

VIEW FROM THE CELLAR

By John Gilman

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- ❖ *Château Calon-Ségur- A Great Classicist in St. Estèphe Starts to Stir.* (pages 1-17)
- ❖ *Recently-Tasted German, Austrian and Alsace Wines in Bottle.* (pages 18-67)
- ❖ *A Few More Utterly Superb Classical and Neo-Classical American Wines.* (pages 68-100)
- ❖ *The Really Lovely, Vastly Underrated 2007 Red Burgundy Vintage- Many Already Drinking Very Well at Seven Years of Age.* (pages 101-128)
- ❖ *Finally Unlocking the Timeless Mystery of Madeira.* (pages 129-198)

Coming Attractions

- ❖ *Domaine Chandon de Briailles- Terroir Reigns Supreme in the Heart of Savigny.*
- ❖ *The 2013ers from Germany.*
- ❖ *The Beautiful, Classic Rioja Cuvées of C.V.N.E.- Best Known as Cuné.*
- ❖ *Domaine Henri Gouges- Traditionalism in Nuits St. Georges- Generational Change Proves That the More Things Change, The More They Stay the Same.*
- ❖ *The 2010 and 2011 Vintages in Piemonte.*
- ❖ *Looking Below the Surface at the 1961 and 1959 Bordeaux Vintages.*
- ❖ *Weingut Johann Joseph Prüm- Middle Mosel Magnificence of the Highest Order.*
- ❖ *The Piemonte Gems of Franco-Fiorina- Yesteryear Wines Stand the Test of Time.*
- ❖ *Great Old Rioja, Another Week With the 2012 Burgundy Vintage, Who Are The Traditionalists In Bordeaux? Ric Forman, François Cotat, Château Cantemerle, Domaine Mongeard-Mugneret, Recently-Tasted Spanish Wines, The 1985 Clarets, Round Two of Kalin Cellars, Cathy Corison, Château Ausone, Building a Well-Priced Cellar Today, More Italian Wines and The 1998 Red Burgundy Vintage.*

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CHÂTEAU CALON-SÉGUR CHANGES STIRRING AT THIS GREAT ST. ESTÈPHE ESTATE



The large and very lovely estate of Château Calon-Ségur- the Gironde River lies immediately to the right.

Château Calon-Ségur is one of the great wines of the northern Médoc, and the team at Calon today looks very poised to add a new and most impressive chapter to its long history of outstanding wines. For in November of 2012, Château Calon-Ségur was sold by its long-time proprietors, the Gasqueton family, to the Brittany-based banking concern of Crédit Mutuel Arkea, with the owner of Château Pétrus, Jean-François Moueix, taking a five percent minority share of Calon and bringing winemaking expertise and a commitment to traditionally-styled claret to the new partnership. However, the estate had already begun its transition period a few years before, as Madame Denise Capburn-Gasqueton, who had managed Château Calon-Ségur since the death of her husband, Philippe, in 1995, brought in Vincent Millet as the new winemaker at Calon after the 2005 vintage. Monsieur Millet had been at Château Margaux as a member of the winemaking team prior to taking over the reins at Calon-Ségur, and it is really from his arrival in 2006 that the new history of this great estate began to be written. Madame Capburn-Gasqueton passed away at the end of 2011, at the age of eighty-seven, and Calon was sold the following year by three of her nieces who had inherited the estate and the family's nearby *Cru Bourgeois* property of Château Capburn-Gasqueton, also located in St. Estèphe.

Today, Monsieur Millet is joined at the head of the management of the estate by Laurent Dufau, who is the *Gérant* (Managing Director) at the property under the new ownership group, and the two form a dynamic team that promises great things in the future at this superb Third Growth. The sale in 2012 to the new partnership also included the estates of Château Capburn-Gasqueton and the second wine of Calon, Marquis de Calon, with fully two hundred and thirty hectares of land being part of the transaction- though not all of this is planted to vineyards- and ninety hectares of vines located at Calon-Ségur proper.

Château Calon-Ségur is the most northerly of the classified growths, lying overlooking the Gironde River at the northern end of St. Estèphe, with Châteaux Phelan-Ségur and Les Ormes de Pez its closes communal neighbors to the south. Just to the north of the St. Estèphe limitation lies Château Sociando-Mallet, which is another close neighbor of Calon-Ségur. The estate bears the distinction of being the very first to be planted to vines in Ste. Estèphe in the middle ages, and the property really came to prominence under the aegis of its late seventeenth and early eighteenth century owner, the Marquis Nicolas de Ségur, who appended his name to the estate at this time and which the château still proudly wears today. Prior to the ownership of the Marquis de Ségur, Calon had been the property of the Gasq family, who were also very important vineyard owners in the seventeenth century in Bordeaux, and the estate was the dowry of a Mademoiselle Gasq when she married the Marquis. Like many of the very old-time properties in Bordeaux, Château Calon-Ségur was once part of a much larger property, simply known as Calon, which at one time occupied nearly all of present day St. Estèphe and included neighboring Château Phelan-Ségur and Château Montrose (which was carved out of what was then a wooded section of the Calon estate when this parcel was sold off in 1825). The Calon part of the name of the property dates back even further, as this property was first reported in the documentation of the time back in the mid-twelfth century, when, according to David Peppercorn in his second edition of Bordeaux, it was bequeathed by the “lords of Lesparre” to the Bishop of Poitiers, Monseigneur Calon, and he writes that “of the three leading estates in St. Estèphe, this is certainly the most ancient.” As is often commented on when the property is discussed in books on claret, the name Calon is also derived from the term in ancient French for the small boats that navigated up and down the very close by Gironde River in olden times.

In any event, Château Calon-Ségur certainly first came to true prominence in the days of the Marquis de Ségur, who was one of the most important property owners in the Médoc in the history of the region. At the same time that he was receiving Calon as a wedding gift, he also happened to own Châteaux Latour, Lafite and Mouton in nearby Pauillac. Not too shabby! The heart motif that appears to this day on the classic labels of Château Calon-Ségur dates back to the days of the Marquis, as he was quoted as saying that “I make my wine at Lafite and Latour, but my heart is in Calon.” I have never seen any accounting of this oft-repeated quote of whether the Marquis was referring to his preference for the quality of the wines produced at Calon (in comparison to Lafite, Mouton and Latour), or if he was referring to his new and beautiful bride who brought with her this property into their marriage. In any event, to this day, the label of Calon-Ségur still prominently displays this heart, and the motif can be found as an ornament at many places around the property when one visits. The Marquis de Ségur was known at his time as the “Prince of Vines” for his extensive and very fine vineyard holdings in the Médoc, and his family’s period of ownership of Calon-Ségur was one of the golden eras at the estate. The reputation of the wines of Calon-Ségur was very high at this time and over the ensuing decades

of the Maquis' family's association with Calon, as David Peppercorn reports that the prices of the wine as shown in the Lawton firm's business records of the ensuing era (the numbers cover the vintages from 1741 to 1777) report that only the (then combined) estate of Leoville in St. Julien commanded a higher price than Calon-Ségur, and what are today's other Second Growths did not sell at the same price as the wines from this fine Ste. Estèphe property.

Calon-Ségur was sold to Pierre-Sévère de Lestapis, a very prominent Bordeaux-based banker and financier in 1818 and eventually was purchased by the Gasqueton family in 1894, who would continue, through several generations, to own the property up until 2012. It is under the Gasqueton family that the contemporary history of Calon-Ségur can said to have been written, and for much of this era, their proprietorship of the estate was first class, with the property's wines greatly valued by the Bordeaux trade during the first six decades of the twentieth century. The family member who oversaw the administration of Calon-Ségur during this estate's second golden age was Edouard Gasqueton, who ran the estate with great *élan* and precision up until his passing away in 1962. Many older books on Bordeaux comment on what a superb job Edouard Gasqueton did during his decades at the helm of Calon, and it was not until his son, Philippe Gasqueton took over for his father that there began to be a few corners cut at Château Calon-Ségur. One of the more problematic decisions that was undertaken during Philippe Gasqueton's tenure was the fateful decision to greatly expand the percentage of merlot planted in the vineyards at Calon (at the expense of the traditional cabernet sauvignon), so that by the time of his passing away in 1995, fully fifty percent of the estate's *vignobles* was planted to merlot. This was clearly a "lower risk" decision taken on the part of the administration of the estate, as merlot ripens sooner than cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc and was seen as less likely to get caught out on the vines on what was typically the more difficult *fins de saisons* on the Gironde prior to the advent of global warming (which, one might add, has not been particularly evident in Bordeaux in the last couple of years). The expansion of merlot plantings in the vineyards at Calon began in the 1960s and continued up through the 1980s. At the time that much of the *vignobles* at Château Calon-Ségur were being replanted to merlot, the Gasquetons also decided to decrease the vine density in the new plantations, dropping down the number of vines for fully one-third of the property to six thousand vines per hectare (and in some cases even less- some plots are purported to be as low as 2,500 vines per hectare), whereas the average in the Médoc for a classified growth is between eight and ten thousand vines per hectare. Lower vine density made for easier working of the vineyards by tractor and also increased the vigor of the vines, so that rather generous yields were the norm in these parcels and the *grand vin* at Calon was sometimes criticized for a lack of mid-palate stuffing during this era.

The vineyard changes here at Château Calon-Ségur were not the only questionable practices exercised by the Gasquetons towards the end of their ownership of the estate, as the cellar became known as one of the dirtier ones in all of Bordeaux in these later days, and while it is possible of course (as anyone who has visited Château Rayas in Châteauneuf du Pape during the time of Jacques Reynaud can attest) to make great wine in less than cleanly cellars, it was probably not an ideal situation at Calon-Ségur during these years. Additionally, there was also problems with the organization of the *chais* at the property at the end of Philippe Gasqueton's tenure, where all the movements of the wines had to be done by pump, rather than taking advantage of gravity (which would have been very easy in the sloped *cuvée* here, if things had been arranged differently) and the concept of selection was really not self-evident to the

management team at the end of this period. Or course, virtually no one in Bordeaux practiced the same degree of selection in the decade of the 1980s as is typical today, but it is also pretty clear that the Gasquetons were a bit slow to pick up on this trend once it took root in the region. Additionally, the younger merlot vines that were planted in the decades of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s really began to change the personality of the wine a touch in the latter half of the 1980s and the 1990s, with the increased merlot percentage producing a more black fruity, slightly more deep-pitched and less precise, less structured and less vibrant personality for Château Calon-Ségur's wines in this era. This was quite apparent in the vertical tasting of the wines in which I participated in January of this year, as the percentage of merlot climbed from fifteen or twenty percent of the *cépages* back in the day to more than fifty percent in certain vintages in more recent times. To be fair to the Gasquetons, the decision to plant more merlot could also have been in part due to the long-standing reputation of Château Calon-Ségur as one of the sturdiest, most structured and slowest to unfold wines in all of the Médoc, with this reputation dating all the way back to the days of Thomas Jefferson's visit to Bordeaux, and the family might have been seeking a way to make the wine a bit more approachable earlier on in its evolution in bottle.

While the later years of the Gasqueton era at Château Calon-Ségur were not their finest moment, one should not overemphasize these shortcomings at the end of the road to the expense of the very superlative track record that the family had early on here at the estate. From 1894, when the Gasqueton family purchased Calon, up through at least the 1960s, the reputation for the wines here could not have been higher and it was considered one of the greatest of the Third Growths (certainly rated on a par with Château Palmer for much of this time) and was a wine that garnered quite a loyal following amongst claret lovers and the wine trade. The only really old bottle of Château Calon-Ségur that I have had the pleasure to taste is the magical 1928, from the decade that is often cited as one of the greatest in the history of the property (at least since the days of the Marquis de Ségur) and all of the older Bordeaux literature from early on in the post-war years comments that Calon-Ségur was remarkable for its consistent excellence in this era. I have had very good luck with wines since those days as well, as the simply stunning 1961 and 1966 critiqued below will attest, and it seems to me that the slippage here after the decade of the 1950s closed has perhaps been a bit overstated. In any case, there is no doubt that the vast expansion of the merlot plantations in the decades of the '70s and '80s certainly changed the style of this wine rather perceptibly when those young vines began to be utilized in the blend for the *grand vin*. Prior to the increase in the percentage of merlot in the blend (which really started as far back as the vintages of the 1970s), Château Calon-Ségur was typically a wine that showed a fair bit of red fruit character to its aromatic and flavor profile and was always a very soil-driven wine, with the deep beds of gravel, clay and limestone that make up this northern *terroir* always very present in the wines. After the merlot was expanded, the wine became distinctly more black fruity, less soil-driven, and as one seasoned claret commentator, Panos Kakaviatos (who writes regularly for Decanter) likes to say, "more glossy in texture, but lacking in gravitas." In the days of the high percentage of merlot in the blend, it seemed that only in truly exceptional years at the estate, such as 1982, 1988, 1989 and 1996, that the more red fruity personality that Calon was famous for back in its heyday was truly in evidence.

In any event, the less than ideal days here from the 1970s to the early 2000s (during which there were still some very, very good wines produced!) came to an abrupt halt when Madame Gasqueton hired Vincent Millet away from Château Margaux to take over the

winemaking duties at Château Calon-Ségur. Monsieur Millet made it very clear that one of his conditions for accepting the position at Calon was that he be allowed to immediately return the *cépages* of the *grand vin* to a predominantly cabernet sauvignon-based wine, which he did with his first vintage of 2006. Each subsequent vintage at Château Calon-Ségur has seen the percentage of cabernet sauvignon (as well as cabernet franc) increase incrementally and the wine is now routinely in the range of eighty to eighty-five percent a combination of cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc, which was much the same as the great old Calon-Ségurs of the past. The changes that Monsieur Millet set in motion here in the last days of Madame Gasqueton's era (she had succeeded her husband Philippe as the head of the estate after his death in 1995) certainly accelerated with the purchase of the property by Crédit Mutuel Arkea and its partner in 2012, and the property will be greatly changed in the next few years to produce a wine that is even more "traditional" over the coming decades. First and foremost, an extensive replanting program is already in effect, gradually grubbing up the sparsely-planted merlot vineyards created in the 1970s and 1980s and returning them more properly to cabernet sauvignon, and at a far greater density of plantation. Secondly, the estate is in the process of building a completely new *chais* to more gently vinify and handle the wines, taking advantage of gravity, installing much smaller fermentation tanks to better match specific sections of the vineyard and allow Monsieur Millet far better control by fermenting on a parcel by parcel basis. Additionally, since 2012, the new ownership group has moved to remove a significant number of hectares of vineyard land that had been gradually added at the property over the last decades of the Gasqueton era, so that the ninety hectares of vineyards that used to go into Calon have been cut back to what Monsieur Dufau terms "the core fifty-five hectares of vines that were traditionally the heart of the production of the estate back in the first half of the twentieth century." The thirty-five hectares that have been cut out of the production for the *grand vin* will now go to either the second wine, Marquis de Calon, or into the bottling of Château Capburn-Gasqueton.

The changes here at Calon-Ségur are very evident when one tastes the most recent wines, and at the fine vertical tasting of the estate organized in Washington, D.C. this past January, one can see the shift back to a more classic style of the wine right from Monsieur Millet's first vintage of 2006. With its higher percentage of cabernet sauvignon, all the red fruit and soil tones were back front and center in this lovely wine, and I had to give it the nod over its siblings from the more illustrious recent vintages of 2005 and 2000 that were also served at the tasting, due to its far more precise and classically structured personality. The changes wrought by Vincent Millet beginning with the 2006 vintage have only intensified in subsequent years, with the percentage of cabernet sauvignon climbing incrementally with each succeeding year, and the quality of the wines is as high today as they have ever been at Château Calon-Ségur. Calon was always a very long-lived wine at the peak of its reputation in the first half of the twentieth century, and this will clearly become once again one of its calling cards in the years to come. This is not to say that the wines from the more merlot-influenced vintages of the 1980s and 1990s were not long distance runners as well, but one of the aims of the change in the *cépages* here at that time was clearly to try and enhance the wine's accessibility at a younger age. Additionally, the estate back in its salad days in the immediate post-war years had a reputation for crafting one of the very finest wines on the Left Bank in "off vintages", with this claim to fame in this era probably only matched by Château Latour and Château La Mission Haut-Brion for outstanding success in less exalted years. Based on the great showing of the 2007 Calon-

Ségur at our vertical tasting in Washington, as well as the exceptional quality of the 2011 and 2012 Calons in the contexts of those particular vintages, it is quite clear that this estate is once again one of the key properties to look to when the stars do not all perfectly align for the *Bordelais* in a given vintage. Given that it will still take many years for the replanted cabernet sauvignon to really make its presence felt in the blend here, the future can only get better at Calon-Ségur over the coming decades as several of these prime vineyard plots are reclaimed to cabernet and the resulting wine from those new plantations gains in complexity and depth as the vines mature.



Winemaker Vincent Millet tasting the 2011 Calon-Ségur during En Primeur in spring of 2012.

The wine at Calon-Ségur is vinified quite traditionally, with the alcoholic and malolactic fermentations taking place in stainless steel tanks, prior to the wine being racked off into barrels for its *elevage*. The use of stainless steel tanks for fermentation has been part of the winemaking process at the estate for many years, as they were one of the first properties to install these for fermentation all the way back in the 1930s. Typically, the *grand vin* at Calon-Ségur will spend about twenty months in barrel prior to racking and preparation for bottling. The new found commitment at Calon to return the wine back to its historic place at the top of the firmament of classed growths on the Left Bank can be seen in the dramatic reduction in the amount of *grand vin* that the property is producing today. Back when Robert Parker was publishing his second edition of Bordeaux, back in 1991, Château Calon-Ségur was producing twenty thousand cases

of their first wine each year, with fifty percent of the *vignobles* listed as being planted to merlot. Today, the new team at the property aims to produce ten thousand cases of *grand vin* each year, with the *cépages* typically eighty to eighty-five percent cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc. Most of the excluded parcels of merlot that were planted in the 1970s and 1980s are now being relegated to the property's second wine, Marquis de Calon, where it is much better suited to one of its primary functions back in the Gasqueton era of making a more forward wine of charm and earlier accessibility. These changes are already making a dramatic impact on the style and quality of the *grand vin* at Calon-Ségur, and as I alluded to above, this is still very early days for the new team at the property and we are only seeing the first signs of the seriousness at this estate, and the wine at Calon is only going to get better and better in the years to come as the replanting program and cellar changes here fully take root.

An additional change that Monsieur Millet brought to the wines at Château Calon-Ségur once he arrived from Château Margaux, was to increase the percentage of new oak used for the *grand vin* here. Previously, the highest percentage of new wood that was used was sixty percent, but he immediately increased this to one hundred percent new oak for the top vintages, and even the superlative, lighter vintage 2007 Château Calon-Ségur was raised in ninety percent new wood. Now, as readers will certainly be aware, this is hardly a change that I would normally find laudable, as my gut feeling is that the new commitment to precise selection, greater reliance upon the finest parcels, more cabernet sauvignon in the *cépages* and far better winemaking would really make the superb *terroir* of Calon-Ségur stand out even more vividly at the old sixty percent new wood range. However, I have to say that with the wines from 2006 through 2012, I have never once thought that the wine here was over-oaked (or even particularly marked by its new wood component), and it seems that the deft hand of Monsieur Millet in the cellars has no difficulty crafting a wine of excellent soil expression and superb depth of fruit that finds no obstacles "eating up its new wood" and I have found each and every vintage exceptionally well-balanced and very classic in style, despite the increase in the percentage of new wood used here for the *grand vin*. I do hope that at least a few experiments will be run in the future to see how the new, stricter vineyard and cellar regimens at Château Calon-Ségur might translate in less new wood (after all, Château Pétrus is now a distant cousin estate, and this First Growth has been raised in only fifty percent new wood since the 1991 vintage!), for perhaps an even more profoundly elegant and classic wine could be crafted here with a lower percentage of new wood. But, I always think that!

Another of the dramatic changes that have swept through the St. Estèphe firmament since the Gasqueton family sold the estate in 2012 is the new found openness of the team at Calon-Ségur and their far more welcoming philosophy to visitors and their quite obvious desire to have a bit higher profile in the world of wine. The latter half of the Gasqueton era was not defined by a particularly savvy public relations profile at the estate, as old timers in the wine trade talk of how difficult it was to get an appointment at the domaine to taste and that even when a *rendez-vous* was attained, it was not always kept by the team at Calon. Perhaps nothing would better exemplify the philosophy towards the public in the latter days of the Gasqueton epoch at Calon-Ségur than to note that until the new ownership group took over at the end of 2012, there was never a sign to mark the château or its entrance- either one already knew one's way or one was cordially invited not to come! As Monsieur Dufau joked at our vertical tasting in Washington D.C. this past January, "this is probably the first such extensive tasting of the wines of Calon-

Ségur sponsored by the estate in the United States in one hundred and twenty years.” I noted that the domaine has also hosted a similar tasting in Paris at the end of 2013, so there can be little doubt that the winds of change are sweeping through the vines at Calon today.

The vast majority of the wines reported on below were tasted at the end of January of this year in Washington, D.C. at a tasting organized by the fine wine journalist, Panos Kakaviatos, at which the estate kindly supplied sixteen vintages of Calon-Ségur for our tasting pleasure. The vertical tasting covered most of the vintages between 2010 and 1995, with the 1989 and 1982 added to finish up the festivities and round out the lineup. I have included my notes on the 2011 and 2012 vintages of Château Calon-Ségur here, as well as notes on older vintages that were not included in our vertical in Washington. I really should comment a bit about how open Laurent Dufau is about the recent past at Calon and the estate’s plans for the immediate future, as it is quite impressive to hear commentary that is honest about the mistakes that were made in the past here (such as the great expansion of merlot plantations at very questionable vine density levels), as the new team certainly inherited a sizable cellar of older vintages from the Gasqueton era as part of their purchase of the property. As Monsieur Dufau observed, towards the latter years of the Gasqueton era at Calon, the sales philosophy was to only sell through about two-thirds of any given vintage, and retain one-third at the château for the future, so there is little doubt that there are plenty of bottles here that could be commercialized. It would not be unheard of in the world of wine for the new proprietors to keep quiet on the bit of slippage that took place here towards the end of the Gasquetons’ tenure and try to move some of those wines at inflated prices, but I suspect that if and when some of these older vintages do see the light of day, it will be at very fair pricing that reflects their differences from the superbly-crafted, traditional wines of the most recent vintages. I should note that although there has been a dramatic jump in the quality of the wines since 2006 and Monsieur Millet’s arrival at the winemaking helm of the estate, the past wines here are not bad wines by any stretch of the imagination (some vintages are absolutely stellar!), and if their pricing offers up value, there are plenty of these vintages that I have little doubt would find a very, very warm reception in the market, and might even serve as a catalyst for garnering more enthusiasm for the notably superior wines being produced here today.

Château Calon-Ségur is one of the great estates of the Médoc, with a history of truly stunning wines that spans most of the twentieth century and which is undoubtedly destined to attain even more impressive heights in the years to come, as the commitment to excellence and classic claret is palpable when one visits the estate and chats with Laurent Dufau or Vincent Millet, and as good as the wines have been since 2006, they are only going to get better in the future. To my palate, the only really disappointing wines of the last twenty-five years here are the wines from 1995 to 2005, which are not bad wines *per se*, but which have really lost a bit of the classic Calon character from the inclusion of so much merlot in the blends. However, I should note that the higher percentage of merlot is not only a phenomenon specific to this span of vintages, as Edmund Penning-Rowsell, writing back in 1971, observes that Calon is atypical of the top estates in St. Estèphe for already having nearly fifty percent of its vineyards planted to merlot back at this time. With some of the earlier vintages with a higher percentage of merlot in the blend- wines such as 1979, 1982, 1985, 1988 and 1989, there is still plenty of underlying Calon *terroir* to keep the style of the estate’s wines still very typical of the past. One should remember that this was not the only estate that expanded its percentage of merlot in the ‘60s, ‘70s and early ‘80s, as the superb St. Julien property of Château Beychevelle undertook a similar

change in the vineyards during this same era, as this was a popular move at the time. In any event, as the notes below will attest, there were plenty of excellent wines made here at Calon-Ségur during the 1980s and 1990s, and it is only when one looks at these wines through the prism of the greatest Calons of the previous generation that one finds them at all less than thrilling. I have mentioned how good the 1988 vintage of Calon-Ségur is on a number of occasions in the text above, but sadly, I do not have a recent note on the wine to include in the lineup below. I was foolish enough to drink my 1988s up relatively early from Calon (the curse of the greater early accessibility from the higher percentage of merlot in the blend!)- with great pleasure I might add- and no longer have any of the wine in my cellar. But, it is a great vintage at Calon (probably superior to both the fine 1985 and 1989 vintages here) and I can still heartily recommend it to readers. The following wines have all been tasted over the last year, with a few exceptions (like the 1945 and 1928), and I hope they will serve as an adequate testimony to just how great the wines of Château Calon-Ségur have been down through the years, as well as serving as a harbinger for just how exciting the future will be at this great property as the changes outlined above begin to make their presence felt in the wines of the estate.

Marquis de Calon

2012 Marquis de Calon (barrel sample)

Calon-Ségur is clearly the most successful estate in 2012 in Ste. Estèphe by quite a wide margin, as *Régisseur* Vincent Millet and his team at the estate totally seized the opportunity presented by this vintage to produce classic wines and they have succeeded with their entire range. The second wine, Marquis de Calon, includes much of the younger vine merlot that was not considered refined enough for the *grand vin* this year, with its *cépages* consisting of sixty-nine percent merlot and thirty-one percent cabernet sauvignon. The resulting wine is not bad, but it clearly is functioning as a proper second wine and allowing only the best grapes to go into the blend of Calon-Ségur. The nose on the 2012 Marquis de Calon is a bit riper than the *grand vin*, offering up an aromatic blend of cassis, smoke, tobacco leaf, a touch of boysenberry (from the young vine merlot?), coffee grounds and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a touch chunky, with a good core, a slightly rustic tannins and pretty good length and grip on the chewy finish. This will need a few years to soften up, but it will be a very good bottle once it has had a chance to blossom. It does not have the same supreme elegance of the *grand vin* this year, but it also shows the same steady hand of the Calon team. 2018-2040. **88.**

2011 Marquis de Calon (barrel sample)

The team at Calon-Ségur, led by *Régisseur* Vincent Millet, were very draconian in their selection process in 2011, with almost all of the estate's merlot relegated to the second wine, the Marquis de Calon. This led them to the unprecedented step of serving the second wine after the *grand vin* this year during our visit, but one can see why this was done once the two divergently-styled wines were both tasted. The 2011 Marquis de Calon is fully eighty percent merlot this year, and one does indeed find some of the coarseness to the tannins on the backend here that can be found pretty easily around the Médoc in this vintage. But, that said, this is still quite a successful second wine, offering up a lovely nose of dark berries, black cherries, cigar smoke, dark soil tones, espresso and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit chewy, with a good core of fruit and nice bounce on the backend. The tannins are plenty firm here, but there certainly seems to be enough stuffing to eventually resolve the tannins. Not a particularly suave wine, but with good substance. 2020-2035+. **88.**

Château Calon-Ségur

2012 Château Calon-Ségur (barrel sample)

The 2012 Château Calon-Ségur is one of the best four or five wines to be found on the Left Bank in this vintage, clearly more successful than any of the First Growths in this year and a stellar value. The grapes were all harvested between October 1st and October 16th, with the teams making a serious push to finish up on the latter day, as the autumn rains started in earnest on the 17th. Vincent Millet noted that “2012 is really a cabernet sauvignon vintage, and in particular, the old vines really did well this year, so that we had few parcels of the old vines come in with potential alcohol over fourteen percent this year.” The wine ended up at a very respectable 13.5 percent alcohol and is a blend of seventy-eight percent cabernet sauvignon, twenty percent merlot and two percent petit verdot and was raised entirely in new barrels- though the use of new wood here is exemplary in its discretion and understatement and I would never have guessed that this is all new wood this year! The absolutely beautiful nose wafts from the glass in a blend of cassis, black cherries, Cuban tobacco, a touch of pomegranate, espresso, dark soil tones and a very judicious base of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure and refined, with a great core of fruit, a youthful and seamless structure, ripe tannins and superb focus and grip on the ripely tannic, complex and very classy finish. This is the epitome of old school claret, with elegance, breed and potential complexity to burn! It is one of the finest young vintages of Château Calon-Ségur I have had the pleasure to taste and a stunning success in this difficult vintage. 2025-2065. **93.**

2011 Château Calon-Ségur (barrel sample)

The 2011 Château Calon-Ségur is one of the most beautiful wines to be found in all of Bordeaux in this vintage and clearly one of the superstars on the Left Bank this year. As Calon-Ségur is the most northerly of estates in Ste. Estèphe, they were spared from the brunt of the hail and were able to harvest as the grapes demanded this year. Vincent Millet and his team started bringing in their merlot on September 5th, the younger vine cabernet sauvignon on the 12th and waited until the 18th of the month to start bringing in the fruit from the old cabernet vines on the estate. Additionally, most of the merlot was relegated to the second wine in 2011, so that the blend for the *grand vin* is sixty-eight percent cabernet sauvignon, twenty percent merlot, twelve percent cabernet franc and one percent malbec. The result is a stunningly refined and silky example of the vintage that delivers a degree of early elegance that is not found anywhere else in Bordeaux this year! The deep, very complex and beautifully pure nose offers up a sappy blend of red and black cherries, cigar wrapper, espresso, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, a touch of currant leaf and a deft framing of smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure and suave on the attack, with a superb core of fruit, soft acids and a very long, moderately tannic and beautifully focused finish. This is one of the most stunning young vintages of Calon-Ségur that I have ever tasted and one 2011 that is not to be missed! 2022-2065+. **93+.**

2010 Château Calon-Ségur

I did not have the opportunity to taste the 2010 Calon-Ségur during my *En Primeur* visit in the spring of 2011, as Madame Gasqueton was a bit difficult to make an appointment with that year and she condescended to receive my friends only on a day while I was still in Germany tasting the 2010ers. Consequently, I was very curious to see how this wine had turned out in this difficult and overrated vintage, and I found it to be one of the better 2010s that I have tasted, though with a bit of the grittiness to the tannin structure that is emblematic of this year. The bouquet is ripe, but pure in its blend of red and black cherries, Cuban cigar wrappers, dark chocolate, dark soil tones, smoke and nutty new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-

bodied and still quite primary, with a fine core of fruit, ripe, slightly harsh tannins and excellent length and grip on the decidedly “cool-fruited” finish. This is a very good 2010, but to my palate, it was not in the same league as the other two wines in this flight- the 2009 and 2008 Calon. I would also have to give the slight edge to both the 2012 and 2011 at this estate over this more powerful 2010 Calon. But, that said, this is a very strong example of this vintage. 2025-2065. **92+**.

2009 Château Calon-Ségur

Our vertical tasting in Washington was again the first time I had seen the 2009 Calon-Ségur, as I had not tasted the wine during *En Primeur*, and I was very, very impressed with the quality and style of this wine. The *cépages* is fully ninety percent cabernet sauvignon in this vintage, and the perfectly ripe, but not overripe cabernet has made this an instant classic. The beautifully ripe and pure nose wafts from the glass in a vibrant blend of black cherries, sweet dark berries, cigar smoke, dark soil tones, pungent violets and a suave base of nutty new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very classy on the attack, with a rock solid core of pure fruit, superb soil inflection, impeccable focus and balance, ripe, fine-grained tannins and outstanding length and grip on the seamless and youthfully complex finish. This is a great vintage of Calon-Ségur in the making! 2022-2065+. **94+**.

2008 Château Calon-Ségur

The 2008 Château Calon-Ségur is a superb example of this very classic vintage, and surprisingly, this wine was raised in fully one hundred percent new wood- surprising, as it does not really show much new wood influence at all! The deep, pure and still very youthful bouquet offers up a lovely mix of red and black cherries, tobacco leaf, gravelly soil tones, a touch of curry, smoke, currant leaf and a very nicely discreet base of nutty oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, vivid and tangy, with a superb core, classic, chewy structure, a lovely signature of soil, ripe, firm tannins and outstanding length and grip on the focused and still quite youthful finish. The 2008 does not have the same plump core of fruit as the 2009 to buffer its structure, but the wine is in perfect balance and only needs bottle age to blossom into a superb bottle of claret. 2024-2070. **94**.

2007 Château Calon-Ségur

The 2007 Calon-Ségur was one of the real surprised of our tasting, as this was a very complete and complex middleweight of impressive intensity and a very classy structural profile. The blossoming nose jumps from the glass in a stylish mélange of red and black cherries, cigar smoke, dark soil tones, currant leaf and a topnote of cigar wrapper. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and nicely developing its secondary layers of maturity, with good mid-palate depth, lovely focus, still a touch of backend tannin and very good length and grip on the well-balanced and elegant finish. This is just starting to drink and will likely be even better with another year or two in the cellar, but it is an outstanding example of this vintage and it is already quite enjoyable. A very, very impressive 2007 that only included seventeen percent merlot in the blend in this vintage. 2014-2035. **88+**.

2006 Château Calon-Ségur

The 2006 Calon-Ségur (as noted above) was the first vintage produced under the guiding hand of Vincent Millet and this wine was a return to the classic *cépages* at the estate of predominantly cabernet sauvignon, after the detrimental increase in the percentage of merlot in the blend between 1990 and 2005. The wine is very, very closed today, but it is going to be a lovely wine with sufficient bottle age, as the wine is very well-balanced and simply needs time alone in the cellar to resolve its considerable chassis of tannin. The deep and still quite youthful

nose reluctantly offers up scents of black cherries, curry, blossoming notes of dried eucalyptus, dark soil tones, cigar ash and a stylish base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and completely in its dumb phase, with a very good core, ripe, chewy tannins, lovely focus and a very long, currently quite hermetically-sealed finish. This is a good eight to ten years away from blossoming, but it will be excellent if given sufficient patience. 2022-2050. **92.**

2005 Château Calon-Ségur

The 2005 vintage at Calon-Ségur was comprised of more than fifty percent merlot, and while the wine is a good wine in its way, it lacks the brightness, soil signature and classic profile of the wines from 2006 forwards. The bouquet is deep, reserved and shows admirable depth in its constellation of dark berries, tobacco leaf, woodsmoke, espresso, herb tones, a touch of hoisin sauce, dark soil and nutty new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with good purity at the rock solid core, firm tannins and excellent length and grip on the black fruity and still very youthful finish. Qualitatively, this is clearly the equivalent of the 2006, but I have a far stronger preference for the style of the latter vintage, as this is just missing a bit of spark from all of its merlot in the blend. A very good wine, but not a classic Calon-Ségur. 2022-2050+. **92.**

2003 Château Calon-Ségur

The 2003 vintage of Calon-Ségur is a deep, ripe and roasted wine, but in the context of this torrid vintage, it is not particularly egregious in any of these characteristics and it is really a wine that delivers quite a bit of flavor interest in its idiosyncratic character. The bouquet is deep, ripe and fairly gentle in its roasting, as it offers up a mix of blackberries, coffee grounds, roasted game, damp herb tones and cigar smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and powerful in profile, with a plump core of fruit, a very deep-pitched and black fruity personality, somewhat gritty tannins and pretty good length and grip on the finish. Some tasters at our event in Washington felt this wine needs lots of time to really blossom, but I am a bit more pessimistic about its long-term prospects and I suspect this wine will be best drunk in its relative youth, as there does not seem to be a whole lot of structural integrity underlying the thick fruit to tie this wine firmly to its tannins for the long haul. I would fully expect that over several decades, the tannins and the roasted fruit will age on different vectors and peel away from each other. It is a good 2003, but hardly a great Calon. 2016-2030. **87.**

2002 Château Calon-Ségur

The 2002 vintage at Calon-Ségur has produced an okay wine that I prefer to either the 1999 or the 1998 versions, but is a bit angular in profile and clearly seems to have been a bit forced stylistically. The solid and respectable nose delivers a merlot-dominated blend of dark berries, black cherries, cigar ash, charred wood, herb tones and dark soil. On the palate the wine is fullish, fairly complex and a bit four-square, with a moderate core, still a bit of tannin and good, but not great length on the finish. A perfectly acceptable glass of 2002 claret, but not a special wine. 2016-2030. **87.**

2001 Château Calon-Ségur

The 2001 Calon-Ségur was comprised of fully forty-seven percent merlot, which is too bad, as it might have been even finer with a higher percentage of cabernet sauvignon in the blend. That said, this is a very strong bottle from this era and I have little doubt that it will ultimately surpass the more highly-touted, but currently far more closed 2000 vintage at this property. The bouquet offers up a very promising blend of red and black cherries, cigar smoke, dried eucalyptus, gravel, cigar ash and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a classic claret profile, firm, ripe tannins, excellent focus and

balance and a very long, youthful and potentially superb finish. This should prove to be one of the strongest vintages produced in the more merlot-centric style at Calon-Ségur during the stretch from 1975 to 2005. 2022-2050+. **92.**

2000 Château Calon-Ségur

The 2000 Calon-Ségur is a very closed, very grumpy wine at the present time, and this is a characteristic that it shares at the present time with a great many wines from this vintage. The blend here included forty-two percent merlot in 2000 and the wine offers up a very deep-pitched and adolescent bouquet of black fruit, inky tones, damp, dark soil, dried eucalyptus, coffee grounds and cigar smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, closed down and quite dense at the core, with a gritty edge to its firm and chewy tannins, little generosity at the present time, but also with impressive grip on the closed, but very, very long finish. The length on the backend here really gives me some hope for the future of this wine, but it is really in a very difficult place for current assessment and I do not have a strong sense of whether or not this wine will always be a bit charmless, or if this is simply a passing phase and it will blossom to deliver some of Calons' inherent breed with sufficient bottle age. 2025-2065+? **88-92+?**

1999 Château Calon-Ségur

The 1999 Château Calon-Ségur is an okay wine, but it is not entirely clean and both the nose and palate show a bit of dirty diaper. Underneath are tones of black cherries, cigar smoke, dark soil, coffee ground and cigar ash. On the palate the wine is fullish and a bit angular, with only moderate mid-palate depth, a bit of remaining tannin and only so-so length and grip on the finish. One really gets a sense in the 1999 of the rather dirty nature of the cellars at this era at Calon-Ségur, and though this vintage is potable and still has life in it, I cannot imagine it ever really pulling itself together fully and offering up more than it shows today. 2014-2030. **85.**

1998 Château Calon-Ségur

The 1998 Calon-Ségur also shows a bit of dirty diaper to its aromatic mix, but less so than the 1999 and it is a more complete wine on both the nose and palate. The *cépages* of more than fifty percent merlot in this vintage may have been beneficial, as late seasons rains ruined much of the cabernet sauvignon harvest on the Left Bank in 1998. The bouquet is a mix of black cherries, dark berries, a dollop of dried eucalyptus, dark soil tones and just a bit of cedar in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and reasonably complex, with a rather deep-pitched personality, still a fair bit of tannin and good length and grip on the finish. This is not as vibrant as wines like the 2001 and perhaps this wine was the product of concentrator usage or reverse osmosis? It is a solid bottle of Calon in the making, but it is just a touch dull in comparison to other vintages from this era. 2017-2035+. **87+?**

1996 Château Calon-Ségur

Along with the 2001, the 1996 vintage at Calon-Ségur is one of my favorite from the merlot-centric era at the estate, probably because the vintage favored cabernet sauvignon so clearly in the Médoc and a bit more of this grape was included in the blend at Calon in this vintage. The bouquet is deep, vibrant and youthfully precise, wafting from the glass in a mix of cassis, dark berries, cigar ash, dark soil tones, a touch of curry and a gentle framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively tangy, with a fine core of fruit, currently a quite tightly-knit personality, well-integrated tannins and very, very good length and grip on the focused and still quite youthful finish. This is going to be a lovely wine in another eight to ten years' time and should prove to be quite long-lived. I love to imagine what the current team at Calon would have done with a vintage such as 1996 today! 2020-2050+. **92.**

1995 Château Calon-Ségur

Generally, I tend to have a slight preference for the 1995 vintage over 1996, but not at Calon-Ségur. The 1995 here shows more of its merlot component in a deeper-pitched, more black fruity complexion that does not share the same vibrancy of the 1996. The bouquet is a complex and blossoming blend of dark berries, black cherries, cigar ash, dark soil tones that show an exotic touch of sea salts, incipient notes of chipotle pepper and woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and quite plush on the attack, with a good core, moderate tannins and fine length and grip on the complex and merlot-driven finish. This is a good bottle that is only a few years away from reaching its plateau, but it lacks just a bit of the spark found in the 1996 version. 2018-2040. **90.**

1989 Château Calon-Ségur

The 1989 Château Calon-Ségur is a very good example of the vintage that is now into its apogee and drinking with great style. The bouquet is a refined blend of black cherries, dark berries, Cuban cigar wrapper, dark soil tones, a touch of new leather, dried eucalyptus, gentle herb tones and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully resolved, with a sweet core of fruit, lovely soil signature, melting tannins and lovely length and grip on the *à point* and classy finish. This is not a particularly powerful example of the 1989 vintage, but it is very elegant, complex and drinking with lovely style at age twenty-five. 2014-2035+. **92.**

1985 Château Calon-Ségur

Calon-Ségur made a very nice example of the 1985 vintage, with the merlot component here giving the wine a very velvety texture as it closes in on its thirtieth birthday, but with a good structural spine and fine complexity to match. The very suave nose wafts from the glass in a blend of dark berries, black cherries, a touch of cranberry, cigar smoke, charred, dark soil tones, cigarette ash and a whisper of the chipotles to come with further aging. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and round, with a lovely core of fruit, melting tannins, fine focus and grip and a long, elegant and beautifully balanced finish. One of the sleepers of the vintage and quite ready to drink. 2014-2040. **92.**

1983 Château Calon-Ségur

I was hoping for a bit more from the 1983 Calon-Ségur, but this is not a very strong vintage for the estate (assuming my sole bottle was representative). It is still a good, solid wine, but there is a bit of angularity here and some inherent rusticity that places it far back in the pack of wines from this estate in the decade of the 1980s. The nose offers up a mix of desiccated black cherries and dark berries, cigarette ash, a touch of menthol, herb tones, gravelly soil and a touch of iron filings in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, slightly rustic and not particularly well-balanced, with moderate depth at the core, still a bit of chewy tannin, good acids and solid length and grip on the slightly chunky finish. This is okay, but it seems that there was a bit of uneven ripening here in '83 and the wine's components have not integrated seamlessly. 2014-2025+. **86.**

1982 Château Calon-Ségur (Washington Tasting)

Back in this era, it was not uncommon for estates to bottle a vintage over the course of some time, and the '82 Calon has shown a bit of bottle variation over the course of my experience. As was discussed around our table at the Washington vertical, many of us had tasted even better bottles of the 1982 Château Calon-Ségur than those on display that evening, and I would guess that our bottles at this tasting were from a different bottling run, as it was not quite as vibrant and was missing its red fruity component that the best recent bottles I have tasted of

this wine have possessed. That said, this is still a very strong glass of claret, offering up a deep and complex nose of black cherries, cassis, cigar ash, powdered stone minerality, incipient notes of chipotle peppers, a touch of walnut, cigar smoke and espresso. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite plush on the attack, with a fine core, melting tannins and impressive length and grip on the complex and very long finish. This a very good wine, but pristine bottles are even more red fruity and precise and merit at least another two to three points. 2014-2040+. **92.**

1982 Château Calon-Ségur (Previous Example)

This note on the '82 Calon-Ségur dates back a couple of years, but was from a bottle that I would guess hailed from a different lot, and the wine was a bit different in personality, if not dramatically superior to the example that we tasted at our Washington event. The bouquet is deep, complex and much more vibrant, with a bit of the classic Calon red fruit in evidence in its mélange of red and black cherries, black truffles, Cuban cigars, gravelly dark soil tones, iron, tobacco smoke and a lovely topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and quite complex, with excellent focus and purity, a superb core of fruit, suave, modest tannins and outstanding balance and grip on the very, very long, pure and classic finish. While the quality differential between the two bottlings is not particularly dramatic, I have a strong preference for the more vibrant and red fruity personality of this bottling, which I equate with the greatest examples of Calon-Ségur I have had the pleasure of tasting. I should note that I had the opportunity to try another bottle of '82 just before the release of this article, which was potentially glorious, but undone by TCA taint. 2010-2050. **94.**



1979 Château Calon-Ségur

The 1979 Château Calon-Ségur is a very nice example of the vintage, and this is a 1979 claret that I would be happy to drink with regularity over the next decade. The bouquet is deep and complex, offering up scents of cassis, a touch of currant leaf, cigarette ash, dark soil tones, a bit of walnut, incipient chipotle tones and a dollop of Cuban cigar wrapper. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and shows lovely mid-palate depth for the vintage, with fine focus and grip, still a touch of tannin and a very long, slightly angular finish. This is not the most elegant vintage of Calon, but it has sufficient depth and complexity to make up for its slightly angular palate impression and still has plenty of life ahead of it. 2014-2035. **88.**

1966 Château Calon-Ségur

I had not tasted an example of the superb 1966 Château Calon-Ségur since a brilliant magnum of this wine in 2008, and a most recent bottle in January of 2014 was every bit as stellar as I my memory of that magnum. The utterly classic and fully mature nose jumps from the glass in a vibrant mélange of red and black cherries, chipotle peppers, gravelly soil tones, cigar ash, a touch of coffee, a stylish framing of cedar and a gentle topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and utterly *à point*, with a great core of vibrant fruit, glorious soil signature, impeccable focus and balance and a very long, bight and meltingly tannic, seamless finish. This is a beautiful bottle of Calon at its apogee of peak drinkability, with the fine acids of the 1966 vintage having kept this wine vibrant and the fruit still youthfully sweet and succulent, which marries brilliantly with the marvelous tertiary complexity and the soil-driven personality of the wine in this era. A beautiful '66 with decades of life still ahead of it. 2014-2040. **94.**

1961 Château Calon-Ségur

After having been snake-bitten with bad luck on a couple of occasions (cooked examples) with the 1961 Calon-Ségur, I was delighted to be served a bottle in pristine condition just before finishing up this feature on the estate. This is a great, great 1961 that is still a few years away from its apogee of peak drinkability. This hails from the old days at the château, when Calon was renowned for the longevity of its wines, and the 1961 is still a bit chewy and will continue to improve with further bottle age. The bouquet is very, very deep, pure and stunning, wafting from the glass in a vibrant blend of black cherries, sweet dark berries, Cuban cigar wrapper, a complex base of dark soil, a touch of coffee bean and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with the purity of 1961's fruit beautifully synthesized to the classic, sturdy structure of Calon and adding a perception of roundness on the backend that is very rare for Calon in this era. The finish is very, very, very long, focused and well-balanced, with a chewy nature still in evidence to the remaining tannins, and great grip and complexity closing this magical 1961. Hard to believe that this wine, which is now more than fifty years of age, is going to be even better with further bottle age! This is the finest vintage of Calon-Ségur I have ever had the pleasure to taste. 2014-2070. **96.**

1945 Château Calon-Ségur (bottled in Copenhagen by Carl Permin's Vinhandel)

The 1945 Calon-Ségur is an excellent bottle of wine, and if this example is any indication, Danish bottling back in the day was very well done. The bouquet is simply beautiful, offering up a pure and complex constellation of dark berries, Cuban cigars, gravelly, dark soil tones, hints of chipotle peppers and coffee grounds, a touch of fresh herbs and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very pure on the attack, with marvelous focus and complexity, a fine core of black fruit, melted tannins, tangy acids and excellent length and grip on the suave and very well-balanced finish. A lovely '45. 2008-2030+. **93.**

1928 Château Calon-Ségur

The 1928 Calon-Ségur is a magnificent example of the vintage that continues to drink at its absolute apogee of maturity and shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. The deep, pure and stunning nose soars from the glass in a blaze of cherries, red plums, cigar box, iron-infused soil tones, new leather and a smoky topnote that is more wood fire than tobacco in tone. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and brilliantly balanced, with excellent mid-palate depth, a very soil-driven personality, a touch of remaining tannin and stunning length and grip on the pure and vigorous finish. The 1928 Calon-Ségur is one of the greatest vintages I have ever had the pleasure to taste from this superb estate. 2006-2030+. **95.**

**RECENTLY TASTED GERMAN, AUSTRIAN AND ALSACE WINES
A RANGE OF RIESLINGS (AND FRIENDS) FROM DRY TO DESSERT**



Harvest time in the Rheinhessen- Weingut Keller's Frauenberg pinot vineyard surrounds the lone tree on the ridge.

It has been a few years since I put together a compilation of “recently-tasted” German wines, and I have not written up any of my Alsace wine notes since the feature on Maison Trimbach many, many issues ago, so it seemed like it was high time to get this article written. As the notes below will attest, I drink a lot of Riesling these days and the majority of the still white wines in my personal cellar are German Rieslings. Back in the good old days before premo, I used to have a lot more Alsace wine in my cellar as well and these lovely wines graced my table far more often than they do today, but, I much prefer to drink my wines with plenty of bottle age on them, and I have not had good luck aging the Alsace wines in my cellar since the vintages of the mid-1990s forwards. Luckily, at least so far, I have not had the same premo issues with the German wines in my cellar and as long as premature oxidation does not come to rear its ugly head in the German section of my cellar, I will continue to enjoy great pleasure with older wines from this underrated and magical wine country. However, there is no way the breadth of my cellar of German wines could produce anywhere near the quantity of notes on older wines as those that appear below, and I continue to be overwhelmed by the generosity of many winegrowers in German wine country when I visit here and the number of older wines that they so graciously open when I am in the neighborhood is really quite extraordinary. In my experience, this is one of the very special qualities that one can find when visiting German wine country, and for folks who love these wines and have not yet made a point of visiting the

producers and some of the most strikingly beautiful wine villages in the entire world, make 2014 the year to come see where these great wines come from and meet in person some of the most kind and generous wine people in the world!

To round out this report, I have also included my recent notes on Austrian wines drunk since my last report on wines from this country. As readers will recall from that report a few years ago, I do not drink Austrian wines all that often and have not yet had the pleasure to visit and taste at any of the estates here. It is a hole in my wine travels, but as I observed in my piece on the region, I have had difficulties with the generally higher octane levels currently *à la mode* with the top bottlings from Austria, and try as I might, I still have a hard time looking past the higher alcohol levels here to enjoy the very obviously complex and compelling *terroirs* of so many of the wines. I have many friends who love these wines and tell me that I should simply focus at the lower level bottlings- the village wines if you will (rather than the grand cru equivalents) if I want to taste wines with decidedly lower alcohol levels. While I certainly acknowledge that this approach would deliver more wines in a level of ripeness that fits well with my palate predilections, I am loathe to invest time tasting in a region where the very top level vineyards and bottlings are too hot for my tastes and simply focus on the lower level wines. It just seems to me that I could spend my time better in other regions around the world where this dichotomy (at least for my palate) does not exist, and given that each fleeting year already seems too short to cover all the ground I should in the regions where I really love the entire range of wines, I have yet to take the plunge and start visiting and tasting in more depth in Austria. But, having a handful of notes on older bottles, I thought they should at least make a cameo appearance in this piece, though there are far more notes on wines from Alsace and Germany.

The following notes are arranged alphabetically by country of origin, and then by vintage from youngest to oldest for Alsace and Austria. Within each vintage subset, I have listed the wines alphabetically by producer and have not broken the notes down by varietal. Within the larger section on German wines, they have also been broken down into sub-sections by sweetness and ripeness levels, with the dry wines forming the first section, and then followed by Prädikat wines in ascending order of ripeness from Kabinett up to Dessert wine bottlings (I have grouped Eiswein, Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenauslese all together under this section, rather than split them up), with the wines again listed first by vintage and then alphabetically by producer within each vintage sub-section of a given level of sweetness. Most of the wines have been tasted over the last year or two, though a few of the Alsace and Austrian notes are a bit older than this, as it has been a bit longer since the last reports on those two regions were written. I have skipped any notes on wines that may well have been in their primes still three or four years ago, but are from vintages or regions whose wines in more recent vintages have had some problems with premature oxidation, as the utility of notes on those wines two or three years down the road are highly questionable. The German tasting notes also include several wines that have been tasted at the first two editions of Stephen Bitterolf's fine Riesling festival here in New York, called *Rieslingfeier*, which is a great new event on the wine calendar and is a must visit in the future for anyone who loves Riesling and happens to be in New York in the latter half of February. Given the scope of the tasting notes that follow, it is hard to believe that I did not even manage to take notes on the vast majority of wines that I tasted at one of the two *Rieslingfeiers*, and I only wish I had managed to scrawl down some notes on a few more of those amazing

wines that went by my table in such a rapid fire manner during these two great festival tastings, but such is the nature of Paulée-like events such as this.

I have also included at the start of the German section of the article small features on two estates who sent me a nice selection of samples in the last year, but which did not fit in the regular flow of articles on Germany previously. These include Weingut Günther Steinmetz located in the middle Mosel in the village of Brauneberg and Weingut Dr. Lippold located in the village of Ürzig. Prior to receiving the samples from these two estates, I was not familiar with the wines from either producer, but was quite impressed with both and thought it would be more appropriate to give each its own small section at the start of the tasting notes on German wines, rather than bury each wine in the much larger sections on wines at their respective Prädikat levels. As I am off to Germany in a few weeks to taste the 2013ers here, I hope this will serve as a useful introduction to that larger piece on the new vintage that will appear in the next issue. I am planning to shake up my usual tasting itinerary on this next trip to German wine country to include a few estates that I have never had the pleasure to visit before, so that there can be a bit more variety in the vintage coverage this time around. I still do not get the opportunity to spend anywhere near as much time as I would like tasting the new vintage in Germany and hope someday in the future to be able to stretch out my stay considerably here in the spring of each year and taste at a far larger number of estates, but I am presently on the road so much already that it is just not possible to make the trip any longer in the spring. But, I am certainly well aware that my coverage of the region is not as broad or as deep as the wines deserve and will hope to have a chance to rectify this in the years to come.

Alsace

2010 Riesling “Schlossberg”- Domaine Albert Mann

I love the wines from the Barthelme brothers at Domaine Albert Mann and used to cellar them quite often back in the day. Their Schlossberg is one of my consistently favorite Riesling bottlings in all of Alsace and their 2010 rendition is a very good wine, but a touch short on the finish and with a bit more of a fruit-driven personality than I usually find from this overtly stony *terroir*. The bouquet is a pretty blend of apple, petrol, a nice touch of rosemary, lime zest, gentle minerality and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and crisp, but with the fruit uncharacteristically in ascendency in this vintage, and with the finish tailing off just a touch on the backend. This is still a very good bottle for more near-term drinking, but I have had vintages of this wine that competed for the gold medal of dry Riesling in Alsace in several previous years, and the 2010 is not quite in that same league. 2013-2020. **89.**

2010 Gewurztraminer “Riquewihr”- Trapet Alsace

The Riquewihr bottlings from Jean-Louis Trapet’s Alsace vineyards are essentially his “village wines”, and the 2010 Riquewihr Gewurztraminer is a very elegant and pure example of its varietal, wafting from the glass in a blend of rose petals, tangerine, lychees, delicate notes of spiced meats and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and dancing, with lovely refinement and focus, crisp acids and a long, soil-driven and classy finish. This is quite dry in style and really excellent. 2013-2025. **91+.**

2010 Riesling “Riquewihr”- Trapet Alsace

The 2010 Riesling Riquewihr from Trapet Alsace is also a lovely wine, delivering a stylish and complex bouquet of apple, peach, petrol, a touch of honeycomb, spring flowers and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and nicely soil-driven, with

a fine core of fruit, crisp acids and very good length and grip on the focused and classy finish. The 2010 Gewurztraminer seems to have just a bit more cut and precision to it this year. 2013-2022. **90.**

2009 Pinot Blanc “Barrique”- Domaine Ostertag

I do not often think of pinot blanc and new barrels as going together, but this 2009 version from Domaine Ostertag is an excellent wine. Of course, André Ostertag only uses three percent new wood for this bottling. The bouquet on the 2009 is deep, complex and very refined, as it offers up scents of apple, peach, stony minerality, spring flowers and a very gentle framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and very well-balanced, with a good core, bright acids and lovely length and grip on the complex and classy finish. Impressive juice. 2012-2018. **92.**

2009 Riesling “Vignoble d’Epfing”- Domaine Ostertag

The 2009 Riesling “Vignoble d’Epfing” from Domaine Ostertag is a lovely wine that comes in at an even thirteen percent alcohol and is quite classic in its aromatic and flavor profile. The bouquet is a fine blend of green apple, orange, grapefruit zest, a lovely base of soil tones and a touch of petrol in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very well-balanced, with a good core, lovely complexity, crisp acids and fine length and grip on the nuanced and classy finish. A lovely bottle. 2012-2020+. **91.**

2009 Gewurztraminer “Sonnenglanz”- Trapet Alsace

The stellar 2008 and 2009 Gewurztraminers were the first wines that I have tasted from the Sonnenglanz vineyard, which Monsieur Trapet describes as very limestone in soil content, with less depth to the soils here than in the fine, next door vineyard of Sommerberg. The 2009 Sonnenglanz Gewurztraminer from Trapet Alsace is an excellent wine that is effectively a Vendanges Tardives, but not labeled as such, as this was a very ripe vintage and the wine has some botrytis as well. The bouquet is ripe and lovely, offering up scents of lychee nuts, oranges, petrol, honeycomb, pretty, chalky soil tones, citrus zest and rosewater. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rich and glazed on the attack, with a very good core, fine focus and acidity and a long, complex and zesty finish. This is fine juice, with a fair bit of residual sweetness and lovely succulence and balance. 2013-2020+. **93.**

2008 Muscat “Fronholz”- Domaine Ostertag

The 2008 Muscat Fronholz from Domaine Ostertag is a beautiful and very elegant bottle, with its twelve percent alcohol content quite classic and allowing the wine to really deliver a fine expression of its underlying *terroir*. The superb bouquet is a vibrant blend of peach, passion fruit, acacia blossoms, a lovely base of minerality and a gentle topnote of coriander. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and focused, with superb balance, a lovely core and fine length and grip on the poised and racy finish. Just a lovely bottle of old school, dry Alsace Muscat. 2012-2020+. **92.**

2008 Riesling “Heissenberg”- Domaine Ostertag

The 2008 Heissenberg is a pretty ripe example of riesling, as it tips the scales at a generous 13.5 percent and offers up plenty of depth of fruit, but relatively soft acidity. The bouquet is quite appealing in its mélange of grapefruit, tart orange, petrol, stony minerality and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite ripe in personality, with a fat core of fruit, good focus and grip and a long, fairly soft finish. This is a very good bottle, but it strikes me as a wine that will be best off drunk in its relative youth, as I

would expect it to get a bit flabby as it ages, due to its rather modest acidity. But for the near-term, there is a lot to like here. 2012-2018+? **91.**

2008 Riesling “Muenchberg”- Domaine Ostertag

The 2008 Riesling “Muenchberg” from Domaine Ostertag is a bit riper than their lovely Muscat Fronholz, as it tips the scales at 13.5 percent alcohol, but it carries its ripeness with great style and really is a remarkably elegant and complex bottle of dry Riesling. The bouquet is excellent, wafting from the glass in a blend of apple, pink grapefruit, diesel, a hint of papaya, a beautifully complex base of soil tones and an exotic topnote of beeswax. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a fine core of fruit, excellent focus and balance and a very long, pure and slightly low acid finish. This is really just a touch soft (particularly for a 2008) structurally, which will require its drinking up in its relative youth, but in terms of breed and complexity, this is an exemplary bottle of Riesling. 2012-2017+? **93.**

2008 Riesling “Schlossberg”- Trapet Alsace

The 2008 vintage in Alsace is quite classic in style and offers up very racy personalities for many of the wines, and this is certainly in evidence in Jean-Louis Trapet’s lovely Riesling Schlossberg. The bouquet is deep, complex and very classy, as it delivers scents of apple, mandarin orange, petrol, classic, stony minerality (the signature of the Schlossberg) and a lovely topnote of botanicals that recalls a bit the Abtsberg vineyard on the Ruwer. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and snappy, with excellent focus and mineral drive, a lovely core and outstanding length and grip on the zesty and beautifully balanced finish. High class juice and a great value. 2012-2025+. **93+.**

2008 Gewurztraminer “Sonnenglanz”- Trapet Alsace

The 2008 Trapet Sonnenglanz is a stunning bottle of Gewurztraminer, soaring from the glass in a gorgeous mélange of apple, lychee nut, rosewater, gentle notes of smoked meats and a stunning base of chalky minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very light on its feet, with a touch of residual sweetness, and excellent core, bright acids and excellent focus and grip on the very, very long and mineral-driven finish. Great juice. 2012-2025. **94+.**

2007 Riesling “Schoenenbourg”- Trapet Alsace

According to Jean-Louis Trapet, the Schoenenbourg vineyard is a grand cru that has a very calcareous *terroir* that is infused with ancient mussel fossils. His 2007 Riesling from this fine vineyard offers up a very complex and classy nose of peach, passion fruit, petrol, lovely, chalky soil tones that seem almost *Chablisienne* in character (from the mussel fossils?) and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a touch fruity in style, with a very good core, fine focus and grip, fairly gentle acids and lovely balance on the long and succulent finish. I would have loved to have seen just a bit more cut and minerality here, but I assume the superb *fin de saison* in Alsace in 2007 favored a bit more succulent style. Good juice. 2012-2020. **91.**

2007 Gewurztraminer “Sporen”- Trapet Alsace

The 2007 Gewurztraminer “Sporen” from Jean-Louis Trapet’s Alsace estate is outstanding, tipping the scales at an old school 12.5 percent and offering up superb bounce and minerality. The very pretty and refined nose wafts from the glass in a mix of rosewater, sweet grapefruit, spiced meats, stony minerality and tangerine. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and moderately sweet on the attack, with lovely focus and balance, good mid-palate depth, fine framing acids and a very long, light on its feet and complex finish. Lovely wine made in a German *Spätlese* style of sweetness that works very well as an aperitif. 2012-2020+. **92+.**

2004 Riesling “Clos Ste. Hune”- Maison Trimbach

At age nine, the 2004 Clos Ste. Hune was starting to show the very first signs of advancement and is probably going to succumb to premoxy in the coming years, so this is a very good time to be drinking it up. The bouquet is showing a lovely, tertiary blend of apple, orange, petrol, chalky soil tones, incipient notes of new leather, citrus peel and the first hints of the honey to come. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and shockingly *à point*, with a fine core of fruit, lovely length and grip, but just starting to uncharacteristically soften up on the backend and suggesting strongly that this is a vintage to drink over the next few years. It is still a very tasty wine, but it is at about the same stage of evolution today as the 1988. 2013-2016+? **92.**

2001 Riesling “Cuvée Frédéric Émile” (375th Anniversary)- Maison Trimbach

I loved the special 375th Anniversary bottling of Cuvée Frédéric Émile when it was released many years ago, but had worries that this wine at age thirteen would not be in pristine condition. Happily, there was absolutely no signs of advancement or other premoxy-related issues in this, my last bottle of this great wine. This cuvée started out life more reserved in profile than the regular 2001 Cuvée Frédéric Émile, but has blossomed beautifully with aging and is a great example of this consistently excellent wine. The bouquet is deep, complex and shows off all the fireworks of a Cuvée Fred at its peak, wafting from the glass in a deep and classic blend of apple, petrol, salty soil tones, orange peel, pink grapefruit and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a rock solid core, ripe, perfectly-integrated acids, excellent focus and grip and a very, very long, complex and zesty finish. I have not had the 2001 regular bottling of Cuvée Frédéric Émile in many years, so I do not have any point of reference for how the two cuvées have evolved, but there is no doubt that this wine is drinking splendidly well. 2014-2025+. **95.**

2000 Altenberg de Bergheim Grand Cru- Domaine Marcel Deiss

I did not have a chance to see if this was one of the blended wines that Monsieur Deiss has begun to produce from this grand cru vineyards (as it was served blind to me), but it struck me as having quite a bit of riesling as part of its *cépages*. The bouquet is a pretty blend of honey, apricot, orange, petrol, lovely soil tones and a bit of hay in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a fair bit of residual sugar sweetening up the backend, good acids and fine length and grip on the focused and fully mature finish. Good juice for near-term drinking. 2012-2018. **90.**

2000 Pinot Gris “Rangen de Thann”- Domaine Zind-Humbrecht

The 2000 Pinot Gris “Rangen de Thann” from Domaine Zind-Humbrecht is a very sweet wine, despite its hefty fifteen percent alcohol, and it is more of academic interest than a wine that actually delivers a lot of pleasure- at least to my palate. The complex and very sweet nose offers up scents of orange, candied grapefruit peel, a touch of pine resin, soil, honey and petrol. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep and pretty soft, with a good core of fruit, plenty of backend sugar and only modest signs of heat on the long and simple finish. That one can make a wine this high in alcohol, with this much residual sugar, is interesting to say the least, but one must ask the question “why bother to make a wine such as this from one of the greatest *terroirs* in all of Alsace?” This is like drinking a cartoon. 2012-2015+? **87.**

1994 Riesling “Clos Windsbuhl”- Domaine Zind-Humbrecht

The 1994 Clos Windsbuhl is a lovely wine that is a bit soft by the standards of grand cru Alsace riesling, but offers up beautiful complexity and refinement from this very low-yielding

vintage. The superb bouquet is a blend of apple, petrol, a touch of fresh almond, a superbly complex base of stony minerality and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite pure, with a fine core, gentle, framing acids, but lovely length and grip on the still very well-balanced finish. This is a lovely wine for drinking over the relative near-term and should probably be drunk up over the course of this decade. It is a pity that Olivier Humbrecht does not make more wines at this lower octane level, as this is very good. 2013-2020. **92.**

1994 Riesling “Rangen de Thanh”- Domaine Zind-Humbrecht

The 1994 Rangen de Thanh from Olivier Humbrecht is more of what one expects from the domaine these days, as this is borderline overripe and nowhere near as interesting as the '94 Clos Windsbuhl. The bouquet is ripe and lacks elegance in its mélange of apricot, corn meal, oranges, leather and a nice base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and really quite flat, with simple flavors, heady alcohol and a short, blunt finish. Dullesville, but not showing any signs of premox, and it seems to me that this is just the way this wine has evolved with bottle age. 2013-2015. **83.**

1991 Riesling “Clos Ste. Hune”- Maison Trimbach

The 1991 Clos Ste. Hune is one of the more gently structured vintages of this iconic Riesling, but it has aged far more gracefully than I initially anticipated and is a pretty nice drink at the present time. Back in these days, I used to buy a case of Clos Ste. Hune very year for my cellar, but actually passed on the 1991, as I did not think it would age particularly well. However, at age twenty, it is still drinking quite well, as it offers up a nose of sweet grapefruit, gentle leesy tones, dusty limestone soils, dried flowers and a discreet base of petrol. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, ripe and round on the attack, with fairly moderate complexity for this great wine, but a good core, soft, framing acids and sneaky length on the velvety and easy-going finish. This does not have the cut, brightness or grip of a classic vintage of Clos Ste. Hune, but it is still a pretty tasty bottle that will continue to offer up a fair bit of pleasure over the remainder of the decade. 2012-2020+. **87.**

1990 Riesling “Cuvée Frédéric Émile” Vendanges Tardives- Maison Trimbach

As readers will recall, the Trimbach style of Vendanges Tardives is far drier than most of their neighbors, with the wines really just deeper and more concentrated than the regular bottlings, with only a modicum more residual sugar than a normal Cuvée Frédéric Émile. The 1990 Cuvée Frédéric Émile VT is a very good bottle, but it is just a bit more evolved than its 1989 counterpart, wafting from the glass in an aromatic blend of orange, sweet grapefruit, petrol, a touch of botrytis which contributes a bit of pineapple to the blend and salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and snappy, with a good core and balance and just a bit of backend blurriness from the botrytis taking away from what is otherwise an exemplary example of Cuvée Frédéric Émile Vendanges Tardives. 2012-2025. **92.**

1990 Riesling “Clos Ste. Hune”- Maison Trimbach

The 1990 Clos Ste. Hune is one of the greatest vintages of this wine I have ever had the pleasure to taste and I wish I had more than a handful of bottles left in my cellar. The bouquet is starting to blossom nicely at age twenty-one, wafting from the glass in a complex and vivid blend of grapefruit, apple, white soil tones, petrol, a touch of guava, tart orange, lovely mossy tones and a touch of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and rock solid at the core, with crisp, ripe acids, superb focus and grip and stunning length and grip on the magical finish. A great vintage of Clos Ste. Hune that is probably still not quite at its apogee, but it is getting closer to the summit! 2013-2040. **96.**

1989 Gewurztraminer Vendanges Tardive- Maison Hugel

The 1989 Gewurztraminer V.T. from Maison Hugel is fully mature and perhaps would have aged a bit longer if its octane was a touch lower than its 13.5 percent. The nose is deep, tertiary and not without interest, as it offers up scents of grapefruit peel, spiced meats, a bit of rosewater, fine minerality and a topnote of straw. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and now a touch bitter, with a good core and complexity, but very modest acidity, fading structural integrity and a long, slightly flat finish that still shows surprising grip on the backend. Not bad in its way, but now sliding a bit into decline and I am sure it was more interesting a few years ago. Drink up. **86.**

