

KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

JANUARY 2018



Serralunga d'Alba, December 2017

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VIVE LA SAVOIE! ■ NEW ARRIVALS FROM PIEDMONT
A STUNNING VALUE FROM FOILLARD
CHARDONNAY AND PINOT NOIR: NOT FROM BURGUNDY



Annecy

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ON THE WINE ROUTE

by Kermit Lynch

GIVEN THE FLAVOR OF OUR TIMES, I decided to report to you from an extreme gastronomic frontier created for those of you who have more money than you know what to do with, a world where, if price is an object, you won't have an ounce of fun—imagine yourself sitting down hungry and thirsty where the only aperitif is sixty dollars *per glass*. A world in which, given my *métier*, my expenses qualify for tax deductions.

Lake Annecy is forty-five minutes by car from the Geneva airport. Should dining be an important part of vacationing, your smile of delight will grow along with your waistline, because in Savoie, the wines keep getting better, and the food is as good as (and probably better than) in any of the French provinces. Even with snow on the ground, Savoie is a hotbed of deliciousness. Plus, the Alpine landscape is magnificent, the architecture of yesteryear striking, the people civilized. They take time to be pleasant. That's all good.

Woodsy hotel/restaurant Yoann Conte is right on the lake in Veyrier—lovely views. And you'll eat well. Their all-vegetable menu at 160 euros is what first prompted me to file this report. *Delicious* is the word for it. Imaginative, too. Even the carrot *dans tous ses états*. Another meal included snails in absinthe. The resto bakes their own breads and pastries, and it is a great place to explore Savoie wines and the region's fabulous cheeses. One evening, to avoid a *crise de foie*, I ordered from room service and enjoyed the best since I began traveling many years ago. Incredible! Even the little serving of pasta was covered with a tomato sauce that rests vividly in my memory. And I'll never make another soup of winter squash without a sprinkling of little bits of fried lardon or pancetta. Oh yes, one final marvel: they'd smoked a fish called *fera* from the lake, and I'd like to still have its magical aftertaste on my palate.

One night I drove into Annecy *ville* to dine at the Michelin two-star Le Clos des Sens and enjoyed discussing wines with their young sommelier. I'm pretty sure I enjoyed the cuisine. Maybe it's me, but I found the speeches delivered with the arrival of each plate very distracting—wondering, for example, if the food would still be warm after the speech explaining what a genius the chef is. It was like having a museum guide who blathers on so much you can't think for yourself. Conversation at table is continually interrupted by the staff's rote self-congratulations.

My other hotel was nearby in Talloires, the Auberge de Père Bise, where my room was comfortable and classy, with superb lake and mountain views. The village itself is gorgeous. Let's hope it is preserved as is—idyllic. I kept thinking I should move to Talloires for good, but the place has to cope with summer and winter flocks of tourists. October was a good time to go—fall colors, yet too

cold for swimming and too warm for snow, so no mobs. Their two-star restaurant was fine enough but didn't find room in my memory bank.

Also in Talloires, there's a cool little joint run by a husband-and-wife team: Le Confidentiel. Sébastien cooks, and Fanchon does the service and the wine

list. It was cozy and comfy and well done in all respects. Fanchon knew my name, because when she worked in Château Thivin's cellar, she had to put my import strips on each and every bottle destined for the U.S. The chef's quinoa roasted with dried tomatoes, capers, and *confit de citron* impressed me—that and his butternut soup. All was reasonably priced.

One day I said, "Price be damned, I owe a full report to my clientele," and headed higher



Lac d'Annecy

© Kermit Lynch

and higher up into the clouds, to visit Marc Veyrat's remarkable restaurant. I felt like I was on top of the world, although maybe not this world. The prices are loony high, too, but it is worth ignoring the cost for such a magical, *gastronomique* extravaganza. I'm saying that if you go, you have to ignore the price—get it out of your mind. Push, push, let go, let go! Either that or you will suffer every bite of the way.

