

# CHEVALLIER

JULY 2021

aging  
vessels





# aging vessels

**W**INEMAKING is nothing more

than the cumulation of a series of decisions on the part of the grower. What grape varieties, rootstocks, and where to plant them? How to farm them? What day to harvest?

As much as any decision about grapes, viticulture, and harvest, the choice of aging vessel has an all-important impact on the final product. Thousands of years ago, around the genesis of winemaking, the answer might have been obvious: stomp on the fruit for a bit, then toss the must into clay amphorae and leave the rest to the gods. But times have changed, and today vignerons have a seemingly endless array of possibilities when it comes to raising their wines. Oak barrels, popularized in Roman times, were originally prized for their light weight (compared to amphorae) and the relative ease with which they could be shipped overseas. But now oak is valued more for its impact on the wine held inside, like the flavor it imparts and the amount of oxygen it allows to come in contact with the wine. Certain regions traditionally relied on other woods, such as chestnut or acacia, which offer different qualities than oak and are beginning to come back in fashion. Amphorae—terra cotta or sandstone—are also enjoying newfound popularity in natural wine circles and

with producers seeking to emulate ancient methods. Then there are the so-called inert containers: stainless steel, concrete, glass, fiberglass . . . all of which offer distinct pros and cons of their own.

Aging vessels impact many aspects of a wine as it rests before bottling. Some offer logistical advantages, such as the temperature control afforded by stainless steel. Tanks with floating caps can be filled to a custom capacity, whereas other vessels come in standard sizes that may not be suited to small batches of wine. The characteristic flavor of a vessel, namely wood, marries better or worse with a given wine's inherent aromatic palette—white Burgundy would not be white Burgundy without the toasty, buttery contribution of small French oak *barriques*. Furthermore, permeability is crucial, as oxygenation accelerates a wine's aging process.

Aging is a period of refinement, when rough edges soften and the young aromas of freshly fermented grape juice evolve into something more complex and vinous. It's no coincidence this period is known in French as *élevage*, during which the producer "raises" their beloved wine like a child before making the difficult decision that it is ready to go out into the world.

—ANTHONY LYNCH



## 2019 VERMENTINO DI SARDEGNA “STRIA”

VIGNE RADA \$24

✿ STAINLESS STEEL TANK

VIGNE RADA is a young estate founded by Gino Bardino, a former banker who quit his office job to follow his dream of making wine. Gino and his family built a modest winery and began planting vineyards on the slopes outside their home of Alghero, a colorful city on Sardinia’s northwest coast still distinguished by the cultural influence of fourteenth-century Catalan colonists. Conditions are ideal for growing high-quality grapes: fresh maritime breezes and the drying *maestrale* moderate the Mediterranean heat, while the poor, rocky soils are perfectly suited to the production of balanced, characterful wines. Vigne Rada’s lively, perfumed Vermentino is reminiscent of wildflowers, citrus, and Mediterranean herbs, with an unctuous texture and clean, saline finish. Delightfully crisp in its youth, it reveals a surprising complexity and depth after two or three years in bottle.



## 2017 ALTO ADIGE SAUVIGNON “VOGLAR”

PETER DIPOLI \$36

✿ ACACIA CASK

PETER DIPOLI’S SAUVIGNON BLANC is a striking translation of the breathtaking place where it is grown: the steep mountainsides of

Alto Adige, nestled high in Italy’s Dolomites. Alto Adige has a truly special climate; few other places can boast Mediterranean plants like olive trees and lemons growing before a backdrop of Alpine lakes and snowcapped peaks. Dipoli found this high-altitude site, with its curious amalgam of climates, to be perfect for crafting a great terroir-driven wine. The Sauvignon ripens fully here while retaining a pinpoint acidity and slicing minerality from the limestone soils, and the unusual wood treatment—fermentation and aging in large acacia casks—brings out aromatics unique to this mountain Sauvignon while contributing texture and weight. A delicious companion to cuisine from northern Italy and beyond, the Voglar also has surprising aging potential.