1989 Gewurztraminer “Herrenweg Turkheim”- Domaine Zind-Humbrecht

The 1989 Herrenweg Turkheim from Zind-Humbrecht is a lovely example of a fully mature Gewurztraminer, as the wine offers up a deep and tertiary bouquet of orange, beeswax, balsam boughs, a lovely base of minerality, just a whisper of spiced meats and a lovely topnote of rosewater. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and shows just a whisper of remaining sweetness, with a good core, crisp acids and lovely focus and complexity on the long and fully resolved finish. This is a far cry from the steroid-like sweet wines made here at the domaine today, and all I can say is isn't it a pity that Olivier Humbrecht felt compelled to change gears here when he got hold of the reins at the domaine? 2013-2020+. **92.**

1989 Riesling “Cuvée Frédéric Émile”- Maison Trimbach (served from magnum)

I cannot tell you what a triumph of self-restraint it was not to open this magnum when it first appeared at my home, as a friend brought it over for a “pot luck” tasting here and we never got to it on that evening, and this magnum then spent more than two years in my refrigerator until we found the right occasion to finally open it together! Just imagine how many times I looked at it with thoughts of introducing it to my corkscrew! In any event, when we finally did get around to drinking this wine, it did not disappoint, as the bouquet is a vividly pure and complex blend of candied grapefruit, petrol, fresh rosemary, orange, quince, salty minerality and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with racy acids, laser-like focus, stunning balance and a very, very long, vibrant and magical finish. This is one of the most beautiful vintages of Cuvée Frédéric Émile for current drinking, and out of magnum, it has decades of life still ahead of it. This is my favorite vintage of Cuvée Frédéric Émile since the stunning 1979. Thank you Sasha! 2013-2035+. **95.**

1989 Riesling “Cuvée Frédéric Émile” Vendanges Tardives- Maison Trimbach

The 1989 Cuvée Frédéric Émile Vendanges Tardives has reached a beautiful moment of maturity and is drinking very well indeed, offering up a complex and *à point* nose of apple, petrol, rosewater, lavender, a touch of spice tones and a superb base of stony minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and wide open, with a fine core of fruit, superb acids, lovely focus and grip and a long, complex and very classy finish. This is a classic vintage of Trimbach VT that should drink well for the next twenty years or so. 2012-2030. **94.**

1988 Riesling “Clos Ste. Hune”- Maison Trimbach

The 1988 Clos Ste. Hune is one of my favorite recent vintages of this wine, which is now fully mature and drinking at its absolute peak of maturity. The deep, pure and wonderfully elegant nose offers up a complex blend of grapefruit, petrol, beeswax, a touch of peach pit, spring flowers and a wonderful base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and in full bloom, with a fine core of fruit, laser-like focus and exceptional balance and grip on the long and very refined, dancing finish. This does not possess the same

intensity of the riper 1990 vintage, but it is an absolute classic and one of the great vintages of Clos Ste. Hune in the last few decades. 2012-2025+. **94.**

1986 Riesling “Clos Ste. Hune”- Maison Trimbach

I drank up a couple of cases of the 1986 Clos Ste. Hune from the mid-1990s through around 2005 or so, but I should have held onto some of cellar cache of this vintage, as the wine has continued to age very gracefully and is probably drinking better today than any point in its past. The beautiful nose is a blend of apple, grapefruit, chalky, stony soil tones, tart orange, petrol, a whisper of leesiness and a touch of corn kernel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and crisp, with superb focus and complexity, a good core and lovely length and grip on the well-balanced finish that closes with a distinct note of sea salt. A lovely, middleweight vintage of Clos Ste. Hune that continues to cruise along beautifully. 2013-2020+. **91.**



1983 Riesling “Cuvée Frédéric Émile” Sélection des Grains Nobles- Maison Trimbach

Back in 1983, the Trimbach family made their SGN bottlings in quite a dry style, which is really more along the lines of what one would expect from their Vendanges Tardives wines today, and while the style is pretty good relatively early on in the wine’s evolution, the ’83 Cuvée Fred SGN is not as interesting today as it was several years ago. The complex and quite mature nose offers up scents of pineapple, petrol, beeswax, grapefruit peel, buttered popcorn, honey and salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, complex and really almost bone-dry today, with sound framing acids, but with the alcohol starting to show a bit on the backend and

the overall impression of the wine rather blunt by the high standards of the Trimbachs. The finish is still long and the structure remains sound, but this wine has lost quite a bit of its inherent elegance over the last decade and I would be inclined to drink it up over the near-term. 2013-2020+? **87.**

1983 Riesling “Clos Ste. Hune” Vendanges Tardives- Maison Trimbach

In general, I have previously always had a very slight preference for the regular bottling of 1983 Clos Ste. Hune over the Vendanges Tardives, but this most recent bottle of the V.T. may make me reconsider that position, as this wine was utterly magical! The wine offers up a celestial bouquet of great purity and almost exotic complexity, wafting from the glass in a mélange of apple, menthol, very gentle notes of petrol, orange zest, chalky soil tones, beeswax and a lovely topnote of lanolin. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very racy, with a rock solid core of fruit, stunning focus and balance and an endless, pure and very light on its feet finish of uncommon beauty. A brilliant showing for a wine I seem to have been under-appreciating all these years! 2011-2040. **97.**

1983 Gewurztraminer “Herrenweg Turkheim”- Domaine Zind-Humbrecht

The 1983 Gewurztraminer “Herrenweg Turkheim” from Zind-Humbrecht is getting a bit long in the tooth, but still maintains some interest on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a mature blend of orange peel, spearmint, fallen leaves, a touch of spiced meats, lychees and rose petal jelly. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and complex, but now a bit flat as the acids have receded, with a solid core and a bit of gewurztraminer bitterness now dominating the finish. Drink up. **85.**

1983 Riesling “Herrenweg Turkheim”- Domaine Zind-Humbrecht

Unlike the 1983 Gewurztraminer Herrenweg Turkheim from Zind-Humbrecht, which has now seen better days, its '83 Riesling counterpart is still drinking very well and has plenty of life ahead of it. This is a really lovely old Riesling, offering up a deep and classic nose of dried yellow fruit, orange peel, sea salts, petrol, a bit of white cherry and incipient notes of new leather. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and quite dry in style, with lovely focus and balance, still quite vibrant acids and lovely length and grip on the well-balanced and classy finish. Good juice. 2011-2020. **91.**

1979 Riesling “Cuvée Frédéric Émile”- Maison Trimbach

1979 remains one of my all-time favorite vintages of Cuvée Frédéric Émile, and at age thirty-three, the wine continues to cruise along with excellent complexity and breed- though it may have lost just a bit of amplitude and vibrancy over the last few years. The mature bouquet is deep, pure and stunning, offering up a superb aromatic constellation of yellow fruit, petrol, salty soil tones, laurel, a touch of grapefruit peel and gentle notes of new leather. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and still marvelously vibrant, with a fine core, outstanding complexity and focus, still quite sound framing acids, perfect balance and a very long, pure and wide open finish. This wine is clearly balanced at such a superb level that it will continue to cruise along for several more years to come, but the acids are beginning to soften up quite a bit, and the wine will probably start to lose a bit of its lovely cut and bounce on the backend in the not too distant future. It has been a great wine with this stunning vintage of Cuvée Frédéric Émile, but I would be inclined to drink this up over the next decade. 2012-2022+? **93.**

1979 Riesling “Clos Ste. Hune”- Maison Trimbach

The 1979 Clos Ste. Hune is a lovely example of fully mature, classic Hune. The wine has been fully mature for many years now, but continues to drink with great style, as it wafts from

the glass in a mix of orange, sweet grapefruit, petrol, complex, chalky soil tones, a touch of leather and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and at its peak, with a lovely core, fine focus and balance and a long, complex and wide open finish. This has been drinking beautifully for many years now, but shows no signs of imminent decline any time soon. It is not too often that I prefer the Cuvée Frédéric Émile over the Clos Ste. Hune in any given vintage, so there is a possibility that there are even more vibrant bottles of the 1979 Hune out there. 2012-2025+? **91.**

1973 Riesling “Clos Ste. Hune”- Maison Trimbach

The 1973 Clos Ste. Hune has been fully mature for as long as I can remember, and I first had the good fortune to cross paths with this wine sometime in the late 1990s, and yet time still does not seem to affect it in the same way as most dry white wines, and the wine continues to drink with great *élan* even at this advanced age. The bouquet is deep, complex and beautifully tertiary in its complexity, offering up scents of orange, caraway seed, petrol, a touch of coffee, a beautiful base of chalky soil tones now starting to turn quite salty in profile, herbal candy and lime peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very fresh for a nearly forty year-old dry white wine, with still very good acids, lovely focus and grip, very fine complexity and a long, pure and refined finish. A beautiful bottle of old Clos Ste. Hune that still shows no signs of imminent decline! 2011-2030. **92.**

Austria

1999 Riesling Dürnsteiner “Reid Schütt” Smaragd- Weingut Emmerich Knoll

The 1999 Riesling “Reid Schütt” Smaragd from Weingut Knoll is one of the finest bottles of mature Austrian Riesling I have tasted in quite some time, as the wine offers up a deep, complex and beautifully balanced nose of orange, baked peach, lovely minerality, a touch of fresh herb tones, citrus peel and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely complex, with superb focus, a rock solid core, fine framing acids and a very long, poised and very classy finish. Fine juice. 2012-2025+. **93.**

1999 Riesling Federspiel “Steinriegl”- Weingut Prager

The 1999 Steinriegl from Weingut Prager is a fully mature and fairly ripe wine that offers up a rather heady nose of peach, orange peel, deep soil tones and a bit of spiced meats in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and shows a fair bit of uncovered alcohol on the backend, with modest complexity, but at least good core and fine length and grip on the modestly hot finish. I already find this wine too hot to really enjoy, and I have the sense that it is only going to crack up structurally as more years go by, but I should note that others at this blind tasting liked the wine quite a bit more than I did. 2013-2020? **85.**

1988 Grüner Veltliner Loibner “Schütt” Vinothekfüllung Smaragd- Weingut E. Knoll

The 1988 Loibner Schütt “Vinothekfüllung” Smaragd from Weingut Knoll is one of the most beautiful Grüner Veltliners I have had the pleasure to taste. The wine effortlessly carries its 13.5 percent alcohol as it offers up a very refined and deep bouquet of grapefruit, a touch of guava, gentle notes of rosemary, a lovely base of minerality and a very smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and beautifully balanced, with bright acids, a fine core of fruit, superb soil signature and a very long, complex and effortless finish that closes with outstanding grip and a final note of grapefruit peel. Fine juice. 2011-2020+. **93.**

1986 Riesling Loibner “Reid Loibenberg” Kabinett Trocken- Weingut Emmerich Knoll

The 1986 Riesling Loibner “Reid Loibenberg” Kabinett Trocken from Weingut Emmerich Knoll is a very good bottle of dry Riesling that would score a bit higher on my scale if

not for just a whisper of backend, uncovered alcohol. The bouquet is certainly deep and very stylish in its mélange of lemon peel, pink grapefruit, petrol, wet stone minerality and a topnote of lemon blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and nicely focused, with impressive complexity and grip, sound acids and fine length and grip on the slightly warm finish. Good juice, but a bit lower octane would have made this wine just sing for me. 2011-2020. **89.**

1980 Grüner Veltliner Loibner “Schütt”- Weingut Emmerich Knoll

The 1980 Grüner Veltliner “Loibner Schütt” from Weingut Emmerich Knoll has aged very nicely and is still holding onto its plateau of peak maturity, wafting from the glass in a deep and complex nose of rosemary, rhubarb, smoked meats, a lovely base of soil and a topnote of grapefruit peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, clean and still nicely structured, with a good core of fruit, fine complexity, sound acids, but signs that it may start to turn sour in the not too distant future, as the fruit is starting to look over the far side of the plateau at the descent to come. I would opt for drinking this up over the near-term, as it will get more fragile as the next few years go by, but for the present, it is a very nice example of an old Grüner Veltliner. 2012-2017. **87.**

Germany

Weingut Günther Steinmetz

Weingut Günther Steinmetz is located in the superb, middle Mosel village of Brauneberg, which is probably best known as the home of Weingut Fritz Haag. Since 1999, this 5.8 hectare estate has been run by Stefan Steinmetz, the younger of two sons of Günther Steinmetz, and once Stefan took over the day to day running of the domaine, he was quick to swap some of the less favored land that the family had on the flatter vineyard areas in the region with winegrowers who had parcels of Riesling in some of the steep side valleys in this section of the Mosel. Consequently, the estate now has some very good bottlings from parcels (such as Kestener Herrenberg) that are not particularly well-known at the present time, but produce very good wines. It is one of the sad facts of life in the world of German wine these days that even some of the most famous vineyards on some of the steepest slopes in world class regions like the Mosel are not fully planted to vines, or that there are estates that would happily sell their old vines in these great terroirs if someone would make them an offer, and the land that is not immediately on the riverside and in some of the steep, slate soil side valleys and which was once planted abundantly a couple of generations ago is now not seen as economically viable except to very committed young producers such as Stefan Steinmetz.

2011 Brauneberger Riesling- Weingut Günther Steinmetz AP #10

I really like the 2011 Brauneberger dry Riesling from Weingut Günther Steinmetz, which comes in at a cool and classy twelve percent alcohol and offers up lovely balance and freshness. The bouquet offers up a pure and classic expression of Brauneberg, with notes of green apple, lime, sweet grapefruit, plenty of slate, citrus peel and a gentle topnote of petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focused and beautifully balanced, with a lovely core, crisp, ripe acids and excellent length and grip on the complex and classy finish. Fine juice. 2014-2025+. **90.**

2011 Kestener Herrenberg Riesling QbA- Weingut Günther Steinmetz AP #19

The 2011 Kestener Herrenberg QbA from Stefan Steinmetz comes in at an octane of 11.5 percent alcohol and is really a lovely, crisp and focused bottle of dry Riesling. The wine offers up a classy nose of pink grapefruit, tart orange, slate, petrol and a topnote of citrus peel. On the

palate the wine is deep, fullish and well-balanced, with a good core of fruit, blossoming complexity, crisp, ripe acids and very good length and grip on the finish. This is certainly approachable today, but it will be even better with a few years of bottle age. 2013-2025. **89+**.

2011 Wintricher Geierslay Riesling “Sur Lie”- Weingut Günther Steinmetz AP #14

The 2011 “Sur Lie” bottling from the Geierslay is a very good, deep and fairly powerful example of dry Riesling, but it seems to me to have lost just a bit of precision from its stay “sur lie” and I do not really understand the concept behind doing this with Riesling. The bouquet is certainly deep and complex, wafting from the glass in a mix of tart orange, grapefruit, leesy tones, gentle notes of petrol and a bit of orange peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and absolutely rock solid at the core, with crisp acids, fine balance and just a touch of backend blurriness on the long finish. The raw materials here are first rate, and perhaps the wine will gain in focus and precision with bottle age, but right now, it seems to have lost just a touch from its extended lees aging. 2013-2025. **88**.

2011 Brauneberger Juffer Riesling Feinherb- Weingut Günther Steinmetz AP #9

The 2011 Feinherb bottling from the Juffer vineyard from Stefan Steinmetz is a very pretty wine, coming in at 10.5 percent alcohol and offering up just a whisper of backend residual sweetness. The bouquet is a youthful blend of tart orange, petrol, a touch of lime peel, gentle notes of wild yeasts, slate and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and nascently complex, with fine focus and bounce, ripe, well-integrated acids and very good length and grip on the reasonably complex finish. More complexity will emerge here with further bottle age, but the wine is already drinking quite well at the present time. 2014-2020+. **89+**.

2011 Dhroner Hofberg Riesling “GD”- Weingut Günther Steinmetz AP #11

The 2011 Dhroner Hofberg “GD” from Weingut Günther Steinmetz is a superb bottle of dry Riesling, tipping the scales at thirteen percent alcohol and already drinking with great style. The deep and classy nose wafts from the glass in a mélange of pink grapefruit, tangerine, a beautiful base of soil, petrol and a floral topnote redolent of white lilies. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a fine core, ripe, beautifully-integrated acids and excellent focus and grip on the very long and elegant finish. I really like this wine. 2013-2030. **93**.

2011 Piesporter Falkenberg Riesling “von den Tersassen”- Weingut G. Steinmetz AP #12

The 2011 Piesporter Falkenberg Riesling “von den Tersassen” from Herr Steinmetz is a dry and impressively suave and complex Riesling that comes in at thirteen percent alcohol and offers up superb focus and balance. The bouquet is a deep and very classy mélange of tart orange, hints of the white cherries to come, petrol, slate, a bit of lemongrass, citrus peel and just a hint of fresh rosemary in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very refined, with lovely focus and transparency, a lovely core of fruit, crisp, ripe acids, excellent complexity and a very long, pure and very poised finish. This is a very high class bottle of dry Mosel Riesling, and though its structure is so seamless that it allows fine drinking today, it is still very early days for this outstanding wine, and I would be strongly inclined to tuck it away in the cellar for at least another three or four years and let further complexity emerge. Superb juice. 2014-2035. **94**.

Weingut Dr. Lippold

Weingut Dr. Lippold is based in the town of Ürzig on the middle Mosel, and they are the proud proprietors of one of the “filet sections” of the famed Ürziger Würzgarten vineyard, which was long known as the Weltersberg. Dr. Enno Lippold only had the possibility to purchase this

parcel and start his winery in 2006, as before this he worked in a number of different capacities in the wine business in Germany. The vineyard of the Würzgarten was rather dramatically expanded at the time of the adoption of the German wine laws in 1971, as the original 4 hectares of the vineyard were added to with almost all of the surrounding vineyards, so that today the Würzgarten totals 55 hectares! The Weltersberg section was one that was added to the expanded Würzgarten in 1971, but unlike a great many of the other parcels pieced together in this greatly expanded vineyard, it was ranked as a grand cru back in Napoleon's days of administering the Mosel (the same as the original four hectares of the Würzgarten), whereas much of the remainder of the additions on the hill were ranked as premier crus or lower at this time. The vines from the Dr. Lippold estate in the Weltersberg average fifty years of age and are planted on un-grafted rootstocks, as the red slate soils of the Würzgarten have proven heretofore to be impervious to phylloxera. Interestingly, the German wine authorities no longer allow the plantation of ungrafted rootstocks for new vines, so the days of ungrafted German Rieslings on slate soils will one day be a thing of the past. Dr. Enno Lippold purchased his parcel in the Weltersberg from the Pfeiffer family in 2006, and so he kindly included a few of their older vintages from this parcel to show how the wine from this terroir evolves with bottle age. He suggests that the two families non-interventionist winemaking styles are very similar, and if his younger wines evolve as the older Pfeiffer wines did, then we will be in for a treat down the road. The back label on the more recent releases from Dr. Lippold that I tasted state that the wines are made from low yields, but this may need to be taken a bit in context, as the style of the wines that I tasted was certainly old school middle Mosel, with a serious "lightness of step of well water" in evidence that would make me guess that the low yields in question are relative in nature. That said, the wines are really very, very lovely in style and should age very well indeed- at least based on the superb 1996 Spätlese and 1994 and 1990 Auslesen that I tasted from this same parcel that were crafted by the Pfeiffer family.

2008 Ürziger Würzgarten Spätlese "Alte Reben v. Weltersberg"- Dr. Lippold AP #02

The 2008 Spätlese "Alte Reben v. Weltersberg" from Dr. Lippold is a very pretty and ethereal example of the vintage, with a nicely old-fashioned sense of delicacy and filigree evident on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a fine mélange of strawberries, lime blossoms, apple, petrol, slate, a nice dollop of yeastiness and a topnote of purple irises. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, fresh and bright, with a nice sense of intensity of flavor, fine complexity, gentle, framing acids and lovely focus on the long and well-balanced finish. This seems a tad on the softer side in terms of acidity and does not have quite the cut I would have anticipated from a 2008er at age six, but it is really a lovely wine for current drinking. 2014-2020+. **89.**

2009 Ürziger Würzgarten Auslese "Alte Reben v. Weltersberg"- Dr. Lippold AP #01

The 2009 Alte Reben Weltersberg Auslese was just a touch reductive when I first opened it and needed a bit of coaxing in decanter to blossom, but it eventually did so with quite a bit of promise in evidence. The bouquet is gently glazed with botrytis and offers up scents of strawberries, pears, tangerine, gentle notes of honeycomb, a nice base of slate, a bit of youthful petrol and a topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and still very youthful in profile, with a lovely core of fruit, sound acids, fine focus and a very long, primary finish. The sense of reduction worked nicely out of the nose over the course of the forty-five minutes I left it in decanter, but still was clamping down the finish a bit. I have no fears for its ultimate evolution, but this is still very early days for this Auslese and it needs some extended cellaring to

really blossom. I may be underrating this wine a touch, based on catching it in a reductive state. 2019-2040+. **90+**.

1996 Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Benedikt Pfeiffer

I did not have the front label on the sample bottle of this 1996er, so I am not sure if the wine was being labeled at this time with the “Alte Reben v. Weltersberg” notation, but the wine certainly hailed from this filet section of the vineyard. I was also missing the AP number on this wine, as it arrived with a hand-written label, but the wine is a lovely example of a maturing Spätlese that offers up a deep, complex and tertiary nose of peach, passion fruit, bee pollen, saline notes of slate, musky floral tones and the first hints of the peach stone to come with further bottle age. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and quite nicely concentrated at the core, with lovely complexity and focus, with moderate acids, very fine balance and a long, filigreed and classy finish. This is not a particularly racy example of a 1996er, but I really like its depth of flavor and its old school stylistic bent and the wine will have no difficulties continuing to age well, based on its lovely balance. Fine juice. 2014-2025+. **93**.

1994 Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Auslese- Weingut Benedikt Pfeiffer AP #1

The 1994 Ürziger Würzgarten Auslese from Weingut Benedikt Pfeiffer is a beautiful example of the vintage that is fully mature and drinking with lovely complexity and filigree. The suave and mature nose wafts from the glass in a blend of apple, pear, salty soil tones, bee pollen, fruit blossoms, the first hints of the sweet corn to come and irises. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, lovely focus and complexity and a very, very long, pure and classic finish that resonates with fine framing acids and superb minerality. A beautiful and very elegant Auslese at its apogee. 2014-2035. **93**.

1990 Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Auslese- Weingut Benedikt Pfeiffer AP #2

The 1990er Auslese from the Weltersberg section of the Würzgarten is fully mature and drinking beautifully. The deep, complex and classically old school nose delivers a superb aromatic constellation of pear, white cherries, a hint of petrol, gentle notes of honeycomb, very salty slate undertones, crushed violets and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and filigreed, with a lovely core, impeccable focus and balance, superb complexity, a nice base of framing acids and outstanding length and grip on the very refined finish. A beautiful bottle of Würzgarten Auslese at its apogee. 2014-2030. **93**.

Assorted German Wines Tasted Recently

Trocken, Feinherb and Grosses Gewächs Bottlings

2012 Krettnacher Altenberg Riesling Spätlese Trocken- Hofgut Falkestein (Saar)

This was the first wine I have tasted from Hofgut Falkenstein and its talented owner and winegrower, Erich Weber. Everything is done here quite traditionally, with all natural yeasts and aging in old, thousand liter *fuder*. The Altenberg vineyard in Krettnach used to be owned entirely by the Friedrich Wilhelm Gymnasium estate, who have now concentrated their efforts in the Saar on their holdings in the Hofberg vineyard in Falkenstein. In any event, the Altenberg Spätlese Trocken from Herr Weber is excellent in 2012, coming in at a cool 11.5 percent alcohol and offering up a very refined bouquet of grapefruit, lime peel, slate, petrol, wild years and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and intensely flavored, with lovely focus and cut, a fine core, lovely slate drive on the crisp, complex and classy backend. A new estate to me that I really need to visit in the future! 2013-2030+. **91**.

2011 Halenberg Riesling “R- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2011 Halenberg Riesling “R from the Schönleber family was still in tank when I stopped by to visit at the estate and taste the 2012ers here in March of 2013, and as I did not include the note on this wine in the article on the 2012 vintage, it seemed proper to include it here. The wine was destined to be bottled after Easter of 2013 and is now resting comfortably in bottle and will be worth a special search of the market to locate a few for the cellar, as the wine is brilliant! The superb bouquet offers up a deep and complex constellation of lime, fresh mint, petrol, rosemary, a gloriously complex base of slate, smoke and orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and racy, with superb focus and grip, a great core of fruit, stellar transparency, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the refined and nascently complex finish. A stellar wine in the making! 2020-2045+. **95+**.



2010 Ellergrub Riesling- Weingut Immich-Batterieberg

The 2010 Ellergrub Riesling from Weingut Immich-Batterieberg is a very nice wine that tips the scales (at least on the label) at twelve percent alcohol and shows lovely focus and balance in its slightly broader-shouldered style. The bouquet is a stylish blend of green apple, lime peel, petrol, a touch of wild yeasts and a fine base of slate. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and well-balanced, with a good core of fruit, crisp acids and very good length and grip on the focused finish. This is a bigger-styled dry Riesling, but it is quite well made in its style. 2015-2035. **90+**.

2010 Felseneck Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich (magnum)

The 2010 Felseneck Grosses Gewächs from Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich is a gorgeous young wine, wafting from the glass in a deep and young aromatic blend of tart orange, pink grapefruit, just a hint of guava, petrol, wild yeasts, citrus peel, a boatload of slate and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very much defined by its minerality at the present time, with a great core of fruit, laser-like focus and great cut and grip on the very, very long, nascently complex and snappy finish. Particularly out of magnum, this wine needs time, but it will be stellar with sufficient bottle age. 2019-2050. **95+**.

2009 “C. A. I.” Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Immich-Batterieberg (screwcap)

This wine comes in at 11.5 percent alcohol, which is pretty high octane for a Kabinett, but perhaps this is meant to be a dry wine and just does not carry the Trocken designation on the label. The wine was showing quite well when I last tasted it in early 2011, but that was still pretty early on after its bottling and perhaps it may be a bit more reductive today. The nose at that time was a blend of tart orange, petrol, gentle yeasty tones and wet stone minerality. On the palate the wine was medium-full, complex and quite dry in profile, with good acids and good, solid length and grip. Not sure how it would be today (as it is under the screw), but it was perfectly serviceable (but not special) when tasted in early 2011. 2011-2015+? **87**.

2009 Bernkasteler Doctor Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Wegeler

I am so fond of the Doctor wines from Weingut Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch that I sometimes forget that this is not a *monopole* of the family, but there are some other fine proprietors in the Doctor vineyard as well! This 2009 Grosses Gewächs from the Doctor produced by Weingut Wegeler is a very good wine, which to my tastes was just a touch soft on the backend and which kept its score down a tad. The bouquet is first rate, offering up a mélange of green apple, grapefruit, wild yeasts, petrol and a fine base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, focused and nicely complex, with a fine core of fruit, very good length on the finish, but really pretty gentle acidity, which comes as a bit of a surprise, as I do not generally think of the 2005 vintage as being acid deficient. Good juice that could have been outstanding with a bit more cut and grip. 2010-2020. **89**.

2008 Vom Grauen Schiefer Riesling Trocken- Weingut Clemens-Busch

The 2008 Vom Grauen Schiefer Riesling Trocken from Weingut Clemens-Busch is an excellent wine that comes in at a cool twelve percent alcohol and offers up a fine nose of pink grapefruit, a touch of menthol, tart orange, a lovely base of slate, petrol and lime peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focused and racy, with a fine core of fruit, beautiful complexity, crisp acids and excellent length and grip on the very well-balanced and vibrant finish. Fine juice. 2012-2030. **92+**.

2008 Morstein Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

The 2008 Morstein from Weingut Keller is an absolutely brilliant wine in the making, but it is still many years away from a full awakening from its slumber. The stunningly pure and youthful nose soars from the glass in a focused blend of sweet grapefruit, passion fruit, a kaleidoscope of chalky minerality, exotic flower petals, tangerine zest and smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and racy, with a rock solid core, flawless focus and balance, snappy acids and brilliant length and grip on the laser-like finish. This is a baby, but what a future it has ahead of it! 2020-2050+. **97+**.

2008 Schonfels Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Peter Lauer

The 2013 Riesling *Feier* was my first experience with the wines from Florian Lauer of Weingut Peter Lauer, but it will most assuredly not be my last. The 2008 Schonfels Grosses Gewächs was the only wine from Herr Lauer that I managed to scrawl down a note on during the festivities (but not the only fine Lauer wine I tasted), and I was very impressed by its deep, pure and complex personality and fine raciness on the palate that is so emblematic of good Saar Riesling. The very classy bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of tangerine, grapefruit, petrol, slate, wild yeasts, smoke and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and complex, with a fine core, a relatively open personality, crisp acids and lovely filigree on the bright, long and dancing finish. Fine juice. 2013-2030. **93**.

2008 Felseneck Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich

The 2008 Felseneck Riesling Grosses Gewächs from Tim Fröhlich is a superb wine that I last caught back in 2012, when it was still a bit on the young side and in need of a bit more bottle age to blossom. The bouquet is deep, complex and very pure, offering up scents of grapefruit, lemon rind, petrol, a very complex base of slate, lemongrass and a very gentle topnote of wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and focused, with very good, but not great mid-palate depth, lovely balance and a very long, suave and snappy finish. As I was drinking this only at age four, it is very possible that there is more mid-palate stuffing here than was currently evident behind the serious girdle of acidity, and if this turns out to be the case, then my score will be on the conservative side. If not, it will still make an admirably complex and classy middleweight. 2015-2035. **91+?**

2008 Wwe. Dr. Thanisch-Erben-Thanisch Estate Riesling (screwcap)

The only thing not to like about this wine is that it is sealed with a screwcap, as otherwise, this is a dynamite everyday Riesling that offers up simply stunning value. I fully understand that most folks want a wine like this in screwcap, and it was not showing any signs of reduction when I tasted it last year, but one would not have to worry at all about the wine if it were under natural cork. In any event, the bouquet is quite stylish and impressive complex in its mix of green apple, gentle yeasty tones, petrol, slate and tart orange. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and crisp, with a good core, quite a dry personality and lovely length and cut on the long and classy finish. A great entry level Riesling. 2012-2020+? **88**.

2007 Uhlen Grosses Gewächs Riesling “R”- Weingut Heymann-Lowenstein

The 2007 Uhlen “R” Grosses Gewächs from Heymann-Lowenstein is a superb bottle that is already starting to really drink well, but has many, many years ahead of it, and if one only has a couple of bottles of this fine wine, I would recommend holding off on drinking it for a few more years. The deep, complex and very classy bouquet offers up scents of pink grapefruit, white cherries, petrol, a touch of guava, a lovely base of slate and a slightly grassy topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and perfectly balanced, with a lovely core, crisp acids and excellent focus and grip on the very long, complex and elegant finish. High class juice. 2013-2030+. **93**.

2007 Riesling “R.R.”- Weingut Keller

The 2007 Riesling “R.R.” from Klaus-Peter Keller is a beautiful bottle that is starting to drink with great style and complexity, as it offers up a classy nose of apple, pink grapefruit, wet stone minerality, delicate notes of petrol, wild yeasts and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and beautifully balanced, with a fine core of fruit, bright, ripe acidity, excellent focus and a very long, complex and vibrant finish. This was a slightly

sweeter vintage for the R.R., as Klaus-Peter had a barrel each of Morstein and G-Max in 2007 that would not quite ferment down to sufficient dryness to qualify as Trocken, and hence could not be included in their respective Grosses Gewächs bottlings and the 2007 R.R. was treated to some pretty classy additions to the cuvée. 2012-2025. **92.**

2007 Estate Riesling Trocken- Weingut Koehler-Ruprecht

The 2007 Estate Riesling Trocken from Weingut Koehler-Ruprecht, which comes in at twelve percent octane, is a lovely wine, offering up a deep and properly structured personality and a nose of orange, lime zest, bread fruit, a fine base of soil and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and rock solid at the core, with fine purity and focus, bright acids and a very long, well-balanced and bone dry finish that closes with a lovely note of citrus zest. Fine juice. 2013-2030. **89+.**

2007 Kallstadter Saumagen Riesling Kabinett Trocken- Weingut Koehler-Ruprecht

The 2007 Saumagen Kabinett Trocken is a touch riper than the Estate bottling, tipping the scales at 12.5 percent alcohol, but showing the same outstanding focus, purity and serious structural elements. The excellent bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of grapefruit, lemon, hard limestone minerality, a touch of lemongrass, gentle smokiness and a topnote of grapefruit zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with racy acids, outstanding focus and grip and a very long, vibrant and classy finish. This is a beautiful bottle of dry Riesling that still could use a couple more years in the cellar to fully blossom. 2015-2035. **92+.**

2007 Kallstadter Saumagen Riesling Spätlese Trocken- Weingut Koehler-Ruprecht

The 2007 Saumagen Spätlese Trocken from Bern Philippi at Koehler-Ruprecht is another very strong example of the vintage, but the alcohol here is a touch higher again (thirteen percent), and the wine does not quite carry it with the same seamless beauty as the Kabinett Trocken 2007er does at its slightly lower octane, and my score is just a touch lower for that bit of heat poking out on the finish. The bouquet is certainly lovely and quite classic in its mix of grapefruit, lime, chalky soil tones, orange zest and a topnote of straw. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and almost tensile in structure, with a rock solid core, lovely focus and grip, snappy acids and a very, very long, minerally and ever so slightly hot finish. Perhaps I am just being overly sensitive here, but I would have loved to have seen this wine with a touch lower alcohol level- even if it had to carry a bit more residual sugar. It is still a very good wine, but I really love the balance of the Kabinett Trocken 2007er in comparison to this wine. 2014-2030. **89+.**

2007 Kallstadter Saumagen Riesling Spätlese Trocken “R”- Weingut Koehler-Ruprecht

The 2007 Saumagen Spätlese Trocken “R” from Weingut Koehler-Ruprecht is an outstanding wine, with perfect balance and great mid-palate stuffing to carry it far into the future. The excellent and still fairly youthful nose offers up scents of breadfruit, gooseberries, lemon zest, that inimitable signature of hard limestone, lemongrass and a nice touch of white lilies in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and classically soil-driven, with a fine core, outstanding focus and balance, snappy acids and excellent length and grip on the nascently complex and very racy finish. This is still early days for this lovely bottle. 2019-2050. **92.**

2007 Kallstadter Saumagen Riesling Spätlese Trocken “RR”- Weingut Koehler-Ruprecht

The 2007 “RR” bottling of Spätlese Trocken from the Saumagen is another stellar wine in the making, with even better buffering extract to carry this gorgeous synthesis of chalky minerality and brisk acidity. The deep, pure and still fairly primary nose offers up a superb constellation of grapefruit, tart orange, a stunning base of limestone, lemon zest, lemongrass and

spring flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows of stunning mid-palate depth, with ripe, snappy acids, great focus and grip, outstanding balance and a very, very long, minerally and superb finish. This is going to be a great wine, but like the straight “R” bottling from 2007, this still will need a few more years in the cellar to really start to unwind from behind its serious structural elements. It should prove to be a very long-lived and superb wine. 2018-2050. **93+**.

2007 Kallstadter Saumagen Riesling Auslese Trocken “A”- Weingut Koehler-Ruprecht

The 2007 Saumagen Riesling Auslese Trocken “A” from Bern Philippi is a stunning wine that is still a half dozen years away from primetime drinking, but its enormous potential is self-evident. The very deep, very pure and still fairly primary nose soars from the glass in a blaze of grapefruit, lemon peel, straw, wet stone minerality, lemongrass, tart orange and a lovely topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and laser-like in its focus, with bottomless depth at the core, seamless balance, brisk acids and outstanding length and grip on the pure, primary and very minerally finish. A great wine in the making. 2020-2060+. **95+**.



Klaus-Peter Keller tasting berries for ripeness in the Abtserde vineyard in November of 2012.

2006 Hermannshöhle Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2006 Hermannshöhle Grosses Gewächs from Helmut Dönnhoff is aging brilliantly, and though it is still a handful of years away from maturity, but it is like the sun behind a wisp of cloud today and it is very clear that this is going to be a brilliant bottle with a bit more bottle age. The bouquet is a superb and still youthful blend of grapefruit, wild yeasts, a beautiful base of complex slate tones, petrol, a touch of rosemary, orange peel and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and utterly seamless, with a rock solid core, laser-like

focus, great cut and grip and a very, very long and still youthful finish. A great wine that is only a few years away from reaching its plateau of maturity. 2016-2035+. **96.**

2006 Kirchspiel Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

The 2006 Kirchspiel from Klaus-Peter Keller is still a few years away from really blossoming, but it is beginning to reach out from behind its structure and shows gorgeous potential. The deep, pure and still youthful nose wafts from the glass in a blend of pink grapefruit, a touch of passion fruit, petrol, a very complex base of limestone minerality and a lovely topnote of lemon peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and focused, with blossoming complexity, crisp acids, excellent mid-palate concentration and a very long, perfectly balanced and still fairly adolescent finish. This is still very early days for the 2006 Kirchspiel, which will just begin to blossom in earnest as it celebrates its tenth birthday and should drink well for at least a couple of decades from that point forward. A superb wine. 2016-2035+. **93+.**

2006 Abtserde Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller (double magnum)

Yes, it is absurd to be opening a double magnum of 2006 Abtserde at this point in the wine's evolution, unless you are an extremely generous attendee of the first *Rieslingfeier* here in New York in 2013 and need enough quantity of this great, great wine to share with everyone at the event! This was Klaus-Peter Keller's first vintage in the Abtserde, and while the wine is absolutely stellar in 2006, subsequent vintages have shown even more refinement as the Keller team has worked the vineyard to their exacting standards. The 2006 is still a puppy in such a large format, but its inherent quality is still very much in evidence, as the wine is beginning to stir from behind its exceptional structure and is now offering up a deep and still fairly youthful bouquet of pink grapefruit, tangerine, petrol, wild yeasts, a beautifully complex base of limestone minerality, a touch of lemon grass, gentle smokiness and citrus zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very, very elegant, with great mid-palate intensity, bright, zesty acids, and laser-like focus on the very long and very, very classy finish. The secondary layers of complexity are only just starting to be hinted at in this larger format, but this is going to be a very great wine and it was a very, very generous gesture to share this at last year's *Riesling Feier!* 2020-2060+. **96.**

2006 Morstein Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

The 2006 Morstein from Weingut Keller is a stunning example of the vintage, and though it is no more evolved than the Kirchspiel '06, it seems to have just a touch better balance and perhaps a wee bit more depth, so it is more approachable at this stage of its evolution. The absolutely stunning nose delivers a magical blend of pink grapefruit, tangerine, petrol, a gorgeously complex base of chalky minerality, citrus blossoms and a touch of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and completely refined and poised, with a bottomless core of fruit, laser-like precision, gorgeous, nascent complexity and a very, very long, racy and supremely elegant finish. This is a brilliant wine in the making and only a few years away from full lift-off. 2016-2040. **97.**

2006 G-Max Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

Looking back on my notes, I have been very lucky to have crossed paths with most of Klaus-Peter Keller's 2006er Grosses Gewächs bottlings in the past year, which certainly indicates that it has been a very, very good year! The '06 G-Max was tasted at the second annular *Rieslingfeier* here in New York and the wine was really quite open and accessible, with all of the stunning potential it showed early on now becoming a reality. The brilliant bouquet jumps from the glass in a blend of pink grapefruit, tart orange, very complex, chalky minerality, petrol, gentle remaining notes of wild yeasts, citrus peel and a nice topnote of lemongrass. On

the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and stunning in its beautiful sense of balance and focus, with a great core, ripe acids and simply stunning grip and bounce on the very, very long and magical finish. I am not sure if this is the most forward of all the 2006 Grosses Gewächs bottlings that I have tasted this year from Klaus-Peter Keller, or if it is simply the most seamlessly balanced, and hence the impression of accessibility today is that much more enhanced. In any event, I had absolutely no problem drinking this wine! 2014-2040. **97.**

2003 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Auslese Trocken- Karthäuserhof

The 2003 Karthäuserhofberg Trocken comes in at just under thirteen percent alcohol and is an excellent example of the vintage. The bouquet is bright, pure and very classy in its mélange of orange, wheat, gentle leesy tones, a lovely base of slate, sea salts and a topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and beautifully balanced, with a great signature of soil, fresh fruit tones and a very long, pure and tensile finish that shows off admirable complexity and delicacy for the vintage. Fine, fine juice. 2011-2030+. **92+.**

2002 G-Max Riesling- Weingut Keller

The 2002 G-Max from Klaus-Peter Keller is a gorgeous wine, that back in these days, found its origin in grapes from the Morstein vineyard. This is one of the few Grosses Gewächs level bottlings from Klaus-Peter that I have had the pleasure to taste that is into its apogee of drinkability, and for those out there who still have doubts about the eventual quality of these wines (often based on impossibly young and closed examples), may this wine be a light in your wilderness! The superb nose offers up a very complex and vibrant mélange of pink grapefruit, petrol, orange peel, a brilliantly complex base of minerality, tangerine and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and absolutely *à point*, with bottomless depth, superb focus and balance, snappy acids and a very long, transparent and dancing finish. What a brilliant wine! 2013-2035+. **96.**

2001 Schlossböckelheimer Felsenberg Riesling Spätlese Trocken- Weingut Dönnhoff

This was the first time I had tasted the 2001 Felsenberg Riesling Spätlese Trocken from Weingut Dönnhoff, as back in these days, I tended to focus most of my tastings (and all of my buying habits) on the noble sweet wines of Germany. This wine was tasted blind, and though it was quite good, I felt a modest amount of disappointment when the bottle was unveiled, as I love the *terroir* in the Felsenberg and really expected a bit more from the wine in a great vintage like 2001. The nose is deep and complex, offering up scents of apple, pink grapefruit, petrol, lime zest, slate and a topnote of wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a fair bit of ripeness, a fine core of fruit and a long, crisp, complex and slightly heady finish. I did not check what the alcohol level was on this wine, but it was just a touch too high for a pristine sense of balance. That said, this is still a very good wine- just not quite what I expect when Helmut Dönnhoff, the Felsenberg and the legendary 2001 vintage come together! Maybe I just caught the wine at an inopportune moment in its evolution and it will get better with further bottle age? 2013-2025. **90+?**

2001 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Spätlese Trocken- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2001 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Spätlese Trocken from Theo Haart is a very good bottle that is still on the young side and was really is crying out for a bit more bottle age to fully blossom when I tasted it in March of 2010. The bouquet is lovely and more advanced than the palate at the present time, offering up a fine mélange of grapefruit, slate, petrol, some salty soil tones and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and complex, with fine focus and balance, but still plenty of quite brisk acidity that keeps the wine a bit too young for

primetime drinking. A few more years of bottle age should really allow this wine to relax a bit structurally and offer up even more enjoyment than it does today in its youthfully electric stage of evolution. 2015-2035+. **88+**.

1996 Rüdeshheimer Berg Roseneck Riesling Trocken- School at Geisenheim

This wine was made by Klaus-Peter Keller while he was still pursuing his degree in oenology from the school in Geisenheim (sorry I do not know its proper title), and Klaus-Peter and his classmates harvested the grapes for this wine in mid-November at must weights that translated to eleven percent alcohol. The wine turned out very well and has aged excellently, offering up a fine nose of grapefruit, tart orange, a hint of petrol, a great base of soil and a topnote of lemongrass. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full, long and crisp, with beautiful balance, well-integrated acids and a long, racy and still fairly youthful finish that closes with lovely notes of citrus peel, wet stones and lemongrass. A lovely dry Riesling that was a harbinger for what Klaus-Peter would do when he got home to the family estate a few years later. 2010-2030. **92.**

1994 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Spätlese Trocken AP #19

I had been so impressed with the quality of this bottling from the 1990 vintage (which I brought to last year's *Rieslingfeier*) that I thought I would see how the 1994 performed at this year's event. The 1994 version is still caught up in its adolescence at the present time and is not drinking with anywhere near the same style and filigree as the 1990, and I am not entirely sure that it will ever quite make it to the same level with more bottle age. The bouquet is tight, young and shows some promise in its mélange of green apple, lime, petrol, pulverized slate, a bit of gentle mossiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tight and petroly, with a bit of a four-square personality today, a good core, fine cut and grip and a long, youthful and still pretty chunky finish. This could blossom with further bottle age to be really outstanding, or it could simply open up and still retain a bit of its current chunkiness of personality. Time will tell. 2019-2040+. **89-92+?**

1990 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Spätlese Trocken AP #25

In the last few years I have really been starting to understand and appreciate just how good the dry wines were produced here in the decade of the 1990s, as I am such a fan of the classic, noble sweet wines at Maximin Grünhäuser that I suspect I never really gave the dry wines here the credit that they deserved. But, I put a couple of mixed cases of them away in my cellar out of curiosity and the wines have blossomed into stellar dry Rieslings with sufficient bottle age! The 1990 Abtsberg Spätlese Trocken AP #25 is now a riveting wine, delivering a superb bouquet of lime, grapefruit, moss, a superb base of slate, citrus peel and a nice topnote of wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and complex, with a great core of fruit, a superb spine of both acidity and minerality and outstanding length and grip on the perfectly focused and just starting to blossom finish. A beautiful wine. 2012-2035. **94.**

1985 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Kabinett Trocken- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

I have to imagine that the 1985 Rausch Kabinett Trocken from Hanno Zilliken was a wee bit snappy in its youth, as the wine has all of one gram per liter of residual sugar and fully nine grams per liter of acidity- this must have been like trying to swallow a sword in its infancy! However, time has worked its charms on this wine and today, at age twenty-three, the wine is really drinking splendidly well and is one of the finest mature dry wines I have had a pleasure to taste from this Saar Riesling *Maestro*, as it offers up a beautifully complex nose of green fruit,

plenty of smokiness, cress, a touch of beeswax, lime peel and petrol. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and rounding out very nicely on the attack, with a lovely core, great focus and grip, bright, perfectly integrated acids and outstanding balance and grip on the very long finish. Just a lovely bottle that will last for years and years and years, but is now fully into its apogee and drinking with great style. 2013-2040. **93.**

1983 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Kabinett Trocken- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP#11

Dry Saar Riesling often takes a very long time to really blossom from behind its substantial girdle of acidity, and I have little doubt that this beautiful wine was probably pretty bracing in its early years. However, today it is absolutely stellar, wafting from the glass in a beautifully smoky mix of pink grapefruit, lemon peel, white cherries, plenty of petrol, salty overtones, slate and smoke. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and beautifully focused, with great complexity, bright, perfectly-integrated acids, superb balance and a very long, bright and bouncy finish. Lovely juice that still has decades of great drinking ahead of it. 2010-2040.

1968 Ayler Kupp Riesling Naturwein- Unknown Producer

This old bottle came out of Hanno Zilliken's cellar and the label only retained a fragment, so it was impossible to know what estate this wine came from way back in the day. This was not a good vintage by any stretch of the imagination, and yet the wine at age forty-five had not only survived, but was still fairly fresh and offered up more than a modicum of interest on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a blend of yellow fruit, beeswax, dried lemon blossoms, slate, petrol and a touch of sea salt. On the palate the wine is medium-full and moderately complex, with still good, snappy acids, a sound core and some lovely flavors on the short, but intact finish. This is not a great old wine, but an old wine that far outpaced our very modest expectations for a 1968er! 2013-2035. **83.**

Kabinett

2011 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Will Schaefer (magnum) AP #2

Christophe and Andrea Schaefer kindly brought this lovely wine along to the second *Rieslingfeier* tasting and it was showing beautifully out of magnum. The wine is classically ethereal in the spirit of proper Kabinett, offering up a pure and complex nose of apple, pear, lime blossoms, a lovely base of slate, lilac blossoms and a topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and dancing, with crisp acids, lovely focus and filigree and a very long, pure and classic finish. Just a lovely wine. 2014-2040+. **93.**

2009 Wolfer Goldrube Riesling Kabinett- Domaine Daniel Vollenweider AP #1

I really, really like the wines from Daniel Vollenweider and I need to find time in the very near future to stop in and taste at his domaine. This particular bottle of 2009 Kabinett from the Goldrube is outstanding, offering up a deep and very pure bouquet of pear, delicious apples, very complex minerality, a dollop of wild yeasts, orange zest and a lovely topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and complex, with great precision, a fine core and a very long, bright and dancing finish that closes with excellent cut and filigree. First class Kabinett! 2012-2035. **93+.**

2008 Norheimer Kirschheck Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Dr. Crusius AP #23

The 2008 Kirschheck Kabinett from Dr. Crusius is a complex and classy example of the vintage that is already drinking well in its relative youth, but will have no difficulties aging long and gracefully as well. The fine bouquet is a mix of pink grapefruit, a nice touch of wild yeasts, orange zest, lovely slate soil tones and a topnote of petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-

bodied, crisp and complex, with bright acids, lovely filigree and a long, complex and vibrant finish that closes with lovely grip and soil signature. Classic Nahe Kabinett. 2012-2035. **92.**

2006 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Reinhold Haart AP #6

With all of the botrytis in the middle Mosel in 2006, this is in reality probably a light Auslese in must weight, but it drinks like a deeper-pitched and really quite lovely, lighter Spätlese in style. The bouquet is gently glazed and really very pretty in its mélange of peach, fresh fig, honey, orange zest, violets, slate and a touch of custard. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and shows a nice touch of botrytis, with a good core, sound acids and very lovely length and grip on the wide open and succulent finish. Not a classic Kabinett by any stretch of the imagination, but a very enjoyable glass of Goldtröpfchen Riesling. 2013-2025. **90.**

2002 Maximin Grünhäuser Herrenberg Riesling Kabinett AP #3

The 2002 Herrenberg Kabinett AP #3 is a lovely wine that is drinking very well, but perhaps seems just a touch broader-shouldered than the Kabinetten of the 1990s at this great estate. The bouquet is an excellent blend of green apple, lime zest, petrol, complex slate tones and a nice topnote of Herrenberg botanicals. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and very transparent, with bright acids, excellent focus and grip and a very long, pure and classy finish. Good juice. 2012-2030+. **92.**

2002 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Willi Schaefer AP #6

It had been nearly four years since I last opened a bottle of the 2002 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Kabinett from Weingut Willi Schaefer, and the second edition of the *Rieslingfeier* seemed like a good place to check in on the wine, particularly as I was sitting with Andrea and Christophe Schaefer. 2002 was the first vintage where Christophe was “officially” working at the winery, and his inaugural year has turned out some stellar wines. The 2002 Kabinett from the Sonnenuhr is still a few years away from the point where I would want to start drinking it in earnest, but it is already very tasty, as it offers up a superb bouquet of delicious apple, pear, petrol, just a whisper of vanilla custard, apple blossoms and a lovely base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and filigreed, with lovely complexity and focus, excellent cut and a very long, still fairly youthful and gently petrolly finish. A beautiful bottle of Kabinett that will be even better with just a few more years in the cellar. 2018-2035+. **93.**

1998 Norheimer Leistenberg Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Dönnhoff AP #10

The 1998 Leistenberg Kabinett from Weingut Dönnhoff is a beautiful example of fully mature Kabinett from the old days, when it was still possible to get these lithesome wines at an old school must weight. The beautiful and fully mature nose wafts from the glass in a complex and vibrant blend of apple, tangerine, wild yeasts, volcanic soil tones, smoke and dried flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, crisp and filigreed, with a wide open and electric personality, lovely framing acids and excellent focus and grip on the long and complex finish. A beautiful and very classy wine. 2013-2025. **94.**

1998 Maximin Grünhäuser Herrenberg Riesling Kabinett AP #10

The 1998 Herrenberg Kabinett AP #10 is an outstanding example of its Prädikat and this lovely vintage, and when I think of how brilliantly this wine has aged over the fifteen years it was in bottle between its *mise* and our pulling the cork, it makes me ill to think that this wine is now routinely bottled under screwcap. The bouquet on this superb Kabinett delivers a very classic aromatic constellation of lime, orange zest, slate, petrol, candied violets, gentle notes of sea salt and a bit of white grape. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and gloriously

filigreed, with impressive intensity, zero extraneous weight, bright acids and outstanding focus and grip on the very long, pure and utterly refined finish. Stunning juice. 2013-2035. **94.**

1998 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Kabinett- Weingut von Kesselstaat

The 1998 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Kabinett from Weingut von Kesselstaat is a lovely and very delicately-styled example of this Prädikat that recalls the old style of Kabinetten. The bouquet is a very pretty and ethereal blend of apple, white peach, a gentle touch of yeastiness, slate, an understated base of petrol, white flowers and a dollop of upper register bee pollen. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, bright and complex, with lovely focus and filigree, crisp acids and lovely length and grip on the wide open and elegant finish. A lovely wine. 2014-2035. **92.**

1995 Maximin Grünhäuser Bruderberg Riesling Kabinett AP #10

The estate of Maximin Grünhäuser no longer produces Kabinett from the Bruderberg vineyard, as Dr. von Schubert has concluded that it is best to make only a single wine from this vineyard in most vintages and has settled on this always being a QbA bottling, with the exceptional Auslesen tossed in if botrytis happens to strike a parcel here. I have had some great Bruderberg QbAs over the years, so I have no difficulties with this decision, other than the insistence on bottling the wine solely under screwcap, as this least exalted of the estate's vineyards also produces wines that are very long-lived and it too deserves natural cork for a more natural evolution in bottle. In any event, back in the day, the 1995 vintage produced a Bruderberg Kabinett and the wine is excellent, as it offers up an utterly superb nose of green apple, moss, gentle notes of petrol, a great undertow of slate, lime peel and a topnote of wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and very long and complex, with a great core of fruit, bright acids and lovely length and grip on the pure and nicely mossy finish. Just a lovely bottle of Kabinett. 2012-2025+. **92.**

1983 Scharzhofberger Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Egon Müller

As this great wine was served at the second *Rieslingfeier* here in New York, I did not get a chance to catch the AP number on this bottling, but I did at least have the chance to notice how utterly spectacular this wine is drinking right now! The deep, mature and simply stunning nose soars from the glass in a mélange of lime, pear, a touch of lilac, a glorious base of slate, lavender, petrol and a dollop of honeycomb. On the palate the wine is deep, quite full-bodied for Kabinett and rock solid at the core, with great poise and balance, laser-like focus and a very, very long, complex and magical finish. Egon Müller is so much better-known for the stellar quality of his later-harvest wines, but this estate also makes simply great and brilliantly ageworthy Kabinett as well. A great, great wine. 2014-2040. **96.**

Spätlesen

2011 Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Spätlese “375th Anniversary”- Weingut Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

In 2011, the great middle Mosel estate of Weingut Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch celebrated its 375th anniversary, having been founded all the way back in 1636. To commemorate this landmark event, the Thanisch family produced one *fuder* of special Spätlese from their flagship holdings in the Doctor vineyard in Bernkastel. This was the first time I had tasted this gorgeous Spätlese, which will be a very long-lived and stunning bottle that will long be up to the task of celebrating this seminal anniversary of the estate. The bouquet is deep, complex and still very youthful, offering up a beautiful blend of peach, apple, bee pollen, a hint of the yellow plum to come, slate, citrus zest and petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-full,

very pure and beautifully filigreed, with a very tensile and minerally personality at this young age, excellent focus and core and a very long, racy and perfectly balanced finish that closes with great mineral drive and plenty of grip. Give this beautiful bottle of Spätlese at least another six or seven years in the cellar to really blossom. 2020-2050+. **95.**

2009 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Willi Schaefer AP #4 (Auction)

The 2009 Domprobst Auction Spätlese from Christophe Schaefer is a stunningly beautiful example of the vintage, which offers up lovely drinking already, but will certainly be even better with further bottle age. The magical bouquet wafts from the glass in an exotic blend of pineapple, orange, lovely, crystalline minerality, lime zest, bee pollen and a touch of candied violets in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and zesty, with glorious complexity, bright acids, outstanding focus and grip and a very long, pure and dancing finish. A great, great bottle of Spätlese! 2014-2040. **95+.**



2008 Dhron Hofberg Riesling Spätlese- Weingut A. J. Adam AP #4

This was the first wine I had tasted from Weingut A. J. Adam, about whom I have heard very many good things, and this wine did not disappoint. The bouquet is a lovely mix of tart apple, orange, wild yeasts, a fine base of slate, gentle notes of petrol and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and beautifully refined, with good, but not snappy acids, fine focus and grip and a long, dancing and complex finish. This is more Auslese-like in

terms of must weight, which caught me a bit by surprise in a vintage like 2008, but the wine is very long and classy and there is an awful lot to like here. 2011-2025+. **92.**

2008 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Reinhold Haart AP #12

The AP #12 rendition of the 2008 Goldtröpfchen Spätlese from Weingut Reinhold Haart is a gorgeous bottle of wine that is just starting to really blossom, but has decades of life still ahead of it. The very pure and utterly stunning nose wafts from the glass in a mix of white peach, pear, custard, bee pollen, a lovely base of slate and a garden full of spring flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and filigreed, with a fine core of fruit, bright, zesty acids, laser-like focus and lovely balance and grip on the long, pure and complex finish. Just a classic synthesis of the generosity of the Goldtröpfchen and the cut and race of the 2008 vintage. Gorgeous juice! 2013-2030+. **94.**

2008 Zeltinger Sonnenuhr “Rotlay” Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Selbach-Oster

The 2008 Rotlay bottling of Spätlese from Johannes Selbach is a very pretty and filigreed example of the vintage, offering up a pure and complex nose of pear, white cherries, gentle notes of petrol, a lovely base of slate, a hint of white pepper, spring flowers and a lovely, esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-bodied and complex, with a lovely, ethereal personality, crisp acids and very fine length and grip on the complex and filigreed finish. If one were to nitpick, the wine could use just a touch more mid-palate stuffing, as it is a touch ephemeral at the core, but the aromatic and flavor complexity here make up for this quite nicely. 2010-2030. **90+.**

2006 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Willi Schaefer AP #4 (Auction)

The 2006 Domprobst Auction bottling of Spätlese from Weingut Willi Schaefer is a beautiful example of the vintage, offering up a very, very deep and gently botrytized bouquet of peach, tangerine, slate, delicate notes of honeycomb, orange blossoms and a faint touch of petrol in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and very complex, with superb acids, great focus and balance and a very long, glazed and succulent finish. This is, of course, richer than a classic Spätlese, as the middle Mosel just rolled in botrytized grapes in this vintage, but this wine stays light on its feet and shows off that lovely “well water” purity that one finds in so many Schaefer wines. 2014-2035+. **95.**

2006 Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Spätlese- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch AP #6

Not surprisingly, the 2006 Doctor Spätlese AP #6 from Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch is quite botrytized, and like so many Spätlesen from this vintage in the middle Mosel, is more of a lighter Auslese in style, but not without a certain lightness of step that at least makes a passing nod at Spätlese. The very botrytized nose offers up a fine mélange of honeyed yellow plums, pineapple, a lovely base of soil, honeycomb, incipient notes of leather and a fine topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and crisp, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip and a very long, quite cleanly glazed and complex finish. This will probably last for decades to come, but I really like how it is drinking at the present time and might be tempted to enjoy this over the coming decade. 2010-2035. **92.**

2004 Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Spätlese- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

In notable contrast to the quite glazed 2006 Doctor Spätlese, the 2004 from Sofia Thanisch is an utterly classic example of its Prädikat and this great, magical *terroir*. The beautiful bouquet is just starting to really blossom, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of yellow fruit, blossoming notes of saltiness to the slate, bee pollen, petrol, lemongrass and a lovely topnote of dried flowers and incipient notes of laurel. On the palate the wine is medium-

full, crisp and filigreed, with a lovely core, zesty acids, outstanding focus and grip and a very long, soil-driven and dancing finish. This will be an absolute classic vintage of Doctor Spätlease, and while the wine is already quite delicious at age six, it is still a few years away from really hitting on all cylinders. Great juice. 2012-2035. **94.**

2003 Scharzhofberger Riesling Spätlease- Weingut Egon Müller

This was the first 2003er I have tasted from Weingut Egon Müller, and the wine was quite lovely. The bouquet is quite ripe, but also quite pure in its mélange of white cherries, pear, spring flowers, a complex base of slate, bee pollen, spice tones and fresh mint. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and elegant, with a lovely core of fruit, sound framing acids, fine focus and very good length and grip on the wide open, but quite filigreed finish. This has impressive lightness of step on the backend for a 2003er, if not the customary cut of a Weingut Egon Müller Spätlease. 2013-2025. **91.**

2003 Scharzhofberger Riesling Spätlease- Weingut Egon Müller (served from magnum)

As I was tasting this and the above wine while dining with the Müller family, I did not get a chance to check the AP number on this wine, so I am not sure if it is the same cuvée as the above. The wine is bright and vibrant in magnum, wafting from the glass in a lovely blend of fresh mint, pear, white cherries, slate, petrol and dried violets in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and clearly of Auslese must weight, with fine framing acids, impressive complexity and fine grip and bounce on the long and succulent finish. I suspect this is the same wine as the regular bottle reported on above, but slightly behind it in evolution and perhaps a touch deeper at the core, due to its larger format. 2013-2030. **92.**

2003 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlease- Weingut Willi Schaefer (Auction Magnum)

This is really another very lovely example of the 2003 vintage in the middle Mosel. The bouquet is deep, bright and very pretty in its mix of white cherries, apple, a classic base of slate, bee pollen, petrol and a gently floral topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and very complex, with lovely intensity of flavor, bright acids and lovely focus and grip on the very long and zesty finish. This wine is wide open today at age eleven and is drinking very well indeed, but it very nicely balanced and should have no difficulties aging for at least another fifteen years or more. High class juice from this oft-overlooked vintage. 2014-2030. **93.**

2002 Norheimer Kirschheck Riesling Spätlease- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2002 Norheimer Kirschheck Spätlease from Weingut Dönnhoff is a very elegant, filigreed and dancing bottle of Spätlease, offering up a very pretty and esthery aromatic constellation of white cherries, a hint of guava, petrol, a complex base of slate, gentle notes of wild yeasts and a bit of bee pollen in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and delicately strung, with a fine core, impressive complexity and a very long, succulent and dancing finish. Lovely, classic Kirschheck Spätlease. 2010-2030. **91+.**

2002 Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Spätlease- Weingut Dönnhoff AP #8

It had been several years since I last opened a bottle of the 2002 Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Spätlease from Helmut Dönnhoff, and the wine continues to drink beautifully and shows little signs of dramatic evolution since the last bottle I had in 2008. The deep, bright and classy bouquet wafts from the glass in a fine blend of apple, grapefruit, petrol, wild yeasts, tons of slate and a nice topnote of iris blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and complex, with vibrant acids, outstanding focus and grip and a very, very long, classy and precise finish. A

beautiful wine that is already a superb drink, but which might be even better with a few more years in the cellar. 2018-2035. **94+**.

2002 Schlossböckelheimer Kupfergrube Riesling Spätlese – Hermann Dönnhoff

It had been many years since I last tasted 2002 Kupfergrube Spätlese from Herr Dönnhoff, so I was delighted to have a chance to try it at this year's *Rieslingfeier*. The wine is developing beautifully and offers up a superb bouquet of apple, a bit of orange, lovely, apple pie spice tones, a great base of minerality, still a bit of gentle, wild yeasty tones and a lovely dollop of citrus zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and at its apogee, with a wide open (but still racy) personality, great focus and grip, superb filigree and outstanding length and grip on the perfectly balanced and vibrant finish. I fully understand Helmut Dönnhoff's decision to swap his parcel in the Kupfergrube for more Hermannshöhle, but I am going to really miss this bottling from the Dönnhoff family in the years to come! 2014-2035. **94**.

2002 Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen Riesling Spätlese “Rusch”- Emrich-Schönleber (Auct.)

The 2002 Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen “Rusch” from the Schönleber family is a beautiful bottle of Auction Spätlese that has just reached its apogee of peak drinkability and offers up a very pure, ethereal and classy bouquet of lime, apple, slate, cress, plenty of smokiness, a touch of Chartreuse-like herbal tones and a topnote of lime peel. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and dancing, with a nice, delicate glaze of botrytis, crisp acids and a very long, elegant and vibrant finish of great purity and complexity. A beautiful bottle of Spätlese at its apogee. 2013-2025+. **93**.

2002 Piesporter Domherr Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Reinhold Haart AP #7

The 2002 Piesporter Domherr Spätlese from the Haart family is really a lovely and absolutely classic bottle that is now nearing its apogee and drinking with great style and breed. The very pure nose wafts from the glass in a blend of apple, wild yeasts, hints of sweet corn, gentle notes of petrol, slate, bee pollen and white flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, round and silky on the attack, with beautiful balance, sound framing acids, excellent complexity and fine length and grip on the focused and juicy finish. This wine is fully mature and it is probably best drunk over the next decade or so. 2010-2025. **92**.

2002 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Spätlese- Karthäuserhof AP #30

The 2002 Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Spätlese AP #30 is a brilliant bottle of Ruwer Spätlese that has now entered its apogee of peak drinkability. The stunning nose offers up a very pure and vibrant mélange of white cherries, lilacs, wild yeasts, slate, petrol, gently savory notes of exotic botanicals and a lovely, esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and still quite wild yeasty in personality, with a lovely core, superb focus and balance and a very long, crisp and filigreed finish. Just a beautiful bottle of Spätlese with plenty of life still ahead of it. 2013-2030. **94**.

2002 Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Spätlese- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch AP #4

The AP #4 bottling of Doctor Spätlese from the Thanisch family is a lovely wine, but it does not quite possess the same depth and grip of the auction version. The deep and classy nose wafts from the glass in a blend of apple, pear, gentle notes of petrol, lime zest and a very complex base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and complex, with lovely focus and backend bounce, a very good core, excellent balance and a long, zesty finish. Good juice. 2012-2030. **91**.

