



KERMIT LYNCH
WINE MERCHANT

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- ON VACATION
- SLAKE YOUR THIRST!
- LOIRE VALLEY VALUES
- 2009 BURGUNDY CLASSICS

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

AUGUST 2011

ON VACATION

IMAGINE A JOB that everyone thinks is a holiday. When I groan about my work, I never get any sympathy—yes, I can hear your chorus of *boo hoos*, or, “Oh yeah, Kermit, you’ve sure got it rough.”

Even in France—over the years, how many times have I left a domaine only to hear, when a winemaker bids me farewell, an added “*Bonnes vacances*” (which means, “Have a nice vacation”). The French have so many weeks of vacation, plus long weekends, I wondered if they presumed that I had some vacation time coming right up. But no, it wasn’t that.

Finally, after a terrible day on the road—including four hours stuck in my car on the *autoroute* because strikers had shut it down—when the last vigneron of the day shook my hand and said, “*Bonnes vacances*,” I almost snarled.

“*Bonnes vacances*? I have been on the road driving and tasting for thirteen hours, with no time left except to eat alone in some lousy hotel, go to bed, and start right in again tomorrow morning. I won’t see my wife and kids until the weekend, and you, you . . . *BONNES VACANCES? Mon dieu.*”

He was taken aback. Looking me over, he reflected a moment and said, “I suppose it’s because you’re always in shorts and espadrilles.”

Do they expect their American importer in suit and tie? Chauffeured limousine? At least I’d shaved.

Last week in the southern Rhône it was hot enough for shorts, but I, fellow Americans, wore long pants. Still I heard two *bonnes vacances*.

One of my best tastings was at Domaine Gallety between north and south Rhône. Its appellation, Côtes du Vivarais, is little known and maybe that’s why Gallety has yet to attain cult status. It deserves to, deserves it as much as the other top domaines in the south. Its more tempered climate produces delicious Provençal flavors in a fresher, slightly lighter style than usual.

Domaine Gramenon has cult status and tiny allocations. We are lucky to have some. Some of their 2010s are an absolute thrill to taste. Les Laurentides, for example—my tasting note says *ooh la la!!* Not very precise, that, but you get the idea. Sagesse has immense depth. Poignée de Raisins? Their best version ever.

Sang des Cailloux has gone biodynamic. Serge Férigoule says that explains the incredible freshness and liveliness. What a Provençal gem, loaded with perfume, no heaviness—it left my palate with the impression it was glittering.

There were some long, intense blending sessions. One was with Louis Barruol at Saint Cosme. The bottled ’09s are extraordinary. See The Underground Wine Letter for notes, and don’t miss them—Côte Rôtie, Hermitage, and Crozes Hermitage. I can’t help saying it: go ahead, try to find better.

After working on the 2010s, Louis and I met one of my favorite wine people, John Livingstone-Learmonth, for dinner. He lets me call him John, which saves time. He and Louis are writing a book about Gigondas, and they asked me to write an introduction.

Vieux Télégraphe? Oh yes! Has there been a grander vintage there than 2010?

Some might choose 2009. Or 2007. Or 1998. I've been with V.T. a long time. I'm reminded of the 1978. The 2010 offers a long tasting voyage, starting with a nose of charm and complexity and ending with an imposing, stony, tannic finish. I had a weird image in my skull—all alone at the center of Stonehenge.

Then Daniel Brunier accompanied me and helped blend the 2010 KL Côtes du Rhône. We didn't agree. Well, we agreed on 90% of it and then differed on the final touches. His reinforced the charm factor, mine the structure. I wanted more grip. And, George W., I got to be The Decider. It's *my* blend. My logic: to bottle it unfiltered, the blend needs more time to age in *foudre* and clarify. The bottling and shipping will be months from now. I decided to add a couple of the more tannic, intense cuvées to add some keeping power, some guts.

At Domaine de Durban, home of one of the world's most brilliant Muscats, we tasted several vintages. The 2006 was remarkable—the four years in bottle had done wonders for it. We have around thirty cases in Berkeley. Please, please try it. You will never find such an elegant, freshening dessert wine. It will leave your palate in a heavenly state. In its generous, elegant Muscat aroma, I found hints of thyme, mint, and vervain against a backdrop of Gramma's apricot cobbler. It provides a shock of recognition, the recognition that dessert wine doesn't have to be thick or gloppy. Here's one that livens the palate.

