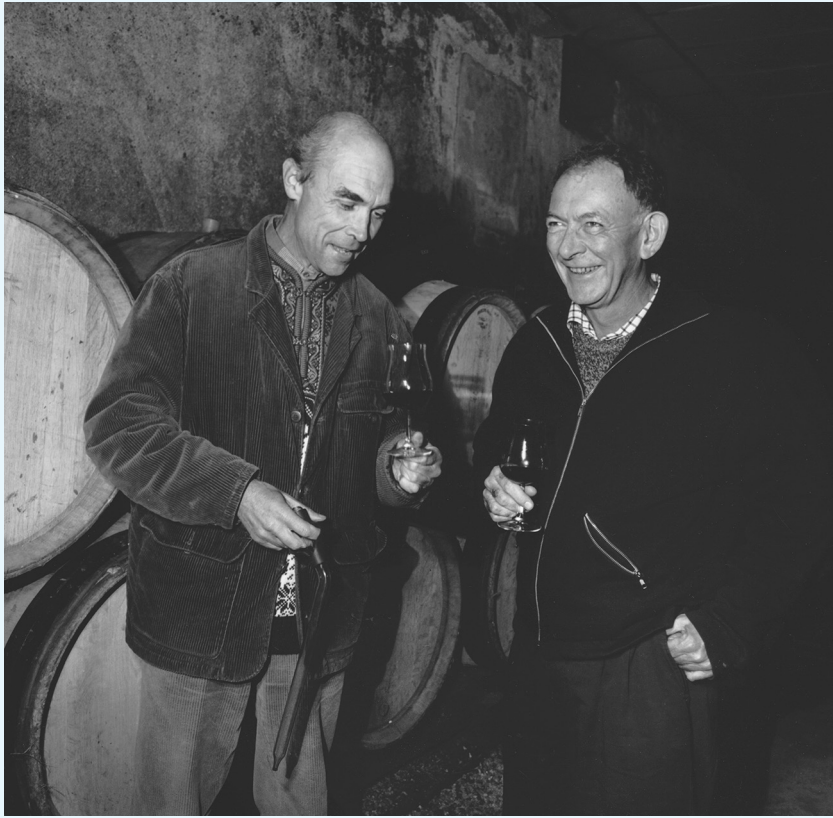


KERMIT'S
PALS

CHEVALIER

NOVEMBER 2025





KERMIT'S PALS

When you begin to import the wines of small family domaines, particularly in a far-off place, an incredible bond forms between importer and producer. By working hand in hand, both parties entrust a large portion of their livelihoods to the other and commit to many, many visits to taste together and ensure both are of one mind in terms of quality and character of the wine. In time, these can evolve into more than business relationships—they often become friendships, and in the most intimate cases, growers' families become extensions of our own. For example, Kermit and the Peyrauds of Domaine Tempier grew famously close, a crucial factor in Kermit's decision to spend half of each year in Bandol. And when a member of Kermit's family got married a few years ago, Jonathan Sack of Clos Sainte Magdeleine hosted the celebration at his picture-perfect seaside domaine in Cassis.

While Kermit's relationships with all our growers are, at their core, professional, there's no doubt he has formed especially close friendships over the

years. The longest-running might be with Aubert de Villaine of Domaine de Villaine in Bouzeron. If you were reading our newsletter in the '90s, you might remember Kermit's memories of listening to Bach cello suites in front of the fire with Aubert. Aubert, Kermit wrote, "built a fire first thing, poured that wonderful Rully, then showed me two new recordings of the Bach cello suites, one by Yo Yo Ma, the other by the Russian Mstislav Rostropovich." In that moment, the two were bonding over a shared love of classical music, with a devotion to wine hovering in the background.