2002 Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Spätlese- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch AP #6

When I last crossed paths with the 2002 Doctor Spätlese AP #6 back in the spring of 2010, the wine was absolutely singing and at a marvelous place in its evolution. This was the

auction bottling of this wine back in September of 2003. The terrific nose offers up a complex constellation of yellow plum, peach, incipient notes of sweet corn, salty soil tones, bee pollen and the first stirrings of more caramelized fruit tones that will come with further bottle age. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and classically broad-shouldered in the true Doctor style, with a fine core, lovely, juicy acidity, excellent focus and complexity and a very long, suave and perfectly balanced finish. I love Spätlesen from the Doctor when they reach this stage of their evolution, where the gorgeous soil tones have come out from behind the youthful fruit and the wine really starts to show its true pedigree. Great juice. 2010-2025+. **93.**

2001 Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff

I had not tasted the 2001 Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Spätlese from Helmut Dönnhoff in ages and the wine is aging just as beautifully as I might have hoped and is an absolutely gorgeous bottle of wine that is just reaching its plateau of maturity. The *à point* and very complex nose jumps from the glass in a blend of orange, sweet grapefruit, wild yeasts, petrol, a beautifully complex base of slate, citrus peel, honeycomb and dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and razor sharp, with a great core of fruit, ripe, buried acids, flawless focus and a very, very long, complex and very refined finish. This has the latent intensity of the 2001 vintage wrapped in a seamless structure that gives the wine lift on the palate and great filigree. A brilliant Spätlese. 2013-2030+. **96.**

2001 Schlossböckelheimer Kupfergrube Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff AP#7

The 2001 Kupfergrube Spätlese is a very good wine, but I had slightly higher expectations for this wine, based on the convergence of a great *terroir* and a brilliant vintage, but the wine did not quite reach the heights I was anticipating. The wine is showing some deepening of color that caught me a bit by surprise (and is not mirrored in the 2001 Hermannshöhle Spätlese), and the nose is a mature blend of baked apples and peaches, petrol, gentle notes of honeycomb, orange zest, caraway seed and incipient notes of peach stone. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still fairly sweet on the attack, with a lovely core of fruit, good complexity, but a slightly flat, albeit long, finish, that keeps the score down a bit. As this bottle was not from my cellar, I do not know the history of its provenance, and perhaps the bottle was not one hundred percent pristine? This was still very tasty, but as I said, I had higher expectations. 2012-2025. **90+?**

2001 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Willi Schaefer AP #5

The 2001 Domprobst Spätlese AP #5 from Weingut Willi Schaefer is an excellent example of the vintage, but it is still a tad on the young side and more nuance and complexity are destined to emerge with further bottle age. The bouquet is deep and starting to stir nicely, as it wafts from the glass in a blend of apple, petrol, incipient notes of peach pit, orange zest, plenty of slate and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and beautifully balanced, with a fine core of fruit, lovely focus and grip, bright acids and a very long, slatey and still fairly youthful finish. It is not a crime to be drinking this wine today, but given how beautiful the 1990 version is drinking at the present time, it is very easy to see that this is still very early days for this promising wine, and I am going to keep the rest of my case buried in the cellar for at least another five years. 2013-2035+. **92+.**

2001 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Selbach-Oster AP #

The 2001 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Spätlese from Weingut Selbach-Oster is a very lovely wine that is now starting to drink at its peak and offers up a lovely and quite complex bouquet of pear, apple, wild yeasts, gentle notes of petrol, white flowers, slate, bee pollen and an exotic

topnote of fresh mint. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and beautifully filigreed, with lovely intensity of flavor, crisp acids, refined elegance and a long, bright and dancing finish. Lovely juice here. 2014-2035. **92.**

1999 Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff AP #7

The 1999 Oberhäuser Brücke Spätlese from Helmut Dönnhoff is a very pretty example of this more forward vintage, as it offers up a very pretty nose of pineapple, white cherries, apple blossoms, gentle notes of baking spices, slate, bee pollen and an understated touch of petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, complex and *à point*, with gentle notes of wild yeasts, a bit more petrol in the flavor spectrum than on the nose, still sound acids and good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This is a very stylish wine for relatively near-term drinking, and though it does not have the depth and cut of a top vintage of Brücke Spätlese, there is still a lot of enjoyment to be found here. 2010-2020. **89.**

1999 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Willi Schaefer AP #14

1999 is not a great vintage in Germany, but I have very much liked how the wines I have tasted recently have evolved with style and substance, and the vintage has certainly reached a very nice point for drinking. The Domprobst Spätlese 1999er AP #14 from Willi Schaefer is a very pretty example of the vintage, offering up an *à point* nose of orange, lime, slate, a nice touch of candied violets and gentle notes of honeycomb. On the palate the wine is medium-full, round and complex, with gentle acidity, good focus and balance and a long, bright and nicely delineated finish. It is time to drink up this very pretty and stylish wine. 2011-2015+. **89.**

1998 Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff

Sadly, I have drunk up most of my 1998ers from Helmut Dönnhoff, with the exception of a handful of bottles of Auslesen, but I really wish I had exercised more self-control with the Spätlesen, as this '98 Hermannshöhle is at its apogee and drinking with even more brilliance than it was seven or eight years ago, when I wiped out my cache in the cellar. The gorgeous nose offers up a complex and vibrant nose of fresh coconut, tangerine, a touch of nuttiness, wild yeast, honeycomb and a complex base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and very complex, with a great core of fruit, crisp acids, stunning focus and grip and a very long, pure and dancing finish. Great, great juice. 2013-2035. **95+.**

1998 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Reinhold Haart AP#7

Weingut Haart's 1998 Goldtröpfchen Spätlese AP #7 is a stellar example of the vintage that is now into its plateau of peak drinkability, but should cruise at this beautiful level for many, many more years to come. The gorgeous bouquet is a blend of pear, apple, sweet corn, wild yeasts, petrol, slate and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and very, very complex, with a lovely core of fruit, brilliant, ripe and zesty acids, laser-like focus and a very long, dancing and filigreed finish. Just a beautiful bottle of Goldtröpfchen. 2010-2025+. **94.**

1998 Haardter Burgergarten Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Müller-Catoir

I have drunk an awful lot of wines from Weingut Müller-Catoir over the years, but the one thing I never managed to do with any great success was keep my hands off of bottles in my cellar, so I have very few notes on older bottles from this superb estate. Therefore, I was very happy to see one of my good friends in Germany bring along this stellar bottle of 1998 Burgergarten Spätlese to one of our dinners while I was in the country tasting the new vintage. The wine has aged with great style and now offers up a complex bouquet of apple, pink grapefruit, a touch of papaya, honey, a beautiful base of soil tones and gentle topnotes of fresh

rosemary and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and still quite youthful at age twelve, with a lovely core, superb acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and vibrant finish. A beautiful bottle from the heyday of the *maestro*, Herr Günther-Schwartz! 2010-2030. **94.**

1998 Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese *- Weingut Selbach-Oster AP #

The 1998 Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Spätlese One Star from Johannes Selbach is a really beautiful example of the vintage, with a nice dollop of botrytis adding depth and dimension on both the nose and palate. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a deep and generous blend of pear, apple, bee pollen, a complex base of slate tones, a touch of white cherry and a topnote of apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, succulent and complex, with a fine core, impressive focus and grip and a very long, zesty and gently glazed finish of impressive purity and bounce. A delicious wine. 2014-2030. **93.**



Hanno Zilliken in the family's beautiful new tasting room at the winery in Saarburg.

1997 Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff

I did not have a chance to catch the AP number on the 1997 Brücke Spätlese from Helmut Dönnhoff, as the wine was served at the *Rieslingfeier*, but typically, I believe that Herr Dönnhoff prefers to only produce a single Spätlese bottling from each vineyard in any given vintage. In any event, the wine is lovely, offering up a bright and *à point* bouquet of apple, peach, incipient notes of leather, a lovely base of slate, apple pie spices and still a whisper of

wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and beautifully delineated, with superb balance and complexity, bright acids and a long, filigreed and very elegant finish. This is a gorgeous time to be drinking this wine. 2014-2030. **93.**

1997 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken (Auction) AP #8

I had not tasted this lovely wine since 2008, and when a good friend from Germany arrived in Burgundy in November with a bottle under his wing to “repair” the palate after a long day in the cellars tasting, I was very much looking forward to when it was opened. The wine certainly did not disappoint, as it soars from the glass in a fully mature and very complex constellation of pineapple, sweet corn, a lovely touch of wild yeasts, salty soil tones from the slate, bee pollen, a touch of petrol and a fine vein of the Rausch’s herbal streak. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, pure and dancing, with magical complexity and lightness of step, fine, framing acids and stunning length and grip on the poised and perfectly balanced finish. This was even better than I remember the last bottle I tasted and is a beautiful bottle of Spätlese at its zenith, but with plenty of life still ahead of it. 2013-2030+. **95.**

1996 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Spätlese AP #

The 1996 Abtsberg Spätlese from Maximin Grünhäuser is still on the young side, but it is destined to be a reference point wine from this golden decade at the estate in the years to come. The youthfully stunning nose soars from the glass in a constellation of lime, white cherries, a touch of grapefruit, beautiful slate undertow, wild yeasts, botanicals, lime peel and blossoming notes of sea salts. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and very racy, with a blade of slate minerality running through the palate, great focus and grip and a very, very long, pure and electric finish. This will be a great drink in a few more years, but it is still early days for this legend in the making! 2016-2040. **95.**

1995 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Spätlese AP #35

The 1995 Abtsberg Spätlese AP #35 is truly a stunning bottle that is just entering its apogee of maturity and will drink at this fine level for decades to come. The utterly classic nose delivers a very complex and classy mélange of tart orange, lime, a bit of yellow plum, fresh peppermint, lovely, salty soil tones, a touch of white cherry, delicate notes of petrol and incipient notes of those inimitable Abtsberg botanicals. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and dancing, with a lovely core of fruit, zesty acids, great filigree, bright acids and a very long, complex and laser-like finish. Just a beautiful bottle of Abtsberg Spätlese at its zenith. 2012-2035. **94.**

1994 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Willi Schaefer AP #7

The 1994 Domprobst Spätlese AP #7 from the Schaefer family is a really lovely example of the vintage that has now reached its plateau of peak drinkability. The pure, complex and vibrant nose offers up a lovely constellation of apple, white cherries, a very complex base of slate, blossoming notes of sea salts, a delicate underpinning of petrol and a topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and tangy, with a lovely core of fruit, superb filigree, bright acids and great complexity and grip on the very long, bright and dancing finish. Just a gorgeous bottle of Spätlese. 2012-2030+. **94.**

1993 Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Fritz Haag AP #5

One of the big holes in my German cellar is not enough Fritz Haag wines, and this very refined 1993 Spätlese further underscored that this is a problem that must be addressed sooner rather than later! The maturing and vibrant nose wafts from the glass in a blend of pear, incipient notes of yellow plum, sea salts, petrol, a beautiful base of slate and a nice topnote of fern. On the

palate the wine is medium-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with superb filigree, fine framing acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and lithesome finish. As pure as well water and gently kissed with a touch of sweetness, this is a gorgeous middle Mosel Spätlese in full bloom. 2013-2030+. **93.**

1990 Scharzhofberger Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Egon Müller AP #4 (Auction Bottling)

The 1990 Auction Bottling of Scharzhofberger Spätlese from Egon Müller is a brilliant wine by any stretch of the imagination, and is one of the most beautiful bottles of Spätlese I have ever had the pleasure to taste. The brilliant bouquet soars from the glass in a complex marriage of ripe fruit, exotic botanicals and a bottomless base of slate, with notes of white cherries, fresh figs, lime blossoms, slate, petrol, violets, apple blossoms and a cornucopia of more savory botanicals erupting from the glass. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with brilliant filigree and focus, zesty acids, laser-like focus and stunning length and grip on the utterly seamless and stellar finish. This is a *tour de force*! 2014-2035. **98.**

1990 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken (Auction Bottling)

I did not get the AP number on this bottle, as it was served at dinner at the estate with the Zilliken family, but there were only two Spätlesen from the Rausch in this vintage and this was the one sold at auction. I just love the color of this wine at age twenty-three, as it is a lovely golden hue, flecked with green glints that promises great things waiting in the glass. The bouquet does not disappoint, as it wafts from the glass in a mix of cherries, pears, lime zest, gentle smokiness, honey, slate and a nice touch of botanicals in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and very racy, with superb focus and mid-palate depth, zesty acids and a very long finish that closes with a fine note of sea salt. A beautiful wine in its prime. 2013-2045+. **93.**

1990 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 1990 Graacher Domprobst Spätlese from Willi Schaefer has reached a gorgeous plateau of peak maturity at age twenty-three, as the wine soars with majestic presence from the glass in a blaze of peach, orange peel, plenty of smokiness, petrol, a glorious base of slate and a topnote of sea salts. On the palate the wine is deep, quite fullish and smoky in personality, with great focus and balance, a rock solid core, bright acids and a very long, complex and extremely classy finish. Just a beautiful example of the Domprobst with decades of life still ahead of it. 2013-2035. **94+.**

1985 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #5

The 1985 Saarburger Rausch Spätlese from Hanno Zilliken is a superb example of the vintage that is fully mature, but shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon as it closes in on its thirtieth birthday. The deep, pure and vibrant bouquet is a beautiful blend of fresh coconut, orange, a very complex base of slate, gentle notes of petrol, citrus peel and that signature topnote of the smokiness that defines the Rausch when it is mature. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very complex, with great cut and focus, bright acids, flawless balance and a very, very long, filigreed and utterly refined finish. Just a beautiful wine! 2013-2035. **94+.**

1985 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #8

I have bad luck with this bottling of Rausch Spätlese, as it is the auction bottling from 1985 and should be even superior to the AP #5 listed above, but I am yet to hit a pristine bottle of the wine, as my bottles (purchased at New York auction) are somehow slightly advanced and lacking just a bit of precision. The wine is still a very good, mature glass of Spätlese, but knowing that it should be better than the above takes a little of the sparkle off of the pleasure.

The bouquet on this most recent bottle is a complex and mature blend of lemon, sweet corn, gentle mossiness, sea slats and slate. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, crisp and complex, with good focus and grip and a fairly long, gently honeyed finish. I am quite certain that there are better bottles out there than mine, but this is still a good enough bottle that I am not planning to dump them down the sink! That said, pristine bottles should rate at least four or five points higher. 2013-2025. **91.**

1983 Scharzhofberger Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Egon Müller

I did not get the chance to catch the AP number of this bottling of Scharzhofberger Spätlese from Egon Müller at this year's *Rieslingfeier*, but, as the AP #11 followed along about thirty minutes later at the same tasting and was definitely a different wine, I must assume that there are at least two distinct bottlings of Spätlese this year from the estate. This unknown AP numbered bottling is excellent, wafting from the glass in a complex and fully mature mélange of green fruit, pears, lilacs, a lovely base of slate, gentle notes of petrol, lime peel and a touch of violet in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and quite dry for this Prädikat level from the estate, with a superb core of fruit, zesty acids and a very long, pure and complex finish. This is quite a unique style of Spätlese from Egon Müller, as I am accustomed to the Scharzhofberg here to produce a wine at this Prädikat level that is more along the lines of the AP # 11 version (see below), but it is an excellent wine and perhaps even a bit more interesting for being a bit off the beaten path in terms of style. 2014-2035+. **93.**

1983 Scharzhofberger Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Egon Müller AP #11

Weingut Egon Müller's 1983 AP number eleven Spätlese from the Scharzhofberg is an utterly classic and stellar example of this great *terroir*. The wine seems to show just a bit of botrytis on both the nose and palate, wafting from the glass in a deep and very complex bouquet of apple, pear, yellow plum, a beautiful base of slate, a touch of honeycomb, a bit of *fleur de sel* and a gentle topnote of various flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with stunning focus and grip, a rock solid core, zesty acids and stunning length and grip on the perfectly balanced and very, very classy finish. A great wine. 2014-2040. **95.**

1982 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 1982 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Spätlese from Weingut Haart is a lovely old bottle of Spätlese that does not have a whole lot of acidity left to carry it further, but the wine remains so perfectly balanced that it is hard to assume it will not continue to cruise along very nicely at this level for several more years. The mature and tertiary nose offers up a lovely blend of sweet corn, peaches, salty soil tones, dried flowers and very delicate notes of petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and silky in texture, with good mid-palate depth, lovely complexity and very good focus and grip on the long and fully mature finish. Fine juice and quite a revelation for a 1982er. 2010-2020+. **89.**

1979 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken (Auction Bottling)

The 1979 Weingut Zilliken Auction Spätlese from the magical Rausch vineyard is one of the most beautiful, mature Spätlesen I have had the pleasure to drink in the last several years (and my days have not seen any dearth of great old German wines in recent times!) and is at its absolute apogee, delivering an aromatic constellation of buttered lemon, sea salts, a touch of honey, yellow plums, flashes of fresh herbs, lavender and a very elegant base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full and hauntingly complex, with flawless focus and purity, crisp

acids, seamless balance and a very, very long, zesty and dancing finish. Saar Riesling! 2013-2030. **96.**

1971 Maximin Grünhäuser Bruderberg Riesling Spätlese

I really like the *terroir* of the Bruderberg vintage on the great hillside vineyard of Maximin Grünhäuser, and it is too bad that the wines from this section are often an afterthought amongst fans of the estate. The 1976 Spätlese from the Bruderberg was drinking very well this year, offering up a really superb and quite exotically savory nose of green fruit, tons of Chartreuse-like botanicals, a touch of white cherries, moss, orange peel and petrol. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and complex, with lovely intensity in the mid-palate, fine cut and grip and a very long, pure and impressive finish. While this does not possess the inherent complexity of the Abtsberg or the Herrenberg sections of the hill, as it is much lower down on the slope and does not have the same exceptional exposition, it is a very worthy site, as this 1976 Spätlese so eloquently attests. A lovely wine. 2014-2030+. **92.**

1971 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Spätlese

This was another cellar treasure that I was lucky enough to taste at the most recent rendition of the *Rieslingfeier*, and the wine is stunning! The beautiful and still very, very vibrant bouquet wafts from the glass in a complex blend of peach, fresh apricot, petrol, just a bit of honeycomb, cress, lime peel and a glorious base of salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, vibrant and magically complex, with a fine core, superb focus and balance, excellent remaining acidity and a very, very long and refined finish that closes with outstanding grip and no signs of advanced age. The fountain of youth. 2014-2025+. **96.**

1971 Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Wwe. Dr. Thanisch AP #7

As unimaginable as it may seem, I tasted this stunning wine from two different people at this year's *Rieslingfeier*, and I can happily report that both bottles were absolutely stellar. The deep, complex and beautifully vibrant nose wafts from the glass in a mix of yellow plum, apple, laurel, a very complex base of salty soil tones, just a touch of leather and a lovely topnote of orange oil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and absolutely *à point*, with outstanding complexity, great freshness and grip and a very, very long, pure and utterly classic finish. A stunning vintage of Doctor Spätlese at its zenith! 2014-2035. **96.**

Auslesen

2007 Scharzhofberger Riesling Auslese- Weingut Egon Müller (served from magnum)

Again, like a great many of the superb wines in this report from Weingut Egon Müller, I had the pleasure to taste this wine at the estate and as it came up from the cellar with no label, there was no way to get the AP number on this particular bottling. In any case, this is a great, great example of the vintage, offering up a magical bouquet of lime zest, candied pear, orange, a glorious base of slate, a touch of honeycomb and a topnote of lime blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very, very pure, with laser-like focus, a very, very clean and elegant glaze of botrytis, laser-like focus, zesty acids and stunning length and grip on the very racy and complex finish. Sheer brilliance! 2020-2070+. **95.**

2005 Scharzhofberger Riesling Auslese- Weingut Egon Müller

This particular bottle of the 2005 Scharzhofberger Auslese was served immediately on the heels of the superb 2007 version in magnum, and this is a more glazed, deeper-pitched interpretation of botrytis than the '07. The bouquet is a lovely blend of baked apples and peaches, honeycomb, incipient notes of tea leaves, a lovely base of the Scharzhofberg's incomparable slate and gentle topnotes of petrol and orange. On the palate the wine is deep, full-

bodied and beautifully framed with bright acids, with a honeyed core of fruit, fine focus and balance and a very long, succulent and nobly rotten finish. The slightly more refined nature of the 2007er's botrytis gives it a slight edge over this very, very good 2005er. 2012-2035+. **93.**

2002 Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Auslese *- Weingut Joh, Jos. Christoffel AP #6

The 2002 Christoffel one star Auslese from the Würzgarten is a very pretty wine that is quite glazed with botrytis, and at least at this fairly early stage in the wine's development, it seems like the noble rot here has robbed the wine just a bit of its inherent complexity. The pretty nose is quite defined by its botrytis, as it offers up scents of pineapple, honeycomb, lemon drops, a very discreet base of slate and floral tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, honeyed and quite elegant in profile, with a good core of fruit, plenty of glazing and a long, crisp and nicely balanced finish. Perhaps it is just very early days for this wine and more complexity will emerge with further bottle age, but this may well be an example of Auslese where less botrytis would have produced a more complete wine. It is still a very pretty wine, but by the (then) very, very high standards of this estate, this is marginally disappointing. 2012-2035+. **90+?**

2001 Dürkheimer Nonnengarten Rieslaner Auslese- Weingut Kurt Darting AP #29

Back in my old sommelier days, I was very fortunate to inherit a goodly supply of Kurt Darting's wines from my predecessor at Gotham Bar and Grill and had the pleasure to serve and drink this estate's wines with quite some frequency during that era. But, I had not seen too many of the domaine's wines since those days and was quite pleased to taste this succulent Rieslaner Auslese. The bouquet is deep and mature, wafting from the glass in a mix of grapefruit, orange, new leather, petrol, a nice dollop of soil tones and plenty of honey. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and nicely plush on the attack, with a good core of fruit, sound acids for its age and very good length and grip on the long, but not overly complex finish. This is good, solid juice at its apogee that should keep well for another eight to ten years. 2010-2020. **88.**

1999 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Auslese- Weingut Reinhold Haart AP #11

The 1999 Auslese AP #11 from the Haart family is a classic example of the Goldtröpfchen vineyard, with a superb and *à point* bouquet of pear, honeydew melon, petrol, slate, honeycomb and a potpourri of white flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very pure and dancing, with a lovely glaze of clean botrytis, excellent focus and grip, fine framing acids and superb length and balance on the complex and succulent finish. This is a beautiful bottle of Auslese at its apogee, but still with plenty of life ahead of it and excellent remaining structure for a 1999er. 2013-2025. **93.**

1997 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Auslese Fuder 57

The 1997 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Auslese Fuder 57 is a beautiful and utterly refined example of this marvelous vintage, offering up a pure and complex bouquet of lime, pear, a lovely dollop of wild yeasts, petrol, a gentle touch of the Chartreuse-like botanicals that will emerge front and center with more bottle age, bee pollen, a lovely base of slate and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and beautifully transparent, with a lovely core of fruit, a classically seamless structure, bright, ripe acids, outstanding focus and grip and a very, very long, complex and blossoming finish. I last crossed paths with this superb bottle of Auslese in the spring of 2010, and at that time it was just starting to blossom and should now be fully into its apogee of peak drinkability, but with decades of life still ahead of it. An utterly classic example of Abtsberg Auslese. 2010-2035+. **94.**

1997 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Auslese- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #9

The 1997 Saarburger Rausch Auslese AP #9 is a very refined and elegant rendition of the vintage that is drinking splendidly at age sixteen. The classic nose offers up a complex and vibrant blend of fresh pineapple, a touch of mango, sea salts, gentle notes of honeycomb, a beautiful base of grey slate, just a dollop of mossiness and a lovely topnote of beeswax. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and tangy, with superb intensity of flavor, blossoming complexity, a very creamy attack from its noble rot, a superb core and plenty of ripe, snappy Saar acidity adding electricity on the very long and classy finish. A truly superb bottle that is just starting to hit on all cylinders and will continue to blossom with further bottle age. 2013-2040+. **94.**

1997 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Auslese- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #5 (Auction)

I did not taste the two 1997 Auslesen from Weingut Zilliken at the same tasting, but a couple of months apart. The '97 Auction Auslese is a beautiful wine that offers up quite an exotic profile of fruit from its lovely glaze of noble rot, jumping from the glass in a blend of fresh figs, green fruit, Chartreuse-like botanicals, honeycomb, slate, limezest, candied violets and plenty of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with an excellent core of fruit, crisp acids and stunning complexity on the very, very long, crisp and dancing finish. What a beautiful bottle of Auslese! 2013-2040+. **96+.**



1994 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Auslese Fuder 47

The 1994 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Auslese Fuder #47 is an utterly brilliant wine on both the nose and palate, and at age twenty-six the wine is fully into its apogee of peak drinkability. The stunning bouquet soars from the glass in an aromatic constellation of lime zest, green gauge fruit, petrol, gentle botanical tones reminiscent of mossiness, a bottomless underpinning of grey slate and a topnote of lilacs. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and dancing, with glorious mid-palate depth, stunning complexity, laser-like focus and supreme elegance on the complex, endless and utterly transparent finish. This is pure magic. 2010-2050. **95.**

1993 Wiltinger Braune Kupp Riesling Auslese- Le Gallais

The 1993 Le Gallais Auslese from Egon Müller is a lovely example of the vintage that has now reached its plateau of maturity, but still has decades and decades of fine drinking ahead of it. The deep, pure and vibrant nose offers up a blend of fresh figs, white cherries, honeycomb, lovely botanical tones that are more minty than Chartreuse-like, a lovely base of slate, a touch of petrol and a floral topnote redolent of lilacs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with superb complexity, crisp acids and superb focus and balance on the very long, elegant and dancing finish. A beautiful bottle. 2013-2040. **93.**

1993 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Auslese- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #4

I really like the style and quality of the 1993 Rausch Auslese AP #4, which is utterly classic and very fine in quality, but it is a bit dwarfed by the magical Auction Rausch Auslese in this vintage. The bouquet on the AP #4 is a superb blend of lemon, tangerine, very complex slate tones, lilacs, sea salts and classic Rausch smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and zesty, with outstanding focus and balance, a lovely core of fruit, a fairly moderate impression of sweetness (due to those lovely Saar acids) and exceptional length and grip on the snappy and very, very pure and filigreed finish. A beautiful bottle of Rausch Auslese that is starting to drink very well, but will continue to blossom with further bottle age. 2012-2040. **93+.**

1993 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Auslese- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #3 (Auction)

The 1993 Saarburger Rausch Auslese AP #3 from Hanno Zilliken is another testament to the unbroken string of brilliant wines that this supreme gentleman has crafted over the course of his long and illustrious career. I had previously tasted the '93 Auslesen AP numbers 4 and 5, but not in my recollection had I crossed paths with the AP # 3 version. The glorious nose is the epitome of mature Saar Riesling, wafting from the glass in a blaze of white cherries, orange zest, smoke, lavender, sea salts, bee pollen and a bottomless base of slate. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and medium-full, with a dancer's sense of balance and grace, a lovely core, ripe, zesty acids and laser-like focus and superb grip on the stunningly long, complex and electric finish. To my palate, Auslese simply does not get any better than this great wine. 2013-2040+. **98.**

1992 Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Auslese *- Weingut Joh. Jos. Christoffel**

The 1992 Three Star Auslese from the Würzgarten from J. J. Christoffel is an utter classic and a great example of how beautifully refined and filigreed the wines used to be from this great estate back in the day. The very elegant nose shows a clean and utterly suave glazing of botrytis in its aromatic constellation of apple, white peach, bee pollen, beautiful slate tones, white flowers and a touch of paraffin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and beautifully complex, with lovely intensity of flavor, great focus and balance, crisp acids and a very, very long, classy and filigreed finish. They do not make wines like this here anymore! 2014-2040. **94.**

1990 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Auslese Fuder 23- Karthäuserhof

The 1990 Auslese Fuder 23 from Karthäuserhof is a truly gorgeous example of the vintage, offering up a pure, complex and fully blossomed bouquet of white cherries, white grape, lovely slate tones, bee pollen, gentle notes of petrol, lime blossoms and a gentle touch of mossiness. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and very pure, with gentle sweetness, very little signs of botrytis, bright acids, excellent grip and a very long, focused and crystal clear finish. A beautiful bottle of Auslese that is just into its apogee and has decades of superb drinking ahead of it. 2011-2035+. **94.**

1990 Maximin Grünhäuser Riesling Abtsberg Auslese Fuder 92

I am quite fortunate to have a goodly stash of 1988 and 1989 Maximin Grünhäuser wines in my cellar, but I have almost none from the 1990 vintage, and the beautiful showing of the Fuder 92 Abtsberg Auslese makes me regret the decision to focus primarily on the previous two vintages. The 1990 Fuder 92 is a beautifully resolved, *à point* and very, very complex wine that wafts from the glass in a very complex and vibrant blend of lime, white cherries, pear, sea salts, honeycomb, white flowers, slate, a dollop of new leather and a gentle topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and filigreed, with a delicate glazing of botrytis, a racy personality, a fine core, crisp acids and outstanding length and grip on the perfectly balanced and bouncy finish. A beautiful wine. 2013-2030. **94.**

1989 Maximin Grünhäuser Riesling Abtsberg Auslese Fuder 96

The 1989 Abtsberg Auslese Fuder 96 is an absolutely stunning example of the vintage, soaring from the glass in a beautifully glazed mélange of pineapple, lemon, petrol, sweet corn, sea salts and just a whisper of botanicals in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, pure and racy, with a lovely core, laser-like focus, stunning complexity and excellent grip on the very, very long, seamless and dancing finish. Just a brilliant bottle of Auslese. 2012-2030+. **96.**

1985 Scharzhofberger Riesling Auslese- Weingut Egon Müller

According to Egon Müller, the estate only produced two Auslesen in 1985, with both of them sold at auction in Trier in different years. Unfortunately, this wine came up from the Müller cellars with no label, so I do not know which AP number this particular bottling wore. The wine was made from small berries that were frozen and then slightly de-acidified, and when we were drinking this wine with Herr Müller, he speculated that he might have liked the wine even better today if it had not been de-acidified. The wine is turning a lovely golden hue at age twenty-eight and offers up a lovely bouquet of fresh apricot, a touch of yellow plum, smoky overtones, honey, laurel and a salty base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very classy, with a fine core, superb focus and grip and a very long, complex and beautifully balanced finish. This does not quite have the cut of some older Auslesen I have had from Weingut Egon Müller, but it is a very elegant and classy bottle. 2013-2030+. **93.**

1983 Maximin Grünhäuser Riesling Herrenberg Auslese AP #42 (served from magnum)

There was a time when I drank the 1983 Maximin Grünhäuser wines with great frequency, as this was a superbly successful vintage for the estate and much of my formative German Riesling drinking was done with '83s from this great property. But, I have finished up my '83s now many years ago, so I was absolutely thrilled to see a magnum of this circulating at the *Riesling Feier* last year, and the wine certainly was everything I imagined it would still be. The beautiful nose wafts from the glass in a complex and very vibrant blend of white cherries, lime zest, cress, slate, petrol, Chartreuse-like botanicals and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and marvelously complex, with superb focus and grip, crisp

acids and outstanding grip on the very long, elegant and perfectly balanced finish. I am sure that this wine is still stunning in regular-sized bottle, but out of magnum, it is as fresh as can be and has decades of life still ahead of it! 2013-2040+. 94+.

1979 Scharzhofberger Riesling Auslese- Weingut Egon Müller

The 1979 Scharzhofberger Auslese from Egon Müller is a very refined and totally *à point* wine that offers up a pure and complex bouquet of pear, white cherries, salty soil tones, petrol, a nice touch of mossiness and beeswax. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and complex, with a lovely core of fruit, a fine glaze of botrytis and a very long, crisp and lifted finish of fine breed. Lovely juice that has been fully mature for a few years already, but shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. A beautiful expression of this great *terroir*. 2013-2035+.

92.

1976 Maximin Grünhäuser Riesling Herrenberg Auslese AP #9

The 1976 Herrenberg Auslese AP #9 is a very lovely example of the vintage that is done along the lines of the very clean, modestly botrytized 1988 version. The bouquet is bright, pure and very classy in its mélange of green fruit, a potpourri of Chartreuse-like botanicals, lime zest, petrol, sea salts and white flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very pure, with a fairly dry personality for an Auslese, great cut and grip and a very, very long, complex and still quite youthful finish. I really like the style and shape of this wine, and there is little doubt that it will be even better five years down the road than it is today. 2014-2040. 94.

1976 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Auslese- Weingut Willi Schaefer

I have only had the pleasure over the years to taste one example of the 1976 vintage from the Schaefer family, prior to this beautiful bottle of Himmelreich Auslese, and it certainly seems that this is a magical vintage for this estate. The '76 Himmelreich Auslese is a simply stunning, supremely elegant example of the vintage, which offers up a very pure and filigreed bouquet of tangerine, yellow peach, honeycomb, sea salts, slate, lemon blossoms and a delicate topnote of paraffin. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and magically complex, with a great core of fruit, complex minerality, stunning delicacy and focus and a very, very long and extremely vibrant finish. Many 1976ers from the middle Mosel are a bit on the heavy side today, but this wine seems like it was made out of electricity it is so pure and precise. A great, great example of the 1976 vintage! 2014-2035. 96.

1976 Scharzhofberger Riesling Auslese- Weingut van Volxem

As this lovely wine was shared at the *Rieslingfeier*, I did not get a chance to see its AP number. This wine harkens back to the days when the range here was made in the classically off-dry style, rather than the predominance of dry wines that are produced here today, and based on how lovely this wine showed, it is hard to come to the conclusion that focusing on dry wines was the right move here. The bouquet is lovely, wafting from the glass in a mix of apple, lemon, beeswax, salty soil tones, white flowers and a touch of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and complex, with fine filigree and focus, lovely acids and very fine length and grip on the pure and elegant finish. A lovely wine with decades of life still ahead of it. 2014-2035+. 92.

1976 Kanzemer Altenberg Auslese Fuder 9- Weingut Kanzemer von Othegraven

I had never tasted an older wine from Weingut von Othegraven before and I was very, very impressed by this lovely '76 Fuder 9 Auslese. The beautifully mature and still very fresh bouquet offers up a combination of apricot, honey, orange peel, gentle notes of peach pit, salty soil tones and incipient notes of new leather. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and

really quite vibrant for a 1976er, with a very good core, lovely focus and complexity, excellent balance and a long, bright and classy finish. Superb juice with plenty of life still ahead of it. 2013-2030+. **93.**

1971 Zeltinger Himmelreich Riesling Auslese- Weingut Sanctus Jacobus

It has been a few years since I last had this lovely wine, but I only just came across the note and figure there is no way the wine is tiring. This is really a lovely wine on the nose, offering up a complex and vibrantly evolved mélange of orange, apple, petrol, leather, a hint of cinnamon and a lovely base of mature, middle Mosel, salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, complex and gently intense in the core, with lovely filigree, gentle and clean botrytis and a lovely, long and still nicely crisp finish. It is really enjoyable to drink these old Auslesen at what today would be Spätlesen must weights, as there is a dancing purity to this style of wine that is hard to find in these days of climate change. 2007-2017+. **91.**

1969 Erdener Treppchen Riesling Feine Auslese- Weingut Bischöfliche

Over the last few years, I have had a couple of very good mature Rieslings from the fine old Bischöfliche estate in Trier, and this is a property from whom I always am on the lookout for older bottles. This 1969 Feine Auslese from the Treppchen vineyard is lovely, offering up a deep and mature bouquet of fresh apricot, lemon peel, gentle notes of sea salts, a hint of honey and a lovely base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and complex, with beautiful balance and mid-palate intensity, bouncy acids and lovely focus and grip on the long and filigreed finish. Back in this era, a Feine Auslese needed to reach ninety Oechsle (barely Spätlese these days!) and a “Feinste” Auslese would have to reach ninety-three Oechsle. Times have changed! Fine juice with plenty of life still in it. 2012-2035. **91.**

1966 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese- Weingut S. A. Prüm

The 1966 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Auslese from Weingut S. A. Prüm is a lovely old bottle that continues to drink with fine style as it closes in on its fiftieth birthday. The deep and mature nose offers up a tertiary blend of peach, a touch of leather, salty soil tones, orange peel and a topnote of peach stone. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and just a touch four-square in style, with a lovely core, impressive freshness and bounce for its age and nice length and grip on the still quite extant finish. This is not going to slow down in the foreseeable future and is a lovely wine for current drinking. 2014-2025+. **89.**

1959 Wawerner Goldberg Riesling Auslese- Weingut Zeimet

I do not know anything about this old estate, but the bottle hailed from the personal cellar of Hanno Zilliken and his family and was shared at a lovely dinner back in the spring of 2010. This is a beautiful old Auslese that remains fresh and vibrant on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet delivering a fine mélange of sweet corn, lemon peel, sea salts, a touch of new leather, lavender, gentle mossiness and a nice touch of butter. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and now quite dry in style, with a rock solid core of fruit, superb focus, crisp acids and excellent length and grip on the complex and zesty finish. This is nowhere near running out of steam and is a lovely old bottle of Auslese. 2010-2025+. **91.**

Auslesen Goldkapsel and Lange Goldkapsel

2010 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel- Weingut Zilliken AP #4 (375 ml.)

It seems funny, given how much I absolutely loved the entire range of 2010ers from Dorothee and Hanno Zilliken, to revisit one a couple of years later and find that I underrated it! The 2010 AP # 4 Goldkapsel Auslese is a brilliant wine on both the nose and palate, exploding

from the glass in a glorious constellation of pineapple, lime, honey, oranges, crystalline minerality, white cherries and just a hint of the botanicals to come with bottle age. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and creamy on the attack, with a great core of fruit, laser-like focus, brisk acids and a stunningly long, complex and electric finish. What a brilliant young wine! 2020-2075+. **96+**.

2007 Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel- Weingut Dönnhoff (Auction) AP#38

I had not tasted this wine since the auction in Bad Kreuznach in September of 2008 and was delighted to have the chance to do so again at this year's *Rieslingfeier*. The wine remains the same gorgeous synthesis of minerality and very clean botrytis that it was five and a half years ago, as it offers up a deep and vibrant nose of apple, orange zest, mango, a bit of honey, apple pie spices and a beautifully complex base of slate. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure, and racy, with a great core, laser-like focus, stellar complexity and a very, very long, racy and minerally finish. I love the cut and grip on the backend here, which seems to just exude slate minerality and zesty citrus notes from the exceptional acidity. A very, very refined and racy example of botrytized Auslese. 2014-2040+. **97**.

2005 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel- Weingut Zilliken AP #7 (Auction)

It had been a few years since I last tasted Hanno Zilliken's 2005 Goldkapsel Auslese AP #7 from the Rausch, and it was really nice to check in with an old friend and find that the wine is aging into a stunning beauty. The gloriously pure and pristinely botrytized bouquet offers up a magical blend of pear, passion fruit, beautiful slate tones, bee pollen, acacia blossoms and a vibrant topnote of lemon zest. With air some of the coming elements of sea salts and laurel also start to be felt in the bouquet. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and absolutely ethereal, with a lovely core, flawless focus and balance, haunting complexity and a very, very racy, laser-like and very light on its feet, endless finish. Perhaps I just caught this particular bottle on a good day, or perhaps I underrated this stunning wine the last couple of times I tasted it! As great as it is to drink today, I would hold off on really starting to drink it with wild abandon for another five or six years, as it is still in its climbing mode and the best is yet to come. 2019-2075. **98**.

1990 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel- Reinhold Haart AP #10

The 1990 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Auslese Goldkapsel AP #10 from the Haart family is a gorgeous example of the vintage that is now fully into its plateau of peak maturity, but still has plenty of life in it. The deep, mature and utterly beautiful bouquet is a blend of yellow plum, pear, honeycomb, laurel, a complex base of slate, a dollop of sweet corn and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and succulent, with lovely complexity, an excellent core of fruit, crisp acids and outstanding balance on the very, very long, filigreed and focused finish. The glaze of botrytis here is so clean and pure, and though this wine is at its apogee, it will continue to drink well for at least another fifteen to twenty years and probably much longer! A golden beauty. 2013-2030+. **94**.

1985 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Auslese Lange Goldkapsel- Zilliken AP #7 (375 ml.)

Amazingly, I had drunk this wine previously out of a full bottle, which was at least twice as good (as there was that much more to go around the table)! This utterly stunning half bottle was not quite as vibrant as its big brother in a full bottle, but it is the same magical wine a handful of more years along in its evolutionary arc. The bouquet is beautiful in its complex and mature mélange of fresh apricot, sweet corn, salty soil tones, beeswax, honey, lime blossoms and Rausch smokiness. With air, and exotic spice tone of cardamom develops, along with more

typical notes of mature Auslesen leather. On the palate the wine is medium-full, magically complex and vibrant, with a lovely creaminess on the attack from its noble rot, a fine core, crisp acids and simply superb length and grip on the very pure and zesty finish. This will continue to go a long, long way in half bottle, but it has reached the point in its evolution where the full bottles are just a touch more complete. 2013-2035. **95.**

1983 Ockfener Bockstein Riesling Auslese Lange Goldkapsel- Geltz-Zilliken AP #13

I love Hanno Zilliken's renditions of the Bockstein, which I sadly do not taste too often, as he has such a tiny parcel in this fine vineyard. The 1983 Lange Goldkapsel from the Bockstein is a truly magical bottle, offering up a complex and vibrant bouquet of sweet corn, lemon, a touch of yellow plum, sea salts, a touch of mossiness, slate and a lovely, smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and now resolved to the point that its sweetness level has come down to Spätlese level, with gorgeous complexity, beautiful focus and mid-plate intensity, with crisp acids and a very, very long, beautifully-glazed and laser-like finish. A brilliant, brilliant wine! 2010-2040. **96.**

1976 Ockfener Bockstein Riesling Auslese Lange Goldkapsel- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The 1976 Ockfener Bockstein Long Gold Kap Auslese is another absolutely beautiful wine, which I had the good fortune to drink at the estate the Zilliken family on the same evening as the superb 1983 version- talk about an embarrassment of riches. The gorgeous and totally *à point* nose jumps from the glass in a mix of yellow plum, currant leaf, beeswax, candied lemon peel, sea salts, sweet corn and a lovely topnote of mossiness. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and resolved again to the point of Spätlese sweetness, with stunning complexity, salty soil tones in abundance, still very vibrant acidity and outstanding length and grip on the perfectly focused and filigreed finish. Another brilliant rendition of the Bockstein! 2010-2030. **95.**

Dessert Wines

2007 Scharzhofberger Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese- Weingut Egon Müller

The 2007 Scharzhofberger Trockenbeerenauslese had only (finally) finished its long, slow fermentation and been bottled a short time before I tasted this wine at the estate in March of 2013! The wine is already quite amber in color, but sparkles with an inner radiance and offers up a stunning and youthful bouquet of apricot, orange, honey, a dollop of white cherries, caramel and a nice topnote of new leather. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and absolutely dancing, with a great core of fruit, crisp, ripe acids, celestial botrytis and amazing length and grip on the perfectly balanced, pure and complex finish. A brilliant TBA that is so flawlessly balanced that I am sure that it will live forever! 2013-2100. **96.**

2006 Lieser Helden Burg Riesling Beerenauslese- Schloss Lieser

Thomas Haag and his extremely talented Cellar Master, Philippe Vesper, made stunning 2006ers. As this was a vintage that was so loaded with botrytis in the middle Mosel, it is not surprising that their 2006 Helden Burg Beerenauslese is a brilliant wine, but even with my great expectations for this wine, I was still struck by how brilliantly light on its feet this wine is for such a boatload of noble rot! The gloriously ethereal nose offers up a magical mélange of apple, fresh fig, lime zest, petrol, beeswax, honey and a lovely, esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and absolutely bottomless, but with glorious, racy acids, laser-like focus and stunning length and grip on the perfectly balanced and very light no its feet finish. Stunning juice! 2013-2050. **98.**

2006 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Beerenauslese- Weingut Willi Schaefer AP #8

The 2006 Domprobst Beerenauslese from the Schaefer family is absolutely lovely, wafting from the glass in a mix of orange, apricot, pineapple, a lovely underpinning of slate, citrus zest, honey and a pungent topnote of orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and gloriously glazed with botrytis, with a great core, superb focus and balance, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the light on its feet and endless finish. The pronounced minerality that this wine displayed out of the blocks has now been submerged a bit under its glorious fruit tones, but I have to expect that it will again climb to the fore in the years to come, as some of this magical puppy fat of fruit recedes a bit into the background. This is a brilliant wine that is already very, very tasty, but it is only starting out on its long journey to maturity and it will be even better ten years down the road. 2013-2040+. **97+**.

2004 Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Eiswein- Weingut Dönnhoff AP #23

The 2004 Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Eiswein AP #23 from Helmut Dönnhoff is certainly one of the greatest German dessert wines I have ever had the pleasure to taste! The magical nose soars from the glass in an electric blend of desiccated mangoes, apple pie, pineapple, honey, a glorious and racy base of slate and a pungent topnote of exotic spices. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and sizzling, with a great core, snappy acids, laser-like focus, glorious complexity and magical length and grip on the dancing and superbly balanced finish. This is almost extraterrestrial in its textural beauty! 2012-2050. **98**.

1998 Bernkasteler Lay Riesling Eiswein- Weingut Dr. Loosen

The 1998 Bernkasteler Lay Eiswein from Dr. Loosen is an okay wine, but with just a bit of unclean botrytis in evidence on the nose and really pretty soft acids for an Eiswein. The bouquet is a mix of leather, apricot, honey, apple pie spices and orange zest. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, fat and pretty soft for Eiswein, with respectable complexity, but a slightly chunky personality and a relatively short finish. Nothing special here, but not completely without interest, just decidedly second division juice. 2011-2025. **88**.

1998 Scharzhofberger Riesling Eiswein- Weingut Egon Müller

To emphasize just how enjoyable the *Rieslingfeier* tastings are here in New York and to try and encourage those who love Riesling to try and put next year's event on their calendars, this year I was in the absurd position of trying to taste this wine, Herr Müller's 1994 TBA from the Scharzhofberg and holding the bottle of 1975 Ockfener Bockstein Beerenauslese from Hanno Zilliken in my hand and trying to find a glass to pour it in! (Nice work if you can get it.) The 1998 Scharzhofberger Eiswein from Egon Müller is absolutely stunning- psychedelic was a description I heard bantered around for this wine, and it surely fits- soaring from the glass in a blaze of tangerine, mango, beautiful slate underpinnings, apple pie spices, orange zest, new leather and honey. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and absolutely electric, with a bottomless core, laser-like focus, snappy acids and brilliant length and grip on the utterly seamless finish. To be honest, the wine is probably perfect, but I had to give a very, very slight nod to the 1994 TBA in the glass next to it, so what is one to do? Herr Müller thought I should simply go ahead and break that hundred point barrier for the TBA, and perhaps that was the logical thing to do! 2014-2050. **99+**.

1997 Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Beerenauslese- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

The 1997 Berncasteler Doctor BA from the Thanisch family is a beautiful wine that is still relatively youthful in its evolutionary arc and has many decades of great drinking still ahead of it. The superb bouquet is a blend of apple, yellow plum, salty soil tones, honeycomb, dried

pineapple, just a whisper of petrol and a lovely topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully honeyed, with a superb core, very precise focus and complexity, great acidity and a very, very long, complex finish that is impressively light on its feet and truly beautiful. Tis will be a very, very long-lived BA and may be even more stunning to drink with further bottle age! 2010-2050. **94+**.



Egon Müller, the maestro of sweet wines, surrounded by his array of ancient casks in his cellars at the Scharzhof.

1994 Scharzhofberger Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese- Weingut Egon Müller

Over the years, I have been treated to such a brilliant array of Egon Müller's stunning wines that it is hard sometimes to keep one's perspective. However, amidst the litany of great, great wines I have tasted from this estate over the years, it is quite possible that this stunning 1994 Trockenbeerenauslese is the greatest wine I have yet tasted here (at least amongst what I would term the younger wines). The sheer magnificence of this wine on both the nose and palate is simply humbling, as it soars from the glass in a blaze of cherries, oranges, brown sugar, slow-baked peaches, leather, orange zest, gentle notes of tea leaves and honey. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and almost unctuous in its succulence on the attack, but with such a magnificent chassis of high octane acidity that the wine remains vibrant and light on its feet. The wine offers up flawless focus and cut, a bottomless core of fruit, stunning complexity and perfect balance on the very, very, very long, pure and gloriously glazed finish. If TBA gets better than this great wine, I would love to taste it! 2014-2060+. **100.**

1994 Mussbacher Eselshaut Rieslaner Trockenbeerenauslese- Weingut Müller-Catoir

I have always loved this bottling ever since I was first introduced to it in the 1986 vintage, and I have had the good fortune to drink it with some regularity over a range of vintages since those early days. The 1994 is a lovely wine, offering up a deep and fully mature nose of tea leaves, cherries, new leather, candied apricots, honey and caramel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very racy for such a high level of botrytis, with a great core of fruit, fine focus and a very long, complex and heavily glazed finish. Fine juice, but perhaps not one of the greatest vintages I have tasted of this fine bottling. 2012-2040. **93.**

1994 Lieser Helden Burg Riesling Beerenauslese- Schloss Lieser

The 1994 Helden Burg Beerenauslese from Schloss Lieser is a really beautiful bottle at its apogee at age ten, wafting from the glass in a mature and very stylish bouquet of apricot, white cherries, new leather, tea leaves, orange peel and caramel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and vibrant, with lovely acids, excellent focus and balance, a very clean glazing of botrytis and excellent length and grip on the complex and succulent finish. Lovely juice. 2013-2025+. **94.**

1993 Scharzhofberger Riesling Beerenauslese- Weingut Egon Müller (Auction Bottling)

The 1993 auction bottling of Scharzhofberger Beerenauslese is a brilliant wine, delivering a bottomless and utterly refined bouquet of apricot, honeyed oranges, tea leaves, a marvelous base of minerality, orange zest and caramel. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, creamy and almost opulent on the attack, with snappy acids, laser-like focus and great length and grip on the very, very complex, honeyed and vibrant finish. I love the combination here of fully mature aromatics and flavors with almost youthful, racy structural elements! A great wine. 2012-2050. **95.**

1993 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Eiswein- Zilliken (375 ml.)

In the 1993 vintage, Hanno Zilliken only produced thirty hectoliters of Eiswein from the Rausch, so the wine was never commercially released. It is too bad that there was not more of this wine made, as it is absolutely brilliant, soaring from the glass in a complex and maturing blend of apricot, orange, a touch of tea leaves, sea salts, sweet corn and a dollop of new leather. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very, very complex, with racy, very ripe acids, laser-like focus and beautiful balance and grip on the very long, suave and electric finish. Magical elixir. 2010-2060. **96.**

1992 Mussbacher Eselshaut Rieslaner Trockenbeerenauslese- Weingut Müller-Catoir

In contrast to the pretty straightforward 1994 Rieslaner TBA from Müller-Catoir, the 1992 shows off more delineation, precision and inherent complexity and is clearly one of the legendary vintages for this fine bottling (I did taste the 1994er and the 1992er side by side, by the way). The 1992er simply soars from the glass in a glorious blend of orange, apricot, leather, honey, orange blossoms, tea leaves, a lovely nod to its underlying soil (no easy feat with this much botrytis!) and a bright topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows off layers of tertiary complexity, with a gorgeous core of fruit, great focus and bounce and a very long, honeyed and surprisingly filigreed finish of endless proportions. This is a glorious wine by any definition! 2012-2040. **96.**

1989 Freinsheimer Goldberg Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese- Weingut Lingenfelder

The 1989 Riesling TBA from Lingenfelder is pretty good wine, but it was probably notably better in its youth and is now getting a touch gentle in terms of structure and showing a bit of phenolic bitterness at the tail end of the finish. The bouquet is still quite lovely, offering up

a very mature mix of raspberries, leather, toffee, honey, orange peel and a touch of molasses. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still shows some framing acidity, with an unctuous core of fruit, modest complexity and reasonable length and grip on the slightly bitter finish. It is okay juice, but not first division. 2012-2025. **87.**

1985 Erdener Prälat Riesling Beerenauslese- Weingut Dr. Loosen AP #16

The 1985 BA from the Prälat vineyard from Dr. Loosen is a pretty good bottle, but not in the league with any of the top dessert wines reported on in this feature. The bouquet is an inviting aromatic blend of apricot, tangerine, gentle notes of honeycomb and plenty of apple blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full and quite delicate in style for a BA, with a nice glaze of botrytis, gentle acidity and good, solid length on the balanced and gently structured finish. There is not much cut or grip here, but it does present a nice panoply of flavors and gently botrytized aromas. Not bad. 2012-2035. **88.**

1983 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Eiswein- Zilliken AP #4 (375 ml.)

I can still vividly recall my visit to taste the 2005ers for the first time with Hanno Zilliken, where he stated that this was the greatest vintage of his career since the 1983ers, and I have been very privileged since that visit to taste a wide selection of both vintages and can only agree with just how brilliant the '83 vintage was for Herr Zilliken! This was the first time I had ever tasted the 1983 Rausch Eiswein AP #4, and though it was nearly four years ago now, I can still taste this wine when I close my eyes, as it is clearly one of the greatest wines I have ever had the pleasure to taste. The utterly magical bouquet soars from the glass in a blaze of apricot, honeyed tangerine, clover, sweet tea leaves, a beautifully complex base of minerality, baked peaches, gentle caramel notes and a hint of sea salt in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows off TBA-level ripeness, with beautiful balance, bottomless depth, laser-like focus and an electric, stunningly long and utterly profound finish. Hanno Zilliken recalled that this wine was made almost entirely from beautiful golden berries that happily froze to perfection. I have never tasted a great bottle of dessert wine. 2010-2050+. **100.**

1975 Ockfener Bockstein Riesling Beerenauslese- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The 1975 Ockfener Bockstein Beerenauslese from Hanno Zilliken is a simply beautiful example of the vintage. The glorious nose soars from the glass in a complex blend of peach, fresh apricot, sea salts, a touch of new leather, a stunning base of slate, honey and peach pits. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and very complex, with a lovely core of fruit, excellent focus and grip, tangy acids and a very long, pure and dancing finish. There is probably not quite the same depth and dimension here as in the best Zilliken family wines from the Saarburger Rausch, but this is a beautiful wine and it is very enjoyable to taste the magic Zilliken touch with a slightly less familiar *terroir* from time to time! A beautiful wine with decades of life still ahead of it. 2014-2035+. **94.**

1973 Steinberger Riesling Eiswein- Staatliche WeinbauDomänen

I have not had a lot of 1973ers, but the few I have had in the last handful of years have really been quite lovely wines, and this is clearly one of the superb, mostly forgotten vintages of this era. However, the 1973 Steinberger Eiswein is a significant step up from a “quite lovely wine”, as this is one of the most stunningly brilliant old Eisweins I have ever had the pleasure to taste, and its seamless and bottomless beauty are the stuff of legend. The brilliant bouquet soars from the glass in a blend of apricot, cherries, new leather, honey, heather, lovely soil tones, orange zest and caramel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, stunningly complex and rock solid at the core, with a blade of acidity adding an electric charge to this gloriously glazed

palate, and with the perfect balance and grip of this wine simply magical on the very, very long, dancing and laser-like finish. What a timeless monument to elegance, complexity and filigree! 2013-2035+. **100.**

1971 Erbacher Marcobrunn Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese- Weingut Schloss Schönbrunn

The 1971 Erbacher Marcobrunn Trockenbeerenauslese from Schloss Schönbrunn is a beautiful wine that has been fully mature for decades, but continues to drink superbly well. The fine old nose offers up scents of cherries, honey, tea leaves, a touch of new leather, apricot and a lovely touch of Rheingau soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely balanced, with fairly moderate acidity today, but lovely freshness and bounce on its very long and classy finish from its impeccable balance. 2012-2040. **93.**

1953 Steinberger Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese- Staatliche WeinbauDomänen

Some of the most magical bottles I have ever tasted have come from the Staat Domaines in Nahe and Rheingau, and I really have not had all that much experience with their superb wines. This 1953 Steinberger TBA was one of the greatest wines I have yet tasted from either locale, as it offers up a deep, mature and utterly pure bouquet of cherries, apricot, honey, new leather, laurel and a lovely base of Rheingau soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and gloriously complex, with superb focus and freshness, a great core and a very, very long, poised and light on its feet finish. A breathtakingly brilliant old bottle of TBA that remains at its apogee- as if time cannot touch it! 2013-2040+. **96.**

ANOTHER ROUND OF RECENTLY TASTED OLD SCHOOL AND NEO-CLASSICAL AMERICAN WINES



I am drinking and tasting more and more American wines as the years go by, and with greater and greater pleasure with each passing vintage. While my own personal cellar of American wines still tends to be pretty focused on the California wines of the decade of the 1970s, I continue to taste more and more examples of new releases from “old school” producers (who may or may not have been around for a long time) and I have been very happy in the last few years to add many new wines and producers to my cellar. Given that my own personal collection was almost completely devoid of American wines less than ten years ago, it strikes me as a pretty strong testament to just how exciting things are below the surface in the world of American wine these days, as I cannot recall having so many well-balanced, complex and ageworthy American wines cross my path as is the case today- at least not since my formative days in the wine trade back in the first half of the decade of the 1980s, when American wines were still of great interest to those with long-term cellaring inclinations. Of course, this is all below the surface and must remain a secret between us, as a majority of American wines today still seem stuck with the stylistic hangover from the excesses of the Parker years of overripe, over-oaked and over-manipulated monstrosities that would be most at home being popped in the back of the limo to accompany a stopover at the McDonald’s drive-thru after a day of hedonistic

excess at Restaurant Daniel. But, for those who never bought into the mis-information age of American wine, the number of options for balanced, complex, elegant and ageworthy wines continues to grow exponentially and one day soon may just rise above the surface and become the prevailing trend in the world of American wine.

The following report would still be a work in progress, if it were not for my attending this year's version of "Pinot Days", which is a multi-nation, travelling road show of (primarily) pinot noir producers which makes several stopovers in major metropolitan areas in the United States and passed through New York in mid-January of this year. The number of superb wines that I tasted during this marathon tasting provided such a depth of notes that I could see no reason for postponing another chapter in the saga of "old school" American wines, and moved up the publication of this feature by a few issues to get these notes out before the wines all disappear from the market. Of course, I am overdue for a visit out west to taste at some of my favorite producers in the American wine scene (and have added several more "must visits" to my next trip's itinerary during the last few months of tasting) and hope to have the opportunity to do so sometime in 2014. I also have full-length, historical features in the works on some of my favorite producers in the world of American wine: Mount Eden Vineyards, Ridge Vineyards, Corison Winery and the peripatetic Ric Forman, not to mention a round two of the brilliant wines of Terry and Frances Leighton at Kalin Cellars, so I will be writing a lot more about American wines in the coming issues of the newsletter. Given that I have these features planned for future issues, I have not included a lot of notes on recently-tasted wines from these estates in this article (with the exception of one or two superb releases that are currently available in the market and whose notes should be released now, rather than held back for the winery features, due to the likelihood of the wines selling through before I get the historical pieces completed). For the wineries whose wines I tasted during the Pinot Days tasting, I have grouped all of their wines together in this section, rather than splitting up their non-pinot noir bottlings into their respective varietal sections. All the other estates' wines that I have tasted since the last report on American wines are listed in sections by varietal, and then chronologically by vintage and alphabetically by producer within each vintage subsection.

In addition to the tasting notes on recently American wines sampled in the last few months, this report also includes a vertical report on the cabernet sauvignon wines of Patrick Campbell's former Laurel Glen Vineyard. Patrick owned and ran the property with great skill and enthusiasm from 1977 until he sold the estate in 2011. To commemorate the sale to Bettina Sichel (daughter of Peter Sichel, creator of the German wine brand of Blue Nun), the winery organized a vertical tasting of many vintages of Laurel Glen cabernet sauvignon spanning the career of Patrick Campbell at the helm of this Sonoma Mountain estate. I had originally intended to do a full feature on the winery and its history, as I had very fond memories of the Laurel Glen cabernets and their very classic style in the decade of the 1980s, but I found that several of the more recent vintages in the latter half of Patrick's career were done in a riper style than I personally tend to get enthusiastic about, and I decided not to do the full feature on the wines. The notes from the 2011 tasting were supposed to find their way into one of the recent American wine articles, but I misplaced the notes for a stretch and hence, they only find their way into print with this feature. I should observe that some of the more modern styled wines that Patrick Campbell fashioned in the decades of the '90s and '00s were still very well-made wines and a few vintages I liked very well indeed, but the style moved pretty decisively away from the wines

of the 1980s, that I had always had tremendous respect for and happily cellared back in the day, and for me the music stopped playing here by the mid-1990s. In any event, I have included the notes from that 2011 tasting in this report, now that they have surfaced in my office files.

Chardonnay and Other White Wine Varietals

2012 Viognier- Fausse Piste (Washington)

Jesse Skiles is the young winemaker and owner of Fausse Piste, and he is a rather unique character in the firmament of American wine, as he is trained as a chef at the Culinary Institute of America, rather than as a winemaker! He sources grapes from both Oregon and Washington vineyards, and tends to make northern Rhône style wines, as his father was a great connoisseur of these wines and inculcated Jesse with a love for these grape varieties in their non-spoof form. I tend to not be much of a fan of American viognier, which I typically find a bit too heady for my liking, but the 2012 from Fausse Piste is at least quite moderate in its ripeness and comes in at an even thirteen percent alcohol. The wine is high-toned and stylish on the nose, offering up scents of pear, acacia blossoms, a nice base of chalky soil and a bit of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and lithe, with nice complexity, only moderate mid-palate depth, bright acids and very good length and grip on the pretty finish. This is not overly complex and really is a tad on the lean side at the core, but it is eminently drinkable- which is more than I can say for a lot of US viognier that I taste these days. 2014-2018. **87.**

2011 Crowley Wines “Willamette Valley” Chardonnay (Oregon)

This was the first wine I had tasted from Crowley Wines and I was very impressed. Tyson Crowley is the man at the helm here and his philosophy is quite laudable- low octane, high acid grapes made with no extraction enzymes, all natural yeasts and aging in all older barrels to translate as much of what was captured in the vineyard over the course of the growing season into the finished wine. The 2011 Willamette Valley bottling is the entry level chardonnay from Tyson and is a stellar value, coming in at a very civilized 12.5 percent alcohol and offering up a deep and very classy nose of apple, pear, a touch of butter, apple blossoms, chalky soil tones and a discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, crisp and complex, with a superb core of fruit, zesty acids and outstanding focus and grip on the beautifully balanced and very serious finish. White Burgundy drinkers will love this wine! 2014-2020+. **92.**

2011 Crowley Wines “Four Winds” Chardonnay (Oregon)

The Four Winds Vineyard is located high up in the foothills of the McMinnville Range and is planted with twenty year-old chardonnay vines. The altitude allows for gentle ripening and excellent acid retention and this 2011 chardonnay comes in again at a cool and racy 12.5 percent alcohol. The bouquet is superb, wafting from the glass in a blend of apple, pear, very gentle leesy tones, a lovely base of soil, lime zest, spring flowers and a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and decidedly low fat in personality, with a very good core, fine focus and a very long, vibrant and complex and very intensely flavored finish. This shows a bit more nascent complexity than the Willamette Valley bottling and probably will also last a bit longer in the cellar. Fine, fine juice. 2014-2022+. **93.**

2011 l’Ortolan (Roussanne)- Fausse Piste (Washington)

While I like the 2012 Viognier from Fausse Piste well enough, the 2011 Roussanne is a far more serious wine and is absolutely outstanding. The deep, complex and very pure bouquet wafts from the glass in a classy mélange of white peach, pear, a beautiful base of chalky soil tones, white flowers, just a touch of coriander seed and a delicate framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and rock solid at the core, with outstanding focus and

grip, bright acids and a very long, complex and vibrant finish. This is a stellar bottle of wine! 2014-2018. **93.**

2011 Ramey Vineyards “Russian River” Chardonnay (375 ml.)

David Ramey has a very high reputation as a winemaker of merit, but I have never understood the reason for this, as I have always found his wines to be painfully safe, middle of the road and the vinous equivalents of Melba Toast. This most recent example of his “regular” chardonnay was impressively mediocre, as it offers up a soulless bouquet of pineapple, apple, a gentle touch of leanness from *battonage* and a bit of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and well-balanced, with the wine’s 14.5 percent alcohol impressively neutered, but with the crisp finish short and utterly devoid of complexity or personality. It is a very, very long time since I had a wine this boring. 2013-2018. **84.**

2009 Rhys Vineyards “Horseshoe Vineyard” Chardonnay (Santa Cruz)

The 2009 Rhys Horseshoe Vineyard chardonnay is a lovely bottle of wine that is drinking very well already, but clearly has plenty of life still ahead of it. The deep and very complex nose offers up a lovely blend of apple, pear, tangerine, a strong vein of complex minerality, a bit of fresh coconut and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully focused, with a fine core, good ripeness and a long, zesty and well-balanced finish. Good juice that will be even better with further bottle age and is showing even a touch more potential than I thought initially. 2014-2025+. **93+.**

2001 Mayacamas Vineyards Chardonnay (Mount Veeder)

By the very classic standards of Bob Travers, the 2001 vintage of Mayacamas chardonnay is a pretty ripe wine, as it comes in at 13.75 percent alcohol. The bouquet is deep, fresh and vibrant, wafting from the glass in a blend of apple, lemon zest, lovely minerality, spring flowers and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and nicely focused, with an ample core of fruit, nascent complexity and just a whisper of heat poking through on the long and racy finish. I suspect this will drink sooner than many vintages of this long-distance running chardonnay, and will probably not last quite as long as well. It is good juice, but I like this wine better when it is a touch lower in octane. 2012-2020. **88.**

1997 Littorai “Mays Canyon” Chardonnay (Russian River Valley)

The 1997 Littorai Mays Canyon chardonnay is a very good bottle that has certainly been mature for many years already and is probably starting to slide over the far side of the plateau of maturity. The deep and tertiary nose offers up a complex blend of peaches, orange peel, musky floral tones, a nice touch of browned butter, almond paste, lovely soil tones and buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fully mature, with a good core, still some framing acids and a long, complex and tertiary finish. Time in hand, but this remains a good drink for the very near-term and was probably stunning four or five years ago. 2014-2016. **89.**

1982 Mayacamas Vineyards Chardonnay (Mount Veeder)

I do not think I have ever really appreciated how well Bob Travers made chardonnay during his long career, as I was always so smitten by what was going on with the cabernets and merlots from Mayacamas. This most recent bottle of 1982 chardonnay underscored that I should not have been so monochromatic in my approach to the estate’s wines, as it offers up a deep, complex and beautifully mature nose of pear, apple, a hint of butterscotch, lemon peel, a lovely base of sandy soil tones and a gentle topnote of fresh nutmeg. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a fine core of fruit, still sound acids and excellent length and grip on the very well-balanced finish. This still has plenty of life in it! 2014-2025+. **93.**



“Pinot Days” in New York

I had not attended the previous “Pinot Days” tasting in New York, but was very pleased when Stewart Johnson of Kendric Vineyards dropped me a note to see if I was going in early January of this year, so that I was able to attend the event on the 18th of the month. It was a very well-organized and jam-packed tasting held at City Winery here in New York, with a couple of hours for the press and wine trade folks, followed by three more hours for the pinot noir-loving public. Thanks to the kind intervention of Craig Haserot of Sojourn Cellars, I stayed on for the final three hours of the public tasting and really cover a bit of ground. That said, even with five hours of near non-stop tasting, I did not have an opportunity to taste even a third of the wines presented this year, and would have loved to have had the opportunity to try each and every wine that was being poured, as there were a great many estates whose wines I have not tried previously or have not kept up with what they are doing these days. It was a real learning experience for me and I found not a few estates (new to me) that are really making stellar wines.

Aberrant Cellars (Oregon)

Aberrant Cellars is another very new winery, having been started by proprietor and winemaker Eric Eide only in the 2009 vintage, after fifteen years spent working in other facets of the wine trade (most recently as a regional manager for Robert Kacher Selections) and the 2008 harvest at a pair of wineries in the Willamette Valley. I was very impressed with the entire range, but in particular, the pinot noirs here look to have stellar potential for evolution in the cellar.

2012 Aberrant Cellars “Philtrum” Pinot Noir Blanc

This is a “blanc de noirs” still wine produced from pinot noir grapes, and it is a very pleasant glass of wine. The bouquet offers up scents of melon, white cherries, orange zest and a base of very chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and nicely balanced, with a good core, fine focus and good length and grip on the moderately complex finish. This is well-made, but I cannot really understand the reason to make a white wine from pinot noir grapes in Willamette Valley, where there would seem to be ample opportunities to buy chardonnay or pinot gris grapes to make a white wine. But, it is a good, tasty bottle for relatively near-term consumption. 2014-2019. **88.**

2011 Aberrant Cellars “Confero” Pinot Noir

This is a blend from several vineyards in Willamette Valley and was raised in twenty-eight percent new wood for ten months prior to racking and bottling. The wine came in at a cool 13.2 percent alcohol and offers up an excellent and quite complex bouquet of cherries, pomegranate, cocoa, fresh herbs, a lovely base of soil, gentle cedar and a nice topnote of cardamom. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely structured, with a good core, ripe tannins and excellent length and grip on the tangy and nicely balanced finish. Good juice that needs five or six years in the cellar to really blossom. 2019-20235+. **90+.**

2011 Aberrant Cellars “Virtus Ex” Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills)

The 2011 “Virtus Ex” Pinot Noir from Aberrant Cellars is produced from a blend of fruit from two vineyards: Willakia Vineyard and Zena Crown Vineyard- both in the cooler Eola-Amity Hills AVA. The wine was raised in just over forty percent new wood in 2011 and tips the scales at 13.5 percent alcohol. The excellent nose wafts from the glass in a blend of red and black cherries, cocoa, woodsmoke, lovely soil tones (the soils here being volcanic in both vineyards), fresh herbs and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a fine core of fruit, lovely transparency, suave tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and youthful finish. Fine juice. 2019-2040. **92+.**

2011 Aberrant Cellars “Carpe Noctem” Pinot Noir

“Seize the night” says Eric Eide about this lovely pinot noir, which is a blend of three vineyards- the two used for the Virtus Ex bottling, as well as Hawk’s View in the Chehalem Mountains. The wine is a touch less ripe than the 2011 Virtus Ex, coming in at 13.3 percent and was raised in fifty percent new wood. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a superb mélange of black cherries, pomegranate, a touch of beetroot, cocoa, woodsmoke, dark soil tones, herbs, cola and cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and shows lovely, blossoming complexity, with a fine core of fruit, suave tannins, excellent focus and balance and a long, tangy and soil-driven finish. This is another very high class bottle of young pinot noir from proprietor Eric Eide. 2019-2035+. **93+.**

Cornerstone Cellars (Napa Valley and Oregon)

Cornerstone Cellars is based in both Napa Valley and the Willamette Valley, as the team of Jeff Keene, Craig Camp and Michael Dragutsky sources their pinot noir and chardonnay from cooler vineyards in Willamette Valley, while producing a full range of cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc and syrah bottlings from vineyards in Napa. At the Pinot Days tasting, I sampled their current releases from Cornerstone Oregon, and was very impressed with both wines.

2011 Cornerstone Cellars Chardonnay (Willamette Valley)

I very much liked the 2011 Cornerstone Cellars chardonnay, which was made from two different vineyard sources in the Willamette Valley and raised in forty percent new wood. The bouquet is deep and vibrant, wafting from the glass in a lovely blend of pear, apple, a touch of fresh almond, a complex base of soil and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and very elegant, with lovely intensity of flavor, a good core, bright acids and excellent focus and complexity on the long, zesty and perfectly balanced finish. A lovely bottle of chardonnay with old world sensibilities. 2014-2022. **92.**

2011 Stepping Stone Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley)

Stepping Stone is the label for the entry level wines from Cornerstone Cellars, and the 2011 Pinot Noir under this label is a lovely wine, which was raised in fifteen percent new wood and offers up a bright, complex and red fruity nose of cherries, strawberries, a touch of beetroot, mustard seed, cocoa, clove-like spice tones and a hint of cedar. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and tangy, with a fine core, lovely soil inflection, suave tannins and excellent length and grip on the pure and impressively transparent finish. Lovely juice and an awful lot of American pinot noir for thirty dollars a bottle! 2016-2030+. **91+.**

Dutton-Goldfield Winery (Sonoma County)

Dutton-Goldfield Winery was a new producer to me at the Pinot Days event, but of course, I have long been familiar with various bottlings made by other estates from “Dutton Ranch” fruit over the years. The winery is a partnership between Steve Dutton and Dan Goldfield, and produces primarily pinot noir and chardonnay bottlings from their own estate fruit grown in the Russian River Valley (with one or two exceptions), with many of the vineyards having been planted by Steve’s father, Warren Dutton, in the late 1960s and 1970s. The domaine’s first commercial releases under the Dutton-Goldfield label were from the 1998 vintage. I did not taste any chardonnays from their lineup, but a nice selection of pinot noir bottlings from the 2012 and 2011 vintages were on display at the Pinot Days tasting. The pinot noirs here tend to be aged in anywhere from thirty to fifty percent new wood and are done in a nicely plush style that never strays over the top, with lovely purity of fruit and fine undertones of chocolate and fresh herbs. A new producer to me and wines that reminded me a bit of my favorite vintages of Dehlinger pinot noir from the good old days, when Fred Scherrer was in the cellars there. I have only tasted a handful of the different wines produced by this winery, but very much liked the style and quality of what I tasted and look forward to sampling more of the Dutton-Goldfield portfolio in the future.