Only a three-day trip . . . then, heading home (my French home), the car radio announced that a flock of sheep had blocked the train tracks at Aix-en-Provence, so all arrivals and departures at the station were delayed . . . two hours so far, creating chaos on the roads, a commuter's nightmare. For some reason, I smiled. For once, it wasn't a strike. But home, sweet home was no longer forty minutes away. How about two and a half hours? Did I just hear a *boo hoo*? One, please, just this once?



The Dentelles of Montmirail

© Gail Skoff

LOIRE VALLEY VALUES

by Lori Varsames

2010 SAUVIGNON BLANC “UNIQUE” DOMAINE DU SALVARD

“Unique” is a good name (albeit slightly understated) for this Loire Valley Sauvignon Blanc. The Brothers Delaille must have chosen “Unique” because of its incredible taste and ridiculously low price. Clean, bright, and zesty, this little *vin de pays* is your perfect solution to just about everything you can possibly imagine.

\$14.95 PER BOTTLE **\$161.46** PER CASE

2010 JASNIÈRES “CUVÉE DU SILEX” PASCAL JANVIER

Talented and steadfast, Pascal Janvier is a real sharp-shooter of Chenin Blanc. His aim is true. He nails it every single time, which I imagine is not easy up on the Loir River, north of the Loire River. Here the sun is a little more scarce, the ripening slower. Cuvée du Silex is my favorite because of its distinctly earthy tones of forest floor and gunflint. It tends to sell out quickly, so get some while you can—our so-called Jaded Palates have already discovered it.

\$22.00 PER BOTTLE **\$237.60** PER CASE

2009 MUSCADET SÈVRE ET MAINE SUR LIE ANDRÉ-MICHEL BRÉGEON

Round, stony, briny, and fresh are just a few words that come to mind when enjoying Michel’s blockbuster 2009. You can bet that it will be delish alongside a hot pile of steamers or iced oysters, but this vintage is unusually versatile at table and, with a lot of dishes, could replace white Burgundy.

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

2010 SANCERRE ROSÉ • DANIEL CHOTARD

When Daniel Chotard uses Pinot Noir to make rosé, it seems to capture some of the fresh grassiness and mineral of his Sancerre *blanc*. Consider trying it the next time you have goat cheese, a salad, pâté, or *saucisson*. The only thing to top the experience would be to drink it while Daniel plays the accordion. The wine of a French accordionist—what more can you ask?

\$26.00 PER BOTTLE **\$280.80** PER CASE

THE SOUTH

by Clark Z. Terry

2009 COTEAUX DU LANGUEDOC “TRADITION” CHÂTEAU SAINT MARTIN DE LA GARRIGUE

The label of the Cuvée Tradition will tell you this wine is made from Syrah and Carignan. The price will tell you that you’ll have enough change left over for a sandwich next door at Café Fanny. What the blend and price don’t tell you is how darn good this wine actually is. I thought I was starting to tire of talking about how many great values we import, but then the new vintage of the Cuvée Tradition crept into the store, stood up, and said, “I’m your new favorite wine for the summer! Drink me when you’re grilling up sausages and enjoying the twilight heat.” Don’t miss this wine—it will speak to you.

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

2010 CÔTES DU RHÔNE BLANC “SUNFLOWER CUVÉE”

Kermit’s collaboration with Louis Barruol now brings us our third vintage of the “Sunflower Cuvée.” Maybe one day I’ll join Kermit and Louis for a blending session of this wine. I wonder if things ever get heated, with intense debates over percentages of Marsanne versus Picpoul. But then, perhaps it is more like B. B. King playing tunes with Eric Clapton, where two distinct styles and backgrounds complement each other to create something fresh yet rootsy. Yes, fresh and rootsy—that is the “Sunflower Cuvée.”