Of course, Kermit and the Bruniers of Châteauneuf-du-Pape go back nearly five decades. Their rapport became so good that, nearly thirty years ago, over lunch at Chez Panisse, Kermit and brothers Daniel and Frédéric joined forces to revive a historic domaine in Gigondas. Kermit wrote:

Daniel said that now, after all those centuries, there is no successor to inherit Domaine Les Pallières, and that the proprietor wanted to retire. I thought of the magical site, the old vines (the youngest are 30 years old, the oldest were planted in 1905), the fact that the wine of Gigondas is undervalued, and above all that I had, right in front of me, the man I consider (working with his brother Frédéric) the most talented winemaker in the southern Rhône. Also, the Bruniers, father Henri and sons Daniel and Frédéric, share my philosophy of realizing and preserving a great terroir's typicity. I imagined tasting one of the Rhône's great



terroirs at Gigondas vinified by the Bruniers. "It is almost too perfect," I said. "Let's do it, let's buy it together."

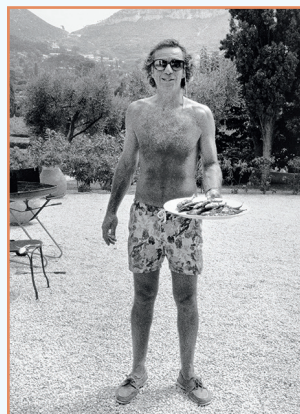
The special bonds Kermit has with all of the growers in this month's Chevalier is a reminder that, at the heart of our business are strong relationships with our growers, individuals with lots of personality, humor, quirks, and a shared passion for this nectar we all love. —TOM WOLF

2024 MEDITERRANÉE BLANC ♦ CLOS SAINTE MAGDELEINE \$30

This summer François Sack and I lunched on the catch of the day down at the Cassis port. He told me it would be easy to make an international crowd-pleaser from his Cassis vineyard. All he'd have to do is let his grapes ripen to 14° alcohol and oak it in new barrels. But Cassis was never like that, he said, and he believes there is a value in keeping the traditional Cassis character, a character you cannot find elsewhere. So his wine is not made to win tastings; it is made to drink with fish. What a great idea!

It was a gorgeous day at Cassis, the light spectacular, the blue Mediterranean right there in front of us. "Cassis should remind you of a glass of Provençal sunlight," Sack said. I looked at his golden wine and took a healthy sip.

—KERMIT LYNCH, OCTOBER 1997 NEWSLETTER



THE TOP-VALUE CUVÉE FROM Clos Sainte Magdeleine features Vermentino, Ugni Blanc, and Clairette grown a few miles inland of the domaine in Cassis. Bursting with floral and summer fruit aromas, it boasts low alcohol and a zippy acidity from the cool vineyard site, tucked high in Provence's forested hills.

2023 BOUZERON ♦ DOMAINE DE VILLAINÉ \$59

One of my worst faux pas in France concerned this Aligoté. Kir is a Burgundian concoction traditionally made of Aligoté with a few drops of crème de cassis. When I first visited Aubert de Villaine in 1974, I liked his Aligoté and told him it was just what I needed because I had recently discovered a good crème de cassis. Aubert's expression turned as sour as a bad Aligoté. It would be unfortunate, he informed me kindly through gritted teeth, to obscure the quality of his Aligoté by pouring crème de cassis into it. Oops! He was right. His Aligoté makes superb drinking, as is. Thankfully Aubert overlooked my naivete, and over the years we have become the best of friends. —KERMIT LYNCH, APRIL 1984 NEWSLETTER

DE VILLAINÉ'S BOUZERON IS MADE from the local Aligoté Doré grape, a mutation of Aligoté that becomes golden when it is ripe and gives far more complex wine than its plainer cousin. The domaine has long realized the potential for this historical Burgundian white grape, planting their best terroirs to its most qualitative clone and forging Burgundy's only Aligoté appellation. Made from hillside fruit aged in *foudre* and sporting its characteristic freshness and energy, it's a staple of the KLWM Burgundy portfolio and a timeless classic.

2024 VIN DE PAYS DU VAUCLUSE ROUGE “PIGEOULET”

◆ FAMILLE BRUNIER \$24

FOR DECADES AND COUNTING, the Brunier brothers have produced a world-class *rouge* from the southern Rhône Valley’s most prestigious appellation, Châteauneuf-du-Pape. With their Pigeolet, they prove just as capable of mastering the hedonistic country quaffer, which teems with northern Provence’s most irresistible qualities: the succulent red and black fruit, stony core, hint of black olive, and *garrigue*. The 2024 showcases remarkable drinkability and versatility at table. Pair it with roast chicken or lamb, or alongside an assortment of hummus, baba ganoush, falafel, and the freshest pita you can find.

