTTLE

\$345.60 PER CASE

2022 CHINON ROSÉ • CHARLES JOGUET

Before Charles Joguet took over his family domaine in Chinon, he was a passionate painter and sculptor in Paris, retreating to a little studio in Montmartre. When his father passed away, he came to a crossroads: become a part-time vigneron among painters or a part-time painter among vignerons, and he chose the latter. The style of Joguet’s Chinon rosé has evolved over the years, and today it is crisp and bright, with bitter notes of ruby citrus, white pepper, and cherry pit. It’s the perfect wine for sipping while indulging in a long-lost, artistic pastime. Fun fact: a drawing Charles made of his mother’s historical home is featured on the label.

\$28.00 PER BOTTLE

\$302.40 PER CASE

PINOT NOIR

by Chris Santini, KLWM BEAUNE

2020 SANCERRE ROUGE “LE CHANT DE L’ARCHET” • DANIEL CHOTARD

Once, white wines from Sancerre were a rarity, and Pinot Noir *rouge* reigned supreme, an order of things that lasted for centuries. In more modern times, as the world thirsted for crisp, lively whites, Sancerre stepped up with such roaring success that it nearly became a household name for “white wine.” Pinot Noir, suddenly shoved into the back seat, was almost a victim of the region’s popularity. Thankfully, Simon Chotard has spent the last decade or so deeply focusing on his reds, releasing micro-cuvées of Pinot Noir from his oldest vines and most interesting plots. His Chant de l’Archet cuvée comes from two parcels of prime real estate (mid-slope and south-facing) on the celebrated “cirque de Reigny,” the amphitheater hill around his village. A slow, cold ferment and a long *élevage* in old wood help showcase the elegance, dark fruit, and spiced nose of this profound and grand Pinot.

\$43.00 PER BOTTLE

\$464.40 PER CASE

2020 BEAUNE 1^{ER} CRU “LES MONTREVENOTS” DOMAINE GACHOT-MONOT

One place where Pinot still decidedly rules the roost is on the Montagne de Beaune, home to the famed *premiers crus* that look down on the town below. Damien Gachot may be best known for his bright and delicious wines from the Côte de Nuits, but he’s been secretly eyeing the high-altitude terroir of Les Montrevenots for quite some time. Damien’s permanent and beaming smile managed to get even wider once he scored a few small rows in 2019 and elbowed his way into the elite club of the Côte de Beaune. It’s an exceptional parcel, perched atop the Montagne, directly above the Clos de Mouches, and adjacent to the start of the Pommard appellation, an ideal spot for making colored, complex, deep Pinots marked by the Beaune terroir while keeping a healthy splash of fresh fruit and acidity in the mix—essential to Burgundy in warmer vintages like this one. His grandmother, Marguerite Monot, who created and single-handedly ran the estate for nearly thirty years, would be proud to see what Damien is adding to her foundations, row by row, village by village, for us to drink and enjoy.

\$94.00 PER BOTTLE

\$1,015.20 PER CASE

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