\$22.00 PER BOTTLE **\$237.60** PER CASE

2009 VACQUEYRAS • SANG DES CAILLOUX

Serge Férigoule is the epitome of the Rhône vigneron—there is nothing else in this world he was meant to do more than make wine from the plateau of Vacqueyras. As the owner of Sang des Cailloux, he spends nearly every waking moment in his winery and vineyards. He is animated and eccentric, yet focused and principled, pouring all his energy into the wine. He cares for one thing, producing wine that is the true essence of his *galet*-littered vineyards.

I cannot think of a wine that reflects the winemaker more than Serge and his Vacqueyras. Wine and maker are wild, with an edgy nature—dynamic, and filled with spirit and vigor. This wine will not be mistaken for anything else—it could only be the Vacqueyras of Serge Férigoule!

\$33.00 PER BOTTLE **\$356.40** PER CASE

FIRST ARRIVALS OF 2010 GRAMENON

by *Chris Santini*

2010 CÔTES DU RHÔNE “POIGNÉE DE RAISINS” DOMAINE GRAMENON

Here's a pure Grenache, in all senses of the word. Tapped from tank, unfiltered and unfiltered, to be downed starting now. The only cellaring this wine needs is about thirty minutes in the fridge to give it a slight chill. Here is *almost* pure fruit (it's not a simple wine), pure pleasure, and a depth of intensity it has never shown before—not that I didn't love it before, too.

\$26.00 PER BOTTLE **\$280.80** PER CASE

2010 CÔTES DU RHÔNE “L'ÉLÉMENTAIRE” DOMAINE GRAMENON

In the Rhône Valley, conventional wisdom (for conventional farmers, at least) says that old vines are to be ripped out or sold off. Yields are too low to make any money at the cooperative and the vines too gnarled and large to easily work and pass a tractor through. Gramenon keeps a keen eye out for neighbors who want to rid themselves of these plots, as what is one person's pain is Gramenon's pleasure. This parcel of Grenache was purchased three years ago and has since been pampered with the full biodynamic treatment with stunning results, which only get better with each passing vintage. L'Élémentaire has the purity of the Poignée de Raisins, but has a dark depth to it with hints of black olives, black fruit, and smoke.

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

2010 CÔTES DU RHÔNE “SIERRA DU SUD” DOMAINE GRAMENON

It's rare to find a good 100% Syrah from the southern Rhône, perhaps because of the sun and heat of Provence. Gramenon, though, sits at the far northern tip of the southern Rhône, not much farther from Cornas than they are from Châteauneuf-du-Pape. This southern Syrah has the softness and spice, and does not suffer in comparison with its northern relatives. It also has the Gramenon magic touch.

\$33.00 PER BOTTLE **\$356.40** PER CASE

SLAKE YOUR THIRST SAMPLER

by Steve Waters

I cook with wine. Sometimes I even add it to the food. —W.C. FIELDS

*And the wine had to be light in alcohol because the cuisine
arouses a gargantuan thirst.* —KERMIT LYNCH

THE DEBATE OVER WINES with lower levels of alcohol has progressed dramatically since we first offered a low-alcohol sampler more than three years ago. This past April, the *San Francisco Chronicle* Food and Wine section decided to list the alcohol level of every wine reviewed to provide consumers with that crucial bit of information prior to making a purchase. I even overheard a client suggesting that lower levels of alcohol in wine have become somewhat trendy. Trendy?!? Well, I'll be . . .

Trends come and go in the wine biz, that's for sure. I'll never forget an Australian gentleman back in my early tasting room days espousing the virtues of a "big, fat, rich, oaky, buttery Chardonnay." I can't say I jumped on the bandwagon with him, but he was on to something because that style of Chardonnay exploded and dominated for quite a while.

If drinking wines with moderate levels of alcohol has become a trend, then more power to it. The balance of multiple courses and copious amounts of wine at table without one side overpowering the other is a marriage made in heaven. Take this sampler home and quaff, cook with, pair, clink, and savor each wine, knowing that one to two glasses will not impede your desire for a few glasses more.