I'd say it is one of the five best meals of my life. It is hard to detail what each dish consists of—you will have enjoyed a meal made of hundreds of ingredients, all chosen and combined with genius. The important thing, the shocker: it's all unbelievably delicious. The trout from Lake Léman smoked and served in tree bark. *Foie gras* with Alpine herbs and fig jam. Yow! *Ris de veau* with wild mushrooms and vegetables from his extensive garden. There were *many* plates, consistently delectable. They make their own breads, but no, you shouldn't permit yourself to fill up on them, right? It's tempting but not smart.

And finally, the cheese platter. When I see a cheese selection, I judge by the visuals. Each I gazed upon at Veyrat's deserves a spot on the wall of the Louvre. A four-year-old Tomme de Brebis (I believe that's what they called it) caught my eye. I asked the Italian sommelier to choose a glass of wine for it. The cheese was thick-textured, deep-flavored, brilliantly characterful. A crusty, wrinkled beauty! He brought me a Chardonnay from the Jura, one of the last wines I would ever have thought to order. It was a perfect match. The Chardonnay had no new oak, and splattered my palate like rays of the sun sparkling in the oxygen-thin Alpine sky. I know—that doesn't make any sense, but Veyrat's symphony left me in a stop-making-sense kind of mood.

Vive la Savoie!

NEW FROM A. & M. QUENARD

FOLLOWING CENTURIES OF TRADITION

by Anthony Lynch

2016 CHIGNIN-BERGERON “LES TERRASSES”

With all due respect to the northern Rhône and its gorgeous expressions of Roussanne, it is very tempting to say that the variety’s future lies in Savoie. Known here as Bergeron, it grows on well-exposed slopes of limestone scree, sucking up mineral essence from the stone that has crumbled down these precipitous mountainsides. Bergeron enjoys an Alpine-influenced climate significantly cooler than that along the baking banks of the Rhône, fifty miles or so to the west—a welcome chill in a time when each vintage seems hotter and drier than the last.

While Alpine Roussanne may be a novelty to most, the grape has been cultivated in these parts just as long as it has thrived in the Rhône Valley. In fact, the Romans arrived here from across the Alps in the second century AD, planting some of Savoie’s first vineyards, records indicate, on a steep slope known today as the Coteau de Torméry.

Nowadays, the Quenard family of nearby Chignin carries on the tradition of growing grapes on the near-vertical heap of rocky rubble that is the Coteau de Torméry. The highest and steepest section of the vineyard has even been terraced to enable viticulture.

This beautifully refined, tenderly floral, and succulently peachy wine, born from pure stone, is the outcome—a product of centuries of tradition, one chosen site, and a family’s laborious dedication to eking out a most genuine elixir from Savoie’s towering mountain facades.