2012 Pinot Noir “Dutton Ranch”- Dutton-Goldfield Winery (Russian River Valley)

The Dutton Ranch bottling from Dutton-Goldfield is their workhorse pinot noir, with the 2012 having been raised in thirty percent new wood and coming in at a very manageable 13.5 percent alcohol. The bouquet offers up a very pretty aromatic constellation of red plums, pomegranate, chocolate, a touch of fresh dill and a stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, suave and silky on the attack, with a good core, modest tannins and a long, velvety and still fairly primary finish. This is not the most complex young pinot noir one will come across, but it is beautifully balanced and has its heart in the right place. 2014-2025. **88+.**

2012 Pinot Noir “Angel Camp Vineyard”- Dutton-Goldfield Winery (Anderson Valley)

The Angel Camp Vineyard bottling is one of the few in the Dutton-Goldfield lineup that hails from outside of Sonoma, as this Anderson Valley vineyard was planted in 2001 and 2002 and the winery purchases fruit here for this cuvée. Like all of the single vineyard bottlings from this estate, it is raised in a touch more new wood (forty to fifty percent) than the Dutton Ranch bottling. The 2012 is a lovely wine, with a decidedly more black fruity personality than the above wine, offering up scents of black cherries, dark plums, a touch of curry, woodsmoke, Mendocino herbs and a judicious base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very nicely structured, with a good core, youthful fruit tones, sound acids, and a long, moderately tannic finish. Good juice that will need a few years to blossom and show off some its secondary layers of complexity. 2017-2035. **90+**.

2012 Pinot Noir “Emerald Ridge Vineyard”- Dutton-Goldfield Winery (Russian River)

The Emerald Ridge Vineyard was first planted in 1991 and is based on a the classic Gold Ridge loam and sandy soils that are found in the best vineyards in this section of Sonoma. The 2012 was showing very fine potential, wafting from the glass in a mix of black cherries, herb tones, chocolate, a nice base of soil nuances and a bit of cedary new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a sappy core of fruit, fine-grained tannins and lovely length and grip on the beautifully balanced and still youthfully weedy finish. I really like this wine, which is not particularly long on complexity, but which shows lots of personality and will age very well indeed. 2016-2035. **91+**.

2012 Pinot Noir “Freestone Hill Vineyard”- Dutton-Goldfield Winery (Russian River)

The Freestone Hill Vineyard dates back to Warren Dutton’s day, as the vines are now thirty-five years of age. The vines here are planted at a higher elevation, which keeps them above the fog layer, and I imagine in many vintages this is a touch riper in style than some of the other single vineyard pinot bottlings. However, 2011 was a beautifully cool vintage, so this wine does not show any of this in its fine bouquet of red and black cherries, fresh herb tones, a lovely base of soil, a touch of cardamom, incipient notes of gamebird and a nice framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and more soil-driven in personality than any of the other bottlings I sampled, with a lovely core of fruit, tangy acids, moderate tannins and excellent length and grip on the complex and classy finish. Fine juice. 2017-2035+. **92+**.

Thomas Fogarty Winery and Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)

I was very happy to meet Tom Fogarty Jr. and Nathan Kandler, one of the estate’s winemakers, during the Pinot Days tasting. The gentlemen had brought only two of their pinot noir bottlings with them for the tasting (both of which I was very impressed with) and they followed up by sending a generous handful of further samples of pinot noir and chardonnays out from the winery to round out my coverage of their current releases. As I am a big fan of the Santa Cruz Mountain wines for their superb expressions of terroir and their relatively cooler growing seasons, I was very, very pleased to add Thomas Fogarty Winery to my short list of outstanding Santa Cruz producers such as Rhys Vineyards, Mount Eden Vineyards and Ridge Vineyards. The winery was founded in 1978 by Dr. Thomas Fogarty (a professor of Cardiovascular Surgery at nearby Stanford University and the creator of one of the major cardiac surgical breakthroughs of the late 20th century) and sits at an elevation of 2,000 feet above sea level, surrounded by twenty-five acres of chardonnay and pinot noir vineyards. Dr. Fogarty bought his property here in the early 1970s and did a bit of “home winemaking” with purchased grapes in a cabin here on the site before getting bitten full-time by the wine bug and clearing land and planting vineyards in 1978. The winery was launched commercially in 1981.

The winery expanded its vineyards in 1999, clearing and planting another eleven acres of vines on a 2,300 foot elevation ridge seventeen miles south of the winery's home in Woodside, which is called Gist Ranch and is the source for several of their single vineyard bottlings these days. "Chef de Cave" Michael Martella has been in charge of the cellars and vineyards here since the doors first opened in 1981, and has been assisted by Nathan Kandler for many years now. Both Messieurs Martella and Kandler are graduates of Fresno State's Oenology Department- founded and home once upon a time to one of California's winemaking founding fathers, Joe Heitz. In addition to pinot noir and chardonnay, the winery now produces also merlot, cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc and syrah. There is also a bit of riesling and gewurztraminer as well from Thomas Fogarty, but so far, I have only tasted the following selection of pinots and chardonnays. Amongst the pinots and chardonnays, I found that the pinot bottlings were a bit more complex than their counterparts of chardonnay, though this is probably just inherent in the personalities of the two grapes as much as anything. All of the wines were very well-made that I tasted, though I should note that the vast majority of these were from the cool and classy 2011 vintage, and I wonder if the style of these excellent 2011s are emblematic more of the 2011 vintage or the house style at Thomas Fogarty. In any case, there are some stellar 2011s from the winery currently out on the market.

2011 Chardonnay "Santa Cruz Mountains"- Thomas Fogarty Winery

Like so many examples of the fine 2011 vintage, the Thomas Fogarty Santa Cruz Mountain bottling of chardonnay came in at a very civilized level of alcohol, with this lovely wine tipping the scales at an even thirteen percent. The bouquet is deep, bright and very pretty, offering up scents of pear, apple, a touch of guava, gentle leesy tones, a stylish base of vanillin oak and a delicately musky floral topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very nicely balanced, with a fine core, good, bright acids and lovely focus and grip on the long and classy finish. Fine juice. 2014-2020+. **91.**

2011 Chardonnay "Portola Springs Vineyard"- Thomas Fogarty Winery

The 2011 Portola Springs Vineyard bottling of chardonnay from Thomas Fogarty is a lovely reflection of this cooler vintage, as the wine comes in with a very old school 12.3 percent alcohol. This is from a steep, southeasterly and windswept vineyard that was planted in 1981. The bouquet is bright and stylish, wafting from the glass in a mix of pear, musk melon, very gentle leesy tones, a touch of almond paste, a discreet base of vanillin oak and a bit of lime zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and vibrant, with lovely focus and grip, good, but not great depth at the core, excellent balance and a long, complex and youthful finish. I can imagine that some folks will not be entirely satisfied with the depth of this wine at the core, but for me, I will happily trade a bit of mid-palate amplitude for this kind of precision, aromatic purity and cut on the backend. Lovely, low octane juice. 2014-2020+. **92+.**

2011 Chardonnay "Albutom Vineyard"- Thomas Fogarty Winery

The 2011 Albutom Vineyard chardonnay from the Thomas Fogarty Winery is quite a bit riper than the Portola Springs bottling, as this wine comes in at a pretty hefty 13.5 percent alcohol in this cool vintage, and I note that past vintages from here have easily tipped 14.5 percent! The wine is aged in one hundred percent new wood and offers up a ripe and stylish nose of peach, passion fruit, butter, a bit of leesiness, toasted almonds, lime blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and far more mainstream than the Portola Springs 2011, with good acids, fine focus and balance and a long, ripe and succulent finish. This is a very well-made wine, with more depth than the above wine, but it does not have the same

complexity and breed, and though the wines are objectively fairly close in quality, I have a pretty strong preference for the leaner and more intriguing Portola Springs bottling in this vintage. 2014-2018. **90.**

2011 Chardonnay “Damiana Vineyard”- Thomas Fogarty Winery

The Damiana Vineyard was planted in 1978, so these thirty-three year-old vines are the oldest chardonnay on the Thomas Fogarty property. The 2011 Damiana chardonnay offers up as ripe and pure nose of pear, peach, buttered hazelnuts, a touch of leesiness, gently musky floral notes and a discreet base of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and classy, with a fine core, crisp acids, lovely focus and a long, well-balanced and juicy finish. This is just a touch less ripe than the Albutom Vineyard 2011 (13.4 percent versus 13.5 percent), but seems zestier and likely to age a bit longer as a result. Good juice. 2014-2020. **91.**



2011 Chardonnay “Langley Hill Vineyard”- Thomas Fogarty Winery

The 2011 Langley Hill Vineyard chardonnay is the ripest of the 2011s I tasted from the winery, tipping the scales at a hefty 13.8 percent alcohol. The nose and palate of the wine are by a pretty wide margin the least complex of the four single vineyard chardonnays I tasted from Thomas Fogarty in this vintage, and though the wine is well-made, I have to wonder just exactly how this got so ripe in this cool vintage, and why one would want to let the grapes get to this sugar level in the first place. The wine is certainly not bad when tasted in a vacuum, but in the context of wines such as the 2011 Damiana or Portola Springs, this wine is rather short on

complexity and breed. The bouquet is a straightforward mix of tangerine, peach, a bit of leanness, some musky floral tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, succulent and well-balanced, with good mid-palate concentration, sound framing acids and just a bit of backend heat poking out on the reasonably long, but simple finish. This is okay, but there are better options amongst the Thomas Fogarty chardonnay portfolio in 2011. 2014-2017. **88.**

2010 Chardonnay “Santa Cruz Mountains”- Thomas Fogarty Winery

Not surprisingly, the 2010 vintage of Santa Cruz chardonnay from Thomas Fogarty is just a touch riper than its 2011 counterpart, coming in at 13.5 percent alcohol, but the wine carries its ripeness very well and does not show any signs of blowsiness. The bouquet does not show quite the subtlety of the 2011, as it wafts from the glass in a mix of pear, guava, a touch of leanness, just a touch of banana, acacia blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep and very nicely balanced, with a good core of fruit, sound acids and very good length and grip on the slightly less complex (than the 2011 version) finish. The little bit of extra ripeness here seems to have taken away a dollop of complexity *vis à vis* the cooler 2011, and not really added anything by way of compensation. This is still a very nice and well-made bottle of chardonnay, but I have to give the nod to the 2011. 2014-2018. **88.**

2012 Pinot Noir “Santa Cruz Mountains”- Thomas Fogarty Winery

The 2012 vintage of “Santa Cruz” pinot noir from the Thomas Fogarty Winery is a bit riper than its 2011 counterpart, coming in at a generous 13.7 percent alcohol. This is still a very good wine, but there is such a world of difference above and below thirteen percent when it comes to aromatic precision and complexity in the realm of California pinot noir, and this does not quite match up to the cooler and classier 2011 version. The exuberant bouquet offers up scents of cherries, beet root, dill-like herb tones, gentle notes of cedar, a bit of cola and a nice touch of soil. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, plush and nicely balanced in its more fruit-driven style, a good core, just a touch of tannin and also just a whisper of backend heat currently poking out on the long and still quite primary finish. This is a very good wine, but the focus and soil signature on the 2011 version is just a bit more exciting. 2015-2025+. **88.**

2011 Pinot Noir “Santa Cruz Mountains”- Thomas Fogarty Winery

The 2011 Thomas Fogarty “Santa Cruz Mountains” bottling comes in at a very sensible 12.9 percent alcohol and is an outstanding example of pinot noir. The deep and complex nose wafts from the glass in a mix of dark berries, black cherries, espresso, a lovely base of minerality and a topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very soil-driven in personality, with a fine core of fruit, excellent focus and intensity of flavor, gentle tannins and excellent length and grip on the well-balanced and very classy finish. This bottling is made for early drinking, but it is so well-balanced that I see no reason it will not age reasonably long and quite gracefully as well. A fine bottle of grown up pinot noir. 2014-2030+. **91+.**

2011 Pinot Noir “Razorback Vineyard”- Thomas Fogarty Winery

The Razorback Vineyard is part of the original plantation known as the Fogarty Estate vineyards that first began to be cleared and planted in 1978. The two acres that comprise Razorback are planted entirely to pinot noir and sit at an elevation of 1400 feet above sea level. The 2011 Pinot from this vineyard comes in at a nicely understated 12.7 percent alcohol and delivers a superb, youthful bouquet of cherries, beet root, pomegranate, cola, a lovely and complex base of soil tones, a touch of mustard seed, a very deft framing of vanillin oak and an interesting, almost savory smokiness that reminds me somehow of smoldering ferns. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully light on its feet, with a sappy core, fine focus and balance, good, nascent complexity and a very long, suave and seamless finish. This is still

pretty primary in terms of development, but it is not particularly tannic and is already quite approachable. However, I would be inclined to tuck it away for a few years and let its secondary layers of complexity start to emerge. It is not the most complex young pinot I have tasted, but I really like its superb focus and its seamless sense of balance. Fine juice. 2016-2035. **92.**

2011 Pinot Noir “Rapley Trail Vineyard”- Thomas Fogarty Winery

The Rapley Trail Vineyard was planted by the winery in 1981 and was the source for their “Estate Reserve” cuvée from the late 1980s. The 2011 version is a bit more black fruity than the 2011 Razorback pinot in this vintage, and is a bit more complex out of the blocks as well. The vineyard is a bit higher in elevation at 1775 feet above sea level than Razorback (1400 feet). The 2011 Rapley Trail pinot offers up a deep and very classy nose of black cherries, a bit of plum, fresh thyme, dark soil tones, California herb tones, cola and a gentle base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very classy, with a lovely core of blackish fruit, fine soil inflection, just a bit of tannin, lovely acids and excellent focus and grip on the long and very well-balanced finish. I really like the style and shape of this wine in the 2011 vintage! 2016-2035. **93.**

2011 Pinot Noir “Rapley Trail Vineyard- Henry Ayrton’s Block”- Thomas Fogarty Winery

As noted above, the Rapley Trail Vineyard was the source for the winery’s “Estate Reserve” cuvée from the late 1980s. However, the winery began producing wines from isolated blocks in this vineyard beginning in the 2002 vintage, with the Henry Ayton block located lower down on the mountainside at the base of this vineyard, where it is a bit “more protected from the elements” and tends to ripen a bit earlier than the higher elevation sections of this parcel of pinot noir. The 2011 bottling is exceptional, offering up a deep and complex bouquet of cherries, dark berries, a bit of beetroot, lovely, stony soil tones, charred wood, cola and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and again, very light on its feet, with impressive transparency and complexity, moderate tannins, a fine core and superb focus and grip on the very long and refined finish. An excellent bottle of pinot. 2016-2035+. **93+.**

2011 Pinot Noir “Rapley Trail Vineyard- M Block”- Thomas Fogarty Winery

The M Block in the Rapley Vineyard is the coolest and most exposed section of the vineyard and the winery often harvests its pinot noir here fully two weeks later than in the more sheltered section of the vineyard. This is pretty ripe for a 2011 Santa Cruz pinot, coming in at 13.3 percent, but it really is beautifully pure and focused. The bouquet on the 2011 is excellent, offering up a deep and suavely black fruity constellation of black cherries, a touch of sweet dark berry, fresh herb tones (with a touch of dill), bonfires, a bit of sarsaparilla, a complex base of soil, cardamom and a nice framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and transparent, with a fine core of fruit, lovely focus and grip and a very long, complex and moderately tannic and tangy finish. Fine juice. 2017-2035+. **94.**

Hilliard-Bruce Winery (Santa Rita Hills- Santa Barbara)

Hilliard-Bruce Winery in the Santa Rita Hills of Santa Barbara County is relatively new, as the winery planted its twenty-one acres of pinot noir and chardonnay vines only in 2004. These are cool-climate vineyards, as the average daytime temperature is in the low 70s and evening temperatures can often drop to the high 50s (Fahrenheit) during the growing season, as the Pacific Ocean (only eleven miles from the vineyards) acts not only as a moderating effect on temperatures, but also provides an almost constant breeze during the growing season. The twenty-one acres of vines are split between 17.5 acres of pinot noir and 3.5 acres of chardonnay,

and the wines tend to be raised in thirty percent new wood. The winery uses evocative names such as Sun, Moon and Sky for their pinot noir cuvées, but I am not sure if these are vineyard selections or cuvées aimed at creating different styles of pinot noir, and the winery's website was rather devoid of technical information. I tasted two examples from Hilliard-Bruce Winery- a chardonnay and a pinot noir- and both were quite good.

2011 Hilliard-Bruce Winery Chardonnay “Santa Rita Hills”

The 2011 Santa Rita Hills bottling of chardonnay from Hilliard-Bruce was raised in thirty percent new wood, was completely barrel-fermented and tips the scales at 14.3 percent alcohol. The nose offers up a fine blend of pear, apple, gentle leesiness, almond paste and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite classy, with a good core of fruit, fine focus and just a touch of backend heat poking out from the ripeness on the long, suave and complex finish. This is a good bottle for near-term drinking, but it would seem to me that with the ambient temperatures here so low, this wine could come in at a full point lower octane and still be perfectly ripe and even better balanced. This is a good bottle as it is, but the potential here seems even better. 2014-2020. **89.**

2010 Hilliard-Bruce Winery Pinot Noir “Sun” (Santa Rita Hills)

The winery's 2010 “Sun” pinot noir is a very pretty wine done in a riper style (but retaining a fine sense of poise and balance), which wafts from the glass in a complex mix of black cherries, plums, chocolate, sasparella soda, woodsmoke, Santa Barbara herbs and a deft framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, plush on the attack and complex, with a fine, sappy core of fruit, very good focus and balance and a long, complex and modestly tannic finish. Good juice. 2014-2030. **92.**

Inman Family Wines (Russian River)

I came away from the Pinot Days tasting strongly convinced that the Inman family is producing some absolutely beautiful wines from their vineyard in the Russian River Valley, but wasting all their efforts by sealing their entire lineup of wines under screwcap. They do an awful lot of things right along the way, harvesting their grapes to typically come in between thirteen and thirteen and half percent alcohol, using only one and two wine barrels to raise certain cuvées of their pinot noirs, utilizing indigenous yeasts for fermentation and practicing non-interventionist winemaking that allows the underlying soil flavors to come to the fore and the wines to retain lovely freshness and bounce from excellent acidity levels. The owner and winemaker here is Kathleen Inman, who released her first vintage in 2002 and has since grown to produce about three thousand cases a year from the winery, spread across the three varietals of pinot noir, chardonnay and pinot gris, as well as a bit of sparkling wine. The estate's own vineyard is the Olivet Grange Vineyard in the Russian River Valley, and they augment the production from this vineyard with some purchased grapes. The family is quite committed to environmentally sound practices (other than the use of screwcaps), and there are stunning wines lurking here underneath their choice of closure. However, of the four wines that I tasted at the Pinot Days tasting, all were showing some signs of reduction, with the 2010 “OGV Estate” pinot noir sufficiently marred by reduction as to be impossible to take a note on the wine. This winery seems to me to be one closure change away from the top tier of Russian River producers, but first they need to lose that screwcap- which really does not at all fit into their more environmentally-friendly, lower carbon footprint that they aim for with their winery!

2012 Inman Family Wines Pinot Gris (screwcap)

This is young and is only showing the first vestiges of reduction on its slightly edgy, pinched finish on the palate. The bouquet is a pretty blend of peach, apple, wheat chaff, pretty soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and currently showing nice complexity, with a good core, crisp acids and a finish that is already starting to get a bit pinched (and will probably get overtly metallic in the near future) on the backend. Drink quick. 2014-2016? **88.**

2011 Inman Family Wines Pinot Noir “Thorn Ridge” (screwcap)

The Thorn Ridge bottling from Inman Family Wines is made from purchased grapes from this vineyard located in the Sebastopol Hills, which lies above the fog line and tends to make a bit riper and more black fruity rendition of pinot noir than the fruit from the family’s home ranch of Olivet Grand Vineyard in the Russian River Valley. The 2011 Thorn Ridge tips the scales at 13.8 percent alcohol and was raised entirely in one and two year-old barrels. The wine offers up a lovely nose of cherries, beetroot, coffee, woodsmoke, Sonoma herb tones and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and tangy, with fine complexity, just a touch of tannin and excellent length and grip on the focused and classy finish. This is still early days for this wine, which means it is not (yet?) showing any signs of reduction and I would be strongly inclined to drink it up in its youth- due solely to its closure- as the underlying balance here is exemplary and this wine would age long and fine under natural cork. 2014-2020? **91.**

2010 Inman Family Wines Pinot Noir “Olivet Grand Vineyard Estate” (screwcap)

Sadly, this wine was far more reduced than its 2009 counterpart and really impossible to take a proper note on at the Pinot Days tasting. The wine is only 12.5 percent alcohol and I would have loved to have seen a good example of it, as there seemed to be a lot of inherent complexity and good underlying balance to the wine, but it was already too stinky with overcooked asparagus overtones to be fair to evaluate the wine without at least a good decanting (which was not available at the tasting). ???

2009 Inman Family Wines Pinot Noir “Olivet Grand Vineyard Estate” (screwcap)

The 2009 OGV Estate bottling of pinot noir from Inman Family Wines is showing just a bit of reduction (which would probably dissipate completely right now with a good decanting), but is an excellent wine under its brewing cloud. The wine tips the scales at a very civilized 13.4 percent alcohol and offers up a lovely and complex nose of strawberries, coffee, beetroot, fresh herb tones and a discreet touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and complex, with a good core, fine focus and balance, modest tannins and very good length and grip on the tangy and quite stylish finish. Under cork I would be totally sanguine for this wine’s future evolution, but under screwcap, it is certainly more of a crapshoot. But, at least for the near-term, there is a lot to like here and I can only imagine how good this wine would be under natural cork! 2014-2020? **91.**

Kendric Vineyards (Marin County)

Proprietor and winemaker Stewart Johnson started Kendric Vineyards back in 2002, having first cleared and planted his 8.5 acre vineyard in northern Marin County over the course of 2001 and 2002. The winery takes its name from Stewart’s father, Kendric Johnson, who passed away in 2001, just as Stewart and his wife, Eileen Burke, were launching the winery project. The first commercial vintage released was from 2004. The vineyards are located near the Sonoma border in northern Marin County, on an east-facing slope and this is a very cool microclimate that is ideal for pinot noir. The marine layer here tends to lift a bit earlier than in

other sections of Marin (due to the nearby effects of Mount Burdell), but this remains an impressively cool area for pinot noir cultivation, with all of the Kendric wines showing that lovely pale color from gently ripened grapes and non-interventionist winemaking. The estate is also just beginning to produce a bit of viognier from vineyards in Marin, as well as a bit of syrah and sangiovese from Stewart's mother's vines in the Shenandoah Valley. I have not yet tasted the syrah or sangiovese, but as the notes below will attest, this is one of California's rising stars for pinot noir and today is a great moment to get in on the ground floor of what will one day be one of the superstars for this varietal in the state. Stewart has changed things ever so slightly as the years have gone by, as he started out in his first couple of years using forty percent new wood for his pinot noirs, but has reduced this to thirty percent from the 2010 vintage forwards. Additionally, as Stewart notes, "the vineyard has ripened at slightly lower Brix as the vines have gotten older, so that the first few vintages used to be in the 13.6 to 13.9 percent alcohol range, but now we are typically under thirteen and a half." He has also started using more whole cluster in his fermentation from the 2008 vintage forwards, as again, the slightly older vines are producing a bit more ripeness in the stems as well. The pinot noirs from Kendric Vineyards are notable for their generally lighter colors and intense aromatics, with lovely transparency to the soil and beautiful focuses and balances. The older vintages are very good, but it is quite clear from tasting a range of years that Stewart is refining his methodology in the cellar with each passing season and as the age of the vines continues to increase, the wines from Kendric Vineyards are only going to get better and better. I really find this to be one of the most exciting pinot noir producers in the state today.

2012 Kendric Vineyards "Marin County" Viognier

I am not the best person to be showing viognier to these days, as I find that most examples are a bit more high octane than I really care for in my wines. The Kendric Vineyards version from 2012 is pretty tame in alcohol by the standards of viognier, only tipping the scales at 13.9 percent, and offers up a perfectly respectable bouquet of peaches, pears, a touch of cardamom, a solid signature of soil and a very musky floral topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and pretty, with a good core of fruit, vibrant acids and good length and grip on the modestly complex finish. A good effort from a difficult grape. 2014-2016. **88.**

2013 Kendric Vineyards "Marin County" Pinot Noir (barrel sample)

Stewart Johnson noted that "normally, I would never think of showing a wine which had only finished up malolactic three or four weeks ago, but the wine was showing so well that I just had to bring a bottle along to the Pinot Days tasting for those who might be curious." This looks likely to be a terrific wine, as it offers up a pure and vibrant nose of red plums, beetroot, smoke, cola, fresh herb tones and a really lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and sappy at the core, with suave tannins, lovely focus and a long, tangy finish. This has excellent promise and I will look forward to tasting the finished article in the years to come! 2016-2035+. **92-94+.**

2012 Kendric Vineyards "Marin County" Pinot Noir Reserve (barrel sample)

This is the first "Reserve" bottling ever produced at Kendric Vineyards, as Stewart Johnson decided to take this lot of grapes and ferment them at a very slightly higher temperature and retain a bit more whole clusters. The wine is a bit deeper-pitched aromatically as a result, but very promising in its aromatic constellation of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, cocoa, a bit of gamebird, mustard seed, fresh thyme, a fine base of soil, incipient notes of beetroot and a deft framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely structured,

with a fine, sappy core, lovely transparency, ripe, fine-grained tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and youthful finish. This is going to be outstanding. 2019-2040+. **93+**.

2010 Kendric Vineyards “Marin County” Pinot Noir (Marin County)

The 2010 pinot noir from Kendric Vineyards is outstanding, offering up a deep and pure bouquet of cherries, red berries, a touch of orange peel, herb tones, fresh nutmeg, cola, lovely soil tones and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with a sappy core, excellent transparency, bright acids, suave tannins and a very long, focused and bouncy finish that closes with superb grip and soil signature. High class juice. 2017-2035. **93**.

2009 Kendric Vineyards “Marin County” Pinot Noir (Marin County)

I was very happy to have a chance to re-taste the 2009 Kendric pinot noir at the Pinot Days tasting, as it became clear that I underestimated this wine a bit when I tasted it in its early days after bottling. The bouquet is deep and beautifully transparent, offering up scents of cherries, beetroot, cola, a lovely blend of fresh herbs, nutmeg and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and shows off a sappy core of fruit, with bright acids, fine-grained tannins, lovely focus and soil signature and a long, tangy and complex finish. A superb bottle of pinot that I would tuck away for another four or five years and really let its secondary layers of complexity emerge. 2018-2035+. **93+**.

2006 Kendric Vineyards “Marin County” Pinot Noir (Marin County)

I really enjoyed the 2006 Kendric Vineyards pinot noir, but it is quite clear that this is from an earlier epoch at the estate, and while this wine is quite lovely, it is not quite in the same league in terms of complexity, soil transparency and breed as the more recent vintages. This is of course natural, as Stewart Johnson is getting more familiar with his vineyard with each passing year and his vines are getting older at the same time. That said, this is still a very tasty bottle, with a slightly higher alcohol level than more recent vintages, as it comes in at 13.9 percent and was raised in forty percent new wood. The bouquet is deep, pure and sappy, offering up a lovely mix of black cherries, pomegranate, cola, just a touch of fresh herbs, gentle soil tones, a dollop of cinnamon and a stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and light on its feet, with melting tannins, sound acids and fine length and grip on the very well-balanced finish. This is not quite as complex and transparent as later vintages, as the combination of younger vines and slightly higher ripeness has diminished these qualities a bit, but it is a very well-made and tasty wine that is now drinking very well indeed. 2014-2025. **89**.

Masút Vineyard and Winery (Mendocino)

The Masút Vineyard and Winery are owned and run by Jake and Ben Fetzer, grandsons of the founding Fetzer family of winegrowers, Barney and Kathleen. When the eponymous Fetzer winery and brand was sold in 1992 to the liquor giant, Brown-Forman, the family kept most of their vineyards and retired from winemaking and headed back to their ranches and continued to farm in Mendocino, supplying grapes to many different estates. Masút Vineyard lies next door to the family’s original Home Vineyard in northern Mendocino (cleared and planted by the Fetzer grandparents back in 1958), with twenty-three acres of vines planted on hillsides entirely to pinot noir in 1997, and it was eventually planned simply as a ranch to sell grapes from to other wineries. However, the family winemaking bug was not to be denied (Jake and Ben made their first wine all the way back in elementary school), and Masút Vineyard began to produce a bit of their own pinot noir bottlings starting in the 2009 vintage, after converting an old redwood barn into a small winery. The Fetzer brothers only make pinot noir and currently offer two bottlings,

their Estate Vineyard and their Block Six cuvée. The Fetzer brothers pick their grapes at night. The wines are made quite traditionally, with about one third new wood and a single racking during their élevage. When possible, indigenous yeasts are used for the fermentations. These 2012s were the first wines I have tasted from Masút Vineyard and I was very impressed with what the two gents are doing, as both of these wines are very strong examples of cooler climate, Mendocino pinot noir.

2012 Pinot Noir “Estate Vineyard”- Masút Vineyard and Winery

The 2012 Estate Vineyard bottling from Jake and Ben Fetzer is excellent, offering up a superb and black fruity nose of black cherries, a touch of dark berry, woodsmoke, cola, a lovely base of soil, a touch of Mendo fresh herbs and a very stylish framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and impressively light on its feet, with a good core of fruit, fine soil signature, a touch of backend, ripe tannin and excellent length and grip on the nascently complex and very well-balanced finish. I really like the balance and purity this wine shows right out of the blocks. Good juice. 2014-2035+. **91+**.

2012 Pinot Noir “Block Six”- Masút Vineyard and Winery

The 2012 Block Six bottling is also excellent, with a bit more ripe tannin than the Estate Vineyard bottling and a bit more mid-palate stuffing. The bouquet is a superb blend of dark berries, black cherries, cola, woodsmoke, incipient notes of gamebird, fresh herb tones, lovely soil signature and a stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a sappy core of black fruit, a more primary personality than the Estate bottling, lovely focus and balance, fine-grained tannins and lovely grip and focus on the very long and refined finish. This section of the vineyard gets just a dollop riper than the overall, so this wine comes in at 14.1 percent alcohol, in comparison to 13.9 percent for the regular bottling, but it shares the same fine sense of harmony and elegance. A fine bottle in the making, the 2012 Block Six from Masút Vineyard will want a few years in the cellar to blossom. 2020-2040+. **93**.

Saintsbury Vineyard (Carneros)

Back in my early wine merchant days, Sainsbury was one of the most consistent and well-made pinot noirs in the market back in the 1980s. The winery was founded in 1981 and released its first wines from the 1982 vintage. I was very pleased to see that the 2011 regular bottling of “Carneros” pinot noir from the estate was very much as I remembered it from those vintages of the 1980s, with its bright red fruit, nice Carneros herb tones and a round, bouncy palate style. I hope that it continues to be done in the slightly lower octane style of the past, as the 2011 was 13.5 percent, but this is from a very cool growing season and perhaps other recent vintages are a bit riper in style. The two single vineyard bottlings that I tasted were riper, oakier and less interesting to my palate than the regular bottling, and I had the distinct impression that their alcohol levels were rather underreported on the labels.

2011 Pinot Noir “Carneros”- Sainsbury Vineyard

The 2011 Carneros bottling of pinot noir from Sainsbury tips the scales at a very civilized 13.5 percent alcohol (in this cool and classy vintage) and really is a nice, round and easy-going drink that is not particularly complex, but hits all the right notes. The classic bouquet is a blend of cherries, beetroot, a dollop of chocolate, herb tones, a bit of nutskin and a very judicious framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and suave on the attack, with a good core of fruit, sound balance, solid acidity and just a touch of backend tannin on the

long, juicy and quite stylish finish. This is not a particularly complex wine, but it is really every bit as good as I remember from the old days and very cut from the same stylistic cloth of the early vintages. Good juice. 2014-2020. **89.**

2010 Pinot Noir “Stanly Ranch”- Saintsbury Vineyard

The Stanly Ranch is also in Carneros, and the 2010 pinot from this site is quite a bit riper than the regular Carneros bottling of 2011, as it comes in at 14.5 percent alcohol. The wine is ripe and quite simple on the nose, wafting from the glass in a blend of black cherries, cola, smoke, herbs and a bit of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and four-square, with sound acids, moderate tannins and some overt, backend heat poking out on the long finish. This is okay, but is really a bit ripe for its own good and lacks the personality of the Carneros bottling. 2014-2020. **86.**

2010 Pinot Noir “Brown Ranch”- Saintsbury Vineyard

Brown Ranch, in Carneros, was planted in 1990 by Saintsbury and the winery has been producing wine from this fruit since 1995. The 2010 officially came in at fourteen percent alcohol on the label, but this wine is quite a bit riper than its stated octane level and in reality is probably closer to 14.4 or 14.5 percent. The bouquet is deep and sappy, offering up scents of black cherries, chocolate, herb tones, smoke and plenty of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and plump at the core, with some uncovered oak tannins poking out on the backend, as well as a bit of heat on the long, fairly straightforward finish. This is not complex juice, and I would have thought that the wood tannins would be fully integrated into a 2010 by now (if they are ever going to fully be absorbed), so I am not overly wild about the balance of its constituent components. It is a shade better than the Stanly Ranch bottling, but at \$65-\$72 per bottle, this is not a wine I would be particularly interested in no matter how it evolves, as it carries a silly price tag for this rather indifferent quality. 2014-2020+? **87.**



Fog rolling in at the Rodgers Creek Vineyard on the Sonoma Coast- one of Sojourn Cellar's top bottlings.

Sojourn Cellars (Sonoma County)

Sojourn Cellars is a relatively new estate founded in 2001 by Craig Haserot and Eric Bradley, with Eric handling the winemaking duties and having previously been Assistant Winemaker at Arrowood Winery prior to co-founding Sojourn Cellars. The estate purchases

small lots of grapes from some of the top vineyards in Sonoma for their pinot noir and chardonnay bottlings, as well as making a small amount of cabernet sauvignon from a top vineyard site in Napa. I was very impressed with the quality of the wines the Sojourn team had brought along for the Pinot Days tasting, and Craig very kindly sent me out some additional bottlings from the winery to round out my coverage. The winery produces eight distinct, single vineyard bottlings of pinot noir from top vineyards in the Sonoma Coast and Russian River Valley, as well as several chardonnay bottlings and their cabernet sauvignon from Napa-sourced fruit. I was very impressed with the elegance and understated style of these wines, as even the ripest bottling at 14.6 percent alcohol was very refined, light on its feet and precise, with no signs of jamminess.

2012 Chardonnay “Sonoma Coast”- Sojourn Cellars

I quite liked the 2012 Sonoma Coast bottling of chardonnay, which is sourced from a pair of different vineyards and blended. The wine does see a fair bit of *battonage* to add core richness, and I had the sense that the lees stirring might have taken away just a bit of precision on the palate. But, there is an awful lot to like here, as the wine offers up a very pretty bouquet of apple, pear, leesy tones, acacia blossoms, butter and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and juicy, with fine mid-palate concentration, lovely balance and very good length and grip on the crisp finish. There is just a touch of blurriness here that keeps the score down a tad, but this is good juice. 2014-2020. **88.**

2012 Chardonnay “Sangiaco Vineyard”- Sojourn Cellars

The 2012 single vineyard bottling of chardonnay from the Sangiaco Vineyard is a nice step up in terms of focus and precision and this is a serious glass of chardonnay. This is one of the most important sources of fruit for Sojourn Cellars, with the vineyard (which lies close to Durell Vineyard in the Russian River Valley AVA) having been planted in 1998 and offering up very high quality chardonnay and pinot noir grapes. The wine wafts from the glass in a complex mélange of apple, a touch of passion fruit, peach, salty soil tones, musky white flowers and a judicious framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a fine core of fruit, a very nice base of soil tones, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the classy finish. A fine bottle. 2014-2020+. **92.**

2012 Pinot Noir “Sonoma Coast”- Sojourn Cellars

The Sojourn Cellars Sonoma Coast bottling hails from eleven different vineyards in this pinot noir hotbed (or should that be cool-bed?) and the blended wine is really a lovely and complex middleweight that offers up fine value. I was very much struck by the nice, pale red color of the wine, and the very stylish nose wafts from the glass in a complex blend of cherries, beetroot, Sonoma herb tones, cocoa powder, a lovely base of soil and a gentle touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, juicy and complex, with a nice core of red fruit, fine soil signature and a long, complex and bouncy finish of very modest tannins. This is made to drink on the young side and it is indeed drinking with great charm out of the blocks, but it is so well-balanced that it should have no problems last a decade or more. 2014-2025+. **90.**

2012 Pinot Noir “Rodgers Creek Vineyard”- Sojourn Cellars

The three single vineyard bottlings of pinot noir that I tasted from Sojourn Cellars (there are eight in total, with the winery splitting them up into spring and fall releases) were all a touch deeper and more structured than the fine Sonoma Coast bottling, with a few a bit riper as well. The 2012 Rodgers Vineyard bottling was the closest in octane to the Sonoma Coast bottling (14.2 percent versus 14.1 percent for the SC) and was really an excellent bottle in the making. The deep, youthfully complex and very refined nose offers up scents of red and black cherries,

woodsmoke, a touch of gamebird, herb tones, raw cocoa and a nice framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with fine focus and grip, moderate, well-integrated tannins, good acids and a very long, pure and still quite primary finish. This is going to be an excellent bottle of pinot, but it will need at least three or four years in the cellar to blossom and will probably not reach its apogee until its tenth birthday. Fine juice! 2017-2035+. **93.**

2012 Pinot Noir “Sangiacomo Vineyard”- Sojourn Cellars

The 2012 Sangiacomo Vineyard pinot noir is a touch riper than the Rodgers Creek bottling, coming in at 14.5 percent alcohol, but it is still a very fine and succulent wine that is impressively light on its feet and finesseful for its octane. The sappy nose wafts from the glass in a lovely blend of cherries, beetroot, a touch of cocoa powder, cinnamon, fresh herbs and a judicious touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and succulent on the attack, with a lovely core, ripe, suave tannins and a long, tangy and very classy finish. I was expecting a bit more opulent, and the light on its feet personality of this wine was most impressive and a very pleasant surprise. This is really fine as well. 2018-2035+. **92.**

2012 Pinot Noir “Gap’s Crown Vineyard”- Sojourn Cellars

The Gap’s Crown Vineyard lies just east and above the Sangiacomo Vineyard, with the higher elevation (300 to 800 feet above sea level) keeping it a bit above the fogs that help moderate the temperatures in Sangiacomo, so this wine tends to be one of the riper of the single vineyard bottlings from Sojourn Cellars. The 2012 is 14.6 percent, but shares the same refinement and restraint of the other Sojourn pinots, as it offers up a lovely bouquet of black cherries, chocolate, gentle notes of Sonoma herbs, a lovely base of soil, woodsmoke and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite plush on the attack, with a sappy core of fruit, silky tannins and fine length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This is not quite as complex as either the Rodgers’ Creek or Sangiacomo bottlings in 2012, but it delivers plenty of enjoyment and will drink better out of the blocks than either of these other two single vineyard bottlings. 2014-2025. **91.**

Additional Pinot Noirs Tasted Recently

2011 Crowley Wines “Willamette Valley” Pinot Noir (Oregon)

The 2011 Willamette Valley bottling of Pinot Noir from Tyson Crowley is still a young wine and it is currently fairly weedy in style, but I suspect that this is a passing phase and the wine will blossom nicely with a bit of bottle age. The bouquet today offers up a lovely red fruity personality underneath its rather strident weediness, with notes of cherries, raspberries, soil and a touch of vanillin oak augmenting a rather broad selection of herb tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tight and rather hermetically sealed in its adolescence at the present time, but with a good core, fine focus and grip, bright acids and just a touch of tannin all supplying a very promising structural chassis for the wine to age on and eventually blossom. If the overt, youthful weediness is eventually subsumed into its other elements and starts to play a supporting role here, the wine will merit a score at the high end of my range. If it stays as weedy as it is now, then it is going to be too herbaceous for most folks and will merit a score at the lower end of the range. I would love to re-taste this wine in six months, as there are some very serious constituent components here, and the other, outstanding 2011 pinots from Tyson seem to indicate that giving this wine the benefit of the doubt would be the most prudent course. 2018-2035. **85-90?**

2011 Crowley Wines “Entre Nous” Pinot Noir (Oregon)

Tyson Crowley has certainly fashioned some low octane pinots in the cooler 2011 vintage, with the '11 Ente Nous bottling coming in at a very understated 11.8 percent! The wine is actually very lovely and in terms of shape and intensity it reminds me quite a bit of some 2011 red Burgundies. The bouquet is a very pretty and red fruity blend of strawberries, cherries, a touch of coffee, gentle herb tones (nothing like the Willamette Valley bottling!), a fine base of soil and a delicate base of new wood. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and nicely high-toned, with good intensity of flavor, a lean personality, tangy acids and just a whisper of backend tannin adding grip and gravitas on the long, transparent and complex finish. I really like this wine for its purity and transparency and it should age very well indeed. 2014-2030. **90.**

2011 Crowley Wines “La Colina Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills, Oregon)

The 2011 La Colina Vineyard bottling from Crowley Wines is another low octane and very serious wine, tipping the scales at a petite 11.4 percent alcohol, but offering up complete ripeness and plenty of intensity. The excellent bouquet jumps from the glass in a mix of cherries, beetroot, woodsmoke, a superbly complex base of soil, fresh herb tones, coffee and a whisper of new wood. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and very transparent, with a good core, lovely focus and purity, just a touch of tannin and a very long, tangy and intensely flavored finish. This is outstanding juice! 2016-2035+. **93+.**

2011 Crowley Wines “Geherts Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Oregon)

The Geherts Vineyard tends to get the ripest fruit of all the pinot noir vineyards that Tyson Crowley works with and in the cool 2011 vintage, the wine came in at an even twelve percent alcohol. This is another very good wine, but it is far more closed at the present time than either the Ente Nous or Colina Vineyard bottlings and will need some time in the cellar to blossom. The nose is a very primary blend of red and black cherries, mustard seed, thyme, a fine base of soil tones, smoke, just a hint of new wood and a mix of other herb tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, nascently complex and quite tightly-knit, with a fine core of fruit, ripe, tangy acids, a dollop of tannin and a very long, soil-driven finish that currently displays a green streak of *herbacité*. This is not as weedy as the 2011 Willamette Valley bottling, but it will need some time to blossom, and again, depending on how much of its fresh herb character slides into a supporting role will determine just how good the wine is at its apogee. 2017-2035. **89-92.**

2011 Fausse Piste Pinot Noir (Oregon)

The 2011 Pinot Noir from Fausse Piste is a very nice, classic bottle of pinot that should drink well for the next dozen years or more. The wine offers up a lovely nose of strawberries, cherries, fresh herb tones, a fine base of soil, a touch of orange zest and a topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and moderately complex, with a nice core, sound focus and grip, just a touch of tannin and a very long, tangy and well-balanced finish. This is good juice, and while it is not quite in the same league as the best Rhône-styled reds from Jesse Skiles, it is very well made and offers up plenty of early drinking pleasure and the potential to also age well for another decade or more. 2014-2025+. **89.**

2009 Rhys Vineyards “Family Farm” Pinot Noir (San Mateo)

The 2009 Family Farm pinot noir from Kevin Harvey and his talented team at Rhys Vineyards is blossoming beautifully and really is a serious bottle of pinot in the making. The pure, complex and very classy nose wafts from the glass in a blend of red and black cherries, cola, a great base of stony soil tones, espresso and a nice touch of spicy oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully focused, with a fine core of fruit, impeccable

balance and nascent complexity, moderate tannins and excellent length and grip on the dancing finish. This still could use a couple of years to really blossom, but it is going to be a superb bottle at its apogee. 2015-2040+. **93+**.

2005 Joseph Swan “Cuvée des Trois” Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley)

The 2005 Joseph Swan “Cuvée des Trois” bottling of pinot noir has aged quite nicely and is really drinking well at age eight. The bouquet is lovely, offering up some fine secondary layers of complexity in its mix of baked cherries, coffee, *sous bois*, herb tones, cola and a deft touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely autumnal, with a good core, still a touch of tannin and a long, complex and tangy finish. This bottling is crafted for early drinking, but like all of Rod Berglund’s excellent pinot noirs, this wine ages very well and really seems likely to peak around its tenth birthday. 2013-2025+. **91**.

Syrah and Other Rhône Varietals

2011 Fausse Piste Syrah “Garde Manger” (Oregon and Washington)

This Fausse Piste syrah bottling is produced from grapes sourced across five different vineyards situated in either Washington or Oregon and aged in older oak barrels. The 2011 vintage comes in at a very civilized 13.4 percent alcohol, as “we pick based more on acidity and balance, rather than pure sugar ripeness” says winemaker Jesse Skiles. The 2011 is an excellent bottle of syrah, offering up a deep, complex and very classy bouquet of cassis, black pepper, game, espresso, a touch of bitter chocolate, lovely soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with modest tannins, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and very suave finish. A lovely wine that would not be out of place in a flight of old school Crozes-Hermitage or St. Joseph. 2014-2024. **92**.

2010 Fausse Piste Syrah “Ambassador Vineyard” (Washington)

The Ambassador Vineyard is located on Red Mountain in Washington state, due east of the Ciel du Cheval Vineyard that plays such an important role at Andrew Will Winery. Jesse Skiles sources viognier, roussanne and syrah from this vineyard, and makes this very limited production cuvée in two barrels- one of which is new. The 2010 syrah bottling from Ambassador is a bigger and riper wine than his Garde Manger version, coming in at 14.5 percent alcohol, but also in possession of great purity and picture-perfect balance. The deep and superbly complex nose offers up scents of black raspberries, cassis, ground pepper, a touch of chocolate, woodsmoke, a lovely base of soil and a deft touch of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and vividly focused, with a superb core, modest tannins, lovely balance and a very long, complex and very refined finish. Outstanding syrah that again, is very northern Rhône-like in style. A great value. 2014-2030. **93+**.

2010 Fausse Piste Grenache (Washington)

Jesse Skiles 2010 Grenache is a superb wine and I was utterly surprised at how well it manages its rather heady 14.5 percent alcohol level, as the wine is very transparent, shows no signs of *sur maturité* and is not hot at all on the backend! The wine is very fine, offering up a fresh and classy nose of cherries, raspberries, a touch of pepper, lovely spice tones, a good base of soil and just a whisper of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and surprisingly transparent for its octane, with a fine core, moderate tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and well-balanced finish. I would expect that this wine will drink best during its relative youth, as 14.5 percent is a lot of alcohol to manage over long-term cellaring,

but the wine is exquisitely balanced today and it is certainly possible that it will age longer than I can imagine. 2014-2020+? **91.**

1995 Edmunds St. John “Durrell Vineyard” Syrah (Sonoma)

The 1995 syrah from the Durrell Vineyard is an outstanding wine and one of my favorites from this vineyard source from Steve Edmunds. The excellent nose is now beginning to really hit its stride, as it soars from the glass in a superb blend of cassis, black cherries, grilled meats, saddle leather, pepper and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very well-balanced, with a fine core of fruit, still a bit of ripe tannin to resolve and outstanding length and grip on the complex and focused finish. Lovely juice that is still probably another year or two away from full blossoming. 2015-2035+. **93.**

Laurel Glen Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon Vertical Report

Laurel Glen Vineyard, that was owned and run with great skill by Patrick Campbell from the time of his purchase of the sixteen acre vineyard in 1977 until he sold the estate in 2011. The vineyard is located high up on Sonoma Mountain and was planted entirely to cabernet sauvignon by its previous owner, Carmen Taylor, in 1968, with the grapes for several years sold to Château St. Jean and used for a single vineyard bottling by that estate. However, vine growing here goes back considerably further, with German winemaking immigrants having first cleared and planted these vineyards to red wine grapes all the way back in the 1880s. Patrick did not produce a wine from his grapes until the 1981 vintage, when he released his first vintage under the Laurel Glen Vineyard label, with the debut cabernet from the winery hitting the market in 1984. The wine was initially one of the great, traditionally-styled cabernets produced, with a deep and structured style that promised from the very first vintage to demand significant cellaring and likely to age long and gracefully. I was a very big fan of the Laurel Glen cabernets when they first were released into the market and followed and cellared them for several vintages in the decade of the 1980s. Subsequently, I had lost track of the style of the wines a bit (not having the opportunity to taste them with any regularity through the decades of the 1990s and 2000s), but was delighted to attend a vertical tasting a year or so ago to celebrate the winery’s thirtieth vintage release. I should note that the property was purchased in 2011 by Bettina Sichel, (the daughter of Peter M. F. Sichel, creator of the Blue Nun brand of German wine), who had worked in the California wine industry in a variety of capacities for twenty years prior to purchasing Laurel Glen Vineyard. Patrick Campbell was retained as a consultant at Laurel Glen.

I was a bit saddened at this vertical tasting that I attended to see that the Laurel Glen style had not stayed consistent from those superb wines of the 1980s, with the alcohol levels creeping up over the years and the wines from the newer vintages far less interesting to my palate than those from the early years of the estate. As Patrick Campbell explained at the tasting, he has started out in his early years following his training at UC-Davis and practicing a routine acidulation of his wines to keep his pH below a specific threshold, and this was done each year from 1981 through the 1986 vintages. Beginning with the 1987 vintage, he began to focus simply on his sugar levels, with an aim of arriving at an alcohol level of between thirteen and thirteen and a half percent for his finished wines, and then would simply de-acidify the wine if the pH was too low. This practice was used up through the 1997 vintage. From the 1998 vintage forwards, Patrick began to pick his grapes according to the acidity levels that he wanted in the finished wines, rather than adjusting the acidity either up or down in the cellar, and his target

acidity has allowed for riper, higher alcohol wines and there are no longer any Laurel Glen cabernets under fourteen percent alcohol, and many of the recent vintages are in the 14.5 to 14.7 percent range. As Patrick observes, "there is a progression from old world, leaner and classical flavors to a more modern, fruit-driven style" at Laurel Glen as the years went by, and while he may have been sanguine with the changes, the vertical tasting did not really show that this evolution in style was necessarily a positive attribute for the cellaring potential of the wines. At least the wines are not too new oaky, as Patrick began by using sixty percent new wood for his cabernets and he has not changed this percentage to follow fashion. I fully anticipated writing a full-length feature on Patrick Campbell and his Laurel Glen cabernets when I was invited to the vertical tasting, but the more recent vintages were suitably disappointing in terms of style (particularly given my expectations to find the superb, classic wines I knew so well from the first decade of the winery's existence) and I decided there was no compelling reason to write a feature article on the wines. The more modern-styled wines here are not bad as far as these things go, but as the notes will show, the earlier vintages are far more serious (particularly in terms of soil signature). The notes from the tasting held in April 2011 were left in my files, as I meant to include them in one of the subsequent features on American wines, but forgot them until coming across them quite recently. Hence, they only find their way into print for Issue 49.

2007 Counterpoint Cabernet Sauvignon- Laurel Glen Vineyard

The 2007 Counterpoint Cabernet from Laurel Glen (essentially the estate's second wine, first produced in the difficult 1988 vintage) is ripe and appealing, and reasonably carries its full 14.5 percent alcohol with only moderate signs of heat on the backend. The jammy and very straightforward nose is a blend of black cherries, chocolate, smoke and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite sappy on the attack, with modest tannins, a fat core and good length on the slightly hot and notably blurry finish. A typical, modern and simple California cabernet sauvignon that is short on complexity, focus and seriousness. 2011-2020. **86.**

2006 Cabernet Sauvignon- Laurel Glen Vineyard

The 2006 Laurel Glen cabernet was one of the most disappointing wines of the entire vertical, with alcohol in the 14.5 range (or perhaps a tad higher, as I stopped asking about this number at the tasting after the wines got all routinely into the modern style) serving to really pull the new wood influence into the aromatic and flavor spectrums of the wine. The very new oaky and simple nose is a blend of black cherries, black raspberries, coffee grounds and plenty of toasty new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit overripe, with a fat core, zero complexity and a long, ripely tannic finish that at least shows no signs of heat. But, it also shows very little promise for the future and is pretty dull and modern jam juice. A sad wine, given how superb this estate's wines were back in the day. 2014-2030+? **85.**

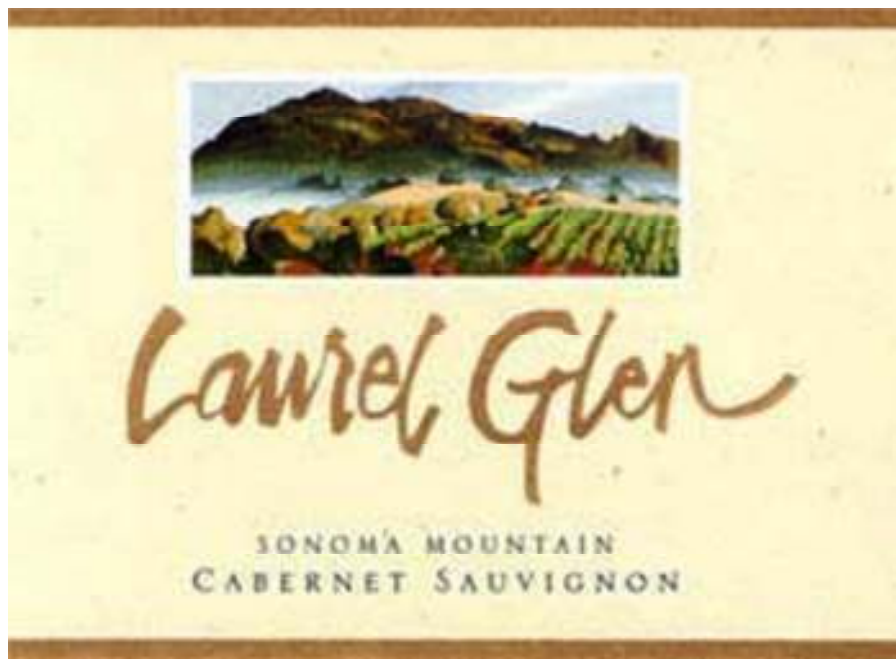
2005 Cabernet Sauvignon- Laurel Glen Vineyard

The 2005 Laurel Glen is nearly as ripe as the 2006, but it shows better overall balance and is one of the better vintages of the modern style here. The bouquet is a ripe and buxom blend of black cherries, boysenberries, chocolate, smoke and toasty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and sappy, with ripe tannins and good length and grip on the well-balanced, modern finish. Perhaps the alcohol level here is a bit lower than the 2006, and hence it is carrying its new wood component better, or perhaps that additional year of bottle age has allowed the wine to better soak up its wood. In any case, this will never be a particularly complex wine, but in the modern style at Laurel Glen, it has to be seen as one of the successes of

this era. That said, I would never buy a wine like this for my own cellar- despite it being reasonably well-made. 2015-2040. **90.**

2002 Cabernet Sauvignon- Laurel Glen Vineyard

The 2002 Laurel Glen was nine years old when I tasted it in the spring of 2011, and it was already showing a fair bit of development to both its bouquet and palate impression. The bouquet is deep and blossoming with secondary tones in its mix of black cherries, chipotles, cigar smoke, fresh herb tones and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and suave on the attack, with a good core, still some ripe tannins to resolve and lovely length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This is a good wine, but short on the soil tones that defined the wines from the previous decades here. 2015-2040. **91.**



2001 Cabernet Sauvignon- Laurel Glen Vineyard

The 2001 vintage at Laurel Glen seems to have produced a slightly riper wine than in 2002, and there is a bit of backend heat on the palate that keeps its score down a bit. The ripe nose is a blend of red and black cherries, a touch of chocolate, tobacco smoke, herbs and Taransaud spicy oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fat on the attack, with a solid core, ripe tannins, sound acids and a long, slightly hot finish that shows no soil tones, but is not too bad in its fruit-driven personality. Only really disappointing in terms of what used to be made here by Patrick Campbell. 2016-2040. **89.**

1999 Cabernet Sauvignon "Reserve"- Laurel Glen Vineyard

The 1999 Laurel Glen, according to Patrick's vintage notes, was the first year that he let the sugars go wherever they wished and simply paid attention to his acidity levels in the grapes to determine the date of harvest. It was a year with a very good Indian Summer and the grapes were brought in from October 14th to the 22nd, with some desiccation of the fruit on the vines. The '99 Reserve did not show particularly well at our vertical, as it was already showing some overt signs of oxidation on both the nose and palate. The bouquet offers up scents of black cherries, chocolate, a bit of marshmallow, herbs and Taransaud spice. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, broad-shouldered and quite soft, with a fat core and an already tiring finish. Perhaps

this was an off bottle, or was a wine that was shipped to New York too soon before the tasting and did not recover from its travels in time to show well. Not sure if it is the wine or the bottle, but this sample was not dead yet, but not particularly inspiring. 2011-2021? **87.**

1998 Cabernet Sauvignon- Laurel Glen Vineyard

The 1998 vintage was a very long and cool year, with uneven ripening plaguing the Laurel Glen cabernet vines, so that a very strict selection was necessary to produce this fine wine. This is my favorite vintage of Laurel Glen cabernet post-1992, as the wine shows more complexity and precision than any subsequent vintage, as perhaps Mother Nature dictated the style of this wine as much as Patrick. The nose is deep and fine, wafting from the glass in a mix of red and black cherries, Cuban cigar smoke, coffee, a touch of chipotle pepper, fresh herb tones and a nice base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows off a lovely core of fruit, with very fine balance and a long, suave and ripely tannic finish. I still think there were more soil tones in the wines from the decade of the 1980s here, but this is a very well-made wine that I would have no worries about having in the cellar. It still needs a bit more time to reach its apogee. 2016-2040+. **92.**

1996 Cabernet Sauvignon- Laurel Glen Vineyard

The 1996 Laurel Glen is a good, respectable bottle of the more fruit-driven style at the winery, and the wine is impressively long on the backend. The ripe nose offers up a blend of red and black cherries, Cuban tobacco, coffee, herbs and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and chewy, with a good core, quite modest complexity, but very good length and grip on the ripely tannic finish. This is not bad in its more fruit-driven style. 2016-2040. **89+.**

1994 Cabernet Sauvignon- Laurel Glen Vineyard

The 1994 cabernet from Patrick Campbell is decidedly riper in style than either the 1998 or the 1996, and well done in this context, but less interesting as a result to my palate. The sappy nose is a blend of black cherries, cassis, chocolate, tobacco leaf, smoke and plenty of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit overly forceful in style, with a solid core, ripe and tannins, minimal complexity and good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. I would guess (again, I was not asking for specific alcohol levels by this stage of the tasting, as Mr. Campbell was getting tired of my questions!) this is fully 14.5 percent alcohol. It carries its ripeness well, but has sacrificed complexity to fatness of fruit. 2018-2040+. **88+.**

1993 Cabernet Sauvignon “Reserve”- Laurel Glen Vineyard

I was not too impressed with either vintage Reserve bottling from Laurel Glen, as both seemed to lack a bit of freshness on the palate, though the aromatics on the 1993 version were quite good. The 1993 Reserve offers up a ripe and impressively complex nose of red and black cherries, sandalwood, a touch of meatiness, nutskins and new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite glossy with plush fruit on the attack, but rather flat from the mid-palate back, with ripe, well-integrated tannins and very little complexity on the reasonably long finish. This is okay, but not special. 2011-2030. **87.**

1992 Cabernet Sauvignon- Laurel Glen Vineyard

Laurel Glen’s 1992 cabernet sauvignon is a very good wine that is still quite primary in terms of aromatic and flavor development, but shows excellent potential. The deep and emerging nose offers up scents of cassis, black cherries, tobacco smoke, a touch of nutskin, a lovely base of soil tones (the last vintage where these are prominent in the wines here?), fresh herb tones and a nicely integrated base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, quite complex and really well-balanced, with a rock solid core of fruit, melting tannins, very good focus and

excellent grip on the very long and classy finish. I really like this vintage of Laurel Glen. 2011-2025+. **92.**

1991 Cabernet Sauvignon- Laurel Glen Vineyard

Patrick Campbell prefers his 1992 to his 1991 (which hailed from a cooler growing season and longer hang time), but I have a very slight preference for his quite classically-styled '91. The bouquet of the 1991 Laurel Glen is deep, complex and offers up lovely secondary elements in its mélange of desiccated cherries, roasted venison, cigar ash, a touch of chipotle pepper, gentle herb tones and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit broader-shouldered than the 1992, with a fine core of fruit (though again, the 1992 is perhaps just a touch deeper), excellent focus and balance, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the complex and moderately tannic finish. This is drinking beautifully now, but has only just reached its plateau of maturity and will continue to cruise along for decades to come. If I only had a few bottles in the cellar of this wine, I would hold off opening them and let the wine blossom even more fully. 2011-2035+. **92+.**

1989 Cabernet Sauvignon- Laurel Glen Vineyard

Like all of the wines from Laurel Glen from the 1992 vintage back, the alcohol level of the '89 is under 13.5 percent and the soil tones of the vineyard really show here at the lower octane level. The excellent and *à point* bouquet offers up scents of cherries, currants, cigar smoke, a touch of orange peel, a superb signature of soil and a topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and just a touch sinewy in personality, with good, but not great depth at the core, still a bit of tannin and lovely length and grip on the complex finish. The relative lack of stuffing here gives the wines a slightly firmer edge to the remaining tannins here, but the wine is long and complex. This was a year with a rain at harvest and not a great year for north coast cabernet, but the wine has aged gracefully and is not a bad drink today. 2011-2025. **88.**

1988 Cabernet Sauvignon- Laurel Glen Vineyard

The 1988 vintage was another very difficult one for cabernet in Napa and Sonoma, and Patrick Campbell decided to introduce his second wine, Counterpoint, in 1988, so that he could practice a very strict selection process for the Laurel Glen bottling. Consequently, he produced only eight hundred cases of his first wine in '88 (typically there would be a bit more than three thousand cases) and the wine turned out very well and has aged with style and flair. The bouquet today is terrific, wafting from the glass in a mix of cassis, black cherries, a touch of sandalwood, tobacco smoke, stony soil nuances and fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, poised and complex, with a good core, fine focus and balance, still a bit of remaining tannin and lovely length and grip on the complex and elegant finish. This wine has aged very well indeed and still has plenty of life ahead of it. 2011-2030. **90.**

1986 Cabernet Sauvignon- Laurel Glen Vineyard

I was expecting just a bit more from the 1986 Laurel Glen, as this was a high quality vintage in the fine run of 1984 to 1987, but the wine was starting to show some structural degradation on the palate. The bouquet is first rate and shows a lovely tertiary layer of development to its constellation of dark berries, cigar ash, a touch of chipotle pepper, autumnal soil tones, herbs and a bit of nutty new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and quite tertiary in terms of flavors, with a respectable core, fairly low acids, melted tannins and only moderate grip on the long and complex finish. This is not bad wine by any stretch of the imagination, but I expected more, as it showed such fine promise when it was young. 2011-2020. **89.**

1981 Cabernet Sauvignon- Laurel Glen Vineyard

The inaugural vintage at Laurel Glen has stood the test of time very well indeed and was my absolute favorite of this vertical tasting in the spring of 2011. The fantastic nose jumps from the glass in a blend of sweet cassis, black cherries, cigar smoke, a very complex base of soil, coffee grounds and a topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, tertiary and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, outstanding focus and grip and a very long, complex and very refined and classic finish. Fine, fine juice and worlds above the recent vintages in terms of aromatic and flavor complexity. 2011-2030+. **93.**



Cabernet Sauvignon

2010 Corison “Napa Valley” Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford Bench)

I love Cathy Corison’s fine and elegant Napa cabernets and will be writing a full-length feature on her and her lovely wines in the not too distant future. Her most recent releases hail from the 2010 vintage and are excellent. Here 2010 Napa Valley bottling tips the scales at a very civilized 13.6 percent alcohol and offers up a superb bouquet of red and black cherries, gentle cigar smoke, incipient notes of allspice and fresh nutmeg, a lovely base of soil, a touch of violets and a judicious framing of cedary new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and nicely balanced, with a fine core of fruit, plenty of firm, ripe tannins and excellent length and grip on the youthful and very promising finish. I would give this classic Napa cabernet a solid

decade in the cellar to start to blossom- its true apogee is probably still twenty years out from the vintage! 2024-2060. **93.**

2009 Volker Eisele Family Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Chiles Valley- Napa)

This was the first wine I had tried from the Volker Eisele Family Estate, which is produced entirely from estate grown fruit in vineyards in Chiles Valley that are owned by the Eisele family. The 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon is a blend of eighty-nine percent cabernet and eleven percent merlot and was raised in fifty percent new wood, coming in at a very respectable 13.8 percent alcohol. This is a very fine, old school cabernet, wafting from the glass in an excellent aromatic blend of black cherries, cassis, a touch of eucalyptus, a nice base of soil, just a touch of incipient violet and a stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a fine core of fruit, ripe tannins and superb balance and grip on the long, youthful and chewy finish. This is a fine bottle of classically structured cabernet that should blossom very nicely in the fullness of time and harkens back to the good old days. 2020-2045+. **92.**

1982 Matanzas Creek Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma)

This was the first older bottle of Matanzas Creek cabernet that I have ever had the pleasure to taste, as I saw this lone bottle at an auction and took a chance on it for twenty-five dollars. It was well worth it, as the wine is really quite excellent, offering up a deep and complex nose of black cherries, tobacco leaf, a touch of bell pepper, lovely spice tones, gentle eucalyptus nuances and a stylish framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and *à point*, with a fine core, lovely focus and balance, modest tannins and impressive length and grip on the refined and complex finish. This is really a lovely bottle of cabernet at its apogee and with decades of life still ahead of it. 2012-2035. **92.**

1980 Robert Mondavi Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve

I have had some very nice examples of cabernet from the 1980 vintage over the years, which was not a great vintage, but which produced more than its share of fine, ageworthy wines. The 1980 Mondavi Reserve cabernet is more middle of the road in quality, but still a good wine, as it offers up a deep and complex, albeit, slightly leathery bouquet of cassis, dried eucalyptus, some tarry tones, a nice base of soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and marred by a touch of brett, with a good core, still a bit of hard tannin and good length and grip on the focused, but slightly ungenerous finish. I suspect this will always have a bit of a tough edge to it from less than ideal ripening. But, not bad juice and a wine that I would much prefer to drink over the overtly hot and more sickly syrupy-styled cabernets made here today. 2014-2030+. **88.**

1979 Jordan Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma)

I really enjoyed the first several vintages of Jordan Vineyards cabernets, but I found the wheels to come off of the vehicle here with the 1982 vintage, and to my palate, this winery never regained the magic touch after that fateful vintage and became simply a safe and commercial wine for newbies. However, before the weedy '82, this was a very good source for classic Sonoma cabernet, as this recent bottle of 1979 so amply demonstrated. The bouquet is deep, complex and nicely mature, wafting from the glass in a mix of dark berries, bell pepper, dark soil tones, cigar ash and plenty of Sonoma herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, elegant and very complex, with a good core, superb focus and balance, melted tannins and a very long, suave finish. This is classic Sonoma cabernet, which will always be a bit more herbal in profile than its Napa Valley counterparts, but for those with no tolerance issues with pyrazines, there is an awful lot to like in this stylish and complex wine. 2013-2030+. **92.**

1978 Diamond Creek “Volcanic Hill” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa)

It had been several years since I last tasted the '78 Diamond Creek Volcanic Hill cabernet and the wine is cruising along beautifully and almost getting ready for primetime drinking-almost! This is clearly one of the greatest wines ever produced from this estate and it is really still just a touch too young for primetime drinking, but it is getting close and will be absolutely magical once it fully blossoms. The deep, complex and truly superb nose soars from the glass in a mix of cassis, dark berries, meaty tones, cigar ash, a great base of minerality, a touch of soy and a gentle base of road tar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and very, very deep at the core, with superb focus and grip, outstanding acidity and stunning length on the ripely tannic and flawlessly balanced finish. It really seems like I underrated this brilliant wine the last few times I tasted it! One of the iconic cabernets of this legendary era in California history. 2017-2050+. **97.**

1978 Ridge Vineyards “York Creek” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa)

The 1978 Ridge York Creek cabernet is still a bit chewy on the palate and will continue to improve with further bottle age. This wine offers up a deep, ripe and lovely bouquet of cassis, black cherries, cigar ash, a bit of brett-derived barnyard, chipotle peppers, leather and a complex base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and still a bit tannic, with a good core, fine acidity and very good focus and grip on the long, complex and broad-shouldered finish. This is good juice that may yet improve with a bit more bottle age, but like several of the York Creek bottlings from Ridge, there is a bit of brett here that may put off those that are quite sensitive to the condition. 2012-2035+. **88+.**

1975 Beaulieu Vineyards “Georges de Latour” Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon

André Tchelistcheff produced some of the greatest red wines in the history of California during his long and illustrious career at Beaulieu Vineyards, but so many of these great wines have now seen the sun set on their magnificence and very few (if any) remain still in their prime. Therefore, I was very pleasantly surprised to find that the 1975 Georges de Latour bottling of cabernet remained so vigorous- perhaps already looking over the far side of its plateau, but not yet in full descent and still very much an enjoyable glass of mature wine. The wine takes a good fifteen or twenty minutes to flesh out on the palate after opening, as the remaining tannins are a bit bare-boned out of the blocks, but the fruit comes up nicely and this wine gives a lovely hour to ninety minute window of fine drinking, before it again starts to get a bit sinewy on the palate. During its prime period, the wine offers up a really lovely nose of red and black cherries, a bit of plum, Rutherford dust spice tones, sweet cigar wrapper and gentle notes of toasted coconut from its American oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and really quite nicely delineated, with a good core, still a bit of tannin and fine freshness and purity on the long and focused finish. This starts out as a nice **87** wine and then climbs up to **91** when all of the constituent components are open and in place, stays there for an hour or so, and then begins to gently fade a bit and get four-square. It still has a fair bit of life in it, but I cannot imagine that the passing of time is going to be an attribute for this wine anymore and I would be inclined to drink it up in the near-term in regular-sized formats. I suspect it is absolutely stunning still in magnum. It is probably the best remaining wine from the decade of the 1970s at BV, and is still a very lovely testimony to just how good those wines were in their glory days. 2013-2020+? **87-91.**

1975 Joseph Phelps Vineyards “Eisele Vineyard” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa)

I have not written a note on the legendary 1975 Eisele Vineyard bottling from Joseph Phelps since 2007, and I wish I could say that I get to drink this great wine with greater frequency, but I was not savvy enough to lay in a serious quantity of this wine in my own cellar

back in the day and now have to rely on the generosity of those more savvy than I was back in the day. This is a legendary California cabernet and at age thirty-five, the wine is at its apogee of peak drinkability (but with decades of life still in reserve), as it soars from the glass in a brilliantly pure blend of cassis, black raspberries, tobacco smoke, a touch of saddle leather, chocolate, beautiful soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and marvelously complex, with a sappy (but not pumped up!) core of fruit, melting tannins, stunning focus and balance, and brilliant length and grip on the poised, plush and endless finish. This is a great, great bottle of cabernet that may yet even improve a touch with further bottle age. Like so many of the great 1975 California cabernets, time seems to be standing still for this great wine. 2010-2050. **96+**.