## 2019 ALPILLES ROSÉ “PETRA”

DOMAINE HAUVETTE \$46

✦ CONCRETE EGG

DOMINIQUE HAUVETTE wants little to do with the Provençal rosé craze. Note the color of this rosé—unlike many, hers is not an attempt to simulate water. Next, the aroma: deep and vinous, this bears little resemblance to the



grapefruit-and-Febreze-scented wines inoculated with lab-processed “aromatic” yeast strains. She ferments and ages her rosé in concrete eggs, lets it finish malolactic, bottles it unfiltered, and doesn’t release the wine until she deems it ready. The result is a stunning display of complexity. Her rosé has grip and grain that rival many a white Burgundy, but with the sunshine and fleshiness you’d expect from a southern wine. Treat Dominique’s rosé as you would any serious wine, and you will be rightly rewarded.

## 2019 ÎLE DE BEAUTÉ *ROUGE*

DOMAINE DE MARQUILIANI \$29

✦ STAINLESS STEEL TANK



VIGNERONNE ANNE AMALRIC of Domaine de Marquiliani, an old olive mill on Corsica’s east coast, specialized in rosé (and olive oil) until crafting her first red from the 2015 vintage. Like her delicate, ethereal rosés, her *rouge*—a blend of Sciaccarellu, Syrah, and Grenache—features aromas of fresh berries and wild Corsican herbs, but it delivers more heft and body without sacrificing

drinkability. The secret to her delicious, thirst-quenching wines undoubtedly lies in her great terroir, sandwiched between snowcapped peaks on one side and the inviting Mediterranean on the other. Cool winds are a constant here, and the persistent ventilation facilitates sustainable farming, ensuring top-quality raw materials. Fermentation in tank and an unfiltered bottling are the final steps to creating this red you will have trouble setting down.







## 2018 NUITS-SAINT-GEORGES “VIEILLES VIGNES”

DOMAINE ROBERT CHEVILLON \$115

✦ BURGUNDIAN BARREL  
(228-LITER FRENCH OAK, 20% NEW)

THE CHEVILLON BROTHERS’ stunning collection of vineyards in Nuits-Saint-Georges would make any Pinot Noir grower jealous.

On top of that, they farm old vines that have adapted to the often challenging Burgundian conditions and provide ripe, healthy clusters of grapes year after year. While they are lucky landowners in several top *premiers crus*, they also bottle this old-vine village-level Nuits that hints at the greatness of the appellation’s very best sites without requiring a long period of aging to appreciate. The Chevillons use less new oak and release this cuvée slightly early in the goal of making it more accessible. Fifty-year-old Pinot Noir delivers classic Côte de Nuits character in this seductive, yet rich and structured red that can be held for another decade if you prefer your Burgundy with a bit of bottle age.

## 2017 FAUGÈRES

DOMAINE LEON BARRAL \$40

✦ CONCRETE TANK

DIDIER BARRAL’S LINEUP offers a peek at what wines might have tasted like back in the day when vine growers all over France made wine as just a single element of a multifaceted farm. While France once teemed with such growers, hardly any remain today. Didier is our last producer to work off the grid, with no cell phone, no email, and no computer. He gardens, farms grapes, and raises cows and pigs on his property an hour west of Montpellier. The animals fertilize the soils, trim competing vegetation, and eventually feed Didier and his family. Most importantly, he works biodynamically, with a zealous devotion to biodiversity, creating an ideal habitat for his vines and all the life around them.

His Faugères comes from Carignan, Grenache, and Cinsault up to seventy years old in schist soils, fermented naturally in concrete tanks and bottled unfiltered with only the slightest touch of sulfur. Plush and generous, with fragrant floral notes, wild dark fruit, and meaty gamey suggestions, this bottling illustrates the Languedoc’s rustic backcountry with heart and soul.