\$33.00 PER BOTTLE

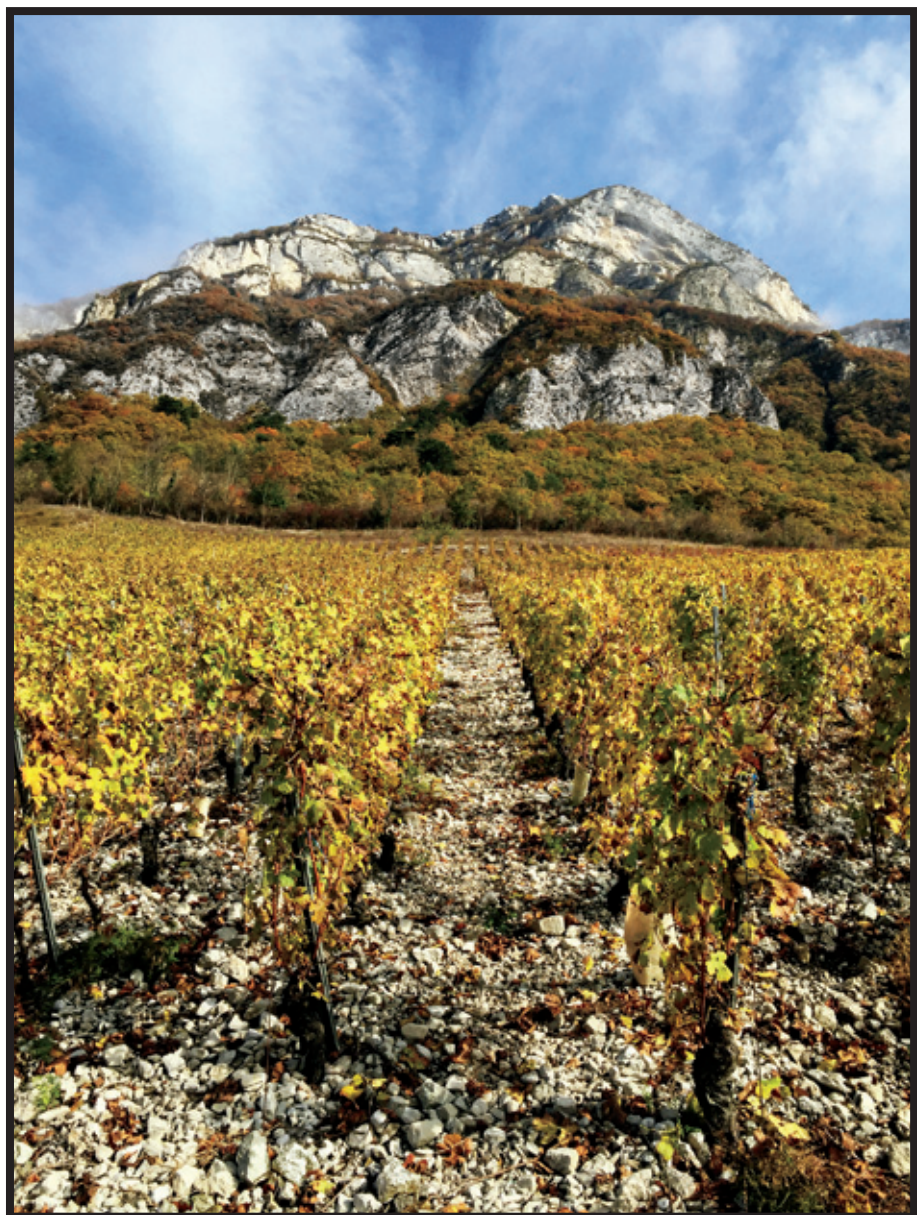
\$356.40 PER CASE

2015 ARBIN MONDEUSE “TERRES BRUNES”

The Quenards also own land in the neighboring *cru* of Arbin, where heavier clay soils provide a stylistic contrast to the sheer rock of Chignin. The local Mondeuse grape finds a natural home here, creating wines that marry the bright, floral nature of a Pinot Noir with the juiciness of Gamay and the chewy, animal element of Syrah. Most Savoie reds are fairly light in body, but not this one: it is a thick, dense, and rather wild trip to Alpine red wine paradise.

\$32.00 PER BOTTLE

\$345.60 PER CASE



The Coteau de Torméry in Chignin, Savoie

CHABLIS

by Anthony Lynch

2016 CHABLIS • ROLAND LAVANTUREUX

Lovers of mouthwateringly crisp, steely Chablis will rejoice with the 2016s: they are about as *classique* as can be! The young Lavantureux brothers have proven that an entry-level Chablis can not only be a satisfying and refreshing drink but also show a bit of nuance—

this is not just a one-dimensional quaffer. A portion of the wine ages briefly in neutral barrels, adding a lovely textural element you'll appreciate at table. This Chablis is quite versatile, but cracked Dungeness crab is a hard pairing to beat.



\$28.00 PER BOTTLE

\$302.40 PER CASE

2015 CHABLIS “LES TRUFFIÈRES” DOMAINE COSTAL

The *lieu-dit* Les Truffières balances ripe, luscious fruit with the nerve and briny minerality so characteristic of fine Chablis. Aged in a combination of stainless steel and 600-liter *demi-muids*, it goes into bottle completely unadulterated: without cold stabilization, fining, or filtration. You won't find many other Chablis made like this, and here you'll taste the total elegance and breadth of nonmanipulated Chardonnay from these famously rocky soils.