1975 Ridge Vineyards “York Creek” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa)

Whereas the 1974 York Creek (please see below) is a lovely and very pure bottle of mature cabernet that remains at its apogee, the 1975 is not quite in the same league in terms of polish, as it is just a touch horsey on both the nose and palate from a bit of brettanomyces in this vintage. Folks have different tolerances to brett, and if even a small amount puts you off, then this wine is probably not for you. However, if you touch of brett is no big deal for you personally, then there is still plenty to enjoy in the '75 York Creek cabernet, as the wine is a bit younger than the 1974 at this point in its life and will continue to cruise along quite a bit longer than its older sibling. The impressively complex bouquet is a blend of black cherries, cassis, leather, cigar ash, a nice base of soil, a touch of black truffle, celery seed and charred wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and just a touch leathery from the brett, with a superb core of fruit, great soil signature, still some tannins and fine length and grip on the finish. There is plenty of vigor here, so the wine will continue drinking well for several decades. My score reflects my fairly high tolerance to a small amount of brett, but I should observe that others may find even this small amount of brett intrusive and not enjoy the wine quite as much as I did. 2012-2030+. **92**.

1974 Mayacamas Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (served from magnum) (Mount Veeder)

The 1974 Mayacamas cabernet in magnum is still a tad on the young side and really deserves a bit more bottle age before it reaches its apogee of peak maturity in this sized format. The brilliant nose offers up a smorgasbord of black cherries, cigar smoke, a bit of road tar, a beautifully complex base of volcanic soil tones, hints of both mint and petroleum jelly and a pungent topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with moderate tannins, outstanding complexity and grip, perfect balance and stunning length and grip on the still vibrant and palate-staining finish. I dearly hope that the new regime at Mayacamas will take note of wines such as this brilliant 1974 and not change too much at this iconic estate! 2012-2040+. **97**.

1974 Joseph Phelps Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa)

If recent auction prices are a reflection of a trend, it seems that folks who fancy great old school California cabernets are waking up to the fact that there was not really all that much difference between “regular bottlings” and “single vineyard bottlings” back in the day, as the prices for the “regular bottlings” have been rising steeply in the last year. Of course, the auction prices for the great old single vineyard bottlings from Joseph Phelps have been pretty stiff for years, accurately reflecting just how brilliant the wines were here up through the big stylistic change that commenced at the estate with the 1991 vintage. This most recent bottle of the '74 Napa cabernet from Joseph Phelps was excellent, wafting from the glass in a complex mix of

cassis, black raspberries, eucalyptus, a touch of chipotle pepper, cigar ash, a lovely dollop of spice tones and a bit of petroleum jelly in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, complex and velvety on the attack, with a good core of fruit, melted tannins and lovely length and grip on the focused and very classy finish. This particular bottle had a slightly loose cork, so there is a possibility that there are even better examples out there. 2014-2025. **90.**

1974 Ridge Vineyards “York Creek” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa)

The 1974 York Creek cabernet from Ridge is a lovely wine that has certainly been mature for many years already, but shows absolutely no signs of slowing down anytime soon. The deep, pure and complex nose wafts from the glass in a mix of black cherries, plums, tobacco ash, menthol, coffee, lovely soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, suave and classy, with fine, mature complexity, still solid stuffing, melted tannins and nice brightness and grip on the long and fully resolved finish. The balance here is lovely and this wine will continue to drink well for years to come, despite its tannins having fully fallen away. 2012-2025. **91.**



Ric Forman's cabernet franc vines ripening in the fine September sun of 2011.

1973 Beaulieu Vineyards “Georges de Latour” Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon

This particular bottle of BV Reserve cabernet had a fairly crumbly cork, so perhaps it was not the best example of the wine still out there. The wine shows just a touch of maderization on the nose, but with air, freshens up nicely to offer scents of desiccated cherries and plums, a

touch of Rutherford dust, cigar smoke, gentle spice tones and coconuttty, American oak. On the palate the wine is still full-bodied, complex and nicely balanced, with melted tannins, good focus and grip, nice acids and a good, solid core. The finish is long and well-balanced, and if it were not for the touch of oxidation, this would be outstanding. I would suspect that there are even better examples out there, and out of magnum, this would be very fine. 2014-2025? **87-90+?**

1968-1969 Spring Mountain “Lot H” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa)

Ah, things were certainly different back in Napa in the late 1960s, as this is a multi-vintage blend of cabernet sauvignon that included purchased juice from Martha’s Vineyard in 1969 (hence the Lot H moniker), as Joe Heitz did not bottle the entire production from Martha’s under his own label in this vintage. I have had problems with TCA contamination in many bottles of Spring Mountain cabernets from the early to mid-1970s, but there is no problem with this wine, which offers up a deep, mature and complex bouquet of cherries, eucalyptus, new leather, nutskins, smoke, soil and a touch of chipotle peppers in the upper register. On the palate the wine has been fully mature for years, but is still holding on nicely, with its medium-full and velvety format showing zero remaining tannin, but still impressive length and grip on the well-balanced and complex finish. This lovely wine is getting to the far side of the plateau and will probably start to decline in the not too distant future, but it is still a very good bottle of fully mature Napa cabernet. 2012-2020. **89.**

Bordeaux-Inspired Blends

1976 Joseph Phelps Vineyards Insignia (Napa)

The 1976 Phelps Insignia is essentially the Eisele Vineyard bottling in this drought year, as the Insignia did not become a more merlot-influenced Bordeaux blend until the 1977 vintage, and the first three vintages this cuvée was envisioned as the top of the line, cabernet sauvignon bottling from the winery. Consequently, the 1976 is ninety-four percent cabernet from the Eisele Vineyard. It has been a few years since I last reported on this great wine, with my most recent bottle showing a bit more of the influence from this very arid vintage, with the bouquet offering up scents of roasted cassis, eucalyptus, a touch of tariness, Cuban cigar smoke, a beautiful base of soil, espresso and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and still fairly structured, with a bit of backend tannin still perking up the finish, a great core of fruit and outstanding length and grip on the balanced and complex finish. A beautiful bottle. 2010-2035+. **94.**

1974 Joseph Phelps Vineyards Insignia (Napa)

The 1974 Joseph Phelps Insignia bottling is one of the greatest California wines I have had the pleasure to taste, and at age thirty-eight, it is still a wonder to behold. This was the very first vintage that the winery produced an Insignia bottling, as the work on the winery was finally completed (the first vintage for any wines from Joseph Phelps was 1973), which in these first few vintages was primarily cabernet sauvignon. The glorious nose on the 1974 soars from the glass in a blaze of mulberries, chocolate, small berries, a touch of toffee, a beautiful base of soil tones, crushed violets, smoke and a deft touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and extremely elegant, with a lovely core of ripe, pure fruit, seamless structure, melting tannins and great focus and balance on the very long, velvety and complex finish. It is so sad that Joseph Phelps Vineyards got tired of making First Growth quality wines and decided to make vinous cartoon characters instead, as the 1974 Insignia clearly shows that at one point in time these folks really knew how to make magical wines in California. The ’74 Insignia is fully mature, but still has decades and decades of life ahead of it. 2012-2050+. **97.**

THE VASTLY UNDERRATED AND SUPREMELY ELEGANT 2007 RED BURGUNDIES



The entrance to the stunning courtyard of the l'Hôtel Dieu- home of the Hospices de Beaune.

I do not usually write features on vintages of red Burgundy in the bottle as young as the 2007s, as I typically age my red Burgs for quite a while before I start to pull them out of the cellar, but the 2007s have been showing so beautifully on wine lists in the region when I am there that I felt the vintage deserved a re-visit at age seven. 2007 was a vintage that I liked very much from the outset, but in the superb range of years between 2005 and 2012, the 2007s seem to have gotten lost a bit in the marketplace, with only the savviest of Burgundy lovers paying them the attention that they deserve. A similar thing happened to the 2000 red Burgundies back in the day, with those who were willing to not only chase the highly-touted surrounding vintages rewarded with some absolutely beautiful bottles of Burgundy at a relatively early age, and which continue to drink well down to this day. As a lot of my Burgundy cellar is still too young for primetime drinking (the oldest vintage I have in depth is 1988, which is not yet ready to my palate), I am always on the lookout for vintages such as 2000 or 2007 that promises to provide early enjoyment and which will help me keep my hands off of wines such as the '88s or '93s that really deserve more bottle age. The other thing that really got me interested in writing again so soon about the 2007s was some of the foolish talk I have heard and seen regarding the 2011 red

Burgundies, which are incorrectly tabbed in some circles as plagued by the same issue of “green meanies” as the 2004 reds (to use the vintage’s internet moniker for the herbaceousness that some 2004s continue to show at the present time). For certain less experienced tasters of Burgundy, it seems that the 2011 vintage is a highly suspect year that has produced a large number of wines that should be studiously avoided by followers of these rather vocal Burgundy pundits. As there are some similarities between the 2011s and the 2007 reds (though none whatsoever that I can see between the ‘11s and the ‘04s), it seemed that a visit with the 2007 reds now might afford a more genteel light with which to regard the potential beauty of the 2011 reds down the road, and perhaps give folks who are aware of the chatter out there about the 2011s a more serious data point with which to assess a vintage that is likely to remain a lot easier to find in the marketplace than the very short crop of 2012s- many of which seem likely to simply never see the light of day in the market and will be quietly syphoned off to merchants’ biggest clients on a pre-arrival basis at very, very steep prices.

I should note that 2007’s biggest weakness as a vintage is its place in the line of high quality red Burgundy years that has run unbroken from 2005 to the present time. The 2005 vintage was a watershed year for the Burgundy market worldwide, with the “boom and bust” mentality that had previously not been particularly evident in the Burgundy market arriving with a vengeance when the 2005s were put up for sale at astronomical prices, and which has continued to completely define the Burgundy market since that day. Keep in mind that the very high prices for the 2005s were generated almost exclusively by merchants and speculators in the pipeline, as the price out the cellar door from producers was not dramatically higher than the tariffs for the 2004s. The mood of the Burgundy market became far more rapacious amongst both buyers and sellers with this vintage, with vintages such as 2005 selling with very high price tags- particularly for the most highly sought after estates and bottlings- and vintages like 2006 and 2007 treated as vintages simply to pass through the pipeline while waiting for the next great vintage to come along to make a fortune on by merchants or the Burgundy arbitrage specialists. Since the 2005 campaign, the most important factor in the Burgundy market that has moved the less luxuriant vintages through the market at all was the mistaken belief on the part of consumers that buying their favorite domaines in these so-called lesser years would be seen as an act of good faith with merchants and keep their allocations in line for the next hyped vintage. Clearly, this will not be the case with the 2012s, which will find many merchants with painfully short allocations of this high quality and very small crop turning their backs on a large number of long-time Burgundy clients to maximize their profits on this vintage by selling the wines to the highest bidder. Such is the casino mentality of the Burgundy market these days, which will not lead to great comprehension in the future when the next vintage along the lines of the 2007s comes along.

But, once one gets out of the mercantile confines of today’s Burgundy market, what one finds is that there is an awful lot of respect for the 2007 reds amongst those fixated on the quality of the wines (rather than their potential return on investment), as the vintages is aging very gracefully and fully delivering on the early predictions of the wines’ charm and very good, if not outstanding quality. One finds that some of the vintage’s biggest fans are the producers who made the wines themselves, who happily submit that the vintage is very, very good and starting to drink quite well already, but which will age still for many, many more years to come. Amongst the *vignerons* with whom I spoke with about the 2007 vintage was Dominique Lafon,

who observed “that the 2007 reds have really not gotten the credit that they deserve, as the wines are really quite nice to drink right now and when I am in the mood for a younger wine, this is the vintage that I have been reaching for lately.” And, when the topic comes up of comparing the 2007s with the 2011s, as both vintages shared a late-arriving ripeness due to a very cool mid-summer season, almost every Burgundian who commented on the comparison between the two vintages was quick to point out that the 2011 reds will certainly be even better than the very good 2007s. Véronique Drouhin was typical of the reaction one finds amongst the Burgundian producers themselves, when talking about the relative merits of 2007 and 2011, when she said “I like the 2007 reds very much- they are charming, opening nicely and really will provide some very nice drinking in the years to come, but they are not as serious as the 2011s and do not possess the same purity of fruit, the same classic expressions of *terroir* and will never quite reach the same heights as the 2011s.” So it seems to me, that the 2007 vintage, due to its slight stylistic similarity to 2011, can serve a very useful (and tasty) crucible to judge whether or not the 2011s that remain in the market are worthy of more attention than they have heretofore received in some circles. Additionally, there remains some goodly stocks of 2007 red Burgundies still scattered around the market, at what look like really good prices in comparison to some of the other recent vintages still for sale, and while the wines are still out there, this is a good time to re-visit the vintage.

The 2007 Burgundy vintage started out very early, with great weather in the spring getting the vines out of the blocks on a pace to repeat the August harvesting of 2003, but after a very hot and beautiful April, the next three months of May, June and July were cold, damp and the vines really matured at a snail’s pace during this time period. Flowering was also problematical in 2007, due to the rainy and cold weather in May and early June. By the time August of 2007 dawned, the early start was long lost and it was looking like only a miracle last couple of months would allow the crop to even ripen in 2007. Happily, the weather was sunny throughout most of the rest of the season, with temperatures mounting nicely as August gave way to September, and the grapes did indeed ripen quite well in the end (if a bit unevenly, due to the problems at flowering), and the top domaines were able to produce very suave middleweights in 2007 that showed no lack of pretty fruit tones and lovely signatures of *terroir*. One of the keys, as I wrote way back in early 2009 about the red wines of 2007, was that it was imperative to recognize and cherish the more delicate style of the vintage to produce outstanding wines. If one were a *vigneron* prone to trying to pump up the vintage with things such as heavy extraction or use a lot of new oak for the wines, one squandered the beauty of the vintage and easily missed out on making exceptional wines. However, most of the estates that I regularly visit were quite savvy of the style of the wines in 2007 and adjusted their cellar regimens to take advantage of the charm inherent in this vintage and have made really lovely, lovely wines. A great many of them are already very tasty, due to a bit lower acidity than many recent vintages, which allows the wines to be quite open for inspection, even when they are still in their relative infancy and several years away from their peaks of maturity.

The 2007 red Burgundies are wines that are very, very representative of their underlying *terroirs*- which is usually an attribute that I associate most closely with higher acidity vintages than 2007, and which arrived in so many of the top 2007 reds through the very slow and deliberate pace of grape maturation in this cold and overcast mid-summer. Most of the top 2007s couple their fine fidelity to their underlying soils with truly beautiful fruit tones, which run the

gambit from strawberry and blood orange in the more red fruity villages to lovely and very pure black cherry, cassis and dark berry tones in the more typically black fruity villages. While the fruit components of the vintage are very, very pretty, they are not quite as vibrant in 2007 as in higher acid vintages like 2008. The wines of 2007 are not blockbusters by any stretch of the imagination, with far less power and tannin than either of the two vintages that preceded '07, but the wines are not short of intensity, depth or complexity, and they are really wines of great charm, purity and promise. Many of the village wines and Bourgognes are now into their apogees of maturity, but this does not mean that they will not continue to improve with further bottle age. Most premier crus and grand crus at the present time are still a few years away from fully blossoming, but due to the vintage's very suave structural style, they are almost all very easy to taste today and get a good read on just how good they are going to be down the road. In short, 2007 is a very, very good vintage for red Burgundy, and the wines are already beginning to deliver a lot of pleasure at age seven, but will be even better with a bit more bottle age.

In the chronology of fairly recent Burgundy vintages, one can think of the 2007s as the logical stylistic follow-up to the 2000 reds from this region, with which they share a lovely combination of pretty, succulent fruit tones, very good soil signatures and a structural leniency that allows them to drink well early on. However, like the best 2000 reds, the 2007s will age still for many years to come and the grand crus are clearly going to be better to drink at age fifteen than they will be today. And 2007, in general, is a superior vintage across the board to 2000, so anticipate that the 2007s will eventually land at a bit higher overall quality level on a wine by wine basis than its corresponding top 2000 red Burgundy, for there is more purity and even better soil inflection in the 2007s than in the 2000s (which are not short of *terroir* by any stretch of the imagination, as I have been drinking a lot of 2000s in the last couple of years). It will be interesting to see how the 2007 red Burgundies unfold over the coming decades, as they may well age along the lines of the fine 1985 reds and deepen at the core with extended bottle age and show more serious structure and grip at age twenty-five than they did at age fifteen, and it may well be that the next time I circle back around to re-visit this vintage down the road, my assessment of the vintage as very, very good, but not great, will prove to have once again underestimated the wines a bit! And please keep in mind, as you read the notes that follow, that the 2011s would form the next stylistic link after the 2007s in this chain from the 2000 vintage, but again, with the overall quality of the wines even superior to their corresponding 2007. For these three years are the "middleweight vintages" of the last dozen years, which will trade on intensity of flavor rather than density of fruit, but will not fall short of soil signatures, complexity or elegance, and will be seen down the road as vintages that lacked nothing but the sheer audacity of powerful fruit that defines more flashy young vintages of recent times, and a few more years down the road we will certainly hear more comments of "I wish I had bought more wines from that vintage."

So where does that put the 2007 red Burgundies today on their voyage of evolution? As I briefly noted above, the regional and village wines are now drinking very well indeed, but with both categories still offering up potential for further bottle aging, and the village wines in particular are really going to be even better with a bit more time in the cellar, as they are just reaching that point in their evolutions where they are starting to blossom. The premier crus are still a bit on the young side, though the typically less-structured crus are certainly quite accessible today and can be very, very pleasurable to taste. Premier crus that tend to be a bit

more structured out of habit, such as some of those in Gevrey, Nuits or Pommard, are really still a few years away from providing a lot of enjoyment (even in a more primary guise) and should still be cellared for another four or five years before broaching. The grand crus in general are also on the young side, but here, one often finds the more complete and complex profiles of these wines makes them sometimes better to drink today than the more closed and structured premier crus, as the grand crus deliver a bit more breadth and depth of fruit to buffer the sound structural elements found in these wines. A perfect case in point is a wine like Laurent Ponsot's stunning 2007 Clos de la Roche "Vieilles Vignes", which is still certainly a young wine, but is so brilliantly balanced that it is hard not to come to the conclusion that this is a very good time to be starting to drink the wine, as it is already flat out delicious! But, in general, all the top grand crus from 2007 will improve with further bottle age and should be allowed to do so, for this is not an "off vintage" by any stretch of the imagination, and just because the market does not recognize the inherent quality of the 2007s is no reason to assume that the wines themselves share in the culpability of those who have underestimated this lovely year for red Burgundy.

The following wines were primarily tasted over the course of my last three trips to the Burgundy region, all of which took place over the course of 2013. I have augmented the notes I have culled during these three trips with notes from bottles tasted over the course of this past year here in New York (from my own cellar and those of generous friends), as well as at a very, very fine tasting of the 2007 red Burgundy vintage organized in February of this year by the well-known Burgundy lover, Chet Kern. All of these bottles have shown quite clearly that the 2007 vintage is aging very well indeed, with the wines starting to offer up some very real pleasure and with the best years of complex and sophisticated drinking for this vintage still to come. We are living through a renaissance period for the wines of Burgundy (at least if one is willing to drink their white Burgundies on the young side and avoid the plague of premox!), and to take exception with the more middleweight vintages in this remarkable run of years, such as 2000, 2007 and 2011 and solely focus on the ripest and most expensive vintages strikes me as a highly dubious strategy of Burgundy connoisseurship. Only buying and drinking the most highly celebrated recent vintages, such as 2005, 2009, 2010 and 2012 is a pathway that will lead to missing the true beauty of the wines from this lovely region, as the iterations of *terroir* that infuse these wines with their magic are repeated in never-ending variation across the unique styles of each passing year, and to only focus on the deepest fruit, the most powerful structures and the flashiest early appeal of a given vintage is to miss much that is the most moving in the world of Burgundy. It will also leave you, unless you have a very deep cellar of red Burgundy already, drinking wines painfully before their time (had any bottles of the totally shut down and recalcitrant 2005s lately?) or mistaking the flash of fat fruit in vintages like the 2009s for the far more satisfying complexity that comes when the truly great vintages reach their actual apogees of maturity twenty or thirty years down the line. Paying attention to the more middleweight years like 2000, 2007 or 2011 will offer the rewards of these lovely wines in their own right, coupled to keeping the more structured years like 2005 and 2010 properly hibernating in the cellar for the foreseeable future.

I should also take just a moment to discuss the 2011 vintage in a bit more depth as well- it being the stylistic successor to these lovely 2007s. As I wrote about the vintage back in November of 2012 in Issue 42, the 2011 vintage is a year where the red wines attained their ripeness quite late in the growing season, after a similarly warm spring and cool and rainy mid-

summer. The 2011 reds are going to be a vintage characterized by their quite low alcohol levels (at least in the context of the last twenty years of Burgundy vintages in these times of climate change- their sugar levels would not be remarkable by the standards of thirty or forty years ago, though they would have been more heavily chapitalized back in that era), but they are generally wines that lack nothing in terms of purity of fruit, transparency of *terroir* expression and fine, moderate structures and seamless balances that will carry them far into the future. However, it is an old school vintage in terms of sugar levels, as most of the grapes came in with potential alcohol levels between 11.2 percent and 12.5 percent- depending on the harvesting philosophy of the *vigneron* (with traditional late-pickers like Laurent Ponsot attaining sugars at the upper end of this range), but with very good hang times for the grapes and the vines in 2011 had certainly seen their entire vegetative cycle worked through by the time of picking. As I noted in Issue 42, most Burgundians like to have a solid hundred days of growing season between the flowering and the harvest, and in 2011, due to the very early budbreak from the hot and precocious spring, most grapes were out on the vines from 105 to 110 days from *floraison* to picking, so this was not a vintage that was compromised by a short growing season and one should not confuse moderate sugar levels with a lack of physiological ripeness in the grapes of 2011.

As Christophe Roumier observed when I was first tasting his 2011s in November of 2012, the phenolic ripeness of the 2011s was very good at the time of harvest, with tannins and stems both ripe and the leaves on the vines were starting to drop when he started picking- all of which are signs that the growing season has completed its cycle- and “it seemed only likely that waiting (to pick) would see the acids fall with no additional benefit in higher sugar levels.” What one has to keep in mind with pinot noir at the typically lower octanes of the 2011s, whether or not the wines were chapitalized, is that when the sugar levels are on the lower side, this is a grape that tends to show more early herbaceousness in the wines and this is certainly evident in some of the 2011s at this very early stage of their lives. In a few isolated cases, where a particular vineyard may be located in a decidedly cooler location- say way up on the slope in Vosne or Nuits St. Georges- the very cool, damp and gray mid-summer may have provided a ripening challenge that it was not quite possible to surmount fully, and there are a few wines that may have not quite gotten completely over the finish line before the vegetative cycle of the vines gave its last gasp, and for these wines, they may always be just a touch short of complete ripening. But, this is a tiny, tiny, tiny percentage of 2011s that I have tasted- I am thinking of two or three wines out of the more than a thousand that I tasted during my three extended stays in Burgundy tasting the 2011 vintage- and to paint the vintage with the pejorative moniker of “green meanies” is so far off base from the reality of the vintage and it says more about the lack of experience of the taster in question, or the easily-ignited paranoia of wine buyers and bulletin board posters out there these days, than it does about the actual quality or stylistic profile of the 2011 red Burgundies. If one looks back at the continuity from 2000 to 2007 to 2011, it is quite clear that all three vintages share some stylistic similarities, and that each subsequent vintage is a qualitatively bit superior in the same general style as its predecessor. Now, I am drinking a lot of 2000 red Burgundies right now out of my own cellar, as I very much liked the vintage out of the blocks and foresaw it as a perfect foil to allow the 1999 reds to rest peacefully in my collection, and the top wines are still not fully mature, so all three of these vintages offer some serious promise of fine drinking and act as perfect foils to help protect the more structured vintages that surround them in this last great run of high quality years in the Côte d’Or.



This is not to say that there will not be a significant percentage of 2011 reds that show some of the herbaceous side of the pinot noir grape in their early years, as this is quite typical with this grape when the sugars are on the lower side, but these are elements that are very positive in the long run for the complexity of these wines, and if one is worried about a bit of fresh herbs in their young pinot noir, I would suggest that perhaps this is not the varietal for you. I for one worry a bit more when this element is missing in young red Burgundy (as I love my mustard seed in my young Chambolles or Moreys), as it is there to a greater or lesser degree in almost all young red Burgundy vintages, with the exception of very ripe years like 2009. Even the flashy young appeal of the 1990 reds in

their early years out of bottle, plush and sumptuous with ripe fruit, was not short of young pinot noir herb tones to augment all of that fruit. This is just one of the lovely attributes of this grape, and this herbaceous side to pinot noir is always more evident in vintages of more moderate ripeness like 2011 when the wines are young, as there is simply less of that sumptuous young fruit to cover up this classic characteristic. There are also plenty of herb tones to be found in the 2008s. But, one should certainly not condemn the vintage with irrational fears of “green meanies” simply because these wines, with their alcohol levels generally under thirteen percent, show a bit more of these fresh herbs out of the blocks than the more amply fruity profiles of young wines found in other recent vintages with higher sugar levels. The 2011 vintage has provided a very, very high percentage of outstanding wines that will provide superb drinking in the fullness of time, and it seems to me that if one is really serious about red Burgundy for their own pleasure (rather than simply using it as a unit in their investment portfolio), to sit out the 2011 red Burgundy vintage is the height of folly. This is even more self-evident in the wake of the very recent model of evolution displayed by the aforementioned 2007 reds, which share some structural attributes with the 2011 reds, and which are aging very, very well indeed. I tasted hundreds of 2011 red Burgundies during my three weeks in the region in November of 2013

handicapping the 2012 vintage, as it is customary in many cellars to show a selection of the previous year in bottle after the barrel sample tasting, and I can only state that my respect and affection for the 2011 red Burgundies is every bit as high today as it was when I first began tasting the vintage a year previous. The only thing that has really changed over the course of that year is that I now more fully question the palates of certain “Burgundy commentators”, who still seem to have a lot to learn. But, they’ll get there one day.

Bourgogne

2007 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Denis Bachelet

Denis Bachelet’s 2007 Bourgogne is a very pretty example of its appellation, offering up a red fruity and brambly nose of cherries, strawberries, coffee, mustard seed, a nice base of soil tones and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and brambly, with a touch of tannin, good focus and grip and a sneaky-long finish. I really like this wine’s jammy-brambly core of fruit and nice signature of soil. It is drinking well now and will continue to improve for a handful more years. 2013-2020+. **87+**.

2007 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Camus-Bruchon

Domaine Camus-Bruchon made absolutely splendid 2007s, and this extends all the way down the food chain to their excellent Bourgogne rouge. The wine is drinking very well indeed at age seven, offering up a classy nose of cherries, red currants, woodsmoke and a nice dollop of soil. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focused and tangy, with lovely balance, just a whisper of remaining tannin and lovely length and grip. A very stylish middleweight, with modest complexity, but its heart in the right place! 2012-2020. **88**.

2007 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine David Clark

I already miss David Clark’s presence in the Burgundy firmament, as he really made splendid wines during his brief sojourn in Morey St. Denis and it really is a pity that he was never able to lock down a few premier cru or grand cru vineyards and make his domaine a more viable commercial entity. His 2007 Bourgogne rouge is a splendid wine, offering up a bright and red fruity nose of cherries, red berries, coffee, lovely soil tones, woodsmoke and just a hint of dried rose petals in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and nicely balanced, with a solid core, nice soil signature and a long, tangy and well-balanced finish. A lovely example. 2012-2020+. **88**.

2007 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Georges Roumier

Christophe Roumier really made a nice bottle of Bourgogne rouge in 2007. The wine offers up a pretty blend of red and black cherries, fresh thyme, woodsmoke, dark soil tones and a touch of mushroom in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, deep and shows good mid-palate stuffing, with a touch of tannin, bright acids and sneaky length and grip on the nicely balanced finish. This is not particularly complex, but does a nice job with the elements it possesses. There is a slightly balsamic quality to the wine that is intriguing. Good, solid juice. 2014-2022. **87**.

Côte de Nuits Villages

2007 Côte de Nuits Villages- Domaine David Clark

The 2007 Côte de Nuits Villages from David Clark is another excellent example of the vintage, offering up a fine bouquet of cherries, pomegranate, cocoa powder, a fine base of soil, gentle smokiness and incipient notes of *sous bois*. On the palate the wine is fullish, suave and

complex, with a good core, lovely focus and a long, gently tannic and properly tangy finish. This is fine juice and was a bargain back in its day in the market. 2012-2022. **88+**.

Marsannay-la-Côte

2007 Marsannay “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Stéphane Brocard

On my “to do list” for the last couple of years has been to find time to visit Stéphane Brocard in Marsannay and taste his full range of wines. He is a member of the well-known Brocard family in Chablis, but has headed south to the Côte de Nuits to chart his own course, and the couple of wines that I have tasted from him thus far have been really, really good. His 2007 Marsannay V.V. offers up a deep, complex and classic nose of cherries, grilled meat, a touch of orange zest, a superb base of dark soil tones, just a hint of cinnamon and a discreet framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, complex and gently tannic, with a good core, lovely acids and impressive length and grip on the focused and classy finish. A fine example of Marsannay. 2013-2025. **91+**.

Gevrey-Chambertin

2007 Gevrey-Chambertin “Mes Favorites”- Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils

The 2007 Mes Favorites is a lovely blend of the sturdiness of this cuvée and the perfumed elegance of the vintage. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a very stylish blend of cherries, a touch of fresh truffle, woodsmoke, a fine base of soil, hints of chocolate and a judicious base of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very suave on the attack, with lovely mid-palate intensity, fine focus, tangy acids and really exquisite backend minerality on the long and still moderately tannic finish. This is a lovely example of the vintage, offering a lovely combination of 2007’s generous fruit tones and the lovely mineral definition of this bottling. The wine is quite drinkable today, but will be even better with a few more years in the cellar. Fine, fine juice. 2014-2035. **93**.

2007 Gevrey-Chambertin- Maison Joseph Drouhin

The Drouhin family has really been working on the quality of their village wines in general in the last several vintages, and their Gevrey *villages* has been augmented with fruit from a few new (to the cuvée) parcels since the mid-2000s and has really jumped up in quality to my palate. The 2007 is a really lovely bottle, offering up a pretty and perfumed bouquet of cherries, strawberries, mustard seed, a lovely base of soil and a nice touch of coffee. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and tangy, with a nice core of red fruit, modest, silky tannins, bright acids and lovely length and grip on the complex and stylish finish. A lovely example that is already drinking very well indeed. 2012-2025+. **89**.

2007 Gevrey-Chambertin “les Corbeaux” Vieilles Vignes- Domaine Denis Bachelet

Not surprisingly, many of the 2007 Gevrees that I tasted in preparation for this report are amongst the more backward examples of the vintage, and this is one commune where I would be waiting a bit longer before opening top premier crus, as the wines are still a bit bound up in their structures. The 2007 Corbeaux from Denis Bachelet is certainly a few years away from full blossoming, but shows excellent potential in its aromatic constellation of black cherries, dark berries, grilled meats, dark soil tones and cedary new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still pretty tight, with a very good core, firm tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and chewy finish. This wine has still not absorbed fully its new wood component and shows a bit of backend wood tannin, but the stuffing is here and all that is required is some

patience to let all of the constituent components integrate fully. It will be a lovey wine, but this is one of the youngest 2007 premier crus that I tasted in preparation of this report. 2019-2035+. **92.**

2007 Gevrey-Chambertin “aux Combottes”- Domaine Dujac

The entire range of 2007 Domaine Dujac wines that I tasted for this report were absolutely stellar, and ironically, I tasted all of them here in New York, rather than sampling a few in Burgundy. If the old saw that “Burgundy always tastes best when drunk in the region” is really true, then I can only imagine how good these wines would be in their local market! The 2007 Combottes is outstanding, wafting from the glass in a blossoming bouquet of red plums, cherries, a touch of raspberry, cocoa, fresh herb tones, nutmeg, lovely soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and elegant, with a sappy core, fine focus, modest tannins and lovely length and grip on the complex and very suave finish. In terms of complexity development, this is still a bit primary in tone and further bottle age is going to allow more secondary layers to emerge, but there are no rough edges here and it is already a delicious bottle to drink. I would be tempted to try and hold off for a few more years however, just to let those secondary elements fully emerge on both the nose and palate. 2017-2035+. **93.**

2007 Gevrey-Chambertin “Premier Cru” Capita- Domaine Louis Trapet et Fils

The 2007 Capita from Jean-Louis Trapet is a lovely example of the vintage, but it is one of those 2007s that still needs a few years to blossom out from behind its structural elements. The bouquet is deep, young and very promising in its stylish mélange of red plums, red and black cherries, cocoa powder, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, grilled meat and a nice base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a fine core, lovely soil inflection, tangy acids and fine focus and balance on the long, youthful and moderately tannic finish. I would tuck this away in the cellar still for a minimum of three or four more years before thinking of starting to drink this wine in earnest. It will be lovely, but give it a bit more time! 2017-2035+. **91+.**

2007 Gevrey-Chambertin “Petite Chapelle”- Domaine Rossignol-Trapet

The Rossignol brothers’ 2007 Petite Chapelle is a stellar example of the vintage, and though it is still a few years away from fully blossoming, it is already well on its way to offering up lovely drinking. The superb bouquet offers up a still nicely reserved blend of red and black cherries, gamebirds, a complex base of black minerality, coffee bean, charred wood, a touch of mustard seed and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very nicely structured, with a superb core of fruit, moderate tannins, lovely focus and grip and a very long, blossoming and soil-driven finish that closes with the first notes of the *sous bois* to come with a bit more bottle age. High class juice, but give it a few more years in the cellar to blossom completely. 2017-2035+. **92.**

2007 Charmes-Chambertin Vieilles Vignes- Domaine Denis Bachelet

Denis Bachelet’s 2007 Charmes-Chambertin is a great wine in the making, but give it at least another six or seven years in the cellar to really start to come into its own. The deep, primary and extremely promising nose offers up a lovely mix of black cherries, cassis, grilled meats, espresso, a very complex base of dark soil tones and smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and still very primary in personality, with a rock solid core of fruit, moderate tannins, fine focus and grip and a very, very long, well-balanced and superb finish. 2020-2050+. **95+.**

2007 Charmes-Chambertin Très Vieilles Vignes- Domaine Joseph Roty

The 2007 Charmes-Chambertin from Domaine Joseph Roty is excellent, and it was great fun to taste this right alongside of Denis Bachelet's version, as the wines hail from contiguous and equally ancient plots of vines. This is a stellar wine in the making and every bit as fine as Monsieur Bachelet's version, as the wine delivers a superb bouquet of cassis, black cherries, grilled meats, black minerality, a touch of mustard seed, French roast and spicy, well-integrated new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and pure, with a superb core, excellent focus and balance, tangy acids and a very long, moderately tannic and classic finish. This is going to be a stellar example of the vintage! 2020-2050+. **95+**.

2007 Ruchottes-Chambertin- Domaine Georges Mugneret-Gibourg

The Mugneret family's 2007 Ruchottes-Chambertin is a beautiful example of the vintage, with a sense of purity and vibrancy on the nose that is truly exceptional. The first class bouquet wafts from the glass in a superb constellation of black cherries, black plums, gentle notes of grilled meat, incipient notes of truffles, black minerality, cocoa and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very precise on the attack, with a gorgeous core of fruit, excellent transparency, fine-grained, melting tannins and stunning length and grip on the perfectly balanced, complex and utterly refined finish. A great, great 2007 Burgundy! 2017-2045+. **96**.

2007 Ruchottes-Chambertin- Christophe Roumier

Christophe Roumier's 2007 Ruchottes is still quite youthful, but it has stellar potential and its ultimate beauty is already quite self-evident. The pure and primary bouquet wafts from the glass in a fine blend of red and black cherries, blood orange, cocoa, a beautiful base of minerally soil tones, mustard seed, incipient meatiness, just a touch of vanillin oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and sappy on the attack, with a very soil-driven personality from the mid-palate back, a great core, ripe tannins and excellent focus and grip on the very, very long, pure and classy finish. This is a stellar vintage of Roumier Ruchottes-Chambertin in the making, and all that is required is a bit more cellaring. 2019-2045. **94+**.

2007 Latricières-Chambertin- Domaine Rossignol-Trapet

Domaine Rossignol-Trapet's 2007 Latricières-Chambertin is a gorgeous example of the vintage, with fine purity and building complexity very much in evidence on both the nose and palate. The excellent bouquet delivers a complex mélange of desiccated cherries, red plums, cocoa, incipient notes of roasted meat, *sous bois*, woodsmoke and a deft touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and developing with great style, with an excellent core of fruit, suave, moderate tannins, lovely focus and complexity and a very long, pure and still nicely reserved finish that augurs extremely well for its future development. This is a wine that is certainly accessible already, but three or four more years of bottle age will really reward one's patience with a wine in full bloom and velvety on the palate! 2017-2040+. **94**.

Morey St. Denis**2007 Morey St. Denis- Domaine David Clark**

David Clark's 2007 Morey St. Denis *villages* is excellent, wafting from the glass in a complex aromatic blend of cherries, beetroot, a bit of bonfire, sweet notes of mustard seed and fresh thyme, a lovely base of soil and coffee. On the palate the wine is fullish, long and nicely plush on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, impressive transparency, melting tannins and a very long, focused and tangy finish. Lovely juice. 2012-2025. **90**.

2007 Clos des Lambrays- Domaine du Clos des Lambrays (375 ml.)

It is ironic that I went to Domaine du Clos des Lambrays immediately after my visit with Charles Van Canneyt of Domaine Hudelot-Noëllat, as we had just tasted his lovely Malconsorts and he noted that he had just drunk a magnum of the 2007 Clos des Lambrays with friends the week before, where they had found the wine full of promise but still way too young in magnum. Happily, there were still a supply of half bottles at the domaine, so Monsieur Brouin was able to show me a very suave and classy young '07 Clos des Lambrays that was really quite lovely out of half. The bouquet is blossoming superbly in this format, offering up a deep and complex blend of dark berries, cassis, charred wood, Burgundian truffles, dark soil tones and a lovely topnote of spit-roasted gamebird (which would also be a very lovely accompaniment to this wine). On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and quite velvety on the attack, with moderate tannins, and excellent core of fruit, lovely soil signature and superb focus and grip on the long finish that is just starting to show some secondary layers of complexity. A beautiful example of the vintage. 2016-2040+. **94.**

2007 Clos St. Denis “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine de Chézeaux

The Domaine de Chézeaux Clos St. Denis is, of course, made by Laurent Ponsot and the 2007 version is excellent. The deep, closed and very promising nose wafts from the glass in a blend of black cherries, dark berries, game, a superb base of soil, dark chocolate and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, tightly-knit and rock solid at the core, with good acids, moderate tannins and a very, very long, primary and beautifully balanced finish. This will be excellent, but it needs some more bottle age to really blossom. 2018-2050. **94+.**

2007 Clos St. Denis- Domaine Dujac

Domaine Dujac's 2007 Clos St. Denis is a lovely and absolutely classic example of this supremely elegant wine. The pure and transparent nose wafts from the glass in a blossoming blend of cherries, strawberries, coffee, gamebirds, mustard seed, lovely minerality and new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, tangy and very soil-driven in personality, with a sappy core, moderate tannins and a very long, tangy and beautifully focused finish. A lovely wine that is already quite tasty, but really deserves at least a few more years in the cellar to develop even more complexity. 2017-2045. **94+.**

2007 Clos de la Roche- Domaine Dujac

Jeremy Seysses has crafted an outstanding 2007 Clos de la Roche. The wine is deep and classy, but also decidedly less far along its evolutionary path than the domaine's Clos St. Denis, as it offers up a very pure and primary nose of red and black cherries, plums, cocoa, a fine base of soil, woodsmoke and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a rock solid core, suave, seamless tannins, tangy acids and outstanding length and grip on the perfectly balanced and youthful finish. This will be dynamite wine in the fullness of time, but this is one of those top 2007 grand crus that still needs some more cellaring. 2020-2050. **95+.**

2007 Clos de la Roche “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Ponsot

I had very much liked the Ponsot Clos de la Roche out of barrel, but it certainly seems like I underrated it a bit back in the fall of 2008, as the wine has really turned out brilliantly and is already drinking with great complexity and breed at age seven. The absolutely brilliant bouquet soars from the glass in a blaze of black plums, black truffles, roasted venison, woodsmoke, coffee, incipient *sous bois*, fresh herb tones and a lovely base of dark soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully complex, with a great core of pure fruit,

stunning soil signature, melting tannins and stunning length and grip on the focused and utterly classic finish. Stunning juice! 2014-2050. **97.**

2007 Clos de la Roche- Domaine Armand Rousseau

The 2007 Clos de la Roche from Domaine Rousseau is a lovely example of the vintage that is starting to really drink with great style and complexity at age seven, but has decades of life still ahead of it. The very pure and blossoming nose offers up a beautiful mélange of cherries, plums, cocoa, a bit of game, summer truffles, woodsmoke, dark soil tones and a nice touch of nuttiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very velvety on the attack, with a good core of fruit, excellent focus and complexity, silky tannins, and lovely length and grip on the tangy and very classy finish. A beautiful, refined example of the vintage. 2014-2035+. **92+.**



Looking across the premier cru vineyard of Clos Sorbés back towards the village of Morey St. Denis.

Chambolle-Musigny

2007 Chambolle-Musigny “les Feusselottes”- Domaine Georges Mugneret-Gibourg

The Mugneret sisters 2007 Feusselottes is still a bit on the primary side today, but there is superb potential already very much in evidence on both the nose and palate. The lovely bouquet is a blend of cherries, plums, roses, cocoa, a refined base of soil tones and a fine framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a lovely core, moderate tannins, good acids and excellent length and grip on the still fairly young

and slightly oaky finish. This wine does not quite have the same mid-palate stuffing as the stunning Mugneret grand crus from '07, and consequently, it needs a few more years to more fully integrated its new wood completely and is not quite as approachable today. But, in a few more years, this will be a superb drink. 2017-2035. **92.**

2007 Chambolle-Musigny “les Gruenchers”- Domaine Digioia-Royer

I do not know the wines well from Domaine Digioia-Royer, which I taste on occasion at the Les Grands Jours events in Burgundy, so I was very happy to see this wine included in Chet Kern's lineup of 2007s here in New York. The wine shows lovely aromatics in its mix of cherries, plums, fresh herbs, cinnamon, a bit of gamebird, a fine base of soil and a fairly generous coating of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a sappy core of fruit, good focus, but a bit of oak resin seeping in on the backend. There is also a bit of uncovered oak tannin on the finish as well, and I do not have any sense of how well the wines from this domaine integrate their new wood with bottle age, so I am not entirely confident of how well the wood will be absorbed here with more bottle age. There is no doubt that the underlying raw materials here are exceptional, but the use of new wood is not the most sophisticated. If the new wood fully integrates, then the wine should place at the top end of the range, but less new wood could make this wine really step up. 2018-2035+. **88-90+?**

2007 Chambolle-Musigny “les Gruenchers”- Domaine Dujac

This is always one of my favorite bottlings from the village of Chambolle, and the 2007 Dujac Gruenchers is an excellent wine. The bouquet is pure and perfumed, wafting from the glass in a blend of red and black cherries, gamebirds, a fine base of soil, mustard seed, cocoa, fresh herbs and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very sappy at the core, with fine focus and balance, modest tannins, but still a bit of adolescent (perfectly-integrated) new wood waiting to more fully slide to the background on the palate. The finish is long, pure and very promising. 2018-2040. **92+.**

2007 Chambolle-Musigny “les Cras”- Domaine Georges Roumier

Christophe Roumier's 2007 Les Cras is really starting to blossom, but I would still try to hold off for another three or four years and really let its secondary layers of complexity to be unlocked. The bouquet is pure and truly vibrant in its aromatic constellation of cherries, red plums, incipient notes of gamebird, a beautifully complex base of soil tones and a pungent topnote of roses. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a superb core of fruit, modest tannins, bright acids and a very long, nascently complex and tangy finish. The wine is quite approachable structurally already, but it is still quite primary in its aromatic and flavor development and there are more fireworks to come here with a bit more patience. A beautiful 2007 in the making. 2016-2035+. **92+.**

2007 Chambolle-Musigny “les Amoureuses”- Domaine Georges Roumier

Not surprisingly, Christophe Roumier's 2007 Amoureuses is a stellar young wine. The bouquet is deep, pure and still fairly primary in its development, wafting from the glass in a sophisticated blend of red and black cherries, deep plum, cocoa, a superb base of soil, fresh herb tones, incipient notes of gamebird and a delicate touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, and youthfully complex, with a sappy core, moderate tannins, lovely acids and a very, very long, pure and focused finish. Lovely juice that still needs several more years to seriously start to blossom. 2020-2055+. **96.**

2007 Bonnes-Mares- Domaine Dujac

The 2007 Domaine Dujac Bonnes-Mares is one of the youngest examples of the vintage that I have tasted from the Seysses family, and this wine is still quite youthful and in its adolescence today. The bouquet is very deep, very pure and very primary, delivering scents of plums, black cherries, cocoa, still a bit of its youthful stemminess, lovely, but undeveloped notes of soil and a fair bit of youthful new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and sappy, with a fine core, lovely focus and balance, still a very hunkered down personality and a fair bit of oak influence on the backend that comes across as graphite, as it has not yet been fully integrated into the body of the wine. This will be excellent, but it is hard to get a real read on its ultimate shape right now, as this is still getting comfortable in its own skin and many years away from blossoming. Given how stellar the rest of the Dujac range is in this vintage, it is hard not to imagine that this wine will be stunning with sufficient bottle age, but be patient and leave this puppy alone in a cold corner of the cellar for at least another eight to ten years! 2022-2060. **93-96?**

2007 Bonnes-Mares- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

Freddy Mugnier's 2007 Bonnes-Mares is a beautiful and very elegant, transparent example of the vintage that is only a few years away from reaching its plateau of maturity, where I have little doubt it will delight for a couple of decades. The pure and very soil specific nose offers up scents of red and black cherries, gamebirds, a bit of nutskin, cocoa, mustard seed, gentle notes of vanillin oak and a very complex and classy base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, complex and intensely flavored, with great transparency, a fine core of gently sappy fruit, moderate tannins and a very long, tangy and refined finish. A beautifully suave and feminine example of Bonnes-Mares that is so well-balanced that it will age for decades, but should start to drink with unabashed enthusiasm in a few more years. A lovely wine. 2017-2045+. **93+**.

2007 Bonnes-Mares- Domaine Georges Roumier

The 2007 Roumier Bonnes-Mares is a stunning wine in the making, but it too is quite young and needs some time alone in the cellar before it starts to stir. The deep, pure and very promising nose wafts from the glass in a sappy blend of black cherries, dark berries, a touch of heather, cocoa, gamebirds, a beautifully complex base of soil tones, woodsmoke and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and primary, with a sappy core, excellent focus and balance, ripe, chewy tannins and lovely bounce on the long and youthful finish. A stellar wine in the making. 2022-2075. **96.**

2007 Musigny- Maison Joseph Drouhin

The Drouhin family's 2007 Musigny is a beautiful bottle of wine in the making, but like so many of the very finest grand crus in this vintage, it is still several years away from blossoming fully. The deep, pure and very refined nose offers up scents of cherries, strawberries, beetroot, mustard seed, a brilliantly complex base of iron-infused soil tones, woodsmoke and a gentle base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and youthful, with a sappy core of fruit, stunning focus and nascent complexity, great balance, suave, seamless tannins and outstanding length and grip on the tangy and soil-driven finish. A gorgeous Musigny in the making! 2020-2060. **96.**

2007 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

Monsieur Mugnier's 2007 Musigny is one of the wines of the vintage, and though it is still very early days for this wine, its ultimate quality is very, very evident. The simply gorgeous nose wafts from the glass in a blend of red and black cherries, a touch of cocoa, roses, a

beautifully complex base of iron-infused soil tones, mustard seed, woodsmoke, orange zest and a deft framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very sappy at the core (particularly for an '07), with stunning backend energy and grip, laser-like focus, fine-grained tannins and magical balance on the very, very long, classic finish. A great, great 2007! 2020-2060+. **96.**

Vougeot

2007 Clos Vougeot- Domaine Georges Mugneret-Gibourg

The 2007 Clos Vougeot from the Mugneret sisters is an absolutely stellar example of the vintage. The bouquet is deep, complex and beautifully focused, delivering scents of red and black cherries, cocoa, a dollop of fresh thyme, a beautifully complex base of soil tones, just a touch of gamebird, woodsmoke and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with superb soil inflection, great poise and balance, suave tannins and outstanding length and grip on the still fairly primary finish. This is a great glass of young Burgundy today, but the real fireworks will not start here until some of the secondary layers of complexity start to emerge with a bit more bottle age. 2018-2050+. **96.**

Vosne-Romanée et Flagey

2007 Vosne-Romanée- Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair

The 2007 Vosne-Romanée from Domaine Liger-Belair is a perfect example of just how well this vintage is beginning to drink at the present time, as it offers up a vibrant and very classy nose of red and black raspberries, Vosne spices, a touch of gamebird, lovely minerality, coffee and cedar. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and quite defined by its minerality, with a succulent core of fruit, bright acids, just a touch of remaining tannins and lovely length and grip on the complex and quite elegant finish. Good juice. 2013-2030+. **90+.**

2007 Vosne-Romanée “Clos des Réas”- Domaine Michel Gros

Clos des Réas was one of the first “serious” red Burgundies I ever had the pleasure to taste, as Domaine Jean Gros back in those days was very ably represented in Massachusetts and I had the good fortune to taste several vintages of Clos des Réas from the decades of the 1970s and early 1980s in my formative years in the wine trade. The 2007 Clos des Réas is a very good wine, but as is the case with many of Michel Gros’ wines in the last decade or more, there is just a bit too much toasty new wood here for my palate and the wine does not quite show the same precision that was so evident in this wine back in the old days. The bouquet is deep and fairly jammy for a 2007, but not overripe in its mélange of raspberries, cherries, herb tones, venison, a touch of toffee and a generous coating of toasty new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and again, fairly jammy, with a good core, soft tannins and very good length and grip on the succulent finish. The focus here is not quite in the first division and the oak treatment still smacks of the fashion of the 1990s, but there is still quite a bit to like in this wide open bottle. 2013-2025+. **88.**

2007 Vosne-Romanée “Beaumonts”- Domaine Dujac

Of all the '07 premier crus from Domaine Dujac that I tasted in preparation of this report, this was the only wine that I found a bit puzzling in its current stage of development, as the new wood was not yet integrated and seemed almost a bit resinous in tone- which is certainly not something I associate with the wood program at this fine estate. The complex bouquet is a blend of cherries, red plums, plenty of youthful stems, cinnamon, cloves, dark soil tones, herbs and

smoky, resinous new wood. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tangy and complex on the attack, with a good core and tangy acids, but some backend bitterness from uncovered oak tannins on the long finish. Will have to taste this again to see if this representative. ???

2007 Vosne-Romanée “les Orveaux”- Domaine Mongeard-Mugneret

Like many of the 2007s, the Mongeard-Mugneret Orveaux is really drinking quite nicely at the present time, though I have little doubt that this wine will continue to age very nicely for at least another twenty years. The lovely nose is showing some signs of secondary development in its mix of strawberries, *sous bois*, venison, woodsmoke, a touch of fresh nutmeg and a discreet base of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and quite complex, with a good core, blossoming, autumnal soil tones, still a bit of tannin and very good length and grip on the tangy and nicely focused finish. This is a lovely drink today, but there are plenty of reserves here and this wine will continue to cruise along nicely for a couple of decades. 2013-2035+. **91.**



The Vosne-Romanée premier cru vineyard of Les Orveaux.

2007 Vosne-Romanée “Suchots”- Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair

Louis-Michel Liger-Belair’s 2007 Suchots is an excellent and very classy example of the vintage, wafting from the glass in a blend of red and black cherries, black raspberries, duck, dark soil tones, espresso, a bit of bonfire and smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very sappy, with a lovely core of fruit, still just a bit of adolescent wood tannin to suck up, beautiful focus and balance on the very long, modestly tannic and refined

finish. It is not a crime to drink this wine today, but it is still a handful of years away from really snapping into perfect focus and opening out on the palate, so I would try to exercise a bit of patience and leave it in the cellar for a few more years. A beautiful wine in the making. 2019-2040. **93+**.

2007 Vosne-Romanée “Malconsorts”- Domaine Dujac

The 2007 Malconsorts from Domaine Dujac is a lovely wine, but I caught it at a rather awkward time to evaluate it, as it was the first wine in the lineup at Chet Kern’s tasting and the restaurant had not kept the private dining room where the tasting was to be held cool enough prior to the guests arriving, so the first couple of wines were tasted a bit warmer than would be ideal. The situation was quickly rectified, but I was left wondering if this wine would have shown even better if it had been at the end of the lineup of a dozen premier crus and a bit cooler, rather than first out of the blocks and served a tad on the warm side. The very complex bouquet is deep, expressive and nicely open, as it delivers scents of cherries, strawberries, underbrush, sweet beetroot, coffee, mustard seed, just a touch of cocoa and a gentle base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and tangy, with plenty of secondary development, lovely focus and grip, melting tannins and a very long, suave and vibrant finish. I suspect that I am underrating this wine a bit, as I had loved it out of barrel, and it is probably even better than it showed at our tasting in the slightly adverse conditions under which the first couple of wines were presented. So, I have scored the wine in a range, with the lower number being how the wine showed on this occasion, but the higher number more likely to be representative of a bottle at proper serving temperature. 2014-2035. **92-94?**

2007 Vosne-Romanée “Malconsorts”- Domaine Hudelot-Noëllat

The 2007 Malconsorts from Domaine Hudelot-Noëllat is a beautiful example of the vintage that is drinking already with great style and charm, but it is still early days for this stunning wine and further bottle age will not be an issue for decades to come. The gorgeous nose soars from the glass in a blend of cherries, red plums, a touch of orange zest, fresh nutmeg, summer truffles, a beautifully complex base of soil and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very silky on the attack, with a lovely core of fruit, superb focus and balance, melting tannins, sound acids and lovely length and grip on the complex and very lovely finish. Classic Malconsorts that is starting to drink today with great style. 2014-2035+. **93.**

2007 Vosne-Romanée “aux Reignots”- Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair

The 2007 Reignots from Liger-Belair is a superb bottle in the making, and though it is already really wearing its heart on its sleeve and is irresistible, it is still very early days for this beautiful wine and it is no crime to give it more bottle age. The superb bouquet is a complex and perfumed blend of cherries, raspberries, coffee, cinnamon, gamebirds, a beautifully complex base of soil, woodsmoke and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, long and tangy, with superb intensity of flavor, great focus and mounting complexity, a fine core and stellar soil signature on the very long, modestly-tannic finish. Fine, fine juice. 2014-2035+. **93.**

2007 Echézeaux- Domaine Dujac

The 2007 Echézeaux from Domaine Dujac showed absolutely brilliant at Chet Kern’s tasting here in New York, and I seem to have underrated this wine a bit out of barrel, as it shows as purity and noble refinement on both the nose and palate that is exceptional. The deep, complex and very, very transparent nose soars from the glass in a superb blend of cherries, raspberries, coffee, gamebirds, a gorgeous base of soil, woodsmoke, cinnamon and vanillin oak.

On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with a great core of fruit, tangy acids, seamless tannins and brilliant focus on the very, very long and classy finish. One of the best vintages of Dujac Echézeaux that I can recall tasting! 2019-2045+. **95.**

2007 Echézeaux- Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair

Like all of the 2007s from Louis-Michel Liger-Belair, there is a sense of flamboyance to his '07 Echézeaux that is absolutely seductive, with the wine singing on both the nose and palate already, though it is still several years away from really reaching its plateau of peak maturity. The beautiful bouquet is a mélange of raspberries, cherries, red plums, Vosne spices, duck, a lovely base of soil tones that will get nicely autumnal in the fullness of time and a generous coating of new wood that has still not been completely absorbed into the other components of the wine. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and elegant on the attack, with a lovely core of red fruit, superb soil signature, tangy acids and just a touch of backend wood tannins still awaiting absorption on the very long and complex finish. This will be a superb wine, but give it just a few more years to better integrate its new wood. As good as it is (and the wine is going to be very, very good), I would love to have seen it in a vintage like 2007 raised in a lower percentage of new barrels and a few one or two wine barrels utilized in the *elevage*. But, all this needs is time to fully blossom and no one is going to be disappointed with it down the road just as it is! 2020-2050. **93.**

2007 Echézeaux- Domaine Georges Mugneret-Gibourg

The 2007 Echézeaux from Domaine Georges Mugneret-Gibourg is really a lovely bottle and it is already starting to drink with great *élan* and style. The perfumed bouquet wafts from the glass in a complex mélange of red plums, black cherries, violets, cocoa, gamebirds, a beautiful base of dark soil tones, a touch of graphite and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and beautifully pure on the attack, with a velvety texture, a sappy core, impressive complexity and outstanding length and grip on the moderately tannic and impeccably focused finish. A beautiful wine that is approachable today, but is still a few years away from its true apogee and should prove to be a very long-lived example of the vintage. 2016-2045+. **94+.**

2007 Echézeaux- Domaine Emmanuel Rouget

I keep trying to like the Emmanuel Rouget wines that I infrequently cross paths with these days, but try as I may, I continue to find them consistently sloppy in their use of new wood and the overall balance of the wines is compromised because of this lack of precision with the new oak. I suppose the solution would be to use more forgiving, one wine barrels here, where if one was a bit late getting the wine out of barrel, the tannins would not be obtrusive in the wine, or perhaps the barrels could be more thoroughly soaked prior to the wines being put into them, to take some of the resinous quality out of the finished wines. I am only speculating, as I have not visited and tasted *sur place* here and do not know how the cellar is run, but there is a consistency to the raw and resinous quality of the new wood in the Rouget wines I have tasted since the mid-1990s that really makes me question how the barrels are selected and utilized at this domaine. In any case, the 2007 Echézeaux from Monsieur Rouget offers up a deep and four-square nose of black cherries, dark berries, resinous tones (from poorly-cured wood?), damp soil and a bit of raw vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, chunky and lacking in complexity, with a sappy core, the resinous streak continuing through the flavor spectrum and some uncovered wood tannins adding a degree of coarseness to the reasonably long finish that is rather disappointing. I do not see the likelihood of the wood ever fully being integrated into this wine,

and it seems likely to remain forever mired deep down in the second division of Echézeaux from the 2007 vintage. 2019-2035+. **86.**

2007 Grands Echézeaux- Maison Joseph Drouhin

The 2007 Grands Echézeaux from Joseph Drouhin is a superb wine in the making, but it is still five or six years away from entering its plateau of maturity. The deep, complex and very classy nose offers up scents of red and black cherries, venison, fresh nutmeg, a lovely base of soil, woodsmoke, fresh herbs and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very intensely flavored, with a great core of fruit, outstanding focus and balance, still a bit of suave tannin and a very, very long, tangy and youthful finish. This has outstanding potential and all it needs is a bit more time in the cellar. 2019-2050. **94+.**

2007 Romanée-St.-Vivant- Domaine Dujac

The 2007 Romanée-St.-Vivant from Domaine Dujac is a brilliant wine that still needs a good five or six years to really blossom and start to deliver fully its secondary layers of complexity, but its magnificent future is already writ large and very, very easy to appreciate. The pure and vibrant nose soars from the glass in a magisterial blend of raspberries, cherries, cloves, cinnamon, duck, a magically complex base of minerality, gentle smokiness and a very suave base of nutty new wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and stunningly light on its feet, with a sappy core of fruit, great elegance and transparency, tangy acids, modest, seamless tannins and brilliant length and grip on the still fairly primary, but, oh so promising finish. A great, great wine in the making. 2020-2050. **97.**

2007 Romanée-St.-Vivant- Domaine Hudelot-Noëllat

The 2007 Romanée-St.-Vivant from Domaine Hudelot-Noëllat is a brilliant young wine, and though it is not yet at its apogee, it is still a great glass of young and magical red Burgundy. The blossoming bouquet soars from the glass in a constellation of cherries, raspberries, blood orange, raw cocoa, a gloriously complex base of soil, Vosne spices and a very stylish and discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and nascently complex, with a sappy core of red fruit, brilliant soil inflection, suave tannins and a very, very long, supremely elegant and tangy finish. Brilliant juice. 2017-2045+. **95.**

2007 La Romanée- Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair

Louis-Michel Liger-Belair's 2007 La Romanée is one of the wines of the vintage and is showing stunning aromatic and flavor complexity at age seven, but it is still emphatically a young wine and more patience will be very richly rewarded! The absolutely brilliant bouquet delivers an celestial blend of raspberries, a touch of blood orange, red plums, cinnamon, incipient notes of duck, a kaleidoscopic base of soil tones, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very light on its feet, with exquisite intensity of flavor, great complexity, a sappy core of fruit, great soil signature and great focus and grip on the tangy and modestly tannic finish. This wine is already very accessible and hard not to drink, but it has not yet developed its secondary layers of complexity and will be even better in another three or four years. A brilliant 2007! 2017-2040+. **96.**

Nuits St. Georges

2007 Nuits St. Georges “aux Lavières”- Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair

The 2007 Nuits St. Georges “aux Lavières” from Louis-Michel Liger-Belair is now drinking splendidly, wafting from the glass in a complex and wide open blend of black plums, venison, ark soil tones, woodsmoke and a lovely topnote of exotic spices. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and very velvety on the attack and perfectly balanced, with a fine core of

fruit, excellent focus and balance, melting tannins and a long, bouncy and complex finish. This is as beautiful bottle of *villages* that has now reached its plateau of maturity, but it has plenty of life ahead of it and there is emphatically no hurry to drink this wine up. Fine juice. 2013-2030+. **90.**

2007 Nuits St. Georges “Chaines de Carteaux”- Domaine Henri Gouges

The 2007 Chaines de Carteaux from Domaine Gouges is an excellent wine that is just starting to fully blossom and is drinking already quite well for a young Gouges wine. The deep and very classy nose wafts from the glass in an emerging mélange of red and black cherries, venison, incipient notes of summer truffles, a lovely base of soil, coffee and a topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite velvety on the attack, with a lovely core of fruit, fine focus and still a bit of backend tannin that perks up the finish and lends grip and structure for further evolution in bottle. With a bit of air, this is already a lovely drink (and quite a bit more advanced in its evolution than the Clos des Porrets from the domaine), but it has many years ahead of it and will only gain in complexity with further bottle age. Fine juice. 2014-2035. **91.**

2007 Nuits St. Georges “les Chaignots”- Domaine Alain Michelot

The 2007 Chaignots from Elodie Michelot is really a beautiful example of the vintage, but it is still on the young side and in need of another four or five years to really come into its own. The very promising bouquet wafts from the glass in a black fruity mix of black cherries, dark plums, a touch of chocolate, gamebird, incipient notes of summer truffle, a touch of nutskin and a beautiful base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite sappy on the attack, with a lovely core, excellent focus and grip and a long, soil-driven and still fairly chewy finish. This is a proper young bottle of Nuits St. Georges that still needs some time in the cellar to fully blossom, but it is going to be excellent. 2018-2035+. **92+.**

2007 Nuits St. Georges “aux Perrières”- Domaine Méo-Camuzet

The 2007 Nuits St. Georges “aux Perrières” from Domaine Méo-Camuzet is really a lovely wine that is only a year or two away from reaching its apogee, and offers up outstanding focus and complexity on both the nose and palate. The excellent and already very complex bouquet is a blend of cherries, red plums, nutskin, gamebird, coffee, a lovely base of minerality, woodsmoke, a touch of summer truffles and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and very elegant on the attack, with superb mid-palate depth, fine focus and still just a bit of fine-grained tannins to resolve on the long, complex and tangy finish. Lovely wine. 2016-2035+. **92.**

2007 Nuits St. Georges “Clos des Porrets”- Domaine Henri Gouges (375 ml.)

The 2007 Clos des Porrets from the Gouges family is a very lovely and promising example of the vintage, but even out of half bottle, this is still a very young wine. As a matter of fact, over the course of the couple of hours that I drank this wine over dinner, it actually closed down, rather than blossoming! But, there is a fine wine just starting to stir here, as the bouquet is a lovely blend of red and black cherries, a touch of pomegranate, woodsmoke, incipient notes of black truffle, a complex base of soil, French roast and gamebird. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a fine core of fruit, excellent structure (particularly for the vintage), bright acids and superb length and grip on the focused, moderately tannic and well-balanced finish. This is accessible now when first poured, but it is clearly still on the young side and will need several more years to really blossom. 2020-2040+. **92.**

2007 Nuits St. Georges “les Champs Perdrix”- Domaine Alain Michelot

Of the three fine 2007 Michelot premier crus that I tasted for this report, the Champs Perdrix was the most forward and if I was in the mood for drinking one of them over the near-term, this is clearly the one I would reach for first. The wine offers up a very lovely nose of red and black cherries, incipient notes of Burgundian truffles, gamebirds, a fine base of soil, just a hint of nuttiness and a gentle topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pre and very suave on the attack, with a fine core, excellent focus and grip and just a bit of backend tannin perking up the very well-balanced and classy finish. Fine juice. 2014-2035. **90+**.

2007 Nuits St. Georges “Clos de la Maréchale”- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

The 2007 Clos de la Maréchale is really a lovely wine that is now quite approachable (like so many top examples from this vintage), but still has a bit of ripe tannin to resolve on the backend and will be happiest resting comfortably in the cellar for another three or four years. The bouquet is superb, delivering a complex aromatic constellation of red and black cherries, nutskin, gamebirds, a superb base of soil tones, incipient notes of summer truffles and a dollop of fresh thyme in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and quite soil-driven in personality, with a lovely core of fruit, bright acids, lovely focus and balance and a long, moderately tannic and very refined finish. A lovely wine in the making, but give it a few more years to fully blossom. 2017-2040. **92+**.

2007 Nuits St. Georges “les Cailles”- Domaine Alain Michelot

The 2007 les Cailles from Domaine Michelot is a lovely wine, offering up a deep, pure and sappy nose of red and black cherries, red plums, a nice touch of sweet walnut, very mineral soil tones, woodsmoke and a topnote of spit-roasted gamebirds. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite primary in personality, with a beautiful core of sappy fruit, ripe tannins, lovely minerality and excellent length and grip on the focused and still quite youthful finish. This is going to be a lovely bottle, but it needs at least another four or five years of cellaring. 2018-2035+. **92**.