2023 BEAUJOLAIS-VILLAGES ◆ JEAN FOILLARD \$30

JEAN AND AGNÈS FOILLARD TOOK OVER his father’s domaine in 1980, and soon thereafter they began to make KLWM customers very happy. Following the example of traditionalist Jules Chauvet, Jean and three other local vignerons—Marcel Lapierre, Jean-Paul Thévenet, and Guy Breton—soon hoisted the flag of Chauvet’s back-to-nature movement. Kermit dubbed this clan the Gang of Four, and the name has stuck ever since.

About a decade ago, Jean added a bottling of Beaujolais-Villages to his small lineup. Jean had been making Beaujolais Nouveau that he would rush to us each November to meet the deadline of the worldwide Nouveau celebration. Eventually, he decided he didn’t want to rush anymore, so he proposed taking his time to produce a Beaujolais-Villages instead of a Beaujolais Nouveau. Featuring grapes from high-elevation, granite-heavy terroirs barely outside the region’s *crus*, this wine is silky and seductive, with notes of rose petals, red berries, and stones. With just the right amount of tannin and acidity, it’s a classy red for all occasions.



Madame Foillard is a fine chef, and she’s so casual about cooking. It seems like she is sitting around the table drinking Morgon with everyone and all of a sudden something steaming and wonderful appears on your plate. Her cuisine, coincidentally, flatters her husband’s wine and vice versa. There is something no-nonsense and straightforward about Foillard’s wine. It seems to say, let’s cut straight to deliciousness. —KERMIT LYNCH, OCTOBER 1998 NEWSLETTER

2021 BANDOL ROUGE ♦ DOMAINE DU GROS 'NORÉ \$56

The winemaker is Alain Pascal, a living, breathing hunk of Provence. Alain's father, who planted the vineyard at La Cadiere d'Azur, was named Honoré. Locals called him Noré for short. He was a massive, broad-backed fellow. I remember seeing him around. How could anyone forget seeing him? He seemed to fill the landscape. Alain inherited his dad's chiseled features, fit for a Provençal Mt. Rushmore. And Alain named his domaine after his dad. Gros Noré. Big Noré.

Alain is a naif when it comes to wine. He does not know where Chablis is, for example. And he thinks Côte-Rôtie is a blend of Syrah and Mourvèdre! But you should see the look on his face, the glow, the boyish excitement when he runs off to find us an old bottle he and his father made for their own drinking.

—KERMIT LYNCH, OCTOBER 1999 NEWSLETTER

ALAIN PASCAL PRODUCES A WINE that is made to work wonders at table with the best of Provençal cooking: garlic, rosemary, thyme, ripe black olives, slow-roasted lamb shoulder, octopus daube, fennel-studded grilled fish, herb-roasted tomatoes, aioli. . . Full-flavored and full-throttle, loaded with warmth, joviality, and down-home familiarity, this juicy Bandol is like a big Provençal bear hug from Alain himself. You won't find a more honest wine.

2022 CÔTE RÔTIE "LA BOISSELÉE" ♦ BARRUOL/LYNCH \$96

"KERMIT IS CRAZY," says Louis Barruol, with a smile and an approving wink, as he taps his wine thief into a fresh barrel. "We used to make two, maybe three cuvées together from the northern Rhône each year . . . and now . . . fifteen!" He then pulls out some purple, vibrant juice from the barrel and lets it into our glasses. We give it a whirl, and with Louis now reassured that it's all worth it, he concedes, "Crazy is good!"



After more than a decade of collaborating and poking around Crozes Hermitage, Hermitage, and Côte Rôtie, Louis and Kermit have come up with a panoply of different batches from great and famous terroirs as well as obscure and unknown parcels. Louis vinifies each separately, and then Kermit or his son, Anthony, tastes through every lot and assembles the final blends. *La Boisselée's* blend changes from year to year based on whatever tastes best; the 2022 has all the violets and spice of great Côte Rôtie, but also a dense and delicious Syrah luxuriance you want to bite off and chew.