\$30.00 PER BOTTLE

\$324.00 PER CASE

2016 CHABLIS 1ER CRU “FOURCHAUME” FRANCINE & OLIVIER SAVARY

One of the best-known *premiers crus* of Chablis, Fourchaume consistently produces wines that flirt with *grand cru* quality. The poor soils on this well-exposed slope, scattered with chunks of Kimmeridgian limestone, put stress on the vine, causing it to plunge its roots deep in search of nutrients. Concentration, power, and plenty of flesh on the bones are Fourchaume's hallmarks, with generous Chardonnay fruit coating an unapologetically stony spine—a grandiose *premier cru*, indeed.

\$36.00 PER BOTTLE

\$388.80 PER CASE

PIEMONTE

by *Anthony Lynch*

2016 DOLCETTO D'ALBA "V. PARI" GUIDO PORRO

There was once a time in Piemonte, decades ago, when growers had to beg clients stocking up on Dolcetto and Barbera to also pick up a few bottles of Barolo. It seems unimaginable today, but the Langhe's economy once depended far more on the humble reds from its workhorse grapes than on the King of Wines. Uncomplicated and easy to down, Porro's Dolcetto illustrates the popular appeal of such wines. It smells of violets and wild blackberries, feels soft, plump, and round on the palate, and is completely gulpable.

\$20.00 PER BOTTLE

\$216.00 PER CASE

2016 BARBERA D'ALBA "BRICCO DEL PILONE" BENEVELLI PIERO



More than your basic sipper, Massimo Benevelli's Barbera has reached new heights in 2016. Full-bodied, refreshing, and surprisingly profound, here is a red that absolutely shines at table. For fans of older wines, take note of this bargain buy for your cellar—five or ten years will do it no harm at all.

\$25.00 PER BOTTLE

\$270.00 PER CASE

2014 BARBARESCO "VICENZIANA" SILVIO GIAMELLO

A soft-spoken family man rarely seen outside of his vineyards or cellar, Silvio Giamello is a maestro of textbook Barbaresco: high-toned, floral, and wonderfully refined. Look no further for a bright, perfumy Nebbiolo crafted traditionally, raised in *botti grandi* (large casks). I expect it to reach its peak in about five years.

\$38.00 PER BOTTLE

\$410.40 PER CASE

2011 BAROLO BUSSIA “CASCINA DARDI”
A. & G. FANTINO

That fine Barolo so often needs years and years of bottle age to become approachable is a test of patience for us all and a real nuisance to those of us without a wine cellar. Luckily, this 2011 from the Fantino brothers of Monforte d’Alba is perfect for drinking today, with a plush, velvety texture and elegant tannins on the finish. The nose is complex, but faded roses are what keep the glass glued to my face. Forget the future—this Barolo is sure to keep you warm *this* winter.

\$55.00 PER BOTTLE

\$594.00 PER CASE

2012 BAROLO “V. S. CATERINA”
GUIDO PORRO

Guido Porro’s Baroli exemplify the aromatic finesse, potency, and longevity of wines from Serralunga d’Alba when produced via traditional production methods such as spontaneous fermentation, long maceration, and extensive aging in enormous oak casks—and no filtration, of course. Santa Caterina gives a delicate and nuanced perfume, equal parts ripe fruit and savory, earthy elements, backed by a chewy structure promising a slow and steady evolution throughout the years. To best enjoy it now, decant it for a few hours and serve with hearty Piedmontese dishes like a *bollito* (boiled meat topped with *salsa verde*).