Aloxe-Corton and Pernand-Vergelesses**2007 Pernand-Vergelesses “les Fichots”- Domaine Chanson**

I do not taste a lot of Chanson wines, as this is still one of the homes of a variation on the old Guy Accad school of winemaking. The 2007 Fichots is an okay example of the vintage, but a bit over-extracted in style. The bouquet is a youthful blend of red currants, cherries, woodsmoke, a bit of venison, Pernand stony soil tones and coffee. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and a bit rigid, with solid length and grip on the moderately tannic, fairly extracted finish. Perhaps this just needs more time to blossom, but my gut feeling is that it will always be a bit rigid from its extraction and never really come around. 2013-2025+? **84+?**

2007 Pernand-Vergelesses “Île de Vergelesses”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2007 Île de Vergelesses from François and Claude de Nicolay is really a beautiful bottle in the making, with the fine structure of this cru still wanting a few more years to fully blossom. The great nose jumps from the glass in a complex, red fruity blend of cherries, strawberries, mustard seed, iron-like soil tones, gamebird, orange zest and woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and already quite open on the attack, with a superb core of fruit, impeccable focus and soil signature, ripe, chewy tannins and outstanding length and grip on the utterly classic finish. A superb wine in the making, but give it a few more years to blossom fully on the palate. 2017-2035+. **92**.

2007 Corton “Bressandes”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2007 Corton “Bressandes” from Chandon de Briailles is a stellar example of the vintage, and it does not seem to be much further away from peak drinkability than the fine Ile de Vergelesses. The outstanding bouquet offers up an aromatic mix of red and black cherries, orange zest, gamebirds, mustard seed, coffee, a very complex base of soil and just a touch of cedar in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very suave on the attack, with a rock solid core, ripe moderate tannins and outstanding focus and grip on the very long, poised and perfectly balanced finish. An excellent wine in the making. 2017-2040+. **93+**.

Chorey-lès-Beaune

2007 Chorey-lès-Beaune- Maison Joseph Drouhin (375 ml.)

The 2007 Chorey-lès-Beaune from Joseph Drouhin is a very pretty example of the vintage that is fully into its apogee of peak maturity and offers up a bright and complex nose of strawberries, cherries, coffee, lovely soil tones, vinesmoke, fresh herbs and dried roses. I really like the combination here of bright red fruit and plenty of soil complexity. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and transparent, with solid depth, just a whisper of tannin and very good length and grip on the complex finish. This wine gets a bit more marked by its stems as it opens up in the bottle (I did not decant this wine- which is not like me with relatively young Burgundy!) and perhaps this touch of remaining stems would not be present if decanted. But, as has been the case for many recent vintages, this is a lovely wine and a great bargain! 2014-2025+. **89**.

Savigny-lès-Beaune

2007 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Peuillots”- Domaine Jean-Marc et Hugues Pavelot

The 2007 les Peuillots from Domaine Pavelot is really drinking beautifully right now, with a round and pretty personality that is totally charming. The wide open bouquet offers up a blend of black cherries, chocolate, gamebirds, dark soil tones and woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and succulent on the attack, with a plump core, melting tannins, nice acids and very good length and grip on the complex finish. As Hugues Pavelot notes, “this is a true *vin de plaisir* today.” 2013-2025+. **89**.

2007 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Gravains”- Domaine Camus-Bruchon

Domaine Camus-Bruchon’s 2007 les Gravains is really a beautiful bottle of Burgundy that is almost into its apogee of peak drinkability, and is in fact drinking very well today, but I feel a couple more years of cellaring will still provide a wine of even more complexity and velvet generosity on the palate. The superb bouquet offers up a pure blend of cherries, strawberries, a touch of orange peel, roses, gamebird, a fine base of soil, a touch of mustard seed and a lovey, smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and silky on the attack, with a fine core, excellent focus and balance and a long, moderately tannic finish that seems to build in structure as it has a chance to air. It is no crime to drink this wine now, but a couple more years will pay dividends. 2017-2035. **92**.

2007 Savigny-lès-Beaune “aux Guettes”- Domaine Jean-Marc et Hugues Pavelot

The 2007 Guettes from the Pavelot family is a bit deeper and more backward than the *à point* Peuillots, but it will be an excellent bottle with a few more years’ worth of bottle age. The deep and nascently complex nose wafts from the glass in a mix of dark berries, black cherries, espresso, currant leaf, charred wood, dark soil tones and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, still a bit of ripe tannin on the

backend in need of resolution, fine focus and bounce and a long, pure and classy finish. This is going to be an excellent 2007. 2016-2035+. **92.**

2007 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Lavières”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2007 les Lavières is turning into a superb example of this oft overlooked vintage. The deep, youthful and still fairly reticent nose offers up a fine mélange of red and black cherries, vinesmoke, a touch of gamebird, coffee, mustard seed, lovely soil tones and that classic topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a fine core, superb soil inflection, moderate tannins and a long, still fairly closed finish. This will be a superb example of the 2007 vintage, but it still needs a few more years of cellaring to fully blossom. 2015-2040. **92.**

2007 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Lavières”- Domaine Catherine et Claude Maréchal

I quite liked the 2007 les Lavières from Domaine Maréchal, but wonder if just a touch of complexity was sacrificed here from the use of reverse osmosis? The bouquet is very pretty and sappy, as it wafts from the glass in a mix of cherries, strawberries, vinesmoke, coffee, soil and a nice topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is fullish and quite suave on the attack, with a good core of fruit, modest tannins and good length and grip on the slightly simple finish. This is quite tasty, but given how special the *terroir* is in the vineyard of les Lavières, this wine is just a touch disappointing for its more fruit-driven style. Good juice, but I was expecting just a touch more from the very fine Domaine Maréchal. 2013-2025+. **88.**



Beaune

2007 Beaune “Theurons”- Domaine Rossignol-Trapet

The 2007 Theurons from Domaine Rossignol-Trapet is drinking very well and shows plenty of secondary development on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a fine blend of cherries, a bit of venison, dark soil tones, coffee, incipient *sous bois*, fresh herbs and just a touch of dirty diaper. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and tasty, with a good core, still just a whisper of backend tannin and very good length and grip on the complex finish. The '07 Theurons does not strike me as quite as clean an example of this fine cru as more recent vintages *chez* Rossignol, but it is a good, honest wine that is drinking very well already and has still a couple of decades ahead of it. 2014-2035. **88+**.

Pommard

2007 Pommard- Château de Pommard

The 2007 is a perfect example of just how fine the wines are here now at Château de Pommard, and this lovely example of the vintage is now starting to really blossom and drink well. The deep, complex and very stylish nose wafts from the glass in a blend of cherries, plums, a touch of lavender, gamebirds, incipient notes of *sous bois*, a gentle note of cinnamon, complex soil tones and just a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and complex, with a fine core of fruit, very refined, modest tannins, lovely focus and balance and a long, wide open and classy finish. Fine juice from a very underrated source these days! 2013-2040. **92**.

2007 Pommard “Chanlins”- Domaine Jean et Gilles Lafouge

The 2007 Chanlins from Domaine Lafouge is a lovely and serious example of the vintage that is still a few years away from fully blossoming, but will deliver outstanding drinking once it has reached its apogee. The bouquet today is starting to stir and show some secondary layers, but it is still a fairly young wine in its mélange of cherries, red plums, gamebirds, coffee, incipient notes of *sous bois*, fresh thyme, nutskins and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still a bit tannic, with a lovely core of fruit, tangy acids, excellent focus and grip and a very long, well-balanced and youthful finish. I would opt for keeping this superb wine tucked away in the cellar for another four to five years before starting to pull corks in earnest, as the wine should deliver lovely autumnal components coupled to bright red fruit at its apogee. It should prove to be one of the longer-lived wines of the vintage and will be excellent once it has fully blossomed. 2018-2035+. **93**.

2007 Pommard “Rugiens”- Domaine Hubert de Montille

I have tried in the last few years to make an appointment to taste with Etienne de Montille, but our schedules have never been in synch and I am yet to have the pleasure to visit the cellars. So, I was a little out of my element when I had the chance to taste his very well made 2007 Rugiens at Chet Kern’s mammoth '07 tasting, as I was not really prepared for such a dramatically different style of wine than those of Etienne’s father. The nose is quite inspired by Henri Mayer’s style, as it jumps from the glass in a blend of black cherries, dark plums, fresh nutmeg, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and a generous coating of new, lead pencil-like oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still a bit adolescent, with a plush core of fruit, a bit of tannin and a very long, focused and still quite primary finish. This will be a fine wine when it has had some more cellaring time, as it needs to fully absorb its new wood and start to show some

secondary layers of complexity. A very well-made wine, but I was a fan of the family's old style. 2019-2035+. **92.**

Monthélie

2007 Monthélie “les Duresses”- Domaine des Comtes Lafon

The 2007 Monthélie “les Duresses” from Comtes Lafon is really now entering its plateau of maturity and drinking very well indeed. The bright and wide open bouquet is a blend of cherries, red plums, nutskins, cocoa, woodsmoke and a nice touch of gamebird. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with melting tannins, lovely focus and grip and a long, tangy and beautifully-balanced finish. Lovely juice for drinking over the next ten to fifteen years. 2013-2030+. **89+.**

Volnay

2007 Volnay- Domaine Michel Lafarge

I have had three or four bottles of the Lafarge family's lovely 2007 Volnay AC in the last year, as I find this wine with some frequency on restaurant wine lists in Burgundy at the present time. This is a beautiful village wine, wafting from the glass in a young and vibrant blend of raspberries, strawberries, cocoa powder, a touch of orange peel, a lovely base of soil that is just starting to hint at its future, autumnal tenor, a bit of nutskin and fresh thyme and a very pungent topnote of roses. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and intensely flavored, with beautiful balance and focus, a lovely core, just a whisper of backend tannin and lovely length and grip on the succulent and soil-driven finish. A superb *villages*. 2015-2035+. **91.**

2007 Volnay- Domaines des Comtes Lafon

I really love the Volnay *villages* bottling from Comtes Lafon, as this is all young vine fruit from the domaine's premier cru holdings in Clos des Chênes, Champans and Santenots du Milieu, so these grapes come from high quality *terroirs*. The 2007 is blossoming beautifully and wafts from the glass in a superb aromatic blend of red and black cherries, cocoa, a touch of nutskin, gamebird, a fine base of soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very suave on the attack, with a good core of fruit and still a very nice sense of reserve for down the road. The tannins here are modest, but the wine has lovely acidity and I would still give this lovely Volnay a couple more years in the cellar to really let it blossom fully. It is a lovely bottle. 2015-2035+. **90.**

2007 Volnay “Santenots”- Domaine Bernard et Thierry Glantenay

The 2007 Santenots from Domaine Glantenay is a very pretty wine that has not quite reached its plateau of maturity, but it only a few years away and is already pretty tasty. The blossoming bouquet is a blend of black cherries, red plums, a bit of chocolate, gamebirds, incipient *sous bois*, woodsmoke, fresh herbs and a bit of nutskin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows off good mid-palate stuffing, with fine focus and balance, still a bit of chewy tannin to resolve and good length and grip on the slightly rustic finish. This is a good solid example of the vintage that is still a few years away from full maturity. 2016-2035. **89.**

2007 Volnay “Clos du Château des Ducs”- Domaine Michel Lafarge

The 2007 Volnay “Clos du Château des Ducs” from Domaine Michel Lafarge is a superb example of the vintage, but, not surprisingly, it is still on the young side and needs quite a bit more cellaring to blossom. The deep and classy nose offers up scents of red and black cherries, a

nice touch of meatiness, dark chocolate, fresh herb tones, still a bit of youthful stemminess, a fine base of soil and just a whisper of spicy oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep and very well-balanced, with a lovely core of fruit, fine soil inflection, excellent balance and focus and a long, nascently complex and ripely tannic finish. Give this very promising wine a bit more time in the cellar. 2019-2040. **92+**.

2007 Volnay “Clos des Chênes”- Domaines des Comtes Lafon

The 2007 Clos des Chênes from Dominique Lafon is an excellent bottle in the making, but this high class wine is still three or four years away from starting to really blossom. The bouquet is already developing secondary layers to complexity in its excellent mélange of cherries, red plums, woodsmoke, gamebirds, coffee, dark soil tones and a nice topnote of fresh thyme. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still a bit youthfully primary, with a fine core of fruit, modest tannins, tangy acids and outstanding length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This is going to be an excellent example of the '07 vintage, but it needs at least four or five more years in the cellar to really blossom. 2018-2045. **92+**.

2007 Volnay “Champans”- Domaines des Comtes Lafon

The parcel of Comtes Lafon Champans is planted with older vines than their Clos des Chênes, and consequently, this is a deeper and more reserved 2007 at the present time. The potential here is stellar, as the wine offers up a youthful and very pure bouquet of dark berries, black cherries, currant leaf, dark chocolate, gamebirds, dark soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and rock solid at the core, with a very impressive, youthful personality, ripe tannins and superb length and grip on perfectly balanced and very serious, young finish. Great juice. 2020-2055. **93+**.

2007 Volnay “Clos des Ducs”- Domaine Marquis d’Angerville

The 2007 Clos des Ducs from Domaine d’Angerville is still a very youthful wine, and at this point in its evolution, it is hard to tell if its somewhat four-square style is simply a function of adolescence, or if the wine will always remain a touch ham-fisted in style. The bouquet is deep and quite black fruity in its mélange of black cherries, dark plums, cinnamon, a nice touch of soil, dark chocolate and a generous serving of smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, and chunky at the present time, with a good core of pure fruit, still a bit of well-integrated tannin to resolve and good length and grip on the four-square finish. This is a pretty extracted style of 2007, and it may prove that a bit of the vintage’s elegance was sacrificed here to beef up the concentration here with extraction. The wine will certainly be good, but will it reach the customary heights of Clos des Ducs breed and complexity with more bottle age? 2019-2035. **90+?**

2007 Volnay “Santenots du Milieu”- Domaines des Comtes Lafon

The 2007 Santenots du Milieu is another great example of the vintage in the making, but like the Comtes Lafon Champans from this vintage, this wine is still several years away from really starting to approach its plateau. The deep, young and very pure and promising nose wafts from the glass in a blend of cassis, dark berries, woodsmoke, French roast, dark soil tones, gamebirds and a nice topnote of currant leaf. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and again offers stellar mid-palate concentration, with superb transparency, ripe tannins, tangy acids and outstanding length and grip on the vibrant and primary finish. Great juice in the making, but give it still more time to blossom. 2020-2055+. **94.**

Auxey-Duresses

2007 Auxey-Duresses “les Duresses”- Domaine Jean et Gilles Lafouge

I had this bottle in a fine restaurant in Pommard and the wine was showing very well-though still clearly a couple of years away from fully reaching its plateau of maturity. The pure and very classy nose wafts from the glass in a classic red fruity blend of cherries, strawberries, woodsmoke, *pigeon*, a touch of orange zest, fresh thyme and blossoming notes of *sous bois*. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and quite soil-driven in personality, with lovely structure for an '07, still a bit of well-integrated tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and still slightly youthful finish. Fans of Gilles Lafouge's beautiful wines will not be surprised to hear how beautiful the 2007 les Duresses is going to be in another year or two. *Chapeau!* 2016-2035. **92+**.

2007 Auxey-Duresses “la Chapelle”- Domaine Jean et Gilles Lafouge

I did not taste the 2007 les Duresses and the la Chapelle at the same tasting, so I am not sure of how they stack up to each other side by side these days. That said, both wines are outstanding, with the 2007 la Chapelle offering up a very transparent and red fruity bouquet of strawberries, cherries, coffee, woodsmoke, stony soil tones and a lovely topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and intensely flavored, with a lovely signature of soil, still a touch of fine-grained tannins, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the blossoming and complex finish. This is a beautiful bottle of Auxey in the making! 2016-2035. **92+**.

MADEIRA- TIMELESS ISLAND WINES FROM JUST THIS SIDE OF PARADISE



I have wanted to write a feature on the wines of Madeira for several years now, but did not want to do so prior to visiting the island for the first time. Happily, I finally had the opportunity to squeeze in a short visit to this beautiful volcanic island during the month of February, and I could finally get a better handle on both the great wines that have been fashioned here since the fifteenth century and the very unique, historic method in which they are produced. As I had a lot of unanswered questions about the wines and their history when I arrived on the island, I have included in this report quite a bit of background information about Madeira wines and how they are fashioned, and I hope some of this information will be useful to subscribers. For those unfamiliar with the Portuguese island of Madeira, it lies in the eastern Atlantic Ocean, six hundred miles south of Lisbon and roughly four hundred miles off the coast of Morocco, with the city of Marrakesh lying on its same latitude. The island is classified as “sub-tropic”, so that it was only in the mid-60s in temperature, sunny and breezy when I was there in mid-February, with its summer temperatures often staying in the mid-80s (Fahrenheit) and high humidity very much a part of the warmer months here. However, as the island is not a tropical island, its growing season is reasonably cool and the grapes take a fairly long time to ripen in the volcanic soils here, with the elevation at which a vineyard lies often a determining factor on what grapes

have a chance to ripen over the course of the Madeirense summer. For Madeira is truly a volcanic island, rising majestically up out of the Atlantic in a breathtakingly beautiful series of cliffs and it is a very mountainous terrain, with stunning gorges, terraced vineyards and gardens cantilevered onto the mountainsides, plunging waterfalls and a gorgeously varied and vibrant panoply of plant life. It is one of the most beautiful places on earth that I have ever had the pleasure to visit, and the photos that I managed to snap and have included here do not begin to do justice to the grandeur and spectacular natural beauty of this island.

Madeira's population is around two hundred and fifty-five thousand people these days, with approximately one hundred and ten thousand of them living in the beautiful principal city of Funchal on the southern side of the island. Funchal has a very large and beautiful bay that the city rises up from into the surrounding amphitheater of mountains, and it is a very picturesque and spotless city of tree-lined, broad boulevards, tiny, San Francisco-like, steeply-pitched winding streets, a lovely old part of the town and a beautiful cascade of ever-changing vistas as one wanders around this jewel of a city. I am sure that the island was very intimidating to get around on by foot or wheeled transport back in the old days, as the mountains do indeed rise right up from the ocean-side in many, many places (and boats would have been a far more preferable option for getting around to other parts of the island), but today there are now a series of well-engineered roadways and dozens and dozens of tunnels under the mountain buttresses that honeycomb the island and make it quite easy to get around by car for those intrepid enough to tackle those tightly-knit roadways. For myself, I was very happy that the Madeira Wine Institute had provided a car and driver, as I would have been awfully slow to follow behind if I was at the wheel and magical vista after magical vista opened up around every other corner or as the car emerged from one of the hundreds of tunnels along the route. It truly is one of the most gorgeous corners on the face of the earth, and even if there was not great wine here in abundance, it would be an island that would merit a visit just for the sheer natural beauty in which it luxuriates.

However, there is wine here and there is an awful lot of it that is very, very old and very, very good. The wines of Madeira had their golden age in the international wine markets a long time ago, as they captured the imaginations of the moneyed elites of North America and England all the way back in the 1600s and they had a very good, two hundred-plus year run of great prominence amongst the most sophisticated wine drinkers of the age. The island was only discovered by Europeans and populated in the early 1400s, though legend has it that it was first landed upon a bit earlier, back in 1346, by the English couple of Robert à Machin and his intended bride, Anna d'Arfet (the account of their romantic voyage that landed them on the unpopulated island was first sung in a Portuguese manuscript from the fifteenth century, penned by Francisco Alcaforado, and hence the non-Anglicized last names of the star-crossed couple). The young lovers were from different aristocratic castes, and hence not allowed to marry, so they set out in secret for the Mediterranean on a sloop with full crew of seasoned sailors. However, the ship was beset by a tempest and driven out into the Atlantic Ocean, where they eventually were shipwrecked on the heavily-wooded and unknown island of Madeira. Anna died of exposure upon landing on the island and her intended husband only lasted a week more, but some of the crew survived and buried the couple here prior to setting out in one of the lifeboats, only to be captured by pirates and imprisoned in Morocco. Amongst their fellow European prisoners in the cells in Morocco was a Spanish native of Seville, Juan de Morales, who was able

to carry back to Europe news of the discovery of the island when he was ransomed in 1416. However, at that time, Spain and Portugal were at war, and before Juan de Morales could return to Spain, he was captured by the Portuguese captain, João Gonçalves Zarco, who brought de Morales and news of Madeira back to Portugal (or otherwise, the island of Madeira might be part of Spain to this day).

In 1418, Captain Zarco and crew set out in quest of Madeira, but they too were beset by storm and driven of course, so that they eventually were shipwrecked on a small island, which they dubbed Porto Santo, from which they could see a dark cloud hovering on the southwest of the horizon, and which the captain correctly assumed was the wooded isle of Madeira. Leaving some of the crew on Porto Santo, Zarco eventually was able to return to Portugal to report and another ship and expedition force was outfitted and sent in search of and eventually reached Madeira in 1420. It was Captain Zarco that named the island, for Madeira translates as “Island of Woods” in Portuguese. However, Noël Cossart, in his superb book, Madeira, The Island Vineyard (which was updated, expanded and reprinted by Mannie Berk in 2011 and from which much of this early account of the island is taken), observes that the Moors certainly knew of this group of islands as early as the eighth century and there are maps to be found in Genoa that predate the Portuguese arrival on the island in 1420. Madeira was eventually made part of Portugal in 1425 and João Gonçalves Zarco was its first governor, overseeing the island until his death at age eighty in 1492. The first settlement was built on the western end of the island and named Machico, after Robert à Machin, but when this valley eventually became too small, the city of Funchal was founded along the great southern bay of the island and officially recognized as a city of Portugal in 1508. The early colonizers of Madeira were not only Portuguese in background, as settlers from a wide variety of western European countries joined their Portuguese fellows in the very early years on the island, and though most of the families that stayed on here eventually took Portuguese names, this was a mixed cultural base here from the outset of its population. Sugar cane and vines from Crete were planted here at the very earliest years, with the first grapes being the Malvasia that still to this day is one of the most important varieties on the island. However, as the island was heavily forested and absolutely impenetrable to the interior, Governor Zarco undertook burning some of the forests to clear land for cultivation. Unfortunately, the fires got out of control and ended up devouring all of the forests on the islands, as they burned unabated for fully seven years. Amongst the early inhabitants of Madeira was Christopher Columbus and his brother Bartolomeu, who split their time living between Lisbon and Funchal during the years from 1470 to 1485, when Columbus was finally bankrolled by Queen Isabella of Spain and set out to cross the Atlantic Ocean.

The island of Madeira is fifty-seven kilometers in width from east to west, and twenty-three kilometers from north to south, with the vast majority of the population living along the coastal areas or the lower foothills of the mountains, which rise at their highest to peaks in the center of the island to over six thousand feet above sea level. The mountainous central location descends down to the sea in a myriad of mountain ravines, and much of Madeira’s building cascades right up to the edges of these ravines, looking down onto the rivers and streams that wander down to the ocean during the rainy season. The agriculture of the island is organized into thousands of small terraces located wherever the mountains would allow, and most of the plots are tiny in size and traditionally farmed by small tenant farmers who grow grapes as part of a mixed agricultural base that also includes bananas, sugar cane, passion fruit, figs, mangos and

other assorted fruits and vegetables. Most of the important Madeira wine producers own a very small number of hectares of vines (or none), and to find a vineyard that is more than a hectare in size is virtually unheard of on the island. As this is a very mountainous island, the vineyards are scattered wherever a spot could be cleared for them, and consequently, vines can be found planted anywhere from right along the ocean (there are very few beaches on Madeira, and it is much more common for the cliffs to rise up directly from the sea) to as far up as eight hundred meters above sea level, which is the limit at which the grapes will fully ripen over the course of a growing season here. The soils are all volcanic in nature, with different sub-minerals in them providing soil colors that range from black to red to yellow in color. I asked if certain grape varieties did better than others in each of these different-colored “tufas”, but all wine producers stated that the question of elevation was far more important to deciding which grapes would excel in a given *terroir* than whether it was black tufa or yellow tufa in origin, for the nighttime temperatures at higher elevations cool considerably even in the peak of summer, and grapes planted high up are harvested six to eight weeks later than those planted close to sea level.

The primary grape variety of Madeira is not its most famous, as many of the wines which are known by name are the famous white wine grapes such as Sercial, Malvasia or Verdelho, but fully eighty-five percent of the island’s vineyards are planted with the red grape of Tinta Negra Mole. Tinta Negra is a very, very good grape that produces lovely wines, and it is responsible for most of the blended wines that are produced and bottled at three, five or ten years of age. It is far more popular amongst the small leaseholders who grow the vast majority of Madeira’s grapes, as its proven ripening power and impressive disease resistance makes it a less risky grape than those such as Sercial, Verdelho, Boal or Malvasia, and it can be planted at a wide range of altitudes. In fact, it was only in 2013 that the Madeira Wine Institute has allowed the grape to be used in varietally-named bottlings, so in the future we will see aged Tinta Negra bottlings from the island that do include the name of the grape on the label. The traditionally most-prized grapes of the island were the four white wine grapes of Sercial, Boal (also spelled Bual), Terrantez and Malvasia (or Malmsey), with Verdelho properly being officially elevated to the same level of respect at the start of the twentieth century and changing this top level of grape varieties to a quintet. Additionally, there was one red wine grape that was also accounted as one of the best on the island, which was Bastardo, though this grape is now all but extinct and efforts are underway by the wine institute and one of the important shippers to try to bring it back into production by encouraging its planting. So, for the immediate future, these six grapes (the big five plus Bastardo) are the only ones that are allowed to be used as varietal names on labels, though as we mentioned above, Tinta Negra has now been given this same status and sometime in the not too distant future, its name will also start to grace labels of Madeira. Moscatel was another grape that was accorded “second division” status traditionally here on the island and that used to be grown in some vineyards on a small-scale basis, but it too has been in eclipse now for several generations and it is only very old wines that will be labeled with this grape varietal.

The old-time Madeirense winemakers came to realize that certain grapes produced better wines at different levels of sweetness, so that Sercial was most often produced as a dry wine, Verdelho and Terrantez in a medium-dry style, Boal and Bastardo at a medium-sweet style and Malvasia or Moscatel at a fully sweet style. However, for centuries this was not a codified system and it was possible to encounter a dry Boal or a sweet Verdelho, but since the early 1970s, when the forerunner to today’s Madeira Wine Institute was formed, there has been a

codification of these historical practices and now any certified wine that is produced from a Sercial will be dry, and the same can be said for the other major grape varieties at their historic levels of sweetness. However, I should note that the British influence in the Madeira wine trade has been very strong for centuries, so a bit of their marketing savvy is evident in the labeling of the sweeter-styled wines, which are often termed “medium-rich” and “full-rich” (rather than sweet), as everyone in the wine trade knows that no one likes to drink or buy “sweet” wines. One can find this most often on the labels of the wines from the houses that were originally founded by British merchants, but there is no set of rules for this and “medium-sweet” and “medium-rich”, for instance, are interchangeable terms for wines finished at this level of residual sweetness. I should note that it is my distinct impression that lodges that were initially founded by British families seem to gravitate towards a slightly sweeter style for each category, so that a Verdelho from a house that started with British origins tends to be just a touch on the sweeter side (and perhaps a touch lower in acidity) than a corresponding Verdelho from a house of Portuguese origins.

The proper name of today’s Madeira Wine Institute is the Instituto do Vinho do Bordado e do Artesanato da Madeira, which is abbreviated as IVBAM. It is a governmental agency whose responsibilities far exceed promotion of the wines of Madeira, as it is also a regulatory agency that is responsible for the entire span of the wine trade on the island. It tastes and gives the official seal of approval to every wine that is released in bottle from Madeira (without the seal the wines cannot be exported), rigorously promotes improved viticultural practices, is actively involved in trying to get more of the noble white grape varieties planted, oversees the EU’s program of subsidizing a portion of the costs for the long *elevage* of Madeira wines, is in charge of inspections of all the wineries on the island, oversees the maintenance of the intricate series of small canals that bring water down from the mountains to the vineyards (and other agricultural plots) and also finds the time to grow experimental parcels of grapes and produce a bit of its own wine on the side for research purposes. Additionally, whenever the fortification of the wines is undertaken by a winery, an official from the IVBAM must be in attendance and the institute is in charge of the importation and distribution of the high quality alcohol that is used for this process. Most recently, the institute has also been very active in trying to better organize and modernize the production of dry wines on the island- which previously had been made at a very low level for the local consumption primarily of the growers themselves- so that the island will be able to offer tourists some dry wines that are locally produced (and drinkable). They even go as far as buying the barrels that the new dry wines will be aged in and having their winemaker produce the dry wines for the small producers of these new dry wines. The Madeira Wine Institute has been essential in the protection and the raising of the overall quality level of Madeira wines since its incorporation and is an integral part of the winemaking process on the island, acting more as a benevolent dictator than as a remote regulatory agency, and it really must be seen as a very active partner in the production of wines from Madeira. Amongst its most recent moves was to abolish the sale of Madeira wine in bulk to protect against the possibilities of fraud, which as one can imagine in this day and age, are of particular concern, given that so many of the wines from the island traded at auction these days are extremely old and now quite expensive. Regulating and promoting the wines of Madeira is not the only responsibility for the IVBAM, as it is also in charge of the handicrafts industry on the island (the exceptional quality and unique style of embroidery in Madeira has been famous for centuries), as well as tourism. As far as I can

remember, they are not (yet?) in charge of the banana or sugar cane sectors of agriculture, but I could be mistaken in that.

One of the most important changes that the Madeira Wine Institute has undertaken has been the requirement that all grapes used in the production of traditional Madeira wines are now crushed and fermented by the major wineries, or lodges, rather than the production from these small plots being delivered as must or finished wines. In terms of maintaining an overall higher standard of quality, the utility of this change is self-evident. Previously, when there were far more shippers of Madeira than there are today, there were often local middlemen located close to the growers who would act as small *négociants*, purchasing the grapes from their neighbors' small parcels of vines and making the wines (often in a very rudimentary fashion) and holding onto them on their premises in either cask or demijohn for several years prior to selling the wines to the lodges for further aging or blending. These small *négociants* were called *Partidistas*, and they were eventually disallowed at the turn of the new millennium, as part of the discontinuation of the trade of Madeira wines in bulk. However, most of them had been fading from the production scene for many years already, as this was a very traditional occupation that was not particularly profitable, and many of the younger generation of the families who had practiced this trade had declined to continue on the tradition of their parents and grandparents, preferring to sell the remaining stocks in the family's possession when the older generation had passed away. Some of the old-time *Partidistas* made very good wine (I actually had a chance to taste one from one of these old-timers during my trip- a rare dry wine made from the Boal grape that was very good), but the quality in general was not up to the same standards of the major shippers and the dissolution of this level of production is probably a good thing for the quality of the wines today.

As I alluded to above, the golden age of Madeira wine sales was far in the past, as there was a time when Madeira was drunk far more widely through the course of the meal amongst the greatest wine collectors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries- particularly in North America and England. During the era of the founding of the British colonies in North America and their eventual independence from the crown, Madeira was the most cherished and widely drunk wine amongst the moneyed elites that formed the United States, and Madeira was far more popular and prestigious in America and the Caribbean than Bordeaux, Burgundy or Champagne. In its early days, Madeira was not a fortified wine (as it is today), but eventually this became the norm for the wines from the island. As Noël Cossart notes, it was during the mid-eighteenth century that Madeira as a fortified wine became typical, with this more by necessity than inspiration, as war at that time made it difficult to ship near Gibraltar and merchant ships had stopped regularly calling at the bay of Funchal on their way to the East or West Indies during the hostilities. This was just at the time that the shippers had greatly encouraged (and often financed) a vast expansion of vineyard planting in the mountains, as there had been a general shortage of grapes for some time, and the best way to use some of these new plantations during this wartime period was to distill some wine into brandy and use this to help preserve the wines that were not being shipped during the war. Over time, this became the preferred method of producing the wine, as fortified Madeira became more popular once shipping was resumed at the end of the war of Spanish Succession, (1709 to 1714), and by the middle of the century, Madeira was routinely a fortified wine and remains so to this day, ranging typically anywhere from eighteen to twenty percent alcohol.



A vineyard on the north side of the island- note the traditional pergola training of the vines in the foreground.

As Madeira evolved from a non-fortified to a fortified wine, its popularity continued unabated, and it was not really until the island's vineyards were besieged by the twin plagues of oidium and phylloxera in the second half of the nineteenth century that the fortunes of the Madeira wine trade began to decline. Prior to this, the bay of Funchal was a regular port of call for merchant vessels and loading up the hold of the ship with casks of Madeira wines was a standard and very profitable practice. During those days, it began to be recognized that wines that had been stored in cask during the oceanic voyage were superior to wines that had never left the island, as the exposure to heat and the other elements during the long trips concentrated and mellowed the wine- greatly improving its quality. Madeira fanciers began to pay a premium for wines that had made a trans-oceanic voyage, and the evolving style of Madeira would eventually lead to the wines we have today. As Noël Cossart notes, "very early on it was noticed that Madeira wine greatly benefited from a long sea voyage" and the wine "was not considered mature unless it had crossed the tropics twice, so wines were sent to the East or West Indies for the sole purpose of maturing." Most of the trade in Madeira during the 1600s, 1700s and 1800s was in cask, or "pipes" as the large barrels were commonly known at the time (a pipe holds 425 hectoliters of wine), and it became standard practice to send pipes of Madeira out in the holds of ships on a trip from Funchal to the Caribbean, and then on to either the United States or England for off-loading and eventual sales by merchants. India was another popular destination for

Madeira at this time, as the colonial market in India greatly fancied the wines of Madeira as well, so that eventually it became standard practice to find merchants' lists that might include East India or West India examples of Madeira, depending on which way the ships were headed that had carried the pipes of the wine in their holds. Bottling was almost always done at the final port for these wines by merchants, and it became typical to store wines on premise at merchants in either America or Britain for extended periods of time prior to bottling for sale. Sales were not always in individual bottles for private clients, as many took their purchase in pipe or hogshead (a half pipe-sized cask) and bottled it themselves into demijohn or individual bottles.

The aging of the wines in pipe during long oceanic voyages greatly added to the allure of the wines in the market, as it was quite commonplace for wines to be marketed under the names of the ships that they had travelled in or occasionally from the ports of call that the ships had visited during their period on the high seas, and wines that had crossed the equator during their long voyages often more prized than those which had not. Of course, the age of great merchant sailing vessels eventually passed away with the rise of steam-powered vessels, and the use of the pipes as ballast became unnecessary and the costs of such transport of the casks eventually made this an impractical aging process for the wines. The Madeira wineries had to come up with an alternative method of aging the wines, which they began working on in the late 1700s and which eventually became known as aging the wines in *Estufa*, with the name taken from the original glass greenhouse erected to assist in the aging of the wines in cask by an enterprising monk. This method was seen as a quicker way than what the Madeirense were using previously to age the wines for a much longer time in cask, which is called the *Canteiro* system, and which was already being used to age wines that were not bound to make their trans-oceanic voyages. Today, with the cessation of cask aging aboard ocean-going vessels, these two systems in their modern, evolved methods, are the aging process by which the unique aromatic and flavor profiles of traditional Madeira wines are still produced, with both methods closely overseen by the Madeira Wine Institute.

The *Estufa* system is now reserved exclusively for the lower level bottlings of Madeira-wines that will be sold at the minimum aging threshold of three years old or sold for inclusion in the food business, such as Madeira-based sauces crafted by food companies in France or for the crafting of "holiday sauces" in the United Kingdom. The food business for Madeira remains quite important, with it accounting for as much as thirty percent of production for some houses. Occasionally, wines raised under *Estufagem* will find their way into five or ten year-old blends, but there is little doubt that this method is inferior to the *Canteiro* system for producing high quality wines, and most lodges prefer to use the latter system of aging for even their five year-old blends. The *Estufa* system has evolved since the very first greenhouse was built in 1794 to accelerate the aging of the wines, and today the system is generally done in one of two ways. Either the wines are aged and heated in large cement tanks (holding between twenty to forty thousand liters), where heating pipes filled with hot water run through the center of the tank and heat the wine up to a maximum temperature of fifty degrees Celsius, or they are aged in temperature-controlled, insulated, large stainless steel tanks that are blanketed with an outside "jacket" in which the hot water passes. The *Estufa* process takes place for a three month period of heating of the wines (in either system), with the wines gradually brought up to temperature over the course of the first month, and then after their three months of heating are over, they take another month or more to be gently brought back down in temperature. Both systems are

outfitted with circulation systems to help regulate the dispersal of heat in the large vats, with some circulation systems preferable to others. Of the two types of *Estufa* used today, it seemed quite clear to me that the large stainless steel tanks with the heating jacket on the outside are the preferable method, as this avoids any direct contact between the heating pipes and the wine, and as they are insulated, they can bring the wine up to temperature far more efficiently. The older cement systems, with the pipes on the inside of the tank, generally have to run the water through the pipes at a much higher temperature to get the consistent temp in the vats up to the target for the aging process, and if the circulation system is not operating flawlessly, the wine closest to the pipes in the center can be burned and acquire a more roasted caramelization that is far less appealing to my palate.

In any event, the *Estufa* system is used almost exclusively for the three year-old blends or the wines designated for the food industry, and the vast majority of the wines reported upon in this article are raised under the more gentle aging system of *Canteiro*. The *Canteiro* system is the aging of the wines in cask for an extended period of time- usually five years or more (though the minimum of aging for this process is two years)- in an environment that is warm and is used to emulate the aging that the wines once received when they were shipped in pipes in the holds of the old-time sailing vessels. Most often the casks aging under the early years of the *Canteiro* system are stored in the same rooms that the *Estufa* process is taking place, typically in rafters up above the tanks, or in rooms of their own that are open to the elements and which get plenty warm during the summer months. All the noble white wine grapes go through the *Canteiro* process, and a very large percentage of the Tinta Negra cuvées do so as well. This process goes on for a great many of the wines for a minimum of five years, and many of these will be aged in this system for far, far longer, as they evolve and concentrate in cask and develop their classic characters. During this time, the wines are often tasted to follow their evolution, as the wines change color into the orange-amber liquids that will find their way into the bottle five, ten or even one hundred years down the road, and develop their unique and compelling aromatic and flavor profiles. Wines that are developing particularly noteworthy characters during this time are earmarked by the winemakers for longer aging under the *Canteiro* system, with an eye towards perhaps being declared as vintage wines one day in the future, or of being part of superior blended wines of ten, fifteen or twenty years of age. I have failed to mention thus far that the minimum age for a proper vintage-dated varietal wine here in Madeira is twenty years of age, and for the vast majority of the wines that will wear a vintage label, they will actually be aged far longer than twenty years before they are bottled. In general, most vintage wines are at least forty years of age before they are bottled and it is far from unheard of for a wine to spend a hundred years aging in cask here in Madeira before bottling and release onto the market. So planning for the future is certainly part and parcel of the crafting of Madeira wines!

As I alluded to briefly above, the Madeira wine trade was dealt a double blow of catastrophic adversity in the second half of the nineteenth century. The first of these occurred mid-century, when oidium first broke out on the island and devastated the vineyards from 1851 until 1861, causing huge drops in production and the drastic thinning of the wine trade as well. Noël Cossart reports that oidium's effect on production was absolutely and immediately devastating, "for the average production of must during the years of 1849-1851 was fifty million hectoliters, falling to eight million hectoliters in 1852 and to three million hectoliters in 1853." By 1854, the production had fallen to only six hundred hectoliters, so it is easy to understand that

it certainly appeared in the eyes of wine traders on Madeira that oidium was on its way to making wine production on the island absolutely extinct. The oidium plague was devastating to other crops as well, and within a few years, the population of this bountiful island was experiencing widespread famine and emigration was endemic. In fact, most of the English wine merchants from this era chose this moment to depart for sunnier vinous climes (most heading to Spain from the island), so that, as Mr. Cossart reports, of the “seventy British houses trading (in the wines of Madeira) in 1850 were reduced to fifteen by 1855.” Madeira wine shippers of other national backgrounds also sold out in alarmingly high numbers during this time, so that the consolidation of production of wine on the island was very dramatic during this crisis. However, in the late 1850s, João Vicente da Silva discovered that sulfur powder was an effective counter-measure to oidium and the vineyards were gradually able to recover from this scourge and by 1861, the threat of oidium had finally been successfully defeated, though at a great cost to the island and its people during this very difficult decade.

Just as things were returning to a period of normalcy in the wine trade on Madeira, with oidium finally conquered, a second catastrophe struck the island, as phylloxera reached here in 1872. The Portuguese government, beset with a widespread phylloxera crisis in the vines on mainland Portugal did not respond to calls for assistance from Madeira until 1883- when it was already far too late to save the vines on the island- and another devastating blow was dealt to the Madeirense wine production. As was the case in other parts of Europe during the phylloxera crisis of the second half of the nineteenth century, eventually the vineyards on Madeira were replanted on American rootstocks that were resistant to phylloxera, but it was not really until the turn of the twentieth century that vineyard production really began to recover on the island. Between the two plagues of oidium and phylloxera, the Madeira wine trade had witnessed fully fifty years of devastation and dramatic contraction, and as a consequence, its worldwide markets dried up considerably (due to a lack of wine) and the golden age of Madeira wine consumption came to a close. By the turn of the century, the number of shippers on the island had dwindled down to ten English houses and a dozen from other nationalities (principally Portuguese) and the great export markets for the wines of Madeira, which had flourished here for more than three centuries, had been lost. While there was some recovery of trade prior to World War I, the worldwide presence of Madeira in the wine market was never to reach the same scale as it had prior to the dual plagues, and by 1917, the number of producers on the island was down to nine British firms and four Portuguese. However, things have been gently improving in recent times, and today the trade in Madeira wines has been quite steady for several years (though tiny compared to the golden age), and old Madeira wines have in the last decade absolutely exploded in price, bringing back some long overdue recognition of the brilliance of these wines and restoring some of the luster to what once were amongst the most highly sought after and cherished wines of the great wine connoisseurs of yesteryear.

The Grapes of Madeira

Historical records show that the very first grapes brought to the island of Madeira were of the Malvasia variety, which still plays a key role for the production of the greatest vintage wines here nearly six hundred years after its arrival on the island, as grapes and sugar cane were brought in from the island of Crete soon after Madeira began to be populated in the 1420s. Over the years, the viticulture of the island became focused on eight predominant grapes, ranked into two levels of quality. At the top of the hierarchy traditionally have been the white wine grapes of

Sercial, Terrantez, Boal, Malvasia, as well as the red wine grape of Bastardo. This level is known as the “Noble Varieties”, and to this group was added the white wine grape of Verdelho in the early part of the twentieth century (having been elevated from its previous status in the second division). At the next level down is found Tinta Negra Mole at what Noël Cossart termed the “Good Varieties”; this is the division where Verdelho was ranked up until the start of the twentieth century. At this level are also the red grape variations of Malvasia and Verdelho, as well as Muscatel, which is now a nearly never used for the production of wine on the island. With the allowance by the Madeira Wine Institute for Tinta Negra to now be a varietally-named bottling from 2013, I assume that it has now been promoted to the top division- Mr. Cossart’s “Noble Varieties”- which certainly seems appropriate, given how many superb wines are crafted from this grape. There are several other grapes that are allowed for cultivation on the island, but they are very much on the periphery and do not produce world class wines.



Looking west along the southern coast of the island from the famed cliff of Cabo Girão, back towards Funchal.

Since the creation of the first Madeira Wine Institute as a regulatory agency in 1979, there has been specific parameters of how certain grape varieties can be bottled that codify and correspond to the historical stylistic precedents of these varietals over the centuries of wine production on the island. So today, if a wine is to be labeled as Sercial, it must be done in a dry style and have no more than 1.5 degrees on the Baumé scale (which roughly translates to 32 grams per liter of residual sugar). Verdelho and Terrantez must be finished in a semi-dry style, with their residual sweetness in the range from 1.5 to 2.5 degrees Baumé (up to 52 grams per liter of residual sugar), Boal (or Bual- the English name for this grape) wines being finished in

the medium-rich (or medium-sweet) style and falling within the 2.5 to 3.5 degree Baumé range (high end of the range would be 70 grams per liter of R.S.), and Malvasia (or Malmsey) having to be finished in the range of 3.5 to 6.5 Baumé degrees and being “full-rich” or full-sweet” in style (this would land the wine anywhere from 70 to 128 grams per liter of R.S.). Please keep in mind when looking at these maximum levels of residual sugar for each category that Madeira is a wine very high in acidity, which leads to a much drier perception of each level of residual sweetness, in much the same manner that Riesling from the Saar will carry far more residual sugar than its counterparts in the middle Mosel and still seem drier, due to very high acidity that cancels out much of the perception of sweetness on the palate. As Tinta Negra is equally adroit producing wines at all four levels of sweetness (depending on where and how it is cultivated), I assume that we will see varietally-labeled examples of Tinta Negra in the future with the corresponding sweetness level of full-dry, medium-dry, medium-rich and full-rich, depending on the residual sugar of the finished wine. The nearly extinct grape of Bastardo on the island (which is another name for the Trousseau grape so popular from the Jura these days) was traditionally finished at the medium-dry level, but most of these wines would have found their way into bottle long before the codification of this system in 1979 and so some of these older examples may be finished a bit sweeter. Moscatel was most often finished in a full rich style when it was still found in some abundance back in the days of yore.

The Tinta Negra grape is by far the most prolific on the island, with its establishment coming soon after the post-phylloxera replanting and its spread quite dramatic throughout the twentieth century, as the grape is far hardier and less disease prone than several of the other traditional grapes grown on the island. Tinta Negra is a variety developed from crossing Pinot Noir and Grenache, so this is no second division grape in terms of parentage, but with demand in the international markets higher for the white wine grapes of Sercial, Verdelho, Terrantez, Boal and Malvasia, the Madeira Wine Institute’s viticultural team has been actively trying to get growers to convert vineyards back to one of the white wine grapes, which command a premium price per kilo and are always in short supply to the wineries. That Tinta Negra continued to make inroads in the terraced vineyards of Madeira all the way to the end of the twentieth century can quickly be seen when one looks at Noël Cossart’s book (which was first published in 1984), where he lists Tinta Negra as responsible for fifty to sixty percent of the vineyard land under cultivation on the island, whereas today, that number is fully eighty-five percent. One of Tinta Negra’s great attractions to the extremely small-scale grape growers on the island is that it does well at a variety of elevations and really requires a lot less vigilance during the growing season. Keep in mind that the Madeirense style of grape cultivation, due primarily to the very mountainous terrain that requires so many tiny terraces to cultivate grapes, is for very small tenant farmers to grow some grapes as part of a mixed agricultural base on these steep and very small parcels. There are a total of seventeen hundred grape growers on the island and the average producer exploits only three-tenths of a hectare of vines, and these are usually split between several parcels! It is typical to see the parcel of ground in which the grapes are planted used for additional crops at the same time, as the grapes are traditionally trained up high on a pergola system, and with all agricultural work on these small terraces having to be done by hand, a grape that is not too “high maintenance”, such as Tinta Negra, has been greatly prized by small, peasant farmers who are also tending banana trees, growing figs or passion fruit, as well as potatoes and other vegetables to feed their families. As was observed time and again when

tasting with winemakers at one of the seven remaining lodges, most grapes in Madeira are truly grown in gardens, rather than vineyards!

Sercial is today the primary grape for dry wines on the island. According to Noël Cossart, it is related to Riesling, and is most at home at high altitude vineyards and is always the last grape to be harvested each year on Madeira. It tends to be aggressively astringent when young and requires a long aging to start to blossom, so that its Portuguese names on the island reflect its aggressive texture and rather inaccessible profile in its youth- *Esgana*, *Esganinho* or *Esganacão*, all of which are derived, as Noël Cossart observes, “from the verb *esganar* meaning to choke, because it is so astringent when young that it chokes one to swallow.” Noël Cossart notes in his book that it really requires seven to eight years in cask to start to mature and mellow out a bit structurally, but today, almost all of it is used for vintage-dated or reserve bottlings that tend to be a minimum of ten years of age, and much of the wine from this grape is more likely to be aged anywhere from twenty to forty years in cask prior to being bottled. With age, it is clearly one of the great wines of Madeira and its Portuguese names referring to its choking properties are clearly only reflective of the wine in its aggressive youth. As it is now always bottled as a dry wine, it is fermented out as close to complete dryness prior to having the addition of its spirit fortification, and is most often aged under the *Canteiro* system. The grape is planted on both sides of the island of Madeira, but usually at higher elevations, where the cooler evening temperatures allow it to mature slowly and gracefully, but it is always the last grape to be harvested during the relatively drawn out picking schedule on the island. It is hardly a modern grape, as it achieves full physiological ripeness at quite low potential alcohol- usually between nine and a half and ten percent. Sercial is quite typically marked by scents and flavors redolent of citrus, dried cherries, savory tones that I associate with things like celery seed, olives or lavender, salty soil tones and with age, notes of browned butter. Younger Sercial tends to be best as an *aperitif* or can be drunk through the meal, though with very long cask aging, it tends to concentrate its sugars and come across as a bit sweeter in style through evaporation and concentration.

Verdelho is another of the great white grapes of Madeira, and I do not have a strong sense of why this grape was historically considered second division on the island and only really elevated to the top level of “Noble Varieties” early in the twentieth century. Prior to phylloxera reaching the island in the 1870s, Verdelho was the most widely-planted grape in Madeira (perhaps one of the reasons it was less prized than Sercial, Boal or Malvasia?), accounting for two-thirds of all vineyard plantations prior to phylloxera, but throughout the twentieth century the grape lost ground to Tinta Negra as the preferred grape of the small tenant farmers on the island. Today, most of the great Verdelho vineyards of yesteryear that were on the south side of the island have been lost to other crops or Tinta Negra, and the vast majority of the grape is grown on the northern side of the island- particularly around the town of São Vicente. Verdelho must be fermented in a semi-dry (or semi-*secco*) style these days, and the finest examples of Verdelho tend to have their fermentation stopped by the addition of spirit to the fermentation vats with a bit of residual sugar still left in the wine. This is not the only allowed method for arriving at the designated sweetness level of medium-dry (1.5 to 2.5 degrees Baumé), as the wine can be fermented totally dry and then have the sweetness level adjusted after the fermentation with the addition of unfermented grape must (much as German wines at *Spätlese* or *Auslese* levels are balanced by the addition of *Süssreserve*). The Madeirenses call this unfermented grape

must *Vinho Surdo*. Writing back in the late 1970s, Noël Cossart was not in favor of stopping the fermentation by the addition of brandy, but preferred fermenting the wine out to near dryness and adjusting the sweetness level later with *Vinho Surdo*, as he notes that the latter method tends to make deeper and richer wines, which he thought might stand the test of time even better. Prior to the codification of fermentation techniques in the late 1970s, the sweetness levels of wines here on the island could also be adjusted by syrup produced from sugar cane, but this has been disallowed for a long time now- though one must remember that a great many of the very old vintage Madeira wines from early in the twentieth century or in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries would have had their sweetness levels adjusted with this sugar syrup, rather than unfermented must. Verdelho tends to share some similarities aromatically with Sercial, but to have more spice tones such as cinnamon or cloves, as well as some overt nuttiness in lieu of the more savory accents found in Sercial. Like Sercial, it is a wonderful *aperitif* wine and I can certainly drink it through an entire meal.

Terrantez is a white grape that has lost popularity rather dramatically over the course of the twentieth century, and is now very sparsely planted on the island. The grape was generally not replanted after phylloxera struck the island, and as Mannie Berk writes, it “has now been relegated to a curiosity, with just a handful of vineyards producing fruit.” It has traditionally been finished in a semi-dry style like Verdelho, and for the small amount that is still produced on the island, it continues to be made in a semi-dry level of residual sweetness. The grape is quite prone to mildew issues during the growing season, which is what has caused its fall from grace amongst the small growers, but there is little doubt that this is one of the greatest wine grapes of Madeira and hopefully it will be able to make a comeback in the years to come. Certainly, there are active efforts by both the IVBAM and the wineries themselves to encourage growers to plant more Terrantez. In style, the wine often resembles Verdelho in its aromatic and flavor profile, with plenty of nutty tones, citrus fruit and saline soil nuances, but when one tastes it in conjunction with Verdelho, it often seems to offer up more dimension on both the nose and palate. All of the Terrantez still grown on the island today is reserved for the top level bottlings with extended age- whether this will eventually be a vintage-dated bottling or one of the fifteen or twenty year-old blends depends of course on the evolution of the wine in cask- but no one at one of the lodges today would consider wasting this precious grape in one of the more modest level bottlings. It is probably my favorite single varietal bottling in the wide range produced on the island (if I were forced to choose only one!), and like all of the other white wine grapes, it produces a wine of timeless beauty that ages on forever, and of course becomes a bit sweeter in style at very advanced ages, where it has been concentrated in cask.

Boal is another of the great white grapes of the island of Madeira, though as the wine is now almost always finished in the medium-rich (or medium-sweet) style, it is always a dark amber in color. According to Noël Cossart, it evolves far quicker in cask than a grape such as Sercial, and is often quite approachable after three or four years of cask aging, and I often find it very agreeable at the five-year level of bottling. With its sweeter style, its aromatic and flavor profile tends to incorporate notes of raisins and figs, orange peel, molasses or gingerbread tones, and yet like all fine Madeira wines, it is always quite reflective of its salty soil tones as well. While the grape tends to produce a wine that will be much more accessible early on than some of the other great white grapes of the island, Boal is also a very long-live wine as well and makes a stunningly great wine when produced as an old vintage-dated Madeira or as the base of one of

the great old Solera bottlings. It is probably my favorite single varietal Madeira to serve with a cheese course in a meal, as it possesses such a wonderful synthesis of generosity of sweetness and tangy, zippy acidity that seems to marry so well with a very wide array of cheeses. The grape is sometimes spelled in its Anglicized version as “Bual”, which probably evolved from the British inhabitants of the island trying to spell the name of the grape as they heard it pronounced in Portuguese, and the two terms are used interchangeably. In the notes that follow, I have simply used the spelling that has been used on the bottle, but when discussing the grape’s name for general background, I have utilized the traditional Portuguese spelling of “Boal”. Most of today’s remaining vineyard plantations of Boal are on the southern side of the island.

Malvasia was the first grape to arrive on the island back in the early decades of the fifteenth century and it remains one of the great white grapes of Madeira. It grows best at lower altitudes, for as Noël Cossart comments, the “vine is a shy grower, requiring sheltered, sunny positions at sea level so that the grapes may ripen (on the vine) until they are almost raisins.” Today, Malvasia must be produced in the “full rich” style, for which it has always been the best-suited, and since the very earliest days of the Madeira wine trade, one of the most cherished wines has been the sweet, ageless Malvasia or Malmsey (to give it its pseudonym). Probably a lot of good potential Malvasia vineyard land was lost to the cultivation of bananas on the island over the centuries, as bananas are easier and more lucrative to grow than wine grapes, and the banana tree tends to succeed best at the same lower altitudes as Malvasia. However, while Malvasia continues to be planted in Madeira, Mannie Berk is quick to point out that the original strain of Malvasia, known as *Malvasia Candida* has been supplanted by a new strain known as *Malvasia São Jorge*, which is now responsible for almost all of the wines labeled as Malvasia or Malmsey these days. There remains a tiny handful of vines of *Malvasia Candida* on the island, cultivated primarily to keep the line alive. Like the other great white grapes of Madeira, Malvasia was formerly planted primarily on the south side of the island, but much of its former fine vineyard locations were swallowed up in the expansion of the tourist trade (and its attendant hotel building) or other agricultural plantings, and today, the vast majority of the grape is cultivated on the north side of the island.

Bastardo is another grape variety that essentially fell by the wayside in the wake of phylloxera, as it generally was not replanted or grafted over onto American rootstocks at the end of the nineteenth century. This is the Trousseau grape, best-known today for the lovely wines it produces in the Jura, and traditionally it was fermented in a semi-dry style. Like Terrantez, it is close to extinct on the island, but I do not have the same sense of it being championed for a potential comeback as Terrantez seems to be, and the few examples of Bastardo that one still comes across are glimpses into a past that may well be disappearing. Mannie Berk reports that other than “a handful of experimental plantings” the grape is essentially extinct on the island. This is too bad, as it is really a lovely wine- perhaps not as aromatically complex and exuberant as the other semi-dry grapes of Verdelho or Terrantez, but broad-shouldered and alive with personality and ambition on the palate. However, one of the experimental Bastardo plantings has been orchestrated by the fine house of Barbeito, who has started a joint-venture project in 2007 to plant Bastardo with a grower in São Jorge, on the northern side of the island, so one day we may be able to point to this project as the starting point for more of this lovely grape to be planted in Madeira. As most of the Bastardos that I have had the pleasure to taste are older vintages that have been concentrated through the passage of years, most are now really more of a

semi-rich style and I would think of serving them in similar occasions to where I would customarily reach for a Boal.

There are several other grapes that have been at one time or another part of the Madeira vine-scape, but the only one that I have tasted that has been bottled on its own is Moscatel, which has always been a peripheral grape for wine production here, but when bottled on its own, was finished in a full-rich style like Malvasia. The grape has always been more popular on the island as an eating grape and so very little wine was made from it, and it is no longer allowed to be bottled as a single varietal wine by the IVBAM. When made into a wine on the island, it is typically very floral and aromatic in profile, with lovely depth and potential for longevity, but probably without quite the same breed and complexity as found in Malvasia or Boal. Today, Moscatel is probably most famous, according to Noël Cossart, for having been the first grapes harvested in the important grape-producing village of Câmara de Lobos (located to the west of Funchal on the southern coast of the island) and transported by motorized vehicle to wineries in Funchal in 1909- the first year that the road was opened up between these two localities. Of the lesser grape varieties that have found their way into the blends once upon a time, the most egregious examples were those produced by the *vitis labrusca* and other American grapes that arrived on the island in the wake of phylloxera and were to be used as rootstocks for the traditional grapes of the island to be grafted onto to combat the louse. Of course, with so many tiny, tenant farmers involved in the vineyard production, some decided that it was simply illogical to perform the grafting and just planted the American grapes in their vineyards, and *vitis labrusca* grapes managed to find their way into the production of some Madeira wines throughout the first half of the twentieth century. With Portugal's emergence from the Salazar dictatorship in the mid-1970s and their eventual inclusion in the European economic community in the late '70s, efforts were undertaken to do away with the plantation of these grapes and (hopefully) most of them have now been grafted over to finer varieties.

While we are still on the subject of grape varieties, another point that should be discussed is the traditional practice of bottling wines under the names of Sercial, Verdelho, Boal or Malvasia for a great many years by the producers if the wines fell within the "traditional stylistic parameters" of the old wines produced from those grapes- even if the cask in question that was to be bottled as Boal was actually Tinta Negra! Prior to the advent of the Madeira Wine Institute, this was pretty common practice, and amongst the top lodges, it generally did not adversely affect the actual quality of the wine in question, as long as the wine was properly aged and was true to the *typicité* of a wine made from Boal or Sercial or Malvasia back when these grapes were far more prolifically planted on the island. This practice no doubt certainly assisted growers in the shift from the top white grape varieties of the past to plantations of Tinta Negra, so one has to be aware that many of the very old wines that one is lucky enough to taste on occasion may well be Tinta Negra in origin, rather than the stated varietal on the label. This methodology of naming the wines had a very long tradition in Madeira, and probably was not particularly malevolent in intention, but with Portugal's inclusion in the EEC and eventually the European Union, this traditional practice has been discontinued as antithetical with both the strictures of the EEC and the intentions of all of the remaining shippers on the island and the Madeira Wine Institute to encourage ever higher quality and authenticity in the wines from the island.

Blending of Madeira Wines

The wines of Madeira are quite complex in their fashioning during their fermentation, aging and blending processes. As was touched upon a bit above, the long, drawn out harvest on the island of six to eight weeks ensures that the wineries are going to be receiving grapes in smaller batches and these are fermented on their own as they come into the wineries, so that early on, there are a large number of small lots that will need to be blended. Madeira wines do not go through malolactic fermentation (as the high malic acids form the spine on which these wines cruise along unmolested by time as the centuries unfold), and all of these smaller lots will have to be blended over the course of their *elevage* to produce the wide variety of different bottlings and sweetness levels that will be produced by each lodge over the years. As one winemaker commented during my trip, “when it comes to blending, we are quite similar to winemakers in Champagne in that we need to be able to keep our traditional house styles and our various examples of sweetness in the finished wines, so blending is very much an art of the winemaker here on the island.” The vast majority of the grapes that winemakers on Madeira work with are of course Tinta Negra today, so wines have to be fermented to different levels of dryness for the various blends, some *Vinho Surdo* must be produced for blending (if fermentation is not to be arrested by the earlier addition of spirit to keep the wine sweet) and decisions have to be made for which lots of wine will be earmarked for the *Estufa* process (and hence go into younger wines to be released onto the market sooner) and which are to be raised by the *Canteiro* process in cask for inclusion in longer-aged blends or reserved for potential vintage-dated wines. As wines aged for the three month period in *Estufa* will naturally lose a significant percentage of their alcohol during the heating of the wines, they are generally not fortified until after this process is complete, and for the lower level bottlings that will be earmarked for sweeter styles such as medium-rich, the *Vinho Surdo* must be kept for the blending to come after the wines settle back in from the *Estufa* process.

Most of the potential building blocks in the cellar for blending are of course made with wines produced from the Tinta Negra grapes these days, as the vast, vast majority of the much more rare white wine grapes will be fermented in preparation for aging in the *Canteiro* cask-aging system, and decisions about whether the cask of Verdelho or Boal are to be reserved for vintage-dated bottlings or older blends can be made down the road. However, since the mid-1990s, there is now a new level of vintage-dated bottling that is allowed in Madeira, which are the *Colheita* or “Single Harvest” bottlings. This level was the logical step between the Five and Ten Year-Old blends and the vintage-dated wines, as they offer up the characteristics of a single vintage, but do not have to be aged as long in the cellars before they are bottled and are hence less expensive to raise and allow shippers to bottle certain casks of wine that have plenty of character, but may not have the requisite structural stuffing to age the twenty or more years in cask to achieve vintage status. The regulations for *Colheita* bottlings require that the wines be aged a minimum of five years in cask and be produced entirely from a single grape varietal, though in reality, most houses will not release a *Colheita* bottling until it has seen around ten years of cask aging. These are quite different from the five and ten year-old blends, as many of the blended wines will often include older wines in the blend to give more of the aged Madeira character to the wines, whereas the *Colheitas* are often produced by casks that were originally being “watched over” for potential vintage-dated bottlings or held for a long time for much older blends, but have matured at a brisker pace and arrived at a good point for drinking long before a vintage-dated bottling would be considered ready for its *mise*.

As the vast majority of Madeira wines sold today are the three year-old and five year-old blends, all of which are crafted across the residual sweetness spectrum from “full dry” to “full rich”, and each house (much as with the *Grandes Marques* in Champagne) have their own house style for these bottlings, so it is quite easy to imagine just how important the blender’s skills are in crafting these wines across a myriad of different casks and tanks of reserve wines. No Madeira can be sold until it is at least three years of age (though the three year-old bottlings do not declare their age anywhere on the labels), but most often, even these younger blends will include a bit of older wines in them to try and replicate the house style as classically and consistently as possible. Often a bit of wine that was raised in the more gentle, *Canteiro* aging process will be included in the younger blends that were aged in the *Estufa* system, to add complexity and breed to the final bottling. Additionally, many of the reserved casks of Madeira that are aged for extended periods of time in the lodges of the shippers do not always evolve in the direction that is originally anticipated by the winemakers, as most casks of wine eventually take on a personality of their own and it is only within the parameters of time that the characters of the casks becomes apparent. As these older wines begin to be tasted with regularity, decisions about whether the wine will develop sufficiently to be included in the vintage program, or earmarked for ten, twenty or even forty year-old blends, or reserved for a *Colheita* bottling have to be made, and when one considers that there are thousands of casks spanning many, many decades in each shipper’s portfolio, one can see that both a fine palate and a vision of how certain wines can be most advantageously blended together for certain cuvées becomes high art.

One can imagine how daunting was the task of keeping track of all these different lots and casks of Madeira back in the old days, but now, the Madeira Wine Institute requires that strict documentation be kept for the origins and makeup of each lot that is retained by the house for blending in older cuvées, or to be possibly bottled as *Colheitas* or Vintage-Dated wines down the road. In fact, there are a few older wines out on the market these days where the required paperwork was lost over the years and the wines can no longer be sold as vintage wines, despite their stunning quality, as their birth years cannot be satisfactorily documented. A good example of this was the brilliant Justino’s non-vintage “Old Reserve” Terrantez, which hailed from a retained 3500 liter cask of wine that probably dates back to the 1940s, but for which the paperwork was lost at some time between it being set aside and the house thinking about bottling it early in the new millennium. The house was able to sell the wine as an “Old Reserve” (with the character of at least a forty year-old wine), but in reality, it is probably more like seventy years of age, stunning, and a great value if one can find it still on the market! And one of the most important things I learned during my visit to the island in February is that the older blended wines can be every bit as stunning as the single varietal, vintage-dated wines, and one should certainly not turn one’s nose up at any category of Madeira simply because it is not a vintage-dated or single varietal wine, as the winemakers at the lodges here on the island take the art of blending very seriously and produce some absolutely brilliant wines from their blends!

Rainwater

Rainwater was a special blended Madeira that was initially made in the 1750s specifically for the market in the southern half of what would become the United States, and which according to Noël Cossart, was first created through sheer happenstance by the very important early Madeira shipper, Francis Newton. Francis was sending an order of two “pipes” of Madeira to his

brother Andrew Newton, who was then living in the English colony of Virginia and organizing Madeira orders for the English colonists throughout Virginia, Maryland, the Carolinas and Georgia in these days. The historical record seems to clearly indicate that the two pipes were left on the beach at the end of the day for transport by longboat out to the waiting freighter, but with the bungs left out of the barrels that remained sitting on the beach overnight. It happened to rain that evening, watering down the two large casks of Madeira a fair bit, but the workmen who had left them on the beach (not surprisingly) preferred to put the bungs back in the barrels and send the pipes on their way to the colonies, and the resulting wine was received very warmly by Andrew Newton's clientele in America, with immediate requests put in for more of this particularly lighter-colored, more elegant and softer style of Madeira. The wine became extremely popular in colonial America, and this popularity eventually spread back to the London market by returning Madeira-loving colonists. Francis Newton began to produce a Rainwater blend by selecting lighter-colored wines (primarily Verdelho) and then adding some water to further lighten up the color and no doubt, rein in the acidity a bit and make that "softer" palate impression for which Rainwater Madeira was so prized at this time. By the end of the eighteenth century, price lists from all of the important Madeira merchants included bottlings of Rainwater. The wine continues to be produced to this day, with present-day examples of Rainwater requiring that no grape varietal name appear in conjunction with the name (and most are presumably made from Tinta Negra), but the style of the blend remains lighter and softer in terms of acidity as was mistakenly crafted on that fateful evening on the beaches of Funchal back in the 1750s.

Vintage Madeira

Vintage-dated Madeira is the *crème de la crème* of the wines produced on the island, and though this category has been expanded since the early years of the new millennium by the creation of the intermediate category of vintage-dated *Colheitas*, the wines that bear a single vintage continue to be amongst the greatest wines found on the island. Understandably, as producing a vintage-dated wine in Madeira is a very serious proposition in terms of the time the wine is to be held, as no *Colheita* can be released without at least five years of age and a true Vintage, single varietal wine, which the Madeirense call *Frasqueira*, must be aged for a minimum of twenty years in cask before they can even be considered for bottling. I forgot to mention above that any single varietal-bottled wine must include a minimum of eighty-five percent of the grape variety in question (just as a California wine labeled as pure cabernet sauvignon must include at least seventy-five percent of this varietal in the blend), so there is a possibility of a bit of the winemaker's blending skills may also be used for these wines. However, lots have to be established early on and guaranteed as such by the IVBAM, so that proper documentation can be retained through the very long years or aging for these wines and their vintage of origin can be declared with perfect confidence all those long years in the future. While the wines remain in cask, the producer will taste them with some regularity (if they have not been sealed) to ascertain how they are evolving and consider whether they will eventually find their way into bottle as a vintage-dated wine, or if they will eventually be moved over to the older reserve wines to be included in the makeup of those twenty, thirty or forty year-old blends.

The European Union has only fairly recently begun a program of assisting Madeira producers with subsidies to help offset the long and expensive proposition of aging their wines for so long in cask. As each wine that is stored in the traditional Madeirense method is subject to

evaporation over the course of their period in cask, the European Union now allows a stipend to be paid to the producers that offsets a portion of the cost of this *elevage* period, with the casks that are to be accounted for under the subsidy program sealed by the Madeira Wine Institute and left untouched for a period of years to qualify for the subsidy. Of course, this is only a help to the producers, who can usually count on an evaporation rate of two percent of the contents of the barrels per annum, and though I could not find out precisely the length of time that the EU subsidy covers, I imagine that it is only for a maximum period of five years, and a great many of these wines are going to spend a considerably longer time in cask. The aging in cask, which is done in open air facilities that allow for the change of temperatures as the seasons unfold and replicate the old days when pipes were transported across the seas in the holds of sailing vessels, serve to concentrate the wines dramatically and give them what we have come to consider their true Madeira character. Typically, the evaporation is tolerated without regular topping up of the barrels, as this greater exposure to oxygen aids in the development of the wines, and topping up with the same vintage and varietal is often only done when the barrels have lost about twenty to twenty-five percent of their volume. As Madeira wines are so high in malic acidity, they do not face the same risks of developing a *flora* of mold on the surface of the wine in cask, as is the case in Sherry production. One of the most important aspects of the long cask aging of Madeira wines in general and vintage wines in particular, is that they are aged in ancient casks that allow quite moderate oxygen ingress through their old and quite closed pores in the barrels. Most Madeira aging barrels are in the one hundred year range, with many houses retaining a cooper right on premises to maintain and if need be, rebuild these old and precious barrels.