2019 Vermentino di Sardegna “Stria” <i>Vigne Rada</i> SARDINIA	Vermentino	8-year-old vines Alluvial with riverbed stones and quartz; clay, limestone, chalk	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F Decant optional	Wildflowers, Mediterranean herbs, ripe lemon, green almond Lush, crisp, briny	Drink now through 2025
2017 Alto Adige Sauvignon “Voglar” <i>Peter Dipoli</i> ALTO ADIGE	Sauvignon Blanc	Vines planted in 1990 Clay, limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 50–54° F Decant optional	Grapefruit, lime, acacia blossom, pine resin Bracing, fleshy, stony	Drink now through 2028
2019 Alpilles Rosé “Petra” <i>Domaine Hauvette</i> PROVENCE	70% Cinsault, 15% Syrah, 15% Grenache	15-year-old vines Clay, limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 50–54° F Decant recommended	Nectarine, white peach, watermelon Supple, nuanced, savory	Drink now through 2025
2019 Île de Beauté Rouge <i>Domaine de Marquilliani</i> CORSICA	40% Sciaccarellu, 40% Syrah, 20% Grenache	Vines planted in 1964 Schist and granite gravel, silt	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 56–60° F Decant optional	Maquis herbs, brambleberry, plum, spice Juicy, brooding, mouth-filling	Drink now
2018 Nuits-Saint- Georges “Vieilles Vignes” <i>Domaine Robert Chevillon</i> BURGUNDY	Pinot Noir	50-year-old vines Clay, limestone	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant recommended	Tea, ripe red berries, clove, vanilla Stately, elegant, pure	Drink now through 2030
2017 Faugères <i>Domaine Leon Barral</i> LANGUEDOC- ROUSSILLON	50% Carignan, 30% Grenache, 20% Cinsault	40- to 70-year-old vines Schist	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant optional	Lavender, blackberry, smoked meat, dried flowers Plush, generous, rustic, graceful	Drink now through 2025

left gatefold: © PAUL BARA

right gatefold: © VIEUX TÉLÉGRAPHE

far left top: Gino Bardino (center) and family. © GAIL SKOFF

far left bottom: Dipoli's mountain Sauvignon vines.

© GAIL SKOFF

middle top: Dominique Hauvette and her œufs en béton.

© DOMAINE HAUETTE

middle bottom: Anne Amalric at harvest. © DOMAINE DE

MARQUILLIANI

near left top: Nuits-Saint-Georges vineyards. © ANTHONY LYNCH

near left bottom: Didier Barral. © GAIL SKOFF

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## CONCRETE TANK

**PROS:** Aromatically neutral ♦ Thick walls provide thermal inertia ♦ Similar permeability to wood

**CONS:** Heavy and hard to install ♦ Hard to maintain  
♦ Hard to set to desired temperature



## CONCRETE EGG

**PROS:** Shape allows for constant motion of lees during fermentation ♦ Promotes creamy mouthfeel  
♦ Aromatically neutral

**CONS:** Can standardize mouthfeel of some wines ♦ Heavy ♦ Lees motion can promote reduction



## STAINLESS STEEL

**PROS:** Preserves fresh fruit characteristics ♦ Comes in many sizes ♦ Easy to control temperature ♦ Easy to clean

**CONS:** Wines can feel hard or angular ♦ Promotes reductive character ♦ Solids tend to stay in suspension



## SMALL OAK BARRELS

**PROS:** Easy to find new or used ♦ Oxygenation softens wines ♦ Wood tannins add structure and weight

**CONS:** Flavors (vanilla, toast) and tannins can dominate wine ♦ Variable in quality ♦ Prone to microbiological contamination



## ACACIA CASK

**PROS:** More subtle flavor than oak (floral) ♦ Larger size imparts fewer wood notes ♦ Less permeable than oak

**CONS:** Harder to find ♦ May be better suited to whites than reds ♦ May impart yellowish color