\$47.00 PER BOTTLE

\$507.60 PER CASE



Guido Porro

© Gail Skoff

— NOT FROM BURGUNDY —

PINOT NOIR

by Dixon Brooke

2016 PINOT NOIR “LES JARDINS” • OSTERTAG

André’s son Arthur has joined his father and grandfather at their domaine in northern Alsace, three generations now working side by side. Much as his father did with him, André has given Arthur a lot of freedom to experiment in the cellar. After returning from planting new Pinot Gris vines in Muenchberg, Arthur joined André and me in Epfig to finish tasting their 2016s and presented me with a dry, skin-macerated Gewurtztraminer that he had made. One of his other initiatives has been to add more stems to their younger-release Pinot Noir to give it a bit more structure. Mission accomplished.

\$34.00 PER BOTTLE

\$367.20 PER CASE

2011 FRIULI COLLI ORIENTALI PINOT NERO “RONCO PITOTTI” • VIGNAI DA DULINE

It may not be from Burgundy, but it was inspired by it. Our friends at Duline studied their incredible *terroir* at Ronco Pitotti for years and experimented for many vintages before they were finally ready to release their first Pinot Nero. The resulting wine is nothing short of brilliant and definitely a contender for Italy’s best example, to my palate. Its secret weapon is the soil of *ponca* (in the local dialect)—a flaky, layered limestone/sandstone rich in minerals—on which the grape is grown. Medium robe, aromatic complexity, elegance, length, silky tannin, and stunning flavor are all on display.

\$124.00 PER BOTTLE

\$1,339.20 PER CASE

2014 ALTO ADIGE PINOT NERO “MAZZON” FERRUCCIO CARLOTTO

We introduced the 2013 vintage earlier this year, and it was a huge hit. Planted high on a limestone cliff in Sudtirol, Mazzon channels both Austrian and Italian influences. Grown and vinified by the talented father-daughter team of Ferruccio and Michela Carlotto, this wine shows the delicate and refined side of the grape—the side I love and the hardest one to tease out. Aged extensively in large cask, barrel, and bottle, it is released when ready to drink. But, as old vintages attest, Mazzon only improves with age.

\$45.00 PER BOTTLE

\$486.00 PER CASE

— NOT FROM BURGUNDY —

CHARDONNAY

by Anthony Lynch

IN BURGUNDY, the Chardonnay grape is known for its impressive ability to translate the site-specific character of each vineyard. But this is also true outside of Burgundy, as Chardonnay shines in places that imprint *terroir* stamps all their own. Here are three surprising examples of this noble variety sure to keep your mind and palate stimulated.

2016 VAL DE LOIRE CHARDONNAY ÉRIC CHEVALIER

What would Chardonnay taste like in Muscadet soils? You guessed it—lean and bright, with a breezy blast of Atlantic brine on the finish. It will work fine with oysters, but at this price you might consider keeping a bottle chilled at all times in the event of impromptu thirst. The suggestions of white flowers and crisp apple remind us of the variety in question.

\$16.00 PER BOTTLE

\$172.80 PER CASE

2015 CÔTES DU JURA CHARDONNAY “LA CHAUX” • FRANÇOIS ROUSSET-MARTIN

From the marl slopes of Château-Chalon, where the Savagnin grape stars in the Jura’s most storied and long-lived oxidative wines, François Rousset-Martin crafts this unusual Chardonnay with regular topping-off of his barrels, to avoid any oxidation. An exotic nose of candied lemon and spices prefaces a focused acidity and a sensation of beeswax and nuts on the palate. Buttery sautéed mushrooms and oozing grilled cheese sandwiches ought to do the trick with this one.

\$42.00 PER BOTTLE

\$453.60 PER CASE

2014 VENEZIA GIULIA CHARDONNAY • KANTE

Kante’s Chardonnay is grown in pure gray limestone just minutes from the Adriatic, then aged on its lees for a year in old barrels in a three-story-deep cave carved out of the rock. It seems to have absorbed the essence of its surroundings: a brisk maritime wind and the dank scent of a cellar dripping with mineral water. The Chardonnay grape, in this case, is merely a vehicle for expressing the stark *terroir* of Friuli’s Carso zone.