As became abundantly clear during my visit to six of the seven remaining Madeira lodges in February (and which was corroborated by every producer we visited), is that setting aside wines for potential vintage bottlings sometime in the future is a quite inexact science and it is most often the wine itself that decides whether or not it will eventually qualify for a vintage bottling. All of the Madeira shippers take great care to ensure that only the very finest wines are bottled as vintage wines, and it is not atypical for a large number of lots that were set aside as perhaps having the potential for declaration of vintage to be rejected twenty, or thirty or even forty years down the road and be returned to the stocks of the older reserve wines to be used for blending purposes. Noël Cossart in his book, notes that back in May of 1982, the Madeira Wine Company (who had absorbed the family firm of Cossart, Gordon & Company and added it to their portfolio of brands a few years previous) had retained sixty-nine separate lots of wines for potential consideration for declaring vintage-dated bottlings, ranging from the years of 1950 to 1976, and that eventually seventy percent of these lots were deemed of not sufficiently high quality to be bottled as vintage-dated wines and were returned for use as reserve wines for the blended bottlings. For each wine in each cask will evolve as it sees fit (and often in unexpected directions) through the long, repeated cycles of aging each year, and not all of the wines will prove to have the sufficient stuffing and stamina to be eventually bottled as vintage Madeira. However, what can be safely said is that if a wine is eventually bottled as a vintage-dated wine by one of the shippers, then it is a wine of excellent quality and it is a wine that is now deemed ready to drink when the decision is made to bottle it- no matter how many years have gone by in cask. Some wines will prove to have enough exceptional character to warrant a vintage-dated bottling, despite perhaps only being twenty or twenty-five years or age, and others will have the depth and will be shown to be consistently improving in cask over a century or more!



Looking down at the Bay of Funchal along the busy street where the lodge of H. M Borges is located.

For the very greatest wines in cask, or those who have taken to the extended aging process in barrel with the finest results, the aging progression often jumps around a bit over the years that go by. Most vintage-likely wines, which can be held in lots from as little as two hundred liters up to three or four thousand liters, depending on the style and quality of a specific batch of wine, start out their lives in casks in the *Canteiro* system, stored at higher levels of barrels up towards the roof, where the temperatures are the highest during the first several years of their journey of aging. Over time- five years, ten years, twenty years- they move down to lower levels in the *Canteiro* rooms, where it is a tad on the cooler side and the evolution and concentration in barrel starts to slow just a bit, with the younger wines from subsequent vintages that also show the possibility of one day becoming vintage-dated bottlings taking their place in casks in the upper rafters. If a lot of wine looks likely to make the cut and become a vintage wine, then they may be moved to cooler cellars for an even more gentle pace of evolution in their original casks, or they may be combined into larger casks (again to slow down the evolution process by being stored at a larger volume), and at older ages (say fifty or one hundred years of age), they may be racked into glass demi-johns for holding at their current stage of evolution and concentration, rather than left in cask at the risk of becoming too concentrated and losing that magical point of balance. However, it is far from unheard of with these old, un-bottled wines in the collections of the lodges, to hear that a certain wine might have spent forty years in its original cask of 425 liters, and then was assembled with the remainder of its lot in one large old

cask of two or three thousand liters for another twenty-five years of aging, at which point it seemed to have reached a superb point of concentration and was all racked into demijohns to hold the wine until the time was deemed proper in the market to bottle some or all of it. On rare occasions, a wine will end up spending some time in demijohn, and then the proprietor will taste it and decide that it had perhaps not quite finished its voyage of evolution prior to going into demijohn, and the wine will be returned to cask!

Several of the producers that I visited with during my visit to the island stated that the important thing to keep in mind is that once Madeira is bottled, it does not evolve any further and is ready to drink and its character remains quite constant throughout the long life of the wine in bottle. Intuitively, I had to wonder if it was not possible that the wines also do evolve slowly in bottle as well- for otherwise, they would never go over the hill- but, then again, I cannot really think of any very old wines from Madeira that I have tasted that I could term over the hill! I posed the question to Mannie Berk and he stated unequivocally that the wines of Madeira do continue to evolve once they are in bottle, and while this evolution is slower and different than when the wines were in cask, there is no doubt that all high quality wines from the island do indeed continue to develop and improve while they are in bottle. Ricardo Freitas, Managing Director and head winemaker at Vinhos Barbeito is also another staunch advocate of Madeira's ability to blossom and change with bottle aging. The thing to keep in mind is that Madeira ages in a reductive fashion, rather than an oxidative fashion, so that the arc of evolution is quite different than with other wines, and one of the chief reasons that so many lodges re-cork and rebottle their wines is to give the wines some much needed oxygen after they have become far more reductive after long periods in bottle or demijohn. Prior to my visit to the island and a few subsequent, long conversations with Mannie Berk, I was under the impression that most old Madeira wines were re-corked due to the natural deterioration of the corks over time, but Mannie was quick to point out that far more important was the decanting of the wines and their extended exposure to oxygen again prior to re-corking, to shake off some of the reductive bottle aromas and flavors that come after decades or centuries in bottle, and that this procedure was very important in allowing the wines to reinvigorate themselves and continue on their very long paths of evolution.

Certainly, when the producers take very old wines out of cask and place them in demijohn for a period of aging at the lodge, it is to keep them at their particular point of evolution and halt the concentrating process that occurs in cask, and it is possible that they will be kept at this point in demijohn until the company foresees the need for some great old wine to be released new into the market at a point in the future. Some of these old wines may then be returned from demijohn to cask for a while in anticipation of bottling the wine up a short time down the road and releasing it for sale, and during this preparation for bottling, the act of decanting the wine back in cask and exposing it to oxygen is a key factor in taking away some of the reductive characteristics that a wine will typically develop while being held in (relative) suspended animation in demijohn. For that reason, it is always quite possible that not all of the wines that bear the same vintage and varietal label- say, for instance, a 1912 Boal from Pereira d'Oliveira- will be absolutely identical wines if they were bottled at different dates. The wine that was bottled later (often ten, twenty years or more) may have been held in demijohn and essentially be the same as the wine bottled earlier, or it could have remained in cask and continued to gently concentrate and evolve during the time between the two bottlings. Once I

became aware of this, I began to ask about bottling dates of old wines, but many of the wines reported on below were tasted prior to my coming to understand the importance of having some idea (when available) of bottling dates and whether or not a very old wine might have spent part of its life in demijohn or not. Of course, in the end, it really only matters about the quality of the wine that finds its way into your glass!

The other thing to keep in mind when it comes to old varietal bottlings of Madeira wines is that the unique system of the past, where *partidistas* were an integral part of the production side of the business for so many centuries, is that not all of the old wines released by a certain lodge under their label were necessarily produced by the shipper in question. They could be wines that were produced and aged by a *partidista* for many, many decades, prior to be offered for sale to one of the shippers, who then might keep it for many years on their premises in cask or demijohn, prior to labeling it and releasing it into the market. Likewise, the rather dramatic consolidation of the number of shippers over the last century and a half on the island has also meant that the firms purchased or merged into the larger shippers who remained also had their cache of old wines in cask or demijohn that came along into the collections of the acquiring company, so not all of the old wines at a single shipper will necessarily be of the same origins, even if they are labeled as the same varietal and vintage date. Take for example a firm like Pereira d'Oliveira, which is now the lodge that has the greatest array of old vintage Madeira in their stocks. This company started out originally as a *partidista*, and over the years, it grew by purchasing other *partidistas* and their stocks of old wines, so that the d'Oliveira cache of old vintages continued to grow over the years, and when they finally began to export, they had a selection of ancient wines that was simply unmatched on the island.

Labels and House Styles

Since the late 1970s, the Madeira Wine Institute has worked hard to codify labeling and production methods of the wines from the island, and the *laissez-faire* days of yesteryear now certainly belong to the past. However, given the timeless nature of Madeira wines, many of the idiosyncrasies in labeling from the past are still very much part of our present drinking pleasure, so I thought it might be useful to quickly go over some of the terms that routinely appear on Madeira wine labels- past and present. We have already alluded to the different levels of sweetness for blended wines: **Dry** (or *Secco*), **Medium-Dry** (or *Meio Secco*), **Medium-Rich** or **Medium-Sweet** (*Meio Doce*) or **Full Rich** or **Full Sweet** (*Doce*). Additionally, there are the age designations for the blended wines, which may or may not be augmented on the labeling with the actual age of the blend in question. For three year-old wines (which are the youngest that can legally be sold), the official term is “**Selected Wine**” and at this level, it is not possible to print on the label that the wine is three years of age. At the five year-old level, the wine is known as a “**Reserve**” Madeira and the five year-old designation normally will also appear on the label. These are typically not expensive bottlings, but they can often deliver dramatically more depth and complexity than the three year-old wines and many of the shippers today are making quite serious wines at this level. Some houses will make varietal bottlings at the Reserve level, but most choose to hold these white grapes back for their ten year-old blends or older. The official name for the ten year-old blends is “**Special Reserve**” and for blends of fifteen years or more, the term “**Old Reserve**” is used. Keep in mind however that these ages refer to the character of the blends, which have to be tasted and approved by the tasting board of the Madeira Wine Institute, and it is certainly possible for a ten year-old blend of “Special Reserve” to actually be

made up of fifty percent eight year-old wine, twenty percent ten year-old wine and thirty percent fifteen year-old wine, as the goal of the wineries is to maintain as consistent a house style for this level of bottling by utilizing more or less of their reserve wines as needs be to recreate as nearly as possible the house style of their ten year-old bottlings from release to release. Ten year-old blends can be superb wines and it is not required that one solely focus on older wines in Madeira to get great wines, for there are some absolutely stellar Special Reserve wines produced these days.

There are no specific age limits for blended wines, so many houses will produce a fifteen, a twenty, a thirty or even a forty year-old blended wine, if they have a particular lot of excellent wine that is worthy of being bottled on its own or in conjunction with similarly-aged cuvées. Often, these older blends will be based on lots of wine that were held back in cask for extended aging to watch their evolution and determine if they would eventually merit a vintage-dated bottling, but for one reason or another, have been deemed not best bottled on their own with a vintage declaration. There can be a number of reasons for a lot not make it to the vintage designation- perhaps it is a superb lot of old Verdelho, say from the 1969 vintage, but the house already has a slightly superior lot of old Verdelho that has just been bottled from the 1968 vintage. A shipper could either hold back the 1969 for an extended period of time, so that the 1968 will be used by the market first, or they can choose to return the 1969 Verdelho back to the stocks of reserve wine for blending and it may become a building block for a thirty year-old or forty year-old blended bottling of Verdelho. Another possibility for our hypothetical 1969 Verdelho lot of wine is that it does not quite possess the same character and complexity as other old Verdelhos in the cellar at the winery, so the proprietor might decide that it will be best utilized in a blend of older wine that may include some old Tinta Negra or Boal, and that the combination of the various old varieties is superior to any of the constituent components being bottled on their own and released as vintage wines. Or it could be used in a smaller percentage to really make a brilliant bottling of Verdelho at the Special Reserve or ten year-old level.

For vintage-dated bottlings, as we have already noted, there is now used the relatively new term of **“Colheita”** for vintage wines that have been aged at least five years in cask prior to bottling and release. Some houses prefer to use the term **“Single Vintage”** for these wines, as the two terms are interchangeable. As we noted above, while five years is the minimum time in cask for these wines, most wineries will keep them closer to ten years in the *Canteiro* system prior to bottling and release into the market. The creation of this category of vintage-dated Madeira wines was approved by the Wine Institute in 2000 and 1995 was the first vintage from which Colheitas were allowed to be produced. For the wines selected for Colheita, not all of a given lot of wine need be used for this purpose, so that it is entirely possible for some of the wine to be bottled up as a Colheita at ten years of age, and the remainder of the lot to be left aging in casks and reserved to eventually be bottled as a proper vintage wine twenty or thirty years down the road. The oldest that a Colheita bottling can be is eighteen years or age- after eighteen years in cask, it can no longer be bottled under this category and must be held another two years for possible vintage bottling or used as a reserve wine for blending. For proper, old vintage wines, there are two terms that are used interchangeably for the wines: **“Frasqueira”** or **“Garrafeira”**. Both of these terms are Portuguese for vintage-dated wines, as the actual English term of “Vintage” is trademarked by the Port houses in Oporto and cannot be used officially by producers in Madeira. *Frasqueira* is probably the more common of the two terms today for the

vintage-dated old wines. Prior to 2010, it was allowable to combine terms like “Reserve” with a vintage-dated wine, so that one will see old bottles labeled as “1921 Malmsey Reserve” from back in the old days, but today, the terms Reserve or Special Reserve are only to be used for the five or ten year-old blends.

I will go more deeply into house styles in the features on the six individual lodges that I visited during my trip, but as a brief thumbnail sketch, let us say that Barbeito will tend to make wines on the drier side of each range of residual sugar for each category, Justino’s, Pereira d’Oliveira and the brands from the Madeira Wine Company (best-known for their flagship brands of Blandy’s and Cossart, Gordon) will be in the mid-range of residual sugar levels for each type, while H. M. Borges and Henriques & Henriques at the sweeter side of the range (except for the driest wines from H & H, which are really quite dry). But, these are generalities (for instance, Justino’s makes a separate line under the Broadbent’s label, which are indeed sweeter in style at each level), and within the range of each house’s portfolio, one will also find that certain styles are specialties of the house, or one lodge’s range of wines in cask might be particularly strong in old Boal or Terrantez, while another might have a great cache of Sercial or Verdelho. For every house’s cellar has been accrued over a very long time, as the consolidation of the number of shippers over the course of the latter half of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries has meant that mergers and acquisitions have brought different types and quantities of old wines to these wineries, depending on what was in the cellars of the companies that have been bought over the years. For instance, Justino’s does not tend to have the same depth of old wines in cask or demijohn as some of the other houses, whereas Pereira d’Oliveira is widely recognized as the finest source for old wines on the island, due to the amazing depth and breadth of their cellars, as well as their focus for many generations on laying down casks for eventual vintage-dated bottlings, rather than placing more of their wines into the programs for younger blends.

Solera Madeira

Soleras were far more popular for Madeira wines in the past than they are today. The name is somewhat of a misnomer as it is used in Madeira, as it has no relationship with how wines are produced by this method in Spain, where younger wine is routinely added at the top of the solera system of casks and refresh the quantity of wines that have been lost through evaporation. In Madeira, the solera system does not use younger wines to top off the barrels in the solera, as doing so would undo the work that time has already done concentrating and adding depth and dimension to the wine through long aging in cask. Rather, the solera in Madeira is topped off with another old wine that has already been approved by the Madeira Wine Institute as consistent in age, style and grape variety to be an appropriate wine with which to add to the solera. A Solera in Madeira may be bottled up to ten different occasions over the course of its long life, but each bottling must not exceed more than ten percent of the existing batch that is aging in cask, so that the character of the old wines in the lot are not compromised by too much of the solera being bottled at any one time. There can only be ten bottlings done for an old solera, and there can only be ten additions of approved wine to top up the solera during its lifetime as well. After the tenth addition of wine to top up the solera, all of the remaining stocks of this wine must be bottled up in their entirety, so that the open-ended style of never-ending soleras practiced for some types of wines in Spain are never replicated here on the island. The Solera wine takes its vintage name from the year in which it was first created; the wines can be

absolutely brilliant, but I never find them to have quite the same precision and focus as a correspondingly old, single vintage wine from the same era.

Pricing Today

Up until the dawn of the new century, the prices for old Madeira wines were ludicrously low for the age and quality of the wines, and it was not unheard of for brilliant, hundred year-old vintage wines to sell for less than one hundred dollars per bottle in the decades of the 1980s and 1990s. However, the auction world has woken up to the quality and rarity of so many of these wines, and now the oldest and rarest wines are much more expensive than was the case only a short time ago (at least by Madeirense standards for the passage of time) and most of the very oldest vintage wines will sell for well into the four figure range per bottle these days. The golden age of buying old vintage Madeira has certainly come and gone, except for the most well-heeled of collectors, but below the level of the oldest and rarest, the vintage wines still remain relatively good values in the context of today's old wine pricing and there are a lot of truly brilliant vintage wines out there in the one hundred to two hundred dollar per bottle range that are still very old and very, very magical. The rarest grapes, such as Terrantez, Bastardo and Moscatel tend to sell at higher prices than the Sercial, Verdelho, Boal and Malvasia bottlings of a similar age, due to their rarity today. The older blends can also be stunning, so do not be tempted to think that a wine has to be a vintage wine from Madeira to be a great wine! The new level of *Colheita* bottlings tend to be excellent values, and one can also find some superb values amongst the blended wines at the ten and fifteen year-old range, so one does not have to spend a small fortune to drink some truly remarkably fine wines from the island. In my experience, the three year-old bottlings tend to be nice, pleasant and correct wines of their respective genres (the *Estufa* method of aging the wines does not ever seem to produce the same aromatic and flavor complexity, nor the breed of the *Canteiro* system), but one can pick and choose and already start to get some very, very good wines at the five year range and there is certainly no reason to ignore the wines of Madeira simply because the 1868 Blandy's Bual is out of the reach of the wine budget.

One of the most important things I learned during my visit to the island is that Madeira wine does not have to be ancient to be stunning, and I returned from my trip with a far more nuanced understanding of these wines and far more appreciation for the great quality of the vintage-dated wines at thirty or forty years of age. Just because Madeira lasts forever does not mean that one has to wait forever to enjoy the wine, as the master blenders and tasters who run each firm and make the decisions in the cellars are all outstanding in releasing wines only when they are drinking beautifully, and it is simply the nature of how Madeira is aged in cask that ensures that some truly remarkable wines reach their peak of drinkability at twenty or thirty years of age, whereas others may need a hundred years of concentrating in cask to reach their true apogees. As the wines tend to be so high in natural acidity, from the combination of the lack of malolactic fermentation, the style of the grapes used to produce the wines and the high acidity in the volcanic soils of Madeira, most people relatively new to the wines of Madeira are probably well-advised to start with some of the sweeter-styled wines such as Boal or Malvasia, or with the blends that are Medium-Rich or Full-Rich in personality. I frequently heard from the winemakers we visited with that they now tend to prefer some of the drier styled wines, but I would suggest that this is a logical evolution of one's palate through familiarity with the island's wines, and I certainly have developed my love for these wines by first viewing them through the prism of the sweeter styles.

Drinking and Serving the Wines of Madeira

Because of the unique way that Madeira wine is raised and crafted, with its long period of cask aging, reasonably open to the elements, the wines do not need to be handled as most wines in one's collection. I prefer to store my bottles standing up, rather than laying down in the cellar. As they have seen their share of exposure to oxygen during their *Canteiro* periods prior to bottling, they are relatively immune to the vagaries of oxidation once opened, and keep for a remarkably long time before they start to fade after the bottles are broached. However, they do change over the course of their time open, and I will never serve a bottle without giving it some time to open up after the cork is pulled. Typically, I like to open a bottle a week before I begin to drink it, so that some of the post-bottling aromas and flavors can work out of the wine and it can truly blossom and show its true complexity. Keep in mind that many of these wines spend a very, very long time in cask prior to bottling, so it is not surprising that once they are squeezed down into what the wine considers a very tiny container, it will hunker down and need some exposure to oxygen to again blossom. If I have not planned ahead well enough to have given a bottle a week or so to open up, then I will simply decant the newly opened wine for at least a few hours (four or five is preferable in my experience to two), rinse out the bottle and then pour it back in for service and extended storage. Because an open bottle will easily last a year, I tend to have multiple bottles open at all times, of varying ages, blends or varietals, so that when I am in the mood for one of the drier-styled wines for an *aperitif* I have one available, and if I want a glass of Madeira with the cheese course or with dessert, I will have alternative options. However, the wines do certainly change over time when they are open, and I find that I prefer them during the first three to six months that they are open, when they seem to offer the greatest panoply of aromatic and flavor complexity. Madeira will sometimes have a very light sediment, though most of the wines are cold stabilized prior to bottling, to allow most of the deposit to settle out, and the wines are routinely racked and filtered also prior to bottling, so most sediment is found in very minute quantities.

When I spoke with Mannie Berk about how he likes to prepare a bottle of Madeira prior to starting to drink it (as he has far more experience than I do with these great wines), he quickly pointed out that one of the keys is to know how long a certain wine has been in bottle. Due to the reductive aging cycle of Madeira wines, they tend to get quite shut down over long periods in bottle and take quite some time to blossom if they have spent eighty or one hundred years in bottle prior to being served. Mannie observed that for him, he likes to decant wines a minimum of one full day for every decade that they have spent in bottle, so if he is serving a bottle of 1850 Verdelho from Pereira d'Oliveira that might have been bottled in 1950, he would tend to let it sit in decanter for six days prior to starting to drink the wine (one day for each decade it has been in bottle), and he would expect it to start to blossom fully at some point after this period of decantation. If this same wine had been re-corked and rebottled in 1995, then it would only need two days in decanter before he would start to serve it. He noted that when he recently bought a fine private collection of old bottles (mostly nineteenth century wines), he ended up having all of them decanted for an extended period of time and then rebottled, as it is not rare to have wines that have spent a long time in bottle or demijohn uncorked and exposed to oxygen for two or three months prior to again bottling them up again, as the wines tend to brighten up and reinvigorate when they are exposed to oxygen after a very, very long time in glass.

In America during colonial times and during the first hundred or so years of American history, Madeira used to be drunk throughout the course of the meal, and I see no reason not to do so still to this day. Of course, it is still a fortified wine, so drinking the wine over the entire meal can be a bit of an undertaking if too many glasses are enjoyed, and it is very easy to sip through these wines and hang on their gorgeous complexity and balance and suddenly find that one has drunk as much as is good for one! But, it is easy enough to drink a drier-styled wine like Sercial or Verdelho through the first part of the meal, switch to a Boal for the cheese and then finish with a rich Malvasia with dessert or for very civilized sipping at the close of the meal. Madeira is purported to go beautifully with cigars, but I do not smoke and can only report on this combination on a second-hand basis. One of the desserts that I really like with Madeira is the traditional “honey cake” of the island, the *Bolo de Mel*, which is actually made with a concentrated syrup from sugar cane (rather than honey) and tastes a bit like gingerbread, though not as sweet. You will find in some of the tasting notes on the very old wines a reference to this honey cake, which is very good and really is one of the aromatic elements one finds with some frequency in very old, sweeter-styled Madeira. The wines of the island have also long had a great reputation as being very flexible in the kitchen for cooking (please only use the younger wines for this and save the more serious juice for proper drinking, as the sauces come out just as well with the younger wines!) and their natural acidities often work well to add a vibrancy to flavors in dishes prepared with this unique wine.

Structure of Tasting Notes

Of the notes that follow, I have broken them down into several sections. The tasting notes start with a feature on The Rare Wine Company’s “Historic Madeira Series” bottlings, which are made in collaboration with the fine house of Vinhos Barbeito. The wines are the brainchild of The Rare Wine Company’s owner, Mannie Berk, who is unequivocally one of the greatest experts in the world today on the wines of Madeira (as well as one of its most passionate collectors), and they have been designed to replicate much of the character and complexity of the greatest very old wines, but are produced as blends and are far more accessible in terms of price than the great old wines in today’s far more heated auction markets. I have included a feature on these wines as it really cannot be under-stated how important they are for introducing a legion of new Madeira fanciers to the wonders of these wines, and it would be wonderful if it could somehow be organized to make this series of superb blends available to markets outside of the US. Following the section the Historic Madeira Series, I have written a section on the six shippers who I visited during my February visit, with a brief history on each house. There only remain seven shippers of Madeira wines on the island today, with only the firm of J. Faria & Filhos having escaped my visits during my trip to Madeira. After a brief history of each shipper that I had the pleasure to visit, I have included tasting notes on the majority of wines that we tasted during our stop at the lodge, with all of the blended wines and the Colheita bottlings listed under each house, but I have not placed the notes on the very oldest wines tasted on each visit in this section, preferring to reserve those for inclusion in the final section of tasting notes on the great old vintage wines. These are listed after the sections on each Madeira lodge, with the wines organized by varietal and in order from youngest (a very relative term for vintage Madeira wine) to oldest. The varietal-labeled vintage wines are listed beginning with the driest (Sercial) and then climbing up in the level of residual sweetness of each grape, to Verdelho, Terrantez, Boal, Bastardo, Moscatel and finishing the range with Malvasia or Malmsey. I have appended expected dates of peak drinkability to all of the tasting notes on the old vintage

Madeiras reported on below, but I am not really sure how useful this is for readers, as if we are discussing a 1954 Blandy's Bastardo for instance, it is probably going to live on far more than the hundred years that I forecast in the window of drinkability, but it seemed a little excessive (and unnecessary) to recommend to drink this wine over the coming two hundred years or more.

The Rare Wine Company's Historic Madeira Series Bottlings

The Rare Wine Company and its founder, Mannie Berk, have been the leading force here in the United States for the re-kindling of this country's love for Madeira, and they have been one of the world's foremost sources for great, old vintage Madeira for many, many years. The American colonies and the early United States were one of the most important markets for the wines of Madeira, and it was really only the disruptions of the twin plagues of oidium and phylloxera, followed by Prohibition in the US, that ended this long-running love affair. Mannie Berk is one of the foremost experts on the wines of Madeira to be found anywhere in the world today, and he has worked studiously for decades to reintroduce these beautiful wines to one of the most important historic markets for Madeira. It is not surprising that he undertook the updating and re-publishing of Noël Cossart's terrific and absolutely invaluable book on Madeira in 2011, with several important chapters added and written by Mannie himself to bring the book up to date. The Rare Wine Company's "Historic Series" Madeiras are a project that was first conceived of by Mannie back in 1998, as he sought to craft more affordable examples of Madeira that replicated much of the magic found in the great, old rare vintage wines of the island, which by this time were already beginning to really soar in price at auction. He has worked in concert with the old line, but very forward-thinking firm of Vinhos Barbeito to craft these superb bottlings, most of which are single varietal bottlings that are raised for an extended period of time in oak casks, prior to blending and bottling in preparation for being shipped to the American market.

The wines for the Historic Series are all raised by the *Canteiro* method. All of the varietal-labeled bottlings are comprised of eighty-five percent of the stated grape on the label (i.e. Verdelho, Sercial, Bual or Malvasia), which these wines ranging from ten to twenty years of age and having been raised in cask at the Barbeito lodge, and these are then blended with fifteen percent of much older wines (forty to eighty years of age) made from Tinto Negra to complete the blend and recreate that impression of really great old wines. The Madeirense take great pride in their expertise as master blenders- a craft they have finely honed over nearly six centuries of wine production- and it is quite clear that Barbeito's current director, Ricardo Freitas and Mannie Berk must be ranked up at the top of the field of blending for these great wines they have created in the last decade or so. The entire lineup of the Historic Series is across the board outstanding and the wines fully realize their original goal of recreating the experience of drinking great, long aged and very old Madeiras at a fraction of the price that the very oldest vintage wines have now climbed to in the auction markets around the world. The wines are named for the great Madeira markets or connoisseurs here in the United States in the very early days of the republic, synthesizing the history of the wine here in the US with some of the finest blended examples of Madeira that are currently to be found on the market. For those who do not have the opportunity or discretionary income to jump in and dabble with the very expensive, rare old wines still available on the auction markets these days, the Rare Wine Company's Historic Series is a great place to discover the style and superb complexity of great old Madeira at a far more accessible price level. I cannot think of a better way to experience the vast majority of styles found within

the wines of Madeira than sampling through these superbly well-made wines, and one could really not do better as an introduction to the magic of Madeira than buying one of each bottling and sampling through them over the course of several months. In addition to the bottlings listed below, the Historic Series also included a Ben Franklin Special Reserve cuvée, which was crafted specifically for a charity in Philadelphia and was made in a Boal style and included about thirty percent of that grape (with the remainder presumably old Tinta Negra), and which I have not had the pleasure to taste.



Rare Wine Company “Charleston Sercial” Madeira (2009 Release)

I really like the Rare Wine Company’s Charleston Sercial bottling, which is one of my favorites in their fine historic Madeira bottling series. This wine only has one percent residual sugar, which with Madeira’s inherent tangy acids, comes across as quite dry, but beautifully buffered. The bouquet is a first class blend of white cherries, oranges, a touch of nutskin, fresh nutmeg, smoky overtones and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and beautifully transparent, with a superb core, racy acids and stunning tension and purity on the superbly focused and very long finish. This is really a terrific bottle! 2010-2060+. **94.**

Rare Wine Company “Baltimore Rainwater” Madeira (2013 Release)

I had the pleasure to try the Baltimore Rainwater bottling while visiting with Ricardo Diogo Freitas at Vinhos Barbeito, as I had not yet tried it here in the states. To give you some idea of how serious both Mannie Berk and Ricardo Diogo Freitas take this series of wines, the

Rainwater is made from a blend of Sercial and Verdelho! The very complex nose offers up a blend of fresh apricot, a touch of Myer lemon, lovely soil tones, a bit of briny ocean breeze and a nice topnote of green olive. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very elegant, with a lovely core and excellent length and grip on the focused and very refined finish. Soft as rainwater, as the saying goes.... 2014-2070. **93.**

Rare Wine Company “Savannah Verdelho” Madeira (2009 Release)

This is probably the most “historic” of the series, as according to Mannie Berk, as the vast, vast majority of Madeira consumed here in the US in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were Verdelhos. This wine offers up a really lovely and quite high-toned nose of orange peel, spice cake, woodsmoke, a lovely base of soil nuances and a nice dollop of herbal tones redolent of celery seed in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, racy and very complex, with a lovely signature of soil, impeccable focus and balance and a very long, poised and tangy finish. This has around two percent of residual sugar to it, which is pretty much all eaten up by the fine acidity here, so that the overall impression is a well-buffered, but essentially dry wine. Impressive. 2010-2050+. **93.**

Rare Wine Company “Boston Bual” Madeira (2009 Release)

The Boston Bual bottling from the Rare Wine Company is really a very pretty wine that offers up excellent value, as it wafts from the glass in a blend of orange zest, coffee, a lovely touch of toasted nuts and a gentle topnote of caramel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and only moderately sweet, with a lovely core, bright, tangy acids and very fine length and grip that closes with a fine note of spiciness. This has about three percent residual sugar, and with its lively acidity, the wine comes off as more off-dry than sweet in style. A fine bottle. 2010-2040+. **92+.**

Rare Wine Company “Porto Moniz” Malvasia Madeira

The Porto Moniz bottling of Malvasia from the Rare Wine Company’s historic Madeira series is a lovely wine, offering up a deep and vibrant bouquet of cherries, burnt sugar, coffee, orange peel, lovely soil tones and a fine signature of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely transparent, with tangy acids, nice sweetness and fine focus and grip on the long and classy finish. Another very classy bottle from this fine series. 2012-2040. **92.**

Rare Wine Company “New York Malmsey” Madeira (2009 Release)

The Rare Wine Company’s New York Malmsey is a bit darker in color than the Boston Bual, and carries closer to five percent residual sugar. The wine is quite a bit deeper-pitched aromatically than the Bual, offering up a mix of brown sugar, *pain épice*, orange peel, gentle herbal tones, dried cherries and a nice dollop of *rancio* in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep and quite broad-shouldered, with a fine core and lovely interplay of acidity and sweetness on the long and well-balanced finish. 2010-2040+. **92.**

Rare Wine Company “Stratford Hall” Special Reserve Madeira

The Rare Wine Company’s Stratford Hall bottling is a lovely bottle of Madeira that offers up a very stylish nose of orange peel, new leather, smoke, gentle notes of molasses, lovely soil tones and a gentle topnote of sweet herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite dry in style, with a fine core and focus, crisp acids and lovely length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This wine is done in a medium-dry style that seeks to replicate the types of Madeira that were so passionately drunk and collected by early American colonists in the Virginia colony during the mid-eighteenth century. 2012-2040. **92.**

Rare Wine Company “New Orleans Special Reserve” Madeira (2009 Release)

The New Orleans Special Reserve Madeira bottling from the Rare Wine Company was originally crafted to assist with recovery efforts for victims of the aftermath of the levy disaster brought about by Hurricane Katrina in this beautiful city. The first release included about thirty percent Terrantez in the blend, but this note hails from the second release of New Orleans Special Reserve and I believe did not include quite as much Terrantez in its *cépages*. In any event, the second rendition of New Orleans Special Reserve is another outstanding wine, wafting from the glass in a spicy aromatic constellation of cherries, orange, peel, gentle notes of molasses, new leather and a spiced meat topnote that is reminiscent of mincemeat. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with excellent complexity, a fine core, racy acids and excellent focus and grip on the long and well-balanced finish. Fine juice. 2010-2040+. **93.**

Rare Wine Company “Thomas Jefferson” Special Reserve Madeira

Thomas Jefferson was a great connoisseur of Madeira wine, and like many of these early fans of the wines, he had a particular blend that he was most fond of, which he noted was one-tenth of a sweet old Malmsey with nine-tenths a drier wine like Verdelho. The Rare Wine Company’s Jefferson Special Reserve is made with that Jefferson preference in mind, being comprised of one tenth wine produced from some of the last Malvasia *Candida* grapes on the island, with this wine blended into a fine, dry Madeira to replicate the blend favored by Thomas Jefferson. Some of the wines in this blend are more than eighty years of age! The bouquet is deep and vibrant, offering up a lovely nose of figs, cherries, toasted almonds, a touch of sweet prune, lovely soil tones, a bit of *rancio* and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and really very snappy, with a fine core, lovely elegance and lift on the very long and focused finish. This is a beautiful wine that can still be found out there in the market (I bought a bottle a couple of days after I returned from the island) and I strongly urge folks who think they might be interested to rush out and secure a bottle before it disappears from the marketplace, as this is truly a brilliant wine and a steal in the context of what such quality wines from the island cost these days! 2014-2065. **95+.**

The Grand Old Lodges

Today there are only seven remaining shippers of Madeira wines left on the island, though a few of these have multiple brands in their portfolios, so that one can still see a few more names of producers gracing labels. These remaining lodges are Vinhos Barbeito, H. M. Borges, J. Faria & Filhos, Henriques & Henriques, Justino’s, Madeira Wine Company and Pereira d’Oliveira. Most of these houses have grown over the last couple of decades from mergers and purchases of stocks from shippers or *partidistas* that have gone out of the business, but not all have been as active as others in purchasing older stocks from companies that wanted to wrap up their affairs on the island, so some firms have far greater depth of old wines in cask or demijohn than others. As is made very clear in Noël Cossart’s fine book from the mid-1980s (and Mannie Berk’s updated chapters in the second edition published in 2011), the trade of Madeira wines was once far more wide open and serviced a much larger market than is the case today, but one does have a sense when visiting Madeira at the present time that the remaining firms are all very much on solid ground and that the extinction of the Madeira wine trade is not anywhere on the immediate horizon. It is quite evident that the English merchants who arrived on the island in the latter decades of the seventeenth century were a driving force for the organization of the market, and their initial success drew more merchants over the ensuing years and growth of the trade was

dramatic, so that Noël Cossart reports that “in 1680 there were some 30 wine shippers” on Madeira, with seven or eight of Portuguese background, ten British and the remainder of other European origins, but “by 1780 there were over seventy British houses” alone, and at least as many from other national backgrounds. The numbers continued to grow throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, as the Madeira wine trade was a global phenomenon and demand was very brisk for the island’s wines in export markets around the world. However, these firms began to thin, as we discussed above, in the mid-nineteenth centuries with the arrival of the oidium epidemic on the island and the contraction of the number of shippers continued during the long quarter century of struggles wrestling with phylloxera and its aftermath. Still, in 1880, Noël Cossart could note that there remained nearly two hundred distinct firms crafting and shipping Madeira on the island, though the vast majority of pipes shipped off of the island by this time was being concentrated in the top dozen to fifteen houses. For example, Cossart, Gordon, who was the largest shipper at this time, exported nearly eleven hundred pipes in the year of 1880 alone, whereas there were still one hundred and sixty-eight shippers who exported less than twenty pipes of wine in the same year.

A real turning point in the contraction and consolidation of the number of houses shipping Madeira wines in the post-phylloxera era occurred in 1913, when the Madeira Wine Association was formed, by a merger of the lodges of William Hinton & Sons, Welsh and Cunha (the precursor to today’s well-known brand of Welsh Brothers) and Henriques & Câmara. These were very difficult years for the trade, as a very large percentage of the export markets had been lost by the more than fifty years of disruptions caused by oidium and phylloxera, not to mention the threat of war, and a great many houses were content to call it a day on the island and sell off or be absorbed into larger enterprises. As the decade of the 1920s accelerated, other large and important independent houses of the era, such as Krohn Brothers, Blandy’s, Leacock, Miles Madeiras and T.T. da Câmara Lomelino also joined the Madeira Wine Association. The island’s largest shipper at the end of the nineteenth and on into the twentieth century, Cossart, Gordon joined the association in 1953, and in total, fully twenty-eight formally independent firms became part of the Madeira Wine Association during the consolidation period of the twentieth century. Originally this was an umbrella organization that sought to rationalize costs of production, but allow the member firms to maintain their own original house styles, but in 1981, the association was re-formed as the Madeira Wine Company, with the family of the Blandys running the company and the consolidation of its multitude of labels undertaken so that now there are only five labels still produced by the company: Blandy’s, Cossart, Gordon & Company, Miles Madeiras, Welsh Brothers and Leacock. Today the firm is co-owned by the Blandys and the Symington family, of Port fame.

The end of another era on the island occurred in the final month of 2013, as the last of the remaining *Partidistas*, Artur de Barros e Sousa, which had been located in the heart of Funchal (just up the street from the historic firm of Pereira d’Oliveira) finally closed its doors and sold its remaining stocks to their neighbors, the d’Oliveira family. This small firm was founded in 1921, and was run for the last several decades of its existence by the two brothers, Arturo and Edmundo Olim, who are spoken about reverentially by everyone I met in the wine trade during my visit to the island. The small lodge was not particularly well-known off of the island, except to the most passionate connoisseurs of Madeira wines, as the family never sought to export their wines and was perfectly content to sell them to visitors who stopped by their shop and small

winery while visiting Madeira. The two brothers worked together for decades, with older brother Arturo, taking over the winemaking for his father after he passed away in 1971- tending the casks and bottling the wines by hand in the tiny lots for which they were renowned. Younger brother Edmundo, the ever congenial and gracious host of visitors in the shop, ended up taking over the sales side of the business in 1974. The two Olim brothers were as well-known on the island for their warmth and good-humored generosity as they were for the absolutely superb quality of their wines. The Artur de Barros e Sousa wines were produced solely under the *Canteiro* system of cask aging (both brothers were extremely proud that the family never produced a single bottle under the *Estufa* method), and the brothers were also well-known for only bottling very small batches of their wines at a time, decanting a hundred or two hundred bottles of a given wine out of cask for bottling as it was needed to stock the shelves of their small shop, so that one might fall in love with a 1983 Sercial on one's last visit to the island and find a later bottling of a slightly more concentrated, but every bit as fine, 1983 Sercial on the shelves on the next visit to their shop. The bottles were stenciled with "ABSL" to denote the name of the firm (Artur de Barros e Sousa, Limitada) and were always done in a bit drier style, though I have not had the pleasure to taste any of their wines. Most of their very oldest stocks had been sold some years ago, with most of the recent offerings from the Olim brothers were from the decades of the 1970s or 1980s, and all of these have been now sold to the d'Oliveira family. When we met with the current head of the d'Oliveira family lodge, Luis A. C. D'Oliveira, he seemed to indicate that the family planned to refurbish and keep the ABSL shop for visitors, but that some renovation work would be necessary before it would again be open to welcome visitors to the island. Given the universal praise for the quality of the Olim brothers wines, I would urge folks who have the opportunity to cross paths with a bottle to not hesitate in purchasing it- as I intend to do so myself the first time I spot an example.

I have listed the lodges here in the order that I visited them on the island during my trip in February of this year, as it seemed like a very well thought out program by our hosts from the Madeira Wine Institute and it also makes it much easier for me to follow my notes and present the wines in the same order that my trip unfolded and my base of knowledge about the wines and the people of the island expanded over the course of these very pleasurable days in Madeira.

Justino's

Justino's is now one of the largest shippers on the island, and probably the most important supplier on the international market for wines destined for the food industry. As the Madeira Wine Institute officially banned bulk shipments of Madeira wines in 2001, the wines destined for the food industry have salt and pepper added to them prior to shipping to ensure that they do indeed get used for the preparation of sauces and the like, rather than finding their way into blends of what might be passed off as fraudulent old Madeira wines. The official name of the firm is Vinhos Justino Henriques, and was founded in 1870. The lodge now has a French, corporate parent in La Martiniquaise, a spirits and liqueur company, who also owns a majority stake of the company of Henriques & Henriques and handles distribution for the important French market for Justino's. The lodge makes a complete line of fine Madeira wines, and as the Commercial Director, Júlio Fernandes, commented, "while we do not have the same stocks of really old wines as some of the other shippers, we do still have some gems in the cellar from before the second world war." The firm used to be based in the center of Funchal, but in 1994, they moved all of their operations up to the top of one of the surrounding hills in a modern

winemaking and aging facility. The style here is quite classic (despite the very modern facilities) and the wines are very well-made, with the more basic bottlings as tad more “commercial” in style, but the older blends and the vintage wines very fine indeed. The firm also produces a line of Madeira wines for Bartholomew Broadbent, which are marketed under the “Broadbent’s” label, and which in general, tend to be done in a slightly sweeter and richer style than similar cuvées produced under the Justino label. This is not surprising, as Madeira drinkers in the UK tend to be more focused on the sweeter styled wines in general, with Boal and Malvasia probably the most popular of the single varietal bottlings here, so the Broadbent’s lineup takes this into consideration when final blending is done for each category. Some of the very oldest wines here in the cellar are labeled with the “V. J. H” moniker, which refers to the old name of the firm, Vinhos Justino Henriques, but for the sake of clarity, I have labeled them in the tasting notes simply as Justino’s.



Justino’s Commercial Director, Júlio Fernandes in the lodges tasting room, with a glass of their fine 1995 Colheita.

Justino’s Fine Dry

Justino’s Fine Dry is comprised entirely of Tinta Negra and is a very nicely done example of a young Madeira. The nose offers up scents of orange peel, raisins, soil and a nice dollop of spices in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows nice transparency, with good focus and grip, but also with just a touch of uncovered backend spirit on the finish. A good solid wine for its category. 2014-2050. **86.**

Justino's "Reserve" Fine Dry Five Years Old

At all of the houses that I tasted at during the trip, it was quite apparent that the jump up from three year-old wine produced under *Estufa* to five year-old wine produced under *Canteiro* is well worth the difference in price of the two categories of wine, as one really does gain dramatically in terms of complexity and refinement at this level. The Five Year-Old Fine Dry from Justino's is a very classy example of its genre, offering up a serious nose of orange, a touch of golden raisin, fine soil tones, a dollop of celery seed and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very nicely balanced, with solid mid-palate concentration and fine length and grip on the bright and very satisfying finish. Fine juice. 2014-2050. **88.**

Justino's "Old Reserve" Fine Dry Ten Years Old

The Old Reserve Fine Dry bottling from Justino's is an excellent wine, wafting from the glass in a complex and very classy bouquet of sultana raisins, a touch of cherry, new leather, lovely soil tones and a complex, spicy topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully seamless, with a fine core of fruit, perfectly integrated acids and excellent focus and grip on the long and classy finish. This is a very well-made bottle. 2014-2050. **89+.**

Justino's Fine Rich

This is a very nice example at the three year-old level, wafting from the glass in a mix of brown sugar, orange peel, cherries, soil and a bit of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is focused, full-bodied and very nicely balanced, with good, but not great mid-palate depth, bright acids and good length and grip on the finish. Good juice and a fine value. 2014-2050. **87.**

Justino's "Reserve" Fine Rich Five Years Old

The Five Years Old Fine Rich Reserve from Justino's shows greater depth on both the nose and palate than the three year-old version, but surprisingly, I like the focus better on the younger blend. The nose offers up scents of raisin, caramel, orange peel and just a touch of soil. On the palate the wine is deep and full, but rather imprecise and a bit blowsy, with a nice balance of acidity, spirit and residual sweetness, but a slightly chunky personality on the backend. Good, solid wine, but here the jump up to the Old Reserve ten year-old bottling is very much justified. 2014-2050. **86.**

Justino's "Old Reserve" Fine Rich Ten Years Old

The Old Reserve ten year-old blend of Fine Rich from Justino's is excellent, as it offers up a bright and complex nose of dried cherries, molasses, a nice base of soil, a touch of celery seed and golden raisins. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very nicely balanced, with bright acids to nicely carry the 115 grams per liter of residual sugar, lovely focus and grip and an impressively long and classy finish. Good juice here. 2014-2050. **89.**

Justino's Sercial Ten Years Old

The Ten Years Old Sercial from Justino's is a lovely wine, wafting from the glass in a precise aromatic constellation of orange peel, dried cherries, celery seed, a touch of straw and a nice base of salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely transparent, with fine focus and balance, zesty acidity and a long, seamless and very classy finish. This carries 43 grams per liter of residual sugar, but between the snappy acids and the lovely, salty soil tones, it comes across as quite dry. 2014-2065. **89+.**

Broadbent's Verdelho Ten Years Old

The Ten Years Old Verdelho was the first wine here that we tasted under the Broadbent's label, and this is a very good example. The wine is deep and complex on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet delivering a mélange of orange, cloves, straw, a touch of smokiness, cardamom, a fine base of soil and just a dollop of Madeira honey cake in the upper register. On

the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and really beautifully balanced, with a rock solid core, tangy acids and a very long, pure and elegant finish. This is the kind of Madeira that would work beautifully throughout the course of a meal. 2014-2065. **91.**

Justino's Boal Ten Years Old

Justino's bottling of Boal Ten Years Old is another of the very, very strong examples that the lodge produces at this level. The wine wafts from the glass in a classy bouquet of desiccated cherries, lavender, lovely spice tones, orange peel and a fine base of soil nuances. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very well-balanced, with a lovely core, fine focus and grip and a very long, classy finish that closes with a nice touch of backend bitterness that plays off the residual sweetness to excellent effect. 2014-2065. **89+.**

Broadbent's Malmsey Ten Years Old

The Broadbent's Ten Years Old Malmsey is very good, as it has superb soil signature and snappy acids to nicely frame its rather considerable 130 grams per liter of residual sugar. The bouquet is a fine mix of sultana raisins, brown sugar, orange zest, smoke, molasses and strong base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very nicely balanced, with a fine synthesis of sweetness, acids and minerality. There is just the faintest whisper of uncovered spirit here on the backend that keeps the score down a bit, but it is only a trace. 2014-2065. **89.**

1999 Justino's Colheita

Like most of the top shippers, Justino's holds back its Colheita bottlings far longer than the required five years in cask, and none of their bottlings at this level will be released before they see at least their fifteenth birthdays. All of the Justino's Colheitas are finished in a medium-rich style. The 1999 Colheita is still a cask sample at this level and is destined to still spend several years in the cellar before it is bottled. The wine offers up a lovely and still fairly youthful nose of sultana raisins, tangerine, celery seed, salty soil tones and a potpourri of spices in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a fine core, still pretty snappy acids, lovely focus and grip and a very long, electric finish. While I am no expert, I would think this wine will still spend more than a handful of years in cask before it is bottled and released, as it seems on the young side to me at this point in time. 2020-2100. **91.**

1996 Justino's Colheita

The 1996 Colheita from Justino's is a very pretty wine, with a deeper and much rounder palate impression than the still quite young 1999 version. The bouquet is a fine blend of honey cake, dried cherries, cigar smoke, cloves, a beautiful base of soil tones and a nice touch of cardamom in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very well-balanced, with lovely focus and grip, tangy, perfectly integrated acids and a very long, classy and vibrant finish. Lovely juice. 2014-2100. **92.**

1995 Justino's Colheita

I had a very hard time picking a favorite between the 1995 and the 1996 Colheita from Justino's, as both wines are excellent. The 1995 offers up a touch more aromatic exotica in its bouquet of dried cherries, brown sugar, complex soil tones, exotic, Asian spices, bergamot and a touch of peppermint in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very well-balanced, with a fine core of fruit, a beautiful seamless blend of acids, residual sweetness and soil tones and a very long, refined and tangy finish. Fine, fine juice and a perfect example of how it is not necessary to go deep with very old wines from the island to get a very sophisticated glass of Madeira! 2014-2100. **92.**

Blandy's (The Madeira Wine Company)

The Madeira Wine Company was our second winery visit of my trip to the island, and this large and important firm continues to fashion truly outstanding examples of Madeira wine. As noted above, the firm began life as the Madeira Wine Association in 1913, and changed its name to the Madeira Wine Company in 1981. The Blandy family, who first arrived on the island in 1811 and whose eponymous lodge joined the association in 1925, eventually came to manage and own fully eighty-five percent of the firm, in addition to its other various real estate development, shipping and banking interests on the island. In 1989, the Blandy family sought an outside partner to improve marketing of the Madeira Wine Company's portfolio in the international market and brought in the Symington family of Oporto, who own the famous Port lodges of Graham's, Dow's and Warre's. The initial agreement was for a fifty-fifty split between the Symington and the Blandy families, but there was an option in the agreement for the Symingtons to take a majority stake in the Madeira Wine Company, which they eventually exercised. However, in 2011, on the two hundredth anniversary of the Blandy family's arrival on the island, the two families reached a new agreement for the Blandys to once again own a majority share and manage the company. Since the arrival of the Symingtons, the Welsh Brothers label has been dissolved (as far as I know) and the firm now only markets Madeira wines under the four remaining labels of Blandy's, Cossart, Gordon and Company, Miles Madeiras and Leacock, with the first two labels reserved for the most prestigious wines in the cellar. However, the firm continues to own several other brands and it seems quite likely, that if one were interested in renewing one of these other historic brands for a particular market, the Madeira Wine Company might be amenable. During our visit, we met with the company's very talented Oenologist and Wine Director, Francisco Albuquerque, as well as Ana Soares, the firm's Public Relations Director. The Madeira Wine Company has been quite active with its growers in recent years in trying to encourage more Terrantez to be planted. At the time of the arrival of the Symingtons to the Madeira Wine Company, the firm was responsible for fully fifty percent of the island's exports in wine and was by a wide margin the largest shipper of Madeira wines in bottle.

The company has pretty good stocks of wines in their cellars (still with plentiful casks of older wines dating back to 1920), and we were treated to a rather extraordinary range of wines during our visit- all of which were bottled under the flagship Blandy's label. As the organization of the bottlings now stands at the Madeira Wine Company, the two labels of Blandy's and Cossart, Gordon & Company are now used for the very finest wines that the firm produces, with the other two labels, Miles Madeiras and Leacock reserved for some of the more basic level bottlings. However, this firm was one of the most active in selling older vintages out into the market in the decades from the end of World War II up through the 1980s, so they do not have anywhere near the same depth of old wines in cask these days as they did once upon a time. However, there are a lot of Blandy's and Cossart, Gordon & Company older bottlings out on the auction markets that originated from their generosity in the second half of the twentieth century in selling older wines, and a great many of the old wines bottled by shippers such as Avery's in the United Kingdom also originated from stocks of old wines of the Madeira Wine Company. As the Madeira Wine Company came over time to absorb nearly all of the remaining English shippers on the island in the twentieth century, as well as many of Portuguese origin, the style here tends to be quite classic and middle of the road in terms of sweetness within any given category of Madeira, though they tend to be a tad on the lighter side in color than some of the more old-fashioned firms like H. M. Borges. Francisco Albuquerque is the man behind the

winemaking and blending at the Madeira Wine Company, and he has won winemaking awards on three occasions over the last half dozen years for his classy wines. At least for the Blandy's range of wines, the *Estufa* process is only used for the entry level three year-old wines (I did not think to ask if this was true of all of the other labels at the MWC), with everything else raised under the *Canteiro* system. The entire Blandy's range is impeccably made, but during our tasting it became pretty clear that the fireworks in the bottle really get started here at the fifteen year-old range of wines and the sweet spot for the Blandy's label is with these older wines.

Blandy's Rainwater

The Blandy's Rainwater is a very pretty and lighter-styled wine that very faithfully reflects the original character of this category. The bouquet is a mix of raisins, dried cherries, lovely spice tones, dried rose petals and a nice dollop of soil. On the palate the wine is fullish, vibrant and nicely transparent, with lovely focus and grip, but just a whisper of backend spirit poking out uncovered on the finish, which keeps the score down just a touch. But, all in all, a very nicely made rendition of Rainwater. 2014-2040. **87.**

Blandy's Ten Years Old Sercial

Blandy's Ten Year-Old Sercial is quite light in color, with a distinctive golden tinge to this amber wine. The complex bouquet is bright and nicely high-toned, wafting from the glass in a mix of orange peel, dried apples, cardamom-like spice tones, salty soil, a dollop of green olive and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and quite seamless in its balance, with a fine core, impressive complexity and excellent length and grip on the focused and very classy finish. Fine juice. 2014-2050+. **90.**

Blandy's "Alvada" Five Years Old

The Alvada bottling is a new, more modern take on the ancient secrets of Madeira winemaking, as the wine is done with a bit of new oak and is made in a sweeter style out of a fifty-fifty blend of Boal and Malvasia. It is a very well-made wine that aims to introduce younger wine drinkers to the magic of Madeira through a "gateway" style that harkens back a bit more to the style of wines they may be familiar with from other regions and countries. The wine is quite sweet and generous in style, delivering an aromatic mix of brown sugar, orange peel, ginger and new oak torrefaction notes. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and round on the attack, with good acids and lovely focus and balance. The finish is long, reasonably complex and quite well-done, but to my palate, the addition of a bit of new wood takes away from the underlying soil tones that are so much a part of the more traditionally-styled wines of the island. However, I can certainly see how this style might be popular to newbies to the wines of the island. 2014-2050. **88.**

Blandy's Ten Years Old Malmsey

I quite liked the style of the ten year-old Malmsey from Blandy's, but it is certainly done in a richer style and is one of the sweetest examples to be found in the Blandy's lineup of Malvasia-based wines. The bouquet offers up a lovely blend of brown sugar, figs, gingerbread, dried cherries, a touch of celery seed and a spicy topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, round and opulent, with fairly gentle acidity to carry this level of residual sweetness. The wine has fine depth at the core and lovely balance, but I really would have loved to have seen this wine with more acidity to give a bit more bounce on the long finish. 2014-2050. **87.**

Blandy's Fifteen Years Old Sercial

The fifteen year-old Sercial is a new edition to the Blandy's lineup and the wine is excellent. The deep and vibrant nose jumps from the glass in a mélange of orange peel, fresh

almonds, lovely, salty soil tones, white cherries and a nice touch of lemongrass in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very elegant in profile, with a fine core of fruit, tangy, seamless acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and very refined finish. A lovely wine. 2014-2060. **91+**.

Blandy's Fifteen Years Old Malmsey

The fifteen year-old Malmsey from Blandy's delivers all of the cut and bounce that I was longing for in their ten year-old version, and this wine is outstanding in quality. The bouquet is a beautiful blend of baked peaches, brown sugar, orange zest, honey cake, a touch of *garrigue*, celery seed and a nice dollop of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and tangy, with a beautiful synthesis of acidity and residual sweetness, great focus and balance and a very, very long, complex and classy finish. A superb example and an outstanding value! 2014-2060. **92.**

1998 Blandy's Colheita Sercial

The 1998 Sercial Colheita from Blandy's is a very, very nice wine, but I have to give a slight nod to the Fifteen year-old Sercial that was served ahead of it, as that wine contained some older wines in the blend and had just a touch more complexity as a result. The nose on the 1998 Sercial offers up scents of lemon, orange peel, fresh almonds, salty soil and a touch of ocean breeze in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, elegant and nicely transparent, with good acidity and fine length and grip on the tangy finish. A very well-made bottle, but I would opt for the fifteen year-old Sercial for my table! 2014-2060. **89.**

1995 Blandy's Colheita Sercial

The 1995 Sercial Colheita is another very, very well-made wine. The exquisite nose wafts from the glass in a mix of orange peel, peach, *garrigue*, a touch of brown butter and a lovely base of salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite a bit more broad-shouldered in style than the elegant 1998 rendition, with a rock solid core of fruit, crisp acids and a very long, complex finish that shows just a whisper of uncovered, backend spirit. Fine juice, but the score is kept down just a tad by that touch of alcohol on the finish. 2014-2060. **90.**

1998 Blandy's Colheita Verdelho

Maybe this is just a reflection of my preference for Verdelho, but I found the pair of Colheitas that I tasted made from this grape to be really, really strong at Blandy's. The 1998 Verdelho is an excellent wine, delivering a deep and complex nose of tangerine, a touch of fresh rosemary, dried apple, cloves, a very classy base of soil tones and a lovely topnote of *pain épice*. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, vibrant and complex, with a great core, seamless balance and excellent length and grip on the tangy and beautifully focused finish. This is high class juice. 2014-2065+. **92.**

1995 Blandy's Colheita Verdelho

The 1995 Blandy's Colheita Verdelho is equally superb. The wine spent sixteen years in cask in the *Canteiro* system prior to being bottled in 2011 and offers up a stunning nose of fresh apricot, salty soil tones, celery seed, orange peel, hazelnuts and lovely spice tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very complex, with great focus and mid-palate intensity, suave, perfectly-integrated acids and superb length and grip on the refined and dancing finish. This is a beautiful bottle of Verdelho! 2014-2065+. **93.**

1996 Blandy's Colheita Bual

The 1996 Bual Colheita from Blandy's is another very strong wine from the company. The very lovely nose jumps from the glass in a fine blend white cherries, cloves, orange peel, a

touch of molasses, fresh rosemary and a fine base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and very well-balanced, with an outstanding core, lovely focus and grip and a very long, complex and classy finish. 2014-2065. **92.**

1996 Blandy's Colheita Malmsey

The 1996 Malmsey Colheita from Blandy's is also very fine indeed, delivering a complex bouquet of brown sugar, orange peel, celery seed, a touch of cigar smoke, a fine base of soil and a topnote of Christmas spices. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and very well-balanced, with a lovely spine of acidity to carry its residual sweetness, excellent mid-palate depth and fine length and grip on the backend. Fine juice. 2014-2065. **91.**

Vinhos Barbeito

Vinhos Barbeito has now moved their production and part of their aging facilities to a modern winery up at the top of one of the mountains overlooking the town of Câmara de Lobos, which sits just to the west of Funchal on the southern coast of the island. This town used to be primarily a fishing village, with a significant percentage of the very finest vineyards on the island located here, but the tourism business has encroached both on the number of hectares planted here to grapes and the waterfront has been transformed into a myriad of restaurants and hotels, with the fishing fleets moved to another section of the island. Vinhos Barbeito is a relative newcomer to the firmament of shippers on the island, having only been formed by Mário Barbeito Vasconcelos in 1946. The firm was run by its founder until his passing in 1985, and he was then succeeded by one of his daughters, Manuela de Vasconcelos, who has already worked alongside of her father for a decade prior to taking over the management of the firm. The lodge was quite active in the bulk Madeira wine business starting in the 1970s, but eventually, they were one of the first of the large houses to move away from this side of the business and concentrate more on the higher quality bottled wines. By the time the current head of the lodge, Ricardo Diogo Vasconcelos de Freitas took over as Managing Director in 1990, the decision was made to leave the bulk wine business completely and concentrate on the highest quality wines. Around this same time, the company also decided to enter into a partnership with their long-time Japanese distributor, the Kinoshita family, who had sold Barbeito wines in Japan since 1967. Ricardo Freitas is joined at the helm of the company by his two brothers, Emanuel and José. Amongst the changes enacted with his arrival at the helm of the family firm, Ricardo Freitas also became the first member of the Barbeito family to take over the responsibilities as the chief winemaker of the lodge, with 1993 being the first vintage that he produced entirely on his own. Today, he is widely recognized as one of the most dynamic winemakers on the island and is a master blender of great renown, and there is no surprise that when Mannie Berk was looking for a firm to assist in the production of his Historic Madeira Series, he reached out to Ricardo Freitas.

Vinhos Barbeito is one of the most forward-thinking of the seven remaining Madeira shippers, skillfully synthesizing modern winemaking techniques to craft wines that very happily look back to the classic style of the island's wines. The *Estufa* system here is carried out in thermal-jacketed stainless steel tanks that very precisely and gently heat the young wines over their three months of warming and their three months of gently recovering in tank prior to racking and filtering, with constant circulation of the wines in tank, as Ricardo Freitas states that "we seek to make wines here by this system that show none of the 'roasted' character typically found in wines produced by *Estufagem*, as I completely dislike this characteristic in Madeira

wines that can be a bit burnt by the old-style *Estufa* concrete tanks.” To better replicate the old days in Madeira, when grapes were traditionally treaded by foot in the *lagars*, Ricardo has invested in a mechanical *lagar* that recreates the gentle crushing of the grapes by foot-treading (which was developed in Oporto), and he uses this for all of his white grapes and a growing percentage of his red grapes as well. All of his white grapes are fermented whole cluster style, with the retained stems again harkening back to the old days, when these grapes were often fermented not only with all of their stems retained, but also often a portion of the leaves from the vines as well. Ricardo Freitas also dislikes topping up of casks during the *Canteiro* process, so this is almost never done during at least the first ten years that the wines spend in cask. Again, looking to synthesize the modern with the tried and true techniques of the past, the new winery’s *Canteiro* aging section was built with a zinc roof (as was used in most of the old, smaller lodges around the island back in the day) to best capture the traditional style of aging, and once the wines are considered ready for bottling, Ricardo will rack them together into one of his old, stainless steel shipping tanks (which were used for the bulk trade back in the day), where they will spend a winter outside marrying their various components and settling naturally prior to bottling in the spring.

As only a portion of Vinhos Barbeito’s aging facilities are located at the new winery, up in the cooler mountain air, they are able to gain complexity in their blended bottlings by taking advantage of different conditions for their other two *Canteiro* locations—one down in the town of Câmara de Lobos and another (their warmest of the three) located in the center of Funchal. The barrels aging at the higher altitude of the new winery facility tend to develop more slowly, and can add greater finesse to the blends from their slower pace of evolution. Since 2007, Ricardo Freitas has entered into a partnership with a grape grower in São Georges (on the northern side of the island) to expand the plantations of the Bastardo grape in Madeira, bringing this grape back from the edge of extinction here. In addition to the full range of blended bottlings, *Colheitas* and older single vintage wines, Vinhos Barbeito also produces a line of “Single Cask” wines from time to time, which show enough unique character over the course of their long aging under the *Canteiro* system that Ricardo deems them to have enough personality to stand on their own and bottles them up as Single Cask wines. And, as has already been mentioned above, Barbeito is also the home of the Rare Wine Company’s Historic Madeira Series, with Ricardo and Mannie Berk spending many days together in the tasting room each year working on the new blends of these great wines. The house style of the wines bottled under the Barbeito label these days tend to be shaded towards the drier side of each category, with great purity and elegance, not to mention tangy acids, and it is quite clear that this is one of the superstar producers today on the island.

1999 Vinhos Barbeito “Single Harvest” Colheita Medium-Dry

The 1999 Single Harvest is made entirely from Tinta Negra and is a lovely wine. It was bottled in March of 2012. The refined bouquet delivers a superb mix of sultana raisins, orange peel, a dollop of salty soil, smoke and fresh almonds. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a fine core, excellent balance and grip and an impressively long and classy finish. This is a very fine bottle. 2014-2075. 91.

1996 Vinhos Barbeito Tinta Negra “Single Cask 409” Medium-Dry

The 1996 Tinta Negra Single Cask 409 is one of two barrels that were reserved as exceptional from a bottling run of the 1996 Colheita back in 2008, and which was aged an

additional five years prior to bottling (the other reserved cask is still aging in the Barbeito cellars). The extra five years of *Canteiro* aging have really given this wine some depth and dimension, as the bouquet now soars from the glass in a great mélange of peach, orange peel, a touch of brown sugar, a superb base of soil, almonds and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and really vibrant on the backend, with excellent focus and grip, perfectly-integrated acids and outstanding balance on the very long finish. This is a stellar bottle. 2014-2100. **92+**.

2004 Vinhos Barbeito Malvasia “Single Harvest” Colheita (still in cask)

The 2004 Malvasia has been in cask for eight years, and. According to Ricardo Freitas, “it is still a couple of years away from really being ready for bottling, as it should show a bit higher acidity with a two more years of concentrating in cask.” The superb nose offers up a constellation of tangerine, peach, fresh almonds, salty soil tones, a touch of green olive and a lovely smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with a lovely core, ripe acids and a very, very long and seamless finish. This is going to make a superb bottle of Malvasia. 2014-2100. **92+**.

2002 Vinhos Barbeito Malvasia “Single Harvest” Colheita

The 2002 Single Harvest Malvasia was only just bottled in June of 2013. This is a stunning wine, offering up a deep and vibrant bouquet of baked peach, smoke, browned butter, a touch of *rancio*, a bit of straw, celery seed and a nice, saline topnote of ocean breeze. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a lovely synthesis of sweetness and high acids, great focus and grip and a very long, complex and seamless finish. An outstanding Colheita. 2014-2100. **93**.

Vinhos Barbeito Boal Reserva

Though this wine is officially a “Five Year Old” Reserva, it is made from wines that spend five to seven years in cask prior to blending and bottling. This is a lovely example, delivering a complex bouquet of orange, fresh apricot, smoke, salty soil tones and a nice topnote of celery seed. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and racy, with a fine core, lovely elegance and focus and a very long, exquisitely balanced finish. This is a very, very classy five year-old blend! 2014-2065. **90**.

Vinhos Barbeito Malvasia Reserva

The Barbeito Malvasia Reserva is also a blend of five to seven year old wines and it is absolutely transcendent for its level! The color is quite a bit lighter than most five year-old bottlings of Malvasia, for which I would suspect no caramel coloring was added. The superb nose offers up an energetic aromatic constellation of fresh almonds, orange peel, gentle olive tones, smoke, dried cherries and a touch of straw. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a great yin and yang of residual sweetness and zesty acidity. The wine is complex, focused and really long, with lovely harmony and bounce. A first class bottle of Malvasia by any stretch of the imagination, and in its price range, this has to have no peers! 2014-2065. **92**.

Vinhos Barbeito Verdelho “Reserva Velha”

The Barbeito Verdelho “Reserva Velha” is their ten year-old blend of this grape, but as is the case with the five year-old wines, the actual age of the wines in this cuvée range from ten to thirteen years or age, so one gets a bit more of the complexity of older wines in the blend. This is superb, offering up a gorgeous and quite spicy nose of cloves, tangerine, salty soil tones, almonds, a touch of lemongrass, just a hint of honey and a fine topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with a super core, ripe,

perfectly integrated acids and superb bounce and grip on the focused and very elegant finish. Another absolutely stellar blend! 2014-2075. **92+**.

