



CHEVALIER

MARCH 2019

THREE FOR NOW, THREE FOR LATER

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We often say we wish to age like fine wine, rarely considering that very little wine—even within the subset of what might be considered “fine”—is meant to withstand aging. I, for one, certainly hope to age like the very best *grand cru* crafted by a master vigneron in a perfect vintage—lest I wake up one day tired, dried out, hollowed and weak from a long descent into decrepitude: a mere shadow of my former self, reeking of faded tertiary aromas.

To avoid such a fate—for your wines, that is—you should consider a number of factors. First, knowing your personal preference is crucial to hitting the sweet spot in the curve of a wine’s evolution. Aged wine is not necessarily better; the changes that take place with time will be judged favorably by some tasters but objectionably by others. It is not unheard of for great producers in prestigious appellations to have a strong preference for younger wines, even if their own bottlings are capable of long aging. If you prefer fruit and vivacious freshness to the earthier nuances of old wine, the answer is simple: drink ’em up, before they start tasting stale to you.

Another crucial factor is having access to proper storage conditions. Without ideal temperature (around 55–60° F), humidity (50–70%), and dim lighting, your collection risks evolving rapidly or worse, sustaining irreversible damage that will render it completely unpalatable. Should you lack proper storage—and remember that basements, wine fridges, wine storage facilities, and bomb shelters can be as good as a subterranean limestone cave—you might consider aging your wines for a shorter length of time, or simply consuming them immediately upon acquisition, to avoid any future disappointment.

Assuming good storage and an appreciation for the mystique of uncorking old wine, knowing which bottles will most benefit from cellaring remains a tricky endeavor. As is often the case with wine, it comes down to the sum of countless fine details that are ultimately responsible for the final product. *Terroir*, grape variety, and vintage are the first and foremost determinants of a wine’s overall balance, which is generally understood to be the key to longevity. But vineyard and winery decisions—harvest date,

yields, maceration, aging vessel, filtration, type of closure, and