\$35.00 PER BOTTLE

\$378.00 PER CASE

VALUE REDS

by Chris Santini

2016 BEAUMES-DE-VENISE ROUGE DOMAINE DE DURBAN

Just a mere 2,618 years ago, a small group of Greek colonists found their way to Provence and settled in some grottoes (*baïmos* in local dialect) on a hilltop. From vine cuttings packed along in their belongings they began a tradition, miraculously uninterrupted since then, of making sweet Muscat, which remains to this day the

claim to fame and calling card of the village of Beaumes-de-Venise. Much ink about this Muscat, one of the great sticky wines of the world, has been rightly spilled in these pages over the last forty years. Yet don't forget about the *rouge*, the sun-filled, hearty, and meaty everyday wine locals drink without pomp or circumstance between bottles of the sweet stuff.



\$19.00 PER BOTTLE

\$205.20 PER CASE

2016 PIC SAINT LOUP ROUGE CHÂTEAU LA ROQUE



If you take a summer stroll on the slopes of the Pic Saint Loup, you may find wild grapevines climbing the rock here and there, providing a few bunches of grapes that are soon taken by the abundant wild boars and birds. Evidence shows that those wild grapes, native to the Pic since prehistoric times, were used by the first human inhabitants of the area, making our friends in Beaumes-de-Venise look like newcomers to the game. Perhaps it's the horse-

farmed, chemical-free vineyards, far from present-day pollutants, or perhaps it's the minimalist winemaking and unfiltered bottling, but there is something timeless to La Roque's Pic Saint Loup, its herbal bouquet and rich, fleshy texture, all free from any hint of modern trappings.

\$19.95 PER BOTTLE

\$215.46 PER CASE

2015 LANGUEDOC ROUGE “LOU MASET” DOMAINE D’AUPILHAC

If you’re on the lookout for an everyday southern *rouge* that’s on the brighter, refreshing side, the Lou Maset may be your drink of choice. Some call this cuvée “gently rustic,” and that about sums it up. It’s no *grand cru* and isn’t trying to be, but it is loads of fun to drink and suitable for just about any occasion you can muster.

\$17.00 PER BOTTLE

\$183.60 PER CASE

2014 CORSE CALVI ROUGE “E PROVE” DOMAINE MAESTRACCI

Beef and brawn abound in Maestracci’s *rouge*, so much so that the estate lets it sit a few years in old casks to mellow out before getting it in bottle. Once it is finally ready, though, it is unmatched in Corsican bang for the buck. While its complexity dazzles, it remains delightful and delicious to drink. And, as always *chez* Maestracci, there is plenty of elegance to boot.

\$22.00 PER BOTTLE

\$237.60 PER CASE



Domaine Maestracci

© Gail Skoff

NEW FROM FOILLARD!

2016 BEAUJOLAIS-VILLAGES

by Dixon Brooke

IT ISN'T EVERY DAY that one can team up with the talented Jean Foillard and create a new wine. I think the last straw was when one of our clients shipped their Nouveau, the one Jean had rushed through vinification, late. "Why not let me take my time with the vinification and label it as Beaujolais rather than Nouveau if it doesn't have to be to the USA by the third Thursday in November?" Recognizing the good sense in that was pretty easy. As the idea took form, Jean went looking for other sources of fruit to complement his personal holdings. Naturally, his first and last stops were in the steep, granite hillsides of Beaujolais-Villages, skirting the *crus*. His inspiration also led him to ink long-term deals with the landholders so that he could work the land himself and manage everything A–Z, eventually owning it all. Now you can own this inaugural bottle! I don't expect you will be able to keep your hands off of it for long, though.

The wine is, of course, classic Foillard: smooth and seductive, with rose petals, red cherry, and a granite crunch to remind you of the noblesse of these slopes. Featuring vines from the communes of Lancié, Saint-Amour, Saint-Jean-d'Ardières, Perréon, and Régnié-Durette, this is the real Beaujolais-Villages, further set apart from simpler Beaujolais by the touch of a master vigneron.

\$24.00 PER BOTTLE

\$259.20 PER CASE





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Adventures on the Wine Route

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