Vinhos Barbeito Sercial “Reserva Velha”

The Reserva Velha bottling of Sercial from Ricardo Freitas is also outstanding. The very pure and stylish nose wafts from the glass in a mix of peach, fresh apricot, lemon, a lovely base of soil tones, gentle spice notes of nutmeg and cardamom, almonds and a saline topnote that recalls an ocean breeze from afar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and seamless, with fine mid-palate concentration, lovely vibrancy and a very long, focused and complex finish. Great juice for its price point. 2014-2075. **92.**

1992 Vinhos Barbeito Sercial Frasqueira

The 1992 Sercial from Barbeito has only been in bottle for a fairly short time, but it was showing beautifully at the time of my visit. The superb bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of orange, fresh apricot, brown butter, citrus peel, soil and an overtly smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure, quite dry and very well-balanced, with racy acids, superb focus and grip and a very long, classy and complex finish. Fine, fine juice, and if one is looking for a dry Madeira to serve through the entire meal, this would be just the ticket! 2014-2100. **93.**

1992 Vinhos Barbeito Verdelho Frasqueira

The 1992 Verdelho Frasqueira (vintage) bottling from Barbeito is also outstanding, and is yet another wine from the current lineup of this fine lodge that gets a nod as one of the best values out there in the world of complex and classic Madeira. The brilliant nose delivers a complex and very refined mélange of orange, brown butter, baked peaches, gentle nuttiness, a touch of savory (almost meaty) notes, vinesmoke and a glorious base of salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with fabulous complexity and focus, ripe, totally buried, but zippy acids and stunning length and grip on the laser-like and stellar finish. This is a winemaking *tour de force*! 2014-2100. **94.**

1992 Vinhos Barbeito Bual Frasqueira

The new vintage release of Barbeito’s Bual is also a superb wine, with excellent depth and aromatic complexity. The classy bouquet delivers a fine spectrum of sultana raisins, tangerine, celery seed, cloves, a touch of brown sugar, woodsmoke and a fine base of minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and racy, with a fine core of fruit, great focus and breed and a very long, suave and tangy finish. Again, the seamless blending of acidity and residual sweetness is exceptional here, which gives the wine only a medium sense of sweetness. I could drink this wine through an entire meal with no problem. 2014-2100. **93.**

Vinhos Barbeito Verdelho “20 Anos”

The new blend of the Barbeito Verdelho “20 Anos” was in the midst of being prepared for bottling, with the wine having been fined, but not yet filtered when I tasted it. It was to be bottled in three or four more weeks and was showing very, very well indeed. The bouquet is a complex blend of lemon, peach, brown butter, almonds, salty soil tones and a topnote of lemongrass. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows a bit more *nervosité* on the palate than the 1992 vintage Verdelho, with excellent focus and grip, snappy acids and a very long, classy and complex finish. This is going to be very fine indeed. 2014-2100. **92+.**

Vinhos Barbeito Malvasia “20 Anos”

The new bottling of Twenty Year-Old Malvasia was in a similar stage of development to the Verdelho and was also showing fine promise. The wine wafts from the glass in a complex blend of cherries, brown sugar, lovely spice tones, toasted almonds, smoke and a fine base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite light on its feet for a twenty

year-old Malvasia blend, with superb focus and balance, bright acids and a very long finish that closes with both elegance and excellent grip. High class juice. 2014-2100. **92.**

Vinhos Barbeito Malvasia “40 Anos” Mai Manuela

The Forty Year-Old bottling of Malvasia from Barbeito is an absolutely stellar wine on both the nose and palate and a very emphatic reminder that one does not have to buy a vintage-dated Madeira to get an absolutely spectacular wine. The glorious nose soars from the glass in a vibrant constellation of dried cherries, tangerine, a touch of bonfire, a great base of soil tones, a bit of spiced meats, rancio and a nice note of charred earth. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and very, very complex, with a great core, superb balance, bright acids and stunning length and grip on the very, very pure and very light on its feet finish. Ricardo Freitas’ preferred style for drier Madeira really works brilliantly with wines such as this forty year-old blend of Malvasia, as the filigree here is as remarkable as one will find on the best bottles of noble sweet Rieslings from Germany. A great, great wine. 2014-2090. **94.**

H. M. Borges

The lodge of H. M. Borges was founded in 1877 by Henriques Menèzes Borges, who was already a large collector and connoisseur of the wines of Madeira and his passion for the wines eventually was transformed from a hobby into a full-fledged business in that year. By all historic accounts, he was a very passionate connoisseur of the wines of the island and he ran the firm with great style until his passing away in 1916. It was not until the second generation of the Borges family took over the business that they began to make and blend their own wines, as prior to this, Senor Borges was quite content to purchase finished wines from *partidistas*. Today the estate is run by the fourth generation of the Borges family, the lovely cousins, Maria Isabel Borges Gonçalves and Maria Helena Borges Gonçalves Fontes, who have been in charge of this quite traditional lodge for several years. The house makes a full lineup of three, five and ten year-old bottlings, various twenty and forty year-old blends, as well as a range of Colheitas and straight vintage bottlings. The Borges family is reputed to have a very good supply of very old wines as well, and we were very generously treated to a very rare 1877 Terrantez from the house, but the Borges ladies had not really prepared a broad tasting for our group, so I have much less sense of their entire range than I do of any of the other lodges that I visited during my trip to the island. From what I tasted, the house style here seems to be quite old school, with fairly dark colors indicating a bit of caramel coloring and the wines often showing quite broad-shouldered personalities and finished in a fairly sweet iteration of each category. That said, they were also very, very good wines and this is a house that I would certainly be on the lookout for in the market for their older wines. I have been fortunate to taste some of their very old vintages at tastings here in the US and been impressed with the complexity and personality of the old wines. Of all the Madeira lodges that I visited on this trip, it was only the Borges cousins that seemed less than sanguine about the future of the wines on the island, but perhaps this perception is amplified by the fact that neither lady has children that seemed one hundred percent predisposed to taking over the running of the family firm when the time comes. As the ladies liked to say during our tasting, “there is no need to really worry about the future, for it will resolve itself when the time comes and we will see what happens.” I hope that a future generation will step in here and keep this staunchly independent firm part of the small firmament of shippers on the island, as the wines are very good indeed, but I got the sense that many in the trade believe that this house will eventually be absorbed by one of the other lodges.



H. M. Borges Reserva Secco

The Borges family uses some *Estufagem* wines, as well as those raised by the *Canteiro* process in their five year-old blends. This wine is comprised of one hundred percent Tinta Negra and offers up a pretty and complex nose of lemon, almonds, green olive, a touch of straw and a nice, smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite broad-shouldered in style, with a good core, ripe acids and very good length and grip. This is very well-made for its level, though perhaps not with the same breed as one might find in a similar wine from a house like Barbeito. 2014-2050. **89.**

Araújo Henriques Verdelho Ten Years Old Reserve (H. M. Borges)

I do not really know the story of this bottling, as we had it at dinner one evening, rather than at the lodge, but I assume that this is a different brand name that the Borges family has retained from the past. The wine is quite good, as it offers up a refined nose of lemon peel, peach, salty soil tones, a nice touch of green olive and walnuts. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and shows off a nice core of fruit, with crisp acids and fine focus, but with just a touch of backend spirit poking out uncovered on the finish and keeping the score down a tad. 2014-2065. **89.**

H. M. Borges Boal Reserva Velha

The Borges ten year-old Boal is excellent. The wine delivers a complex and classy bouquet of cherries, orange peel, nutty tones, brown sugar and a fine base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very well-balanced, with a fair bit of sweetness for a younger

Boal, but with excellent acidity to balance the residual sugar and a very long, focused and powerful finish. Again, this is a fairly big wine in terms of structure, but it is very well-balanced and quite a fine drink. 2014-2055. **90.**

H. M. Borges Malmsey Fifteen Years Old

The Fifteen Years Old Malmsey from H. M. Borges is excellent as well and one really gets the sense from the limited range of this tasting that the house really excels with the sweeter-styled bottlings. The complex bouquet wafts from the glass in a mélange of fresh figs, cherries, molasses, fine soil tones, orange zest and a lovely, spicy topnote. On the palate the wine is typically full and broad-shouldered, with a very fine core, crisp acids, excellent focus and balance and a long, quite sweet, but also tangy and complex finish. Good juice. 2014-2025. **91.**

H. M. Borges Verdelho Twenty Years Old

The twenty year-old Verdelho from Borges is another strong effort, though again, it is a tad sweeter in style than many of the Verdelho blends one will taste from other lodges. The deep and complex nose delivers a fine mix of fresh apricot, orange, woodsmoke, chestnuts, a fine base of soil and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very well-balanced, with a fine core of fruit, excellent complexity and grip and a very long, tangy and nicely focused finish. This too is a very well-made bottle- why are the cousins not showing us more of their portfolio, as we are fans? 2014-2075. **92.**

H. M. Borges Malvasia “Mais de 40 Anos”

This bottling of old Malvasia was crafted to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the founding of the city of Funchal, with many of the wines dating back to casks originally laid down in the 1930s and 1940s. It is a great wine, soaring from the glass in a complex constellation of figs, molasses, orange peel, a lovely base of soil, desiccated cherries, cloves, gentle notes of *rancio* and a lovely, smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and rich, with racy acids, excellent focus and grip, perfect-pitch balance and a very long, complex and utterly refined finish. High class juice! 2014-2100. **94.**

Henriques & Henriques

According to Noël Cossart, Henriques & Henriques was first established in 1850 by João Joaquim Gonçalves Henriques, who owned vineyards in Câmara de Lobos, where the house is still based. Like many of the surviving shippers on the island, Henriques & Henriques grew by absorbing other lodges and their cache of older wines over the years, including Casa dos Vinhos da Madeira, Belém's Madeira, Carma Vinhos and A. E. Henriques Sucrs. Limitada (founded by the youngest son of João Joaquim Gonçalves Henriques) during the wake of the phylloxera epidemic on the island and the lean years leading up to the first world war. The firm first began exporting in 1925, when it was then based in Funchal, as it had previously been content to be a supplier of wines to other lodges who were involved in the export business. The last of the original founding family of Henriques, João Joaquim Henriques passed away in 1968 without any heirs and left the family lodge in the hands of his three partners, Peter Cossart, Alberto Nascimento Jardim and Carlos Nunes Pereira. When Noël Cossart was writing his superb book in the 1980s, his brother Peter was still a managing partner of the firm (as well as the winemaker here for fifty-three years), and Peter's son, John Cossart was the last Cossart to be involved with the management of a Madeira lodge on the island, as he ran Henriques & Henriques from 1994 until 2008.

John Cossart was succeeded as Managing Director of the firm by Humberto Jardim, the son of Alberto Nascimento Jardim, who was trained as an economist prior to taking over the direction of the business and was our gracious host during our visit to Henriques & Henriques. In 1992, the lodge moved from Funchal to a fine, modern facility looking down to the ocean front in Câmara de Lobos, as well as building a new winemaking and aging facility on the northern side of the island in Quinta Grande. It is partially owned by the French spirits firm of La Martiniquaise, as is Justino's, and like Justino's, it is an important supplier to the food industry of bulk Madeira (properly seasoned with salt and pepper) for the preparation of sauces in France. It continues true to its origins and still owns a significant portfolio of vineyards (quite rare amongst the remaining lodges), and the company's vineyards include some plantations of Terrantez, so they are instrumental in trying to bring back this brilliant grape variety from the edge of extinction on the island. When Noël Cossart was writing, Henriques & Henriques were still producing all of their wines from their own vineyards, though I cannot imagine that this is still the case today, but it is still true that this is the only lodge on the island that continues to grow a significant percentage of the grapes that they vinify.

Henriques & Henriques has used all jacketed, stainless steel tanks for their wines raised under *Estufa* since the late 1980s, and this method seems to me to produce for more elegant renditions of wines raised under *Estufagem*. The lodge has become the most popular on the island for seasoning of barrels with Madeira for special cuvées of whiskey- both American Bourbon and Irish Whiskey- and we can expect to see a lot of Madeira-seasoned high end bottlings from spirits companies in the years to come. I suppose this is a logical outgrowth of Macallan's fine success using sherry barrels for their Scotches, and I suspect that these barrels will make interesting whiskies in the future, but it is rather a new experience to see all of these whiskey barrels stacked up seasoning in a winery. Henriques & Henriques did try out these barrels for a bit of their 1997 *Colheita* bottling, with a portion of the wine spending six months in whiskey barrels, but it was not repeated for the 1998 *Colheita* and I hope it was a "one-off" experiment! Amongst the single varietal wines, the house style here seems to be quite dry and transparent for their Sercial bottlings, but shows some of its former English influence from the Cossart days of direction of the firm in slightly more sweeter renditions of the categories for their Verdelho, Terrantez and Boal bottlings. The overall quality here is very high and the wines are very well made across the board, with some of the older wines amongst the finest I tasted during my visit to the island.

H & H Monte Seco Extra Dry Aperitif

This is a relatively new bottling from Henriques & Henriques and is crafted to be drunk in those hot summer months on the island, when most folks thoughts turn to beer or rum punch. This has only twenty-five grams per liter of residual sugar, which with Madeira's high acids, comes across as quite dry. The wine is pale straw-colored and offers up a bright nose of tart orange, salty soil tones, a bit of lemongrass, citrus peel and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and nicely light on its feet, with a good core and fine length and grip on the focused and very well-made finish. This is quite unique in my experience and I would be happy to drink it in any season. 2014-2030+. **88.**

H & H Rainwater

The Rainwater bottling from Henriques & Henriques seems to be finished in a slightly sweeter style than several others that I tasted, but it is quite well done in this more generous

style. The residual sugar here is seventy-two grams per liter. The bouquet is a nice blend of walnuts, orange peel, a fine base of salty soil tones, a bit of lemon and a topnote of laurel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely balanced at its notably richer style for Rainwater, with good acidity and good length and grip on the slightly spirity finish. If the backend alcohol were better covered here, the wine would merit a higher score, as there are some lovely raw materials. 2014-2040+. **86.**

H & H “Full Rich”

The Full Rich bottling from Henriques & Henriques is a three year-old Madeira that is made entirely from Tinta Negra. The wine offers up a generously rich nose of molasses, fresh figs, cloves, a nice dollop of soil tones and orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely focused, with a good core and nice interplay between residual sweetness and acidity, but again, the backend spirit pokes out uncovered just a hint and keeps the score down. The higher residual sweetness in the Full Rich covers up the backend alcohol a bit better than in the Rainwater, but I would love to see this wine perfectly balanced and covering up its spirit fully on the finish, as again, there are some superb raw materials here. 2014-2040+. **87.**

H & H “Finest Full Rich Doce” (Five Years Old)

The Finest Full Rich Doce is a lovely bottle, and here, the spirit is really well-managed and the wine is a very fine value. The deep and complex nose wafts from the glass in a mélange of brown sugar, cherries, cloves, a fine base of soil, a touch of cinnamon and a vibrant topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and vibrant, with a fine core, suave acidity and lovely length and grip on the harmonious and beautifully balanced finish. This is really a stellar value! 2014-2050. **90.**

1995 H & H Single Harvest “Medium Rich”

Henriques & Henriques prefers to use the term “Single Harvest” for their *Colheita* bottlings, and the 1995 is a lovely wine. The complex and classy nose offers up scents of figs, white cherries, *crème brûlée*, a fine base of soil tones, celery seed, a touch of molasses and clove-like spices in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very well-balanced on the attack, with lovely mid-palate depth, impressive complexity, good acids and very good length and grip on the ever so slightly, spirity finish. The backend alcohol here does not really stick out uncovered, but rather hovers just on the edge of perception. 2014-2075. **90.**

1997 H & H Single Harvest “Medium Rich”

The 1997 Single Harvest bottling was a bit of an experiment for Henriques & Henriques, as they allowed a few newer barrels to be used for the *elevage* of some of the wines that went into this blend, and the resulting cuvée does indeed show just a touch of wood influence as a result. Part of the blend here spent six months in whiskey barrels. The bouquet delivers a bit less complex and distinguished aromatic profile as a result, wafting from the glass in a mix of figs, a touch of lemon, brown sugar, salty soil tones and some smoky, almost whiskey barrel-like oak tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit chunky in style *vis à vis* the classically-styled 1995 and 1998 versions, but with good length and grip on the charred oak finish. It was an interesting experiment, but the results are not worthy of a reprise in my opinion. 2014-2065. **87.**

1998 H & H Single Harvest “Medium Rich”

Of the three *Colheitas* that I tasted, the 1998 struck me as the most impressive and if it is a strong indication of the direction this relatively new program (remember, it has only been allowed to make *Colheita* bottlings since the 1995 vintage, so this remains very much a new category for every shipper on the island and folks are still feeling their way with this category),

then this looks likely to be a specialty of this lodge in the future. The 1998 Single Harvest is outstanding, offering up a deep and complex nose of cherries, fresh figs, sultana raisins, salty soil tones, orange peel, a nice touch of Cuban cigar wrappers and a complex, spicy topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite tangy, with lovely focus and balance, a superb synthesis of sweetness, soil and acidity and a very, very long and elegant finish. An excellent wine and a stellar value! 2014-2075. **92.**

H & H Sercial Ten Years Old

The ten year-old Sercial from Henriques & Henriques is an excellent example, offering up a bright and very refined nose of lemon peel, fresh apricot, sea salts, *pain épice*, a touch of green olive and a lovely, smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very suave in its balance, with fine mid-palate concentration, tangy acids and fine complexity and grip on the long finish. This is a very high class bottle for its ten year-old level. 2014-2055. **90.**

2001 H & H Sercial “Single Harvest”

The 2001 Sercial “Single Harvest” is another stellar *Colheita* bottling from Henriques & Henriques. The bouquet is deep, bright and very classy, as it wafts from the glass in a blend of peach, orange peel, a touch of brown butter, Cuban cigar wrapper, a lovely base of soil and a touch of honey cake. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very elegant, with a rock solid core, bright acids, lovely focus and excellent length and grip on the poised and very well-balanced finish. It is interesting that this is probably about the same age as the blended ten year-old Sercial, but the style of the two wines is quite different, as the 2011 Single Harvest shows quite a bit more of the concentrating effects of extended cask aging in *Canteiro*, whereas the blended wine is drier, racier and shows less depth and cask-aged character on both the nose and palate. They make a lovely stylistic contrast to each other. High class juice. 2014-2075. **92.**

H & H Verdelho Fifteen Years Old

The fifteen year-old Verdelho from Henriques & Henriques is a very classy wine as well, wafting from the glass in a complex aromatic constellation of tangerine, coffee, cloves, a hint of *pain épice*, lovely salty soil tones and a touch of lemongrass in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and tangy, with lovely focus and grip, fine balance and a long, poised and very classic finish. Fine, fine juice. 2014-2075. **91+.**

H & H Verdelho Twenty Years Old

The twenty year-old Verdelho from Henriques & Henriques is also excellent, and interestingly, it comes across as a bit sweeter in style than the ten year-old version, as this wine carries fully seventy-four grams per liter of residual sugar. The bouquet is deep and complex, offering up scents of orange, fresh fig, hints of spices meats, salty soil and honey cake. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with snappy acids, lovely focus and grip and a very long, bright and gently sweet finish. Another lovely wine. 2014-2075. **92.**

H & H Bual Fifteen Years Old

The Henriques & Henriques fifteen year-old Bual is also done in a slightly sweeter style than some houses’ versions, but the wine has lovely balancing acidity and is in perfect balance at this richer profile. The deep and complex nose offers up scents of molasses, oranges, a lovely base of soil, coffee, cigar smoke and gingerbread. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and very long, with plenty of residual sweetness, good acidity and a long, precise and vibrant finish. Good juice. 2014-2065. **90.**

2000 H & H Boal “Single Harvest”

The 2000 Single Harvest Boal from Henriques & Henriques is a lovely wine and a notable step up from their fifteen year-old blend in terms of focus and complexity. The bright and classic nose wafts from the glass in a mix of cherries, cloves, a touch of brown sugar, orange peel and a touch of *rancio* in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very racy in profile, with a great core of fruit, fine focus and grip and a very long, impressively transparent finish. This is really a beautifully made bottle of Boal. 2014-2075. **93.**

H & H Terrantez Twenty Years Old

This twenty year-old bottling of Terrantez was produced from a blend of five casks that the firm had in the cellar that all hailed from the 1980s. This is truly a beautiful wine and one of the blends from Henriques & Henriques that is worth a special search of the marketplace to locate. The deep and very vibrant nose wafts from the glass in a superb blend of cherries, baked peaches, honey cake, orange zest, a lovely and complex base of soil tones and a nice touch of cloves in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and tangy, with a superb core of fruit, lovely focus and length, tangy acids and seamless balance on the long and vibrant finish. This is a very, very classy bottle of Terrantez. 2014-2075. **93+.**



Humberto Jardim, Managing Director and CEO of Henriques & Henriques.

H & H Malvasia Ten Years Old

The ten year-old Malvasia from Henriques & Henriques is very well made, as it offers up a bright and smoky bouquet of brown sugar, cherries, peat, salty soil tones, a hint of *rancio*,

heather and cigar smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely tangy for its richness, with a good core, fine focus and balance and a long, classy finish that closes with good bounce and grip. Good juice. 2014-2065. **91.**

H & H Malvasia Twenty Years Old

The twenty year-old Malvasia from Henriques & Henriques is also a superbly made example, with again lots of heather aromatics that recall the wild heath of Scotland. The bouquet is a complex and classy blend of fresh figs, honey cake, cigar wrapper, cloves, heather, sea salts and some lovely savory topnotes of celery seed and vinesmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite tangy, with its considerable residual sweetness nicely buffered by snappy acids. The finish is very long, complex and vibrant, with lovely focus and balance. Fine, fine juice. 2014-2075. **92.**

Pereira d'Oliveira

Unlike all of the other remaining lodges on the island of Madeira, Pereira d'Oliveira did not start out as a shipper, but as a *partidista*, and gradually grew their family operations by purchasing other small *partidistas* and their stocks of older wines as these smaller enterprises changed generational hands and the children sought more lucrative careers or could not agree amongst themselves to keep the family business going. The family firm was started in 1850 by João Pereira d'Oliveira, and has seen a succession of five generations of d'Oliveira family, with the two brothers of Luis Pereira d'Oliveira currently in charge of sales and finance and his brother, Anibal Pereira d'Oliveira in charge of winemaking. Happily, a sixth generation of the d'Oliveira family is already actively involved in the company and there will be no changes when it becomes time for the baton to be passed at this great old house. Today, the lodge of d'Oliveira is, by a wide margin, the greatest remaining source for old wines on the island, as their origins as *partidistas* did not have them joining the export business until the 1980s (they did not even start bottling their wines under their own label until 1974!), and for several generations, they were very content to source out fine old wines in cask or demijohn and happily tuck them away in their cellars for sale on a smaller scale that allowed for the family to accrue a truly remarkable range of great old wines as the years went by. They have been very active over the years in searching out and buying small producers as they became disenchanted with the business, and this has continued on up to recent times, as they purchased the fine supplier of Adeegas do Torreão at the turn of the century and most recently, they also bought the last of the great *partidistas*, Artur de Barros e Sousa in November of last year. Unlike their previous acquisitions, the d'Oliveira family has decided to keep alive the Artur de Barros e Sousa name and will continue on into the future releasing wines from this house out of their stocks, and they have already begun renovations on the quaint old lodge that the brothers Arturo and Edmundo Olim had run virtually unchanged since taking over from their father in the mid-1970s; the site, which is just up the street from one of the d'Oliveiras' main lodges and retail outlets, will be maintained as a tasting room and store for the Artur de Barros e Sousa wines in the future and renovations are already under way at the old location.

This is a very unique and uncompromising lodge where quality reigns supreme, with more than a million and a half liters of very old wines still sitting in their stocks (and my numbers may be off, as I am not including the recent addition of Artur de Barros e Sousa wines)- either cask aging and continuing to concentrate or in demijohns resting from a century or so of such barrel aging- and the d'Oliveira family likes to only bottle up so much of an old wine at one

time as they need for export orders or to stock their very considerable inventory of old bottles in their lovely shop on the Rua dos Ferreiros (right in the heart of Funchal), so there are extraordinary quantities of very old wines always waiting in the wings at Pereira d'Oliveira. We were treated to a superb and very deep tasting by Luis d'Oliveira to finish up our visit to the island in February, and it was very easy to appreciate why the Madeira Wine Institute had scheduled our visit here as the last stop on the trip, as there is probably no single producer anywhere in the world who can match the depth and breadth of selection of old wines that are routinely served up by this generous family! As Luis explained to us as we began our tasting with a 1999 Sercial, the firm is really a combination of five distinct companies that were purchased and formed the core of the old wine stocks over the years, with some of these top *partidistas* of the past, such as Julia Augusta Cunha or Vasco Luis Pereira having been formed earlier (1820) than d'Oliveira family's enterprise (1850), and all were extraordinary for their very deep stocks of old wines when they were brought under the d'Oliveira umbrella. I did not write down the original names of all five *partidistas* that form the core of today's lodge (as I was already getting busy tasting that stellar 1999 Sercial!), but I imagine that these old stocks would have been quite similar to what the Madeira Wine Company might have had back in the 1940s and 1950s, prior to their so aggressively selling pipes and bottles of old wines during the first three decades after the second world war. During this same time period, the d'Oliveira family was selling much smaller lots to other shippers and happily nurturing their stocks of old wines, so that today, they are in an unparalleled position of plenty when it comes to magical old wines, and I suppose that this family was the most logical place for the Olim brothers to settle on as the proper depository of their casks when it became time to sell their beloved Artur de Barros e Sousa stocks.

The house style at Pereira d'Oliveira is quite traditional, but with many of the wines quite bold and extroverted in personality, so that one does not see examples that are on the sweeter side of each category, but one often finds a wine that is certainly very deep, complex and concentrated in that particular style of wine. The d'Oliveira wines that I have tasted tend to be fairly "big wines" in profile, without ever losing the sense of seamlessness and elegance that the very finest wines of the island exude with gracious ease. If my general characterization stated earlier is accurate (and I am not really sure if this is a hypothesis that will stand the test of time over a few more decades of far more focused Madeira drinking) that the former-British firms tend to finish their wines off on the sweeter side of each category and the former-Portuguese firms tend to craft their wines slightly drier at each level, then we could say that the d'Oliveira wines are done in that slightly drier style, but that some of this penchant to finish wines a bit drier is offset by the very real addition of many older and more concentrated wines in their blends, which will give a bit more sweetness versus a comparable wine that is not finished with as much older wine in the cuvée. Amongst the vintage-dated bottlings, there is also a lovely variation on each wine here, as one can come back on a future visit and taste the same beautiful bottle of 1966 Verdelho (for example) and find that the current selection on the shelf has spent a few more years concentrating in cask than the last one you tasted and is even deeper and more complex than the last one you fell in love with here! This is a very old-fashioned firm in the very best sense of the term, and it is clearly one of the greatest wine producers I have ever had the pleasure to visit. In a wine world where so many of the grandest old estates in other regions seem obsessed with crafting "*Cuvée de Luxe*" wines today with the slickest and most expensive new oak and painstaking selection to finely hone the *grand vin* so that only the "best of the best"

makes it into the bottle- micro-managing the wine down to the smallest detail so that those accustomed to the finest things in life will be suitably impressed- it is very refreshing to visit a producer such as Pereira d'Oliveira who seem to intuitively recognize that the magic is already here in the combination of the wines, the soils on the island, and the crucible of time passing and that the true luxury of great, great wine is to be able to savor its beauty in its truest and most transparent guise, rather than underneath a brilliantly done make-up job.



The “sales” shelf at the store at Pereira d'Oliveira- I opted for a 1912 Verdelho, but it was no easy choice!

For the tasting notes that follow, I have listed all the wines that were not vintage-dated and the vintage-dated wines (either *Colheita* or *Frasqueira*) from the decades of the 1990s or 1980s here in this section, and placed the remainder of the extraordinary lineup of older wines in their respective varietal sections of older vintage wines at the end of the article. I should note that the *Colheita* bottlings from Pereira d'Oliveira seemed to me to be particularly strong, as the family's unique perspective about old wines from the island seems to imbue their *Colheitas* with more old wine vintage character than many of their colleagues' examples at this level. But, please do not think that because only eight wines are listed here in this section of the tasting notes that this was a relatively minor tasting during my island visit, because it was simply an unforgettable afternoon of twenty-one brilliant examples of the magic of Madeira, with so many great old wines that it will probably remain etched in my memory as one of the greatest tastings I have ever had the pleasure to participate in over my long career in the world of wine. If one is really

into great, great old wines, I cannot over-emphasize how important it would be to book a flight to Funchal (spend an overnight in Lisbon on the way) and make an appointment to taste with the extremely generous and warm d'Oliveira family, and one of the nicest things about tasting here is that one can actually purchase a great many of these historical treasure pieces that the family so graciously serves over the course of these great tastings!

1999 Pereira d'Oliveira Sercial Colheita

The 1999 Sercial Colheita had just been bottled in 2013, so this wine had spent fourteen years in cask in the *Canteiro* system prior to its bottling. The wine is truly outstanding, wafting from the glass in a mix of peach, walnuts, a touch of orange peel, a very salty base of soil tones, smoke and a bit of lemon in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very complex, with excellent focus and grip, tangy, seamless acidity and superb length and grip on the well-balanced and very elegant finish. This is one of the exceptional Sercials that I could very happily drink through an entire meal. 2014-2075. **92+**.

1989 Pereira d'Oliveira Sercial Frasqueira

The 1989 Sercial from d'Oliveira's had also only been bottled in 2013, and here one can see the dramatic effect of an additional decade of cask aging and its concentrating effect on the wine. This is much darker colored than the 1999 and offers up a deep, complex and excellent bouquet of cherries, cloves, honey cake, a touch of *rancio*, heather and cigar smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with superb focus and grip and a very, very long, intense and beautifully balanced finish. Another superb bottle of Sercial, but I am not sure if I do not have a very, very slight preference for the greater transparency in the 1999 Colheita version. 2014-2100. **92**.

D'Oliveira's "Meio Seco"

The Meio Seco bottling from Pereira d'Oliveira is comprised of ninety percent Tinta Negra and ten percent Verdelho and is a lovely wine. The really very elegant nose offers up scents of sultana raisins, cherries, brown sugar, a nice dollop of soil, cloves and honeyed oranges. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, broad and nicely sweet, but with impeccable focus and bounce from ripe and well-integrated acidity. The finish is long and quite classy for a basic bottling. 2014-2055. **90**.

1994 Pereira d'Oliveira Verdelho Colheita

The 1994 d'Oliveira's Verdelho Colheita is a lovely wine that is done in a sweeter style (see how quickly my generalities about house styles are falling apart?), but with a great spine of acidity to give the wine race and cut. The deep and nicely concentrated bouquet delivers scents of cherries, oranges, *pain épice*, cloves, a touch of spiced meats, leather and lovely soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with great vibrancy and bounce on the long and classy finish. Lovely juice (particularly at 39 euros a bottle at the shop). 2014-2100. **92**.

1985 Pereira d'Oliveira Verdelho Frasqueira

The 1985 Verdelho from d'Oliveira's is utterly superb and has to be one of the great values out there for vintage wines of this quality. The superb nose jumps from the glass in a classy mix of fresh figs, cherries, cigar smoke, honey cake, cloves, cardamom, salty minerality and orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, stunning balance, bright, suave acids and outstanding complexity and focus on the very, very long and utterly classic finish. A *tour de force* Verdelho! 2014-2100. **94+**.

1984 Pereira d'Oliveira Boal Frasqueira

The 1984 Pereira d'Oliveira Boal Frasqueira is a very exotic wine on the nose, but at least this particular example did not quite pack the customary level of complexity on the palate that I am accustomed to with the wines from this great old lodge (though, to be fair, it was served hard on the heels of the legendary 1912 Verdelho, so perhaps my palate had simply not re-adjusted!) and the wine falls in the very good, but not great camp. The bouquet is very exotic in its blend of peach, pear, bergamot, toffee, orange peel, lovely soil tones, smoke and molasses. On the palate the wine is deep and full-bodied, with respectable complexity, but a slightly linear palate impression that does not show the typical breadth of most of these d'Oliveira wines. However, the finish is very long and nicely balanced, so perhaps my impression here is colored somewhat unfavorably by the long shadow of the 1912 Verdelho? 2014-2075+. **89+?**

D'Oliveira's Fifteen Years Old "Doce"

The D'Oliveira's Fifteen Years Old "Doce" is a very, very well-made blend that offers up a complex and very stylish nose of oranges, sultanas, brown sugar, celery seed, lovely soil tones, smoke and a spicy topnote redolent of cloves. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very suave on the attack, with a fine core and impressive complexity, tangy acids and really impressive length and grip on the well-balanced and classy finish. This is an absolute steal! 2014-2065. **92.**

1990 Pereira d'Oliveira Malvasia Colheita

As I think I mentioned in the introduction to this fine old lodge, the *Colheita* bottlings here are particularly strong and offer up some of the best values one can find on the island in this day and age. The 1990 Malvasia *Colheita* is spectacular, soaring from the glass in an aromatic constellation of cloves, brown sugar, cherries, oranges, honey cake and a lovely base of salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and brilliantly focused and balanced, with lovely *filigree* of sweetness, soil and acidity, and a finish that just goes on and on and on! A brilliant wine and only 49 euros a bottle out the cellar door- time to make that visit! 2014-2100. **94.**

Vintage-Dated Madeira

Unknown Grapes or Old Blended Wines

1825 Leacock Seco

This bottle hailed from the private cellar of William Leacock, whose family was once importer shippers in the Madeira trade. The family firm was sold to Blandy's Madeira Wine Company in the late '70s, but Mr. Leacock held onto the family's private cellar until it was auctioned off by Christie's in London in 2008. The Rare Wine Company bought several lots of these legendary old wines and this bottle is of unknown grape varietal(s), but was re-bottled in 1932 (there are no records extant to know when it was first bottled from cask for the Leacock family, but Mannie Berk suspected it would have been on the early side, given its more ethereal style). The wine is quite lovely, as it offers up a very complex and tertiary bouquet of sweet almonds, plenty of herbal tones, dried banana, orange peel, *rancio* and a lovely base of salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very long, but moving into a stage of relative structural delicacy (it was, after all, celebrating its one hundred and eighty-fifth birthday when tasted in 2010!), with lovely focus and complexity, but showing just a bit of backend fraying on the long and tangy finish. I am certainly no expert (yet- one has to keep goals ☺) with wines from the early nineteenth century, but my gut feeling is that this wine might actually be starting

to look over the far side of its plateau of maturity and could be best off drunk up in the not too distant future- if this is actually possible with old Madeira! 2010-2035+? **91+**.

Rainwater

1821 Robert Benson Rainwater

This wine was bottled in the first half of the twentieth century and is an utterly gorgeous bottle. The stunningly beautiful nose offers up a complex and vibrant blend of lemon and orange peel, woodsmoke, dried roses, banana leaves, gentle medicinal overtones and a nice touch of *rancio*. On the palate the wine is deep, dry and magically complex, with a lovely core of fruit, and almost austere palate today, but with beautifully integrated acids and outstanding focus and grip on the very, very long and transparent finish. A gorgeous wine. 2010-2060. **94**.

Sercial

1979 H. M. Borges Sercial

The 1979 Borges Sercial is an outstanding wine, which was just recently bottled. The deep and very vibrant nose wafts from the glass in a complex blend of tangerine, cloves, cherries, a nice touch of spices meats, salty soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very well-balanced, with an excellent core of fruit, superb soil signature, tangy acids and superb length and grip on the focused and elegant finish. The house style for slightly sweeter renditions of each category really works well here with this Sercial, as the touch more sweetness nicely buffers the acidity and gives a seamless and very refined palate impression. High class juice. 2014-2100. **94**.

1974 Blandy's Sercial

The 1974 Blandy's Sercial is a really lovely example of the grape that is drinking splendidly right now. The deep and refined nose offers up scents of dried peach, molasses, walnuts, citrus peel, a touch of straw and a lovely, smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and shows off superb mid-palate depth, with tangy acids, lovely focus and balance and a very long, transparent and classy finish. Fine, fine juice. 2014-2100. **93**.

1971 Henriques & Henriques Sercial

The 1971 Sercial from Henriques & Henriques is excellent, as it wafts from the glass in a complex blend of cherries, fresh figs, brown butter, salty soil tones and a nice touch of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very suave on the attack, with a great core of fruit, lovely transparency and focus, excellent complexity and a very long, seamless and very well-balanced finish. Lovely juice. 2014-2100. **93**.

1971 Pereira d'Oliveira Sercial Reserva

The 1971 d'Oliveira's Sercial Reserva (this designation was abolished for vintage-dated bottlings in 2010, but could still be used on wines that were bottled prior to this time) is a stunningly elegant and complex wine. The utterly refined aromatic constellation wafts from the glass in a blend of tangerine, lemon grass, cloves, *rancio*, cigar smoke and a lovely base of salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and supremely elegant, with lovely mid-palate concentration, tangy, seamless acidity and great elegance and breed on the long, complex and dancing finish. This is a very, very fine bottle of Sercial (and available for 86 euros per bottle at the shop in Funchal). 2014-2100. **94+**.

1969 Pereira d'Oliveira Sercial

The 1969 Sercial from d'Oliveira was bottled in 2008, with the casks having been part of the purchased the historic cellars of Adega do Torreão in 2002. The wine is really stunning on

the nose, soaring from the glass in a beautiful blend of leather, caramel, a touch of orange peel, sweet almonds, cinnamon, cherries, a really lovely base of soil and a delicate topnote of *rancio*. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very elegant in profile, with the powerful personality of youth, great focus and mid-palate intensity and outstanding focus and grip on the very long, tangy and perfectly balanced finish. By Madeira standards, this is still a fairly young wine, but I have absolutely no difficulties drinking it today! A really superb and refined bottle. 2010-2150+. **94+**.

1964 Henriques & Henriques Sercial Garrafeira

According to Humberto Jardim, the 1964 Henriques & Henriques Sercial Garrafeira was made in a more old-fashioned style than the 1971 that preceded it in our tasting, as this was done with whole cluster fermentation, which harkened back to the days when not only stems, but often some leaves would be included in the fermentations of Sercial. As a result, the wine seems to have more savory elements in its aromatic and flavor profile, though it does not strike me as quite as precise and refined as their lovely '71 Sercial. The bouquet is a fine blend of lemon peel, peach, a touch of green olive, browned butter, soil tones and a bit of celery seed in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and shows off quite a bit of mid-palate concentration, as this is a more powerful style of Sercial than the '71, with a good core and fine length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This is very well made and an interesting throwback in style, but I have a very slight preference for the more elegant 1971 version. 2014-2100. **92**.

1940 Blandy's Sercial

The 1940 Sercial from Blandy's is another wine that was opened right before serving at the tasting I was attending, and I wonder if some of this wine's youthful tightness would have dissipated with a few days of aeration prior to service. At the time we shared this lovely bottle, it came across as still quite tight, offering up scents of orange, raisins, coffee, lovely minerality and a nice touch of butterscotch in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite pure on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, bright acids and still a bit of backend, constricted bitterness poking out on the long and nascently complex finish. We caught this wine just after being opened and I suspect that it may well merit an even higher score with a longer period of aeration prior to serving. 2011-2100+. **90+**.

1940 Justino's Sercial

The 1940 Sercial from Blandy's is an utterly brilliant example of this grape at a lovely point of evolution. The deep and very complex nose wafts from the glass in a complex mélange of cherries, celery seed, a touch of cigar smoke, a dollop of green olive, a lovely understated bit of brown butter and a very classy base of saline soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, tangy and very transparent, with a great core of fruit, bright and beautifully integrated acids and superb length and grip on the focused and utterly seamless finish. A beautiful wine. 2014-2100. **95**.

1937 Pereira d'Oliveira Sercial Reserva

The 1937 Pereira d'Oliveira Sercial Reserva is one of the greatest examples of Sercial I have ever had the pleasure to taste. The wine is simply gorgeous, soaring from the glass in a stunning blend of cherries, figs, new leather, *pain épice*, cigar wrapper, and a topnote of *rancio*. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very intensely flavored, with great focus and balance, brilliant complexity and a very, very long, tangy finish that closes with outstanding grip and precision. This is remarkably light on its feet for a wine that was only bottled in 2003 and spent sixty-six years concentrating in cask. A simply brilliant bottle of Sercial! 2014-2100. **96**.

Verdelho

1966 Pereira d'Oliveira Verdelho

This particular bottle of 1966 Verdelho from d'Oliveira's had just been bottled at the tail end of 2013 and the wine is absolutely magnificent. The stunning nose soars from the glass in a brilliant blend of cherries, fresh figs, molasses, cigar smoke, gingerbread, a very complex base of soil tones and a nice touch of new leather in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and vibrant, with a superb core of fruit, lovely transparency and a very, very long, tangy and uplifting finish. A magical bottle of Verdelho. 2014-2100. **96.**

1954 Justino's Verdelho

The 1954 Verdelho from Justino's is a gorgeous wine at a beautiful point of evolution. The deep and complex nose offers up a refined constellation of orange, a touch of clover, celery seed, lovely soil tones, fresh almonds, cloves, cinnamon and a topnote note of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite powerful in personality, with a rock solid core, snappy acids and superb length and grip on the perfectly balanced and very classy finish. Fine juice. 2014-2010. **94.**

1934 Cossart, Gordon & Co. Verdelho

The 1934 Cossart, Gordon Verdelho is drinking splendidly and is a deep, complex and very classy bottle that has now entered its apogee of peak drinkability- where it will probably reside quite comfortably for the next century! The utterly refined nose offers up an aromatic constellation of brown sugar, oranges, dried apricot, cherries and honeyed almonds. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite dry, with outstanding mid-palate concentration, impeccable focus and balance, tangy acids and outstanding length and grip on the finish, which shows just the faintest touch of *rancio* to it and which adds nicely to its complexity. 2010-2100+. **94.**

1912 Pereira d'Oliveira Verdelho

This vintage hails exclusively from the d'Oliveira family's historic São Martinho vineyard high up in the hills overlooking Câmara de Lobos and it is clearly one of the most brilliant bottles of Madeira I have ever had the pleasure to taste (I cannot believe I have had the good fortune to drink this wine on three occasions in the last couple of years!), as it is majestic on both the nose and palate. The wine was bottled in 2008. The utterly brilliant nose soars from the glass in a very complex constellation of cherries, oranges, molasses, lavender, exotic spice tones, *rancio*, a touch of wild fennel, spiced meats, cigar smoke and a lovely and complex base of salty soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and simply explosive, with flawless focus and balance, tangy acids, magical complexity and simply stunning length and grip on the very pure, very elegant and still powerfully vibrant finish. What a magical wine! 2014-2100+. **98.**

1898 Henriques & Henriques Verdelho Solera

The last of the 1989 Verdelho Solera from Henriques & Henriques was bottled in 2009, and the wine is absolutely stellar. The deep and very beautiful nose wafts from the glass in a complex mélange of tangerine, cherries, sultana raisins, a dollop of honey cake, a lovely base of soil and a nice touch of cardamom in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, suave and complex, with a fine core of fruit, tangy, but perfectly integrated acids, excellent focus and grip and a very, very long, pure and beautifully balanced finish. I could drink this wine forever- which is just about how long it is likely to last in bottle! 2014-2100+. **94.**

1885 Compagnie Vinicola Madeirense Verdelho

Ricardo Freitas of Barbeito served us this wine to finish up our tasting at the lodge, as he noted, “it was not made by us, but given to my brother as a thank you for some legal service that he rendered, but it is very well-made and interesting to taste.” The wine is absolutely superb, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of lemon, saline soil tones, new leather, a touch of green olive, smoke, lemongrass and orange peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and transparent, with lovely intensity of flavor, fine focus and balance, tangy acids and a very long, pure and classy finish. For Senor Freitas, this wine was “probably bottled a bit too early, before it really had a chance to concentrate in cask”, but it is a lovely example of how a really old Madeira, that is bottled on the (slightly) earlier side can still age forever and give a decidedly different profile on the palate. Lovely juice. 2014-2075. **92.**

1879 Verdelho “Santa Antonio”- Casa Torre Bella

The Torre Bella family owned excellent vineyards in Câmara de Lobos, and according to Noël Cossart, they were quite renowned for their superbly crafted wines for four generations throughout the nineteenth and first several decades of the twentieth century. The Santa Antonio vineyard lies up the mountain between Funchal and Câmara de Lobos and has lost some of its great traditional vines to lesser grape varieties (and banana plantations) in recent times, but back in this era it was still planted with Verdelho. The 1879 Verdelho “Santa Antonio” from the Torre Bella family is a gorgeous bottle at its absolute peak of maturity, delivering a deep, complex and beautifully vibrant bouquet of caramelized orange peel, a touch of fresh coconut, cherries, sweet butter, fresh almonds and gentle notes of new leather. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, racy and laser-like in its focus, with a rock solid core, tangy, perfectly integrated acidity and brilliant length and grip on the quite dry and perfectly balanced finish. A stunning wine. 2009-2100. **95.**

1870 Blandy’s Verdelho Solera

The 1870 Blandy’s Verdelho Solera was finally all bottled up in 1988, after a cool one hundred and eighteen years in cask! This is a stunningly beautiful bottle of old, concentrated Verdelho, offering up a gorgeous bouquet of dried peach, spiced meats, coffee, orange peel, molasses, a lovely base of soil and a topnote of brown butter. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully complex, with bottomless depth at the core, tangy acids and a very, very long, refined and exceptional finish. Like all of the great old Soleras I have been lucky enough to taste (and the emphasis here is certainly on “great”), there is not quite the same degree of transparency to the soil as one will find in a similarly ancient wine from a single vintage, but this is a difference of style, not of quality! 2014-2100. **95.**

1850 Pereira d’Oliveira Verdelho Reserva

Amazingly, this hauntingly profound and ancient wine is readily available still at the d’Oliveira’s shop in Funchal, and for those still comfortable playing in the nineteenth century arena of Madeira at today’s price points, this is a must buy wine! The utterly transcendental bouquet wafts from the glass in a brilliant mélange of molasses, marinated cherries, brown butter, orange rind, salty soil tones, celery seed, smoke and *rancio*. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and multi-dimensional, with a great core, seamless acidity, stunning focus and balance and an absolutely endless, pure and dancing finish. This is one of the greatest wines I have ever had the pleasure to taste, and looking back now on my note, it really does not even begin to do justice to the quality and style of this legendary effort! 2014-2100. **100.**



Terrantez

Terrantez Twenty Anos - I.V.B.A.M.

This is a twenty year-old blend crafted by the team at the Madeira Wine Institute, which I assume has been made from one of their experimental parcels of Terrantez vines. The institute is really a jack of all trades in the firmament of Madeira wines! Not surprisingly, the wine is very, very good, offering up a deep and complex nose of buttered almonds, fresh figs, a touch of cherry, lovely soil tones, gentle notes of heather, honey cake and a gentle topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, complex and very nicely balanced, with a fine core, crisp acids and lovely focus and grip on the long and classy finish. A very lovely bottle. 2014-2075. **91.**

Justino's "Old Reserve" Terrantez

I briefly alluded to this wine in the introductory remarks, as this is a perfect example of some of the old, non-vintage gems that can still be found on the market. The company lost the paperwork somewhere along the way for this 3500 liter lot of old Terrantez, which Júlio Fernandes believes originated in one of the vintages of the '40s or '50s. The wine's back label states that it is done in the "style of a Terrantez over forty years of age", as this is the most that can be said of the wine by the parameters of the Wine Institute. In any case, the wine is stunning, delivering a celestial and very elegant bouquet of oranges, salty soil tones, celery seed, fresh nutmeg, a hint of olive, brown sugar and a gentle topnote of nuttiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and gorgeously complex, with a rock solid core, tangy acids, outstanding focus and grip and a very, very long and utterly refined finish. A great, great wine. 2014-2100. **97.**

1988 Pereira d'Oliveira Terrantez

The 1988 Terrantez from Pereira d'Oliveira is an excellent wine. The superb nose wafts from the glass in a complex mixture of raspberries, leather, honey cake, salty soil tones, a potpourri of spices, orange zest, a touch of molasses and a topnote of lavender. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with a lovely core, fine focus and a very long, tangy finish. The 1971 Terrantez from d'Oliveira is more transparent than this wine, but I wonder if that character will start to emerge as this wine has an opportunity to evolve in bottle? A fine wine. 2014-2100. **92.**

1978 Justino's Terrantez

The 1978 Terrantez from Justino's is finished in the now classically-stipulated style of medium-dry, but Júlio Fernandes was quick to point out that this grape also does very well if finished in a medium-rich style as well. The nose on the '78 Terrantez is excellent, wafting from the glass in a mix of cherries, orange, straw, cloves, citrus peel and a lovely base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and beautifully balanced, with a great core of fruit, superb focus and grip, suave acids and a long and complex finish. Fine juice. 2014-2100. **93.**

1977 Pereira d'Oliveira Terrantez Reserva

Given how long and gracefully Madeira is to unfold with age, it seems almost a crime to be drinking a bottle of this lovely 1977 Terrantez from d'Oliveira now, rather than thinking of it still in cask waiting for our grandchildren! However, this wine is an excellent drink, wafting from the glass in a bouquet of raisins, oranges, beautiful soil tones, hints of chocolate, plenty of smokiness and a gentle topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and quite complex, with a superb core of fruit, snappy acids and outstanding length and grip on the pure and quite vibrant finish. This wine delivers great pleasure, but I have little doubt that succeeding generations are going to find even more pleasure in this wine than we do today, if some remains still waiting in cask in the stocks of the d'Oliveira family. 2011-2150. **93+.**

1975 Blandy's Terrantez

Blandy's 1975 Terrantez is a flat out brilliant wine and as this was only released five or six years ago, I suspect that one can still find this stunning bottle out there in the marketplace. The celestial nose soars from the glass in a very complex constellation of brown butter, wild fennel, peach, orange zest, molasses, German spiced meats and a refined base of salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and utterly seamless, with a rock solid core, tangy acids and stunning complexity on the very, very long and utterly effortless finish. This is a brilliant bottle of Terrantez! 2014-2100. **98.**

1971 Pereira d'Oliveira Terrantez

I love the 1971 Pereira d'Oliveira Terrantez, which offers up a very pure and refined bouquet of cherries, sultana raisins, toasted almonds, *pain épice*, cloves, a nice touch of spiced meats, orange peel and a beautiful base of salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and multi-dimensional, with a great core, ripe acids and superb focus and grip on the very, very long and beautifully balanced finish. I love the transparency in this lovely old wine. 2014-2100. **94.**

1954 Henriques & Henriques Terrantez

The 1954 Henriques & Henriques Terrantez is an absolutely stellar wine on both the nose and palate, as it synthesizes wonderful concentration from long cask aging with stunning transparency and soil signature. The brilliant bouquet delivers a complex blend of fresh figs, cherries, orange peel, brown sugar, *rancio*, an exotic touch of laurel and a very, very smoky upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very intense, with a rock solid

core, stunning transparency, vibrant acids and laser-like focus on the very, very long, focused and utterly seamless finish. This is another absolutely stellar bottle of Terrantez, and with wines like this out there, it is pretty hard not to argue that Terrantez is the greatest grape grown on the island! 2014-2100. 97.

1877 H. M. Borges Terrantez

The 1877 Borges Terrantez is an absolutely magical wine and clearly shows that this is one of the finest producers of great old wines on the island, even if they are not necessarily predisposed to show them to visitors. The utterly brilliant bouquet soars from the glass in a celestial blend of cherries, caramelized banana, orange peel, *pain épice*, a beautifully complex base of soil tones, fresh nutmeg, toasted almonds and a topnote of smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, racy and magically complex, with a superb core of fruit, laser-like focus, very snappy acids that are perfectly integrated into the base of the wine, and a very, very long, pure and dancing finish. A stunning wine. 2014-2100. 97.



Bastardo and Moscatel

1954 Blandy's Bastardo

The 1954 Blandy's Bastardo is really a superb example of this now very rare grape. The superb nose wafts from the glass in a complex constellation of brown sugar, dried cherries, cardamom, lovely soil tones, cloves and a topnote of browned butter. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite round and generous on the attack, with a lovely core of fruit, fine

soil signature, excellent bounce from the ripe acids and very good length and grip on the fairly complex finish. Bastardo does not seem to produce the most complex examples of Madeira wine, but it is very nice to have the chance to still drink some older wines from this nearly extinct grape. 2014-2050. **93**.

1927 Pereira d'Oliveira Bastardo

The 1927 Bastardo from d'Oliveira's is a beautiful wine, wafting from the glass in an aromatic mélange of molasses, cherries, orange zest, woodsmoke, salty soil tones, toasted almonds, peat and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and just a touch rustic in personality (this is the grape's style on the island), but with great depth and complexity, tangy acids and outstanding length and grip on the broad-shouldered and very personable finish. Stylistically, this is probably not the wine to take to the box at the opera, but it would be just fine at a Rolling Stones concert. 2014-2100. **93+**.

1900 Pereira d'Oliveira Moscatel Reserva

The 1900 Moscatel Reserva from Pereira d'Oliveira was bottled sometime in the 1970s and is really a magical wine. It is a pity that more wines are not made from this grape on the island (or from grapes on the nearby island of Porto Santo), as if this 1900 is a representative example, then this grape does indeed have more than a bit of potential as a principle grape of Madeira! The beautiful nose is quite delicate in its mix of peach, browned butter, white cherries, *pain épice*, gentle *rancio*, smoke, gentle notes of musky floral nuances, a touch of Saki-like fermented rice tones and a topnote of verbena. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and complex, with a great core of fruit, a rather ethereal personality for very old Madeira, lovely focus and balance and fine length and grip on the vibrant and tangy finish. This is a great, great wine! 2014-2075. **96**.

Boal

Ferraz Seco Madeira (Boal)

This extremely rare, dry Boal was made by one of the last of the *partidistas* still on the island, and as they are no longer allowed to be involved in the production of young wines, I have to assume that this wine had a bit of age on it. It was served as an *aperitif* at a fine, small restaurant called Gaviao Novo in the old part of the city of Funchal. The gentleman who sells this wine is in his eighties and sits happily outside of his home, smoking a cigar from eight o'clock in the morning each day, welcoming visitors (just around the corner from the restaurant) and I intend to see what other treasures he might have on my next visit to Funchal. This is really a very nice wine, offering up a complex nose of brown sugar, sweet almonds, orange peel, salty soil tones and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is round, full-bodied and quite elegant, with a good core, moderate acids and sneaky length and grip on the well-balanced finish. Good juice and a glimpse into the past. 2014-2040. **89**.

1977 H. M. Borges Boal

The 1977 Boal from H. M. Borges is a good, solid wine, but it shows a bit of uncovered spirit on the backend and really is not quite as strong as several of their blended wines that I tasted during my visit to the lodge in February. The bouquet is deep and complex, offering up notes of cherries, molasses, figs, honey cake, soil, new leather, orange peel and exotic spices. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and snappy, with a fine core, plenty of sweetness to buffer the acids, good complexity and focus, but with some alcohol poking out uncovered on the long finish. If the spirit were better-managed here, this would be outstanding, rather than simply

quite good, as the complexity on both the nose and palate is exemplary and its extroverted style would certainly be a crowd pleaser. 2014-2075. **88.**

1969 Blandy's Bual

Blandy's 1969 Bual was aged forty-three years in cask and only bottled in 2012. The wine is superb, wafting from the glass in a mix of dried cherries, honey cake, orange peel, a beautifully complex base of soil and a topnote of celery seed. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very nicely balanced, with lovely mid-palate depth, tangy acids and a very, very long, pure and classy finish. This was served hard on the heels of the lodge's legendary 1975 Terrantez, so perhaps I am being a bit overly critical of this wine, but it does not show quite the same level of complexity of the brilliant Terrantez '75. It is still a very lovely wine by any stretch of the imagination, but when a thunderbolt hits you like that Terrantez, the world changes. 2014-2100. **92.**

1968 Blandy's Bual

The 1968 Bual from Blandy's is a very nice, wide open bottle that is drinking very well at the present time. The expressive nose offers up a mélange of cherries, prunes, molasses, honey cake, leather and just a touch of tea leaf. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely tangy, with lovely balance and grip on the long finish, but not quite the same level of precision as the 1969 version. This seems decidedly more mature than the '69, and I would guess that it spent less time in cask than the 1969 Bual. Good juice. 2014-2075. **90.**

1968 Pereira d'Oliveira Bual Reserva

This is a really complex and classy bottle of Bual that is very pure and expressive, as it offers up a deep and vibrant nose of orange peel, golden raisins, heather, a beautifully complex and very salty base of soil, spiced meats and a lovely dollop of *rancio* as a topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a fine core of fruit, excellent focus and grip and a very long, bright and perfectly balanced finish where the sweetness is effortlessly carried by the ripe and very well-integrated acids. Lovely juice. I should note that I tasted this same wine from an earlier bottling back in 2011 and liked the wine very much at that time, but gave this more recent bottling tasted at the lodge a point higher score, which I think underscores how these wines get incrementally better with each subsequent bottling at the domaine. 2014-2100. **94.**

1958 Pereira d'Oliveira Boal Reserva

The 1958 Boal from Pereira d'Oliveira had only been bottled a very, very short time before my visit to the island in mid-February, so the wine was still under its post-bottling period of shock and I may have been misreading its quality a bit. The bouquet is quite lovely, as it wafts from the glass in a mix of cherries, tangerine, cloves, lavender, charred wood, orange peel and a touch of molasses. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite powerful in personality, with a slightly aggressive character to its structure at the present time (effects of the recent *mise?*), with a fine core and superb length and grip on the tangy finish. I have to imagine that this wine is just cranky from its recent bottling (after all, it had spent fifty-six years in far more commodious surroundings in its cask) and the wine is even better than my score would indicate. 2014-2100. **91-93+?**

1957 Henriques & Henriques Boal

I would guess that the 1957 Boal from Henriques & Henriques was bottled quite a bit sooner than the 1954, as it is decidedly more high-toned and transparent in style. The bouquet is bright and complex, wafting from the glass in a lovely mix of orange, fresh apricot, Cuban cigar wrapper, a touch of *garrigue*, heather, salty soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the

wine is deep, full-bodied and less powerful in style than the fine 1954, but more transparent and every bit as intense, with a lovely core, bright acids and excellent focus and bounce on the very long, pure and stylish finish. I really like the style and shape of this complex and very refined Boal. 2014-2100. **94.**

1954 Henriques & Henriques Boal

The 1954 Henriques & Henriques Boal had the old “IVM” seal on its neck (IVM being the precursor to today’s IVBAM or Madeira Wine Institute, which was restructured in 2004, so we know that this wine was bottled prior to 2004) is a lovely wine, but the sweeter style of the house with this grape shows a bit in a bit less transparency in style than several other similarly aged Boals that I tasted on this trip. The bouquet is outstanding, as it offers up a deep and complex blend of heather, orange zest, cherries, peaches, a bit of *garrigue*, honey cake, salty soil tones and a touch of new leather. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and powerfully built in style, with a rock solid core, tangy acids that are beautifully buried in sweetness and outstanding grip and balance on the very long finish that closes with a nice touch of savory nuances. Despite this not being the most transparent of styles, there is an awful lot to like in this very long and very complex wine. 2014-2100. **94.**

1934 Justino’s Boal

The 1934 Boal from Justino’s is really a beautiful wine that seems to have found its way into bottle at a perfect point of harmony and complexity. The deep and very vibrant nose offers up scents of almonds, desiccated cherries and raspberries, a touch of molasses, a lovely base of soil, an exotic note of bergamot and a lovely blast of wild fennel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and utterly seamless in its balance, with a great core, outstanding focus and grip and a very, very long, suave and classy finish. A beautifully concentrated old Boal that has remained very light on its feet. 2014-2100. **94.**

1922 Pereira d’Oliveira Boal

The 1922 Boal from d’Oliveira was bottled in 1999 and is an absolutely fabulous glass of Madeira. The brilliant nose soars from the glass in a refined and powerful blend of baked peaches, fresh figs, Cuban cigars, savory elements of fresh rosemary and celery seed, a nice touch of caramelized banana, sweet nutty tones and a bit of bergamot. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and absolutely bottomless at the core, with brisk acids, laser-like focus, seamless balance and simply stunning length and grip on the complex and hauntingly profound finish. A great, great wine. 2014-2100. **96.**

1903 Pereira d’Oliveira Boal

The 1903 Boal from d’Oliveira is a very nice bottle, but it is not in the same league as the legendary 1922 vintage of this wine. The bouquet is a complex and pretty laid back (by Madeira standards) blend of prunes, tea leaves, celery seed, orange peel and coffee. On the palate the wine is fullish and quite gentle on the attack, with a good core and very nice soil inflection, moderate depth and a good, long and tangy backend. A very, very nice wine, but not a superstar. 2009-2050+. **90.**

1868 Blandy’s Bual

The 1868 Blandy’s Bual is a brilliant wine that is still very vibrant and at its absolute zenith. The stunning nose offers up scents of cherries, a touch of fruitcake, coffee, orange zest, toasted walnuts, brown sugar and a touch of chocolate. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and simply gorgeous, with beautiful roundness on the attack, a great core, laser-like focus, stunning transparency and brilliant length and grip on the very complex and perfectly

balanced, electric finish. A brilliant wine that remains quite snappy on the backend and should age forever. 2008-2100+. **97.**

1863 Vinhos Barbeito Bual

The 1863 Bual from Barbeito is absolutely stunning on both the nose and palate. The bouquet soars from the glass in an utterly refined aromatic constellation of chocolate, dried oranges, sweet prunes, a dollop of new leather, clover and lovely soil nuances. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and perfectly balanced, with great mid-palate concentration, excellent complexity and focus, bright acids and a very, very long and utterly suave finish. Great juice. 2010-2100. **95.**

1863 Blandy's Bual

This toweringly profound old Bual was served hard on the heels of Blandy's stellar 1870 Verdelho Solera, and it is hard to believe that it was even a step up from that magical wine. The brilliantly complex nose soars from the glass in a vibrant blend of tangerine, clover honey, wild fennel, a very complex base of soil tones, orange peel, gentle notes of spiced meats, a touch of molasses and a lovely, esthery topnote of gentle spices. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and celestially transparent, with bottomless depth at the core, tangy, seamless acidity, stunning length and a very, very pure, focused and completely effortless finish. This is one of the most brilliant wines I have ever had the pleasure to taste from anywhere! 2014-2075+. **99.**

1811 Blandy's Bual Solera

The 1811 Bual Solera from Blandy's is another utterly stunning old Madeira, wafting from the glass in a hauntingly beautiful constellation of dried apple, cloves, heather, a beautiful base of soil, orange zest, lavender, brown sugar, almond paste and just a dollop of spiced meats. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully focused, with a lighter style than the 1870 Verdelho Solera, great intensity of flavor, stunning balance and a very, very long, vibrant and simply brilliant finish. 2014-2100. **97.**

1780 H. M. Borges Bual

This is as far back as I have ever gone with old Madeira, so I was quite out of my element and probably not appreciating this wine as much as I might have with a bit deeper experience with eighteenth century wines from the island. For me, the bouquet was utterly magical, but the wine was beginning to show some of its uncovered spirit on the backend of the palate at age two hundred and thirty. The brilliantly ethereal nose wafts from the glass in a blend of orange zest, cloves, cinnamon, a touch of celery seed, a beautiful base of soil and a dollop of high end herb tones. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very transparent, with lovely focus and complexity, but quite a bit of spirit now unbound on the finish and making it a bit more difficult to savor on the backend. I could smell this wine forever, but is it possible that the wine is now on its way to decline? Again, my experience here is zero, so perhaps I am doing this wine a disservice. 2010-2030? **87.**

Henriques & Henriques Grand Old Boal

This great old Madeira was last recorked in 1975 and is thought to date back to the first quarter of the nineteenth century, but had no longer any vintage date on the bottle. The bottles hailed from the collection of one of the founders of Henriques & Henriques, who brought them to the formation of the firm while the wine was still in cask, and it was first bottled in 1927. The wine is absolutely brilliant, soaring from the glass in a complex and vibrant bouquet of brown sugar, sweet almonds, cinnamon, orange zest, desiccated cherries, vanilla and cognac spices. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, tangy and gloriously complex, with magical

transparency, perfect focus and balance and a very, very long and zesty finish. This particular bottle had only been opened three days when I tasted it, so I may have caught it before it had fully blossomed! 2012-2100. **95+**.



Malvasia or Malmsey

1985 Blandy's Malmsey

The 1985 Malmsey from Blandy's was bottled in 2009, after a twenty-four year sojourn in old oak casks. The wine is lovely, offering up a deep and complex bouquet of dried cherries, orange peel, molasses, cloves, a touch of brown butter and a savory topnote of celery seed. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and still fairly youthful in its profile (though the bottle was only opened today), with a fine core of fruit, excellent focus and bounce and a very long, complex and classy finish that closes with fine grip and exceptional balance. This may be even better than it is showing today, as it has only been open for a few hours! 2014-2100. **92+?**

1954 Vinhos Barbeito Malvasia Reserva Velha

The 1954 Barbeito Malvasia Reserva Velha is still quite a zesty wine, but it possesses some very lovely attributes and it is really quite a lovely glass of Malvasia. The very classy nose offers up scents of raisins, baked apples, a touch of caramel, lovely herbal tones, a fine base of minerality and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still relatively tight in structure, with a fine core, very good focus and grip and a long, balanced and

snappy finish. This particular bottle had been opened about six months when I tasted it, so it perhaps may have faded just a touch? 2011-2150. **92+**.

1933 Justino's Malmsey

I really loved the 1933 Malmsey from Justino's when I had a chance to taste it during my visit to the lodge in February. Here is a wine of stunning balance, with the concentration of long cask aging, the sweetness of Malmsey and the tangy acids of great Madeira all seamlessly interwoven. The stunning nose wafts from the glass in a blend of brown sugar, desiccated cherries, walnuts, orange peel, clove-like spice tones, molasses and a lovely touch of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and perfectly balanced, with a superb core of fruit, bright acids and stunning length and grip on the focused and very refined finish. A beautiful wine. 2014-2100. **95**.

1920 Vinhos Barbeito Malvasia

It is interesting to see that the 1920 Barbeito Malvasia is still a bit youthfully tight on the nose (and probably could have done with a bit more time open?), but with some coaxing, it eventually agrees to offer up scents of desiccated oranges, molasses, ginger, toffee, herb tones and a beautiful base of mineral soil nuances. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, classy and tight, with a rock solid core, snappy acids and outstanding length and grip on the very well-balanced and quite complex finish. This bottle was opened on the day of the tasting, and I have to imagine that a week or two open would have allowed its still rather emphatic structure to relax a bit and allow a bit more generosity on the palate. It is a lovely wine that is clearly vibrant and at its apogee and will last for at least another century. 2012-2125+. **94+**.

1910 Blandy's Malvasia

The 1910 Malvasia from Blandy's is a beautiful bottle of wine that is now starting to really drink with great style as it crosses the one hundred year-old threshold. The bouquet is deep, pure and utterly vibrant, as it soars from the glass in a blaze of cherries, molasses, orange peel, a touch of coffee, smoke and a deep base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and beautifully complex, with tangy acids, great focus and grip, a still youthful core of fruit and a very, very long, pure and powerful finish. I love the interplay here of residual sweetness and zesty acidity, which gives the wine glorious richness without ever becoming heavy or syrupy. A beautiful, beautiful bottle. 2013-2100+. **94**.

1907 Pereira d'Oliveira Malvasia Reserva

The 1907 Malvasia from d'Oliveira's is a great old wine at its absolute apogee of peak drinkability. The stunning nose soars from the glass in a blend of heather, desiccated cherries, fresh figs, honey cake, a touch of cigar wrapper, *rancio*, salty soil tones, a touch of iodine and a vibrant topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and simply bottomless in its depth, with perfect balance and focus, tangy acids, a great synthesis of opulent sweetness and uplifting structure and a very, very long, complex and magical finish. Sheer brilliance! 2014-2100. **96**.

1900 Henriques & Henriques "Century" Malmsey Solera

This great old wine was finally bottled up at the turn of the twenty-first century to commemorate the dawn of a new millennium, and it will probably see out the entire twenty-first century in fine style. The deep and beautifully refined nose offers up a celestial blend of desiccated cherries, fresh figs, a touch of chocolate, a gentle note of heather, dried eucalyptus, wild fennel, gentle cigar smoke, orange peel, a touch of sea salts and a nice topnote of *rancio*. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and bottomless at the core, with bright, vibrant

acids, laser-like focus, seamless balance and magical length and grip on the very, very complex and utterly refined finish. Flawless and breathtakingly beautiful juice. 2014-2100+. **100.**

1886 Vinhos Barbeito Malvasia

The 1886 Malvasia from Barbeito was bottled from demi-johns in 2002. According to Mannie Berk, the wine spent about twenty years of its life in demi-john at one point in its *eleavage*, before being returned to cask again (but my notes do not mention at what stage of its cellaring this was done). The wine is absolutely brilliant, offering up a deep and utterly refined bouquet of caramel, coffee, sweet nuts, a touch of banana, gentle notes of brown butter and a topnote of rosemary. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very, very complex, with a great core of fruit, laser-like focus, snappy acids and brilliant length and grip on the perfectly balanced and absolutely *à point* finish. A magical wine. 2010-2100+. **97.**

1875 Vinhos Barbeito Malvasia

Barbeito's 1875 Malvasia is really a beautiful wine, with all of the magical depth and breathtaking dimension of one of the legendary bottles of the late nineteenth century. The beautiful nose offers up a complex constellation of *crème brûlée*, cherries, oranges, walnuts, lovely saline soil tones, just a dollop of celery seed, spiced meats, sweet prunes and a touch of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and wonderfully balanced, with a rock solid core of fruit, magical complexity, snappy acids, laser-like focus and marvelous length and grip on the poised and very classy finish. A great, great wine. 2014-2100+. **97.**

1871 Harvey's Malmsey

The 1871 Harvey's Malmsey is a beautiful bottle at its zenith, but which is beginning to give up a bit of its first century's worth of sweetness and moving into its secondary stage of development on the palate. The hauntingly gorgeous bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of *crème brûlée*, cloves, cherries, orange peel, lovely soil tones and a fistful of exotic spice tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and perfectly resolved, with a lovely core of fruit, stunning complexity and breed and a very, very long and elegant finish that is beginning to lose a touch of its sweetness, but none of its balance or focus. A stunning wine. 2010-2050+? **96.**

1834 Vinhos Barbeito Malvasia

The 1834 Malvasia from Barbeito is a stunningly brilliant wine that delivers a magical bouquet of orange, golden raisins, browned butter, lovely notes of filberts and almonds, a fine base of soil and a topnote of fennel seed. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and laser-like in its focus, with a great core of fruit, superb complexity and balance, perfectly integrated, snappy acids and stunning length and grip on the dancing and profound finish. A great, great bottle of Malvasia. 2008-2100+. **96+.**