2024 <i>Méditerranée Blanc</i> <i>Clos Sainte Magdeleine</i> PROVENCE	45% Vermentino, 45% Ugni Blanc, 10% Clairette	Vines planted in 2019 Clay, limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52°F	Wildflowers, pear, sea salt, cypress Fragrant, saline, fresh	Drink now
2023 Bouzeron <i>Domaine de Villaine</i> BURGUNDY	Aligoté Doré	65- to 115-year- old vines Clay, limestone, marl	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52°F	Lime blossoms, aniseed, vanilla, citrus skin Creamy, suave, vivacious, fine-grained	Drink now through 2032
2024 Vin de Pays de Vaucluse <i>Rouge</i> “Le Pigeoulet” <i>Famille Brunier</i> SOUTHERN RHÔNE	55% Grenache, 15% Syrah, 15% Carignan, 8% Cinsault, 7% Mourvèdre	25-year-old vines Clay with sandy alluvial deposits	Serve <i>cool</i> 56–60°F	Earth, Bing cherry, baking spice Juicy, stony, approachable	Drink now
2023 Beaujolais-Villages <i>Jean Foillard</i> BEAUJOLAIS	Gamay	20- to 55-year- old vines Granite	Serve <i>cool</i> 56–60°F	Pomegranate, rhubarb, black tea, wet stone Mineral, silky, crunchy tannin, bistro-worthy	Drink now
2021 Bandol <i>Rouge</i> <i>Domaine du Gros 'Noré</i> PROVENCE	80% Mourvèdre, 15% Grenache, 5% Cinsault	30-year-old vines Clay	Serve <i>slightly</i> <i>cool</i> 58–62°F Decant recommended	<i>Garrigue</i> , black currant, anise, leather Full-bodied, deep, herbaceous, soulful	Drink now through 2040
2022 Côte-Rôtie “La Boisselée” <i>Barruol/Lynch</i> NORTHERN RHÔNE	Syrah	30- to 50-year- old vines Schist	Serve <i>slightly</i> <i>cool</i> 58–62°F Decant recommended	Black olive, violets, bacon fat, blackberry Floral, earthy, savory, gamey	Drink now through 2040

front cover: Patrick, Kermit, and Alain. © GAIL SKOFF
 inner panel, left: Aubert de Villaine and Kermit. © GAIL SKOFF
 inner panel, right: Kermit and Henri Brunier. © GAIL SKOFF
 far left: François Sack. © GAIL SKOFF

middle: Jean Foillard. © GAIL SKOFF
 near left: Louis Barruol. © JOANIE BONFIGLIO
 back cover: Alain and his Provençale mussels. © JIMMY HAYES

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 to speak with a salesperson, or send us an email at wineclub@kermitlynych.com.

At Poupon's Table, Chapter 18

Quarter past twelve p.m. and Kendrick was yet again standing outdoors at Poupon's gorgeous stone barbecue with four beige-and-white hunting dogs sacked out here and there on the ground, wherever they could find some shade....The sun directly overhead shone lavishly down upon them while Poupon explained his mother's Provençale mussels.



"If you feel like it, you can throw in whatever you like as long as it's Provençale. Whatever: pastis, fennel, rosemary, red peppers, thyme—but that's dressing it up more than it needs. That's the way I see it. My mother told me 'It's not really Provençale mussels without tomatoes and plenty of basil.'"

"No garlic?" Kendrick asked.

"Of course garlic, *mon dieu*, of course."

"Well, you didn't mention it."

"Who needs to mention garlic?"

Everyone knows that you put garlic into Provençale mussels.... And this wine you brought. I saw Cassis on the label. Is it Bobo's?"

"No, it's from François at Clos Sainte Magdeleine. What do you think?"

Poupon smiled, sniffed, and took a sip of the white. "I think it'll be good with the mussels and rougets."



In this month's club package, we've included a copy of Kermit's new novel, *At Poupon's Table*. The character Poupon was inspired by Kermit's decades-long friendship with Alain Pascal of Gros 'Noré, and, as with François Sack in the excerpt above, you'll recognize some familiar names throughout the book. We hope you enjoy it!