PER BOTTLE

2009 REUILLY BLANC • DENIS JAMAIN	\$18.95
2009 LUMASSINA • PUNTA CRENA	16.95
2010 PINOT NOIR ROSÉ • ÉRIC CHEVALIER	14.00
2009 BOURGUEIL "TRINCH!" • CATHERINE ET PIERRE BRETON	22.00
2009 BOURGOGNE ROUGE • BRUNO COLIN	24.00
2009 VINO ROSSO • TINTERO.	9.95

Normally \$105.85

SPECIAL SAMPLER PRICE \$84.50

(a 20% discount)



SPECIAL EVENTS IN BERKELEY

SUMMER PAIRINGS AT VINTAGE BERKELEY

Join us and The American Grilled Cheese Kitchen for an afternoon tasting in front of Vintage Berkeley wine shop.

We're pouring a selection of 2010 rosé to be paired with grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup shooters.

\$30 per person

Limited to 100 people

Ticket includes 1 Grilled Cheese Sandwich,
1 Tomato Soup Shooter, 2 Glasses of Rosé

Sunday, August 7

3-6 P.M.

Vintage Berkeley

2113 Vine Street, Berkeley

Reservations: 510-665-8600

10TH ANNUAL THINK PINK! AT CAFÉ ROUGE

It is ten years now that we've been working with nearby Café Rouge to make their annual rosé night the best it can be.

They are pulling out all the stops (corks?) this year to make their 10th annual Think Pink dinner an evening that should not be missed. The food is from Rouge and the Rosé from us.

Hope to see you there!

Thursday Evening, August 11

Café Rouge

1782 Fourth Street, Berkeley

Reservations: 510-525-1440

MARSANNAY

by Dixon Brooke

KERMIT ONCE SAID, “If you are looking for value, look where no one else is looking.” Marsannay is one of those places, and Régis Bouvier’s humble cellar is its best address.

2009 MARSANNAY BLANC “LES LONGEROIES” • RÉGIS BOUVIER

A whiff of hazelnut starts the show, and what restraint and class for a 2009 white. This is all about the citrusy side of the Chardonnay, fresh and long, *une belle droiture*, with great acidity. Bouvier’s wines are food wines, first and foremost. Serve this with fresh grilled fish or veal picatta, among many other things.

\$33.00 PER BOTTLE **\$356.40** PER CASE

2009 MARSANNAY BLANC “CLOS DU ROY” • RÉGIS BOUVIER

More ample than his other brethren in Marsannay, it’s as if the king demanded a sturdier wine for his table. In a totally different style from Longeroies, the Clos du Roy gives us the rich, generous side of Chardonnay, with an earthy component that reminds you that you’re in Burgundy. Serve with simple roast chicken and wild mushrooms, for example.

\$36.00 PER BOTTLE **\$388.80** PER CASE

2009 MARSANNAY ROUGE “CLOS DU ROY” • RÉGIS BOUVIER

This is a *vin de chasseur*, or “hunter’s wine.” Translation: Rich, full, earthy, entirely satisfying red Burgundy. I just couldn’t help envisioning it at table with wild game, and I don’t even think it was mealtime when I tasted it. But then again, I’m always thinking about the next meal. I suppose all my time in France exacerbated this tendency but the first proof of this behavior goes way back to my early childhood. . . . If you’ve never made a *bœuf bourguignon*, you should allow this bottle to be your inspiration. It isn’t an overly complicated dish: equipment-wise all you need is a good cast-iron or enamel Creuset-like baking dish in which to simmer all the tasty morsels.

\$32.00 PER BOTTLE **\$345.60** PER CASE

— PRE-ARRIVAL OFFER —

2009 **BURGUNDY CLASSICS**

by *Dixon Brooke*

2009 **BRUNO COLIN**

First we present a Burgundy fanatic's tour through the greatest appellations of Chassagne, guided by one of its most talented growers. Is there anything not to like here? The Chenevottes and Boudriotte are a bit rounder and more approachable now than the other *crus*, but they don't lack definition and nerve.



Vergers is the most high-toned, as usual. Blanchot is a new acquisition, right next to Le Montrachet on the Chassagne side. It is a tour de force with impeccable balance. The Puligny is an ultra-classic, laser-cut example of this great appellation.

