

# ADVENTURES CLUB

by Anthony Lynch • AUGUST 2013

## 2012 VIN DE SAVOIE “LES ABYMES” • A. & M. QUENARD

Recently, Savoie has been getting more and more attention for its crisp, charming whites. It's no coincidence: these wines are unique, delicious, and often come at great value. While a wine like this quaffer from André and Michel Quenard might traditionally be found in an alpine resort as an après-ski pick-me-up next to a warm *croque-monsieur*, my guess is it will have more use readily waiting in your refrigerator as your go-to summer refresher. The Jacquère grape, when grown in the cool mountain climate of Savoie's steep limestone slopes, gives light, focused wines with the transparency of a fresh mountain stream. “Les Abymes” hails from outside the town of Chignin and features low alcohol, lively acidity, and unrivaled thirst-quenching properties. Try it well-chilled with a grilled cheese sandwich, fresh shellfish, or on a hike with a panoramic lookout. Alternatively, just drink it and worry about the rest later.

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

## 2010 MONTELECCIO • SESTI

The Castello di Argiano, home to the Sesti family, is a magical place. While not much of the original *castello* exists—just a picturesque, crumbling stone tower—the property sits atop one of Tuscany's idyllic rolling hills with a panoramic view of this famous countryside. While some growers in the area aim to release as many bottles as possible each year, Elisa Sesti and her father, Giuseppe, have very small holdings, having chosen only the best hillside vineyard sites to produce wine of homegrown quality vintage after vintage. Their perfectionism starts in the vineyards, where they focus on the well-being of each vine as well as the health of the soil. In the cellar, lunar and planetary cycles—based on Giuseppe's background in astronomy—dictate their wholesome philosophy and careful practices. The outcome is several bottlings of Sangiovese that reflect the Sestis' passion and hard work. In addition to a long-lived Brunello and serious Rosso di Montalcino, they bottle this more approachable red that still reflects the classic earthy flavors characteristic of the region's reds. For a traditional pairing, try a slow-cooked pork shoulder or *pappardelle* with porcini mushrooms blended with a flavorful reduction.



Elisa and Giuseppe Sesti

Photo © Dixon Becker

**\$25.00 PER BOTTLE**      **\$270.00 PER CASE**

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# BUTCHERS IN FARAWAY LANDS

By Christopher Lee

When I travel, I somehow manage to find the good butchers. Maybe it's the crowd I hang with (no pun intended), maybe it's some other coincidence, but it happens without fail. Many butchers nowadays buy their meats pre-cut, or even pre-wrapped, and not much special skill or training is required to handle them: it's the antithesis of butchery. As one Dublin butcher said, "Anyone can work in a shop like that, and anyone does." So it's a delight to find the real deal, and less and less frequent.

You can always tell a good butcher shop: outside, the color and brightness of the cuts displayed in the front window and the absence of packaging; inside, the old, tarnished meat grinder, and the wavy-topped butcher's block, worn down by years of scraping. There's typically only one butcher behind the counter, usually the owner. The place smells good.

Strolling down the high street of a small Irish town on a recent Saturday afternoon, I passed four butcher shops in two blocks and two crossroads. I was wandering, not shopping for dinner, but in one of the shops, a fine-looking steak caught my eye. It was well marbled and thick-cut, with the perfect eye of the second rib sitting brightly in its center; a beautiful strip of tender cap meat ran across the top, trimmed with golden fat (a sign of good aging). It was a cut I recognized as the "butcher's cut," a term for a delicious piece that lies between the shoulder and the rib. It's what the hard-working butcher would take home, as I've secretly done many a time. Without a doubt, it's one of the finest cuts and least expensive ones: a rib steak at the price of chuck. I stepped inside to investigate.

I soon learned that the butcher's family raises its own grass-fed beef, and that his grandfather opened the shop sixty years ago to market its products—vertical integration of a sort. The Irish are rightly proud of their fine beef. Ireland's wet climate produces lots of good grass year-round for the cattle, so it's unnecessary to say "grass-fed." All beef raised in Ireland is grass-fed, and in general, Irish and UK farmers are bewildered by the new-fangled term "grass-fed"; it has always been done that way here. No contrivances needed.

We had a pleasant chat, and when I mentioned that I cook, he asked about marinades for grilled meats. He hopes to offer his customers some new delights for summer, such as it is in Ireland. I promised to send him a few recipes, but he said he doesn't use email, so would I please send them by post? Funny to think some of our California recipes will be floating around the Irish Midlands, on someone's Weber.



Christopher Lee is a former head chef of Chez Panisse and Eccolo in Berkeley and co-founder of the Pop-Up General Store in Oakland, California. Read his blog at <http://oldfashionedbutcher.blogspot.com>.