PER BOTTLE

- 2009 CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET "LES CHENEVOTTES" 1ER CRU \$52.00
- 2009 CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET "LA BOUDRIOTTE" 1ER CRU . . 52.00
- 2009 CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET "EN REMILLY" 1ER CRU. . . . 53.00
- 2009 CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET "LES VERGERS" 1ER CRU. . . . 53.00
- 2009 CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET "BLANCHOT DESSUS" 1ER CRU 55.00
- 2009 PULIGNY-MONTRACHET "LA TRUFFIÈRE" 1ER CRU. 80.00

2009 **COLIN-DELÉGER**

From Bruno's father, Michel, you can experience the Puligny side of Le Montrachet's *terroir* with his extremely rare bottling of Demoiselles. Chevalier is higher up on the slope, cutting a bit leaner profile than Bâtard and Le Montrachet, but boasting endless depth and stony complexity. It's the Meursault Perrières of Chassagne. High praise, where we come from.

PER BOTTLE

- 2009 CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET "EN REMILLY" 1ER CRU. . . . \$59.00
- 2009 PULIGNY-MONTRACHET "LES DEMOISELLES" 1ER CRU . . 116.00
- 2009 CHEVALIER-MONTRACHET GRAND CRU 205.00



2009 MAUME

For longtime fans of this classic Gevrey estate, never fear, the Maume tradition is alive and well. Bertrand Maume continues to follow a fairly simple formula of farming his low-yielding, ancient, *sélection massale* vines and then racking their juice into old barrels and leaving them alone for several years. The wines are a bit more accessible young than they used to be, as Bertrand is using fewer stems than his father did, but we have no doubt these wines will stay the course. This vintage gives us a generous bunch, with a lot of sap and stuffing. They live up to the reputation of this great wine village and there is, as they age, an intellectual interest you'll enjoy—the thinking person's Burgundy. Our boss loves to regale us with older Maumes from his collection.

PER BOTTLE

2009 CÔTE DE NUITS-VILLAGES	\$24.00
2009 GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN	46.00
2009 GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN "AUX ETELOIS"	52.00
2009 GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN "EN PALLUD"	55.00
2009 GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN "CHAMPEAUX" 1ER CRU	77.00
2009 GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN "LAVAUX SAINT-JACQUES" 1ER CRU	100.00
2009 CHARMES-CHAMBERTIN GRAND CRU	127.00
2009 MAZIS-CHAMBERTIN GRAND CRU	129.00

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



TO EACH HIS OWN CHABLIS

by *Chris Santini*

WE HAVE TWO village-level wines currently in stock, both from the highly praised 2009 vintage, and both from producers who for us are in the “Old Reliable” category, supplying us year in and year out since who knows when with nothing but tip-top Chablis. These two vigneron, Olivier Savary and Roland Lavantureux, are separated by only two or three miles, both farm old vines, and both have a minimalist laissez-faire attitude in the cellar and shun the use of wood on their village-level Chablis. That’s about where the similarities end, though, as the wines are two different yet honest takes on Chablis.

Savary’s Chablis is refreshing, with great acidity, and citrus notes all wrapped tightly around a mineral core. It’s for those who like a bit of taut and tension in their Chablis, and for those who like to drink it with shellfish, for example. I’m sure this one would age fine, but I’d lean more toward drinking now and the next few years for the freshness.

Lavantureux’s Chablis is a bit richer, of a golden hue, and laden with mineral-ity. This one could even stand up to another local specialty, the *Andouillette de Chablis*, if you’re into that kind of thing. It tastes great now, but Lavantureux Chablis can age beautifully for at least ten to fifteen years. He says he’s enjoying the 1998 himself these days.

So which one is better? Well, they’re different. Our advice? Take six of each and earn an additional 5% discount. Five plus ten adds up. You’ll be enjoying two classy Chablis for just over twenty dollars per bottle.

PER BOTTLE

2009 CHABLIS • DOMAINE SAVARY	\$24.00
2009 CHABLIS • DOMAINE LAVANTUREUX	24.00

Six of each, 15% case discount

\$244.80



KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT—TERMS AND CONDITIONS

All wines purchased from Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant are deemed sold in California and title passes to the buyer in California. We make no representation relative to the customer's right to import wine into his/her state. In placing an order, the customer represents to Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant that he/she is at least 21 years of age and the person to whom delivery will be made is at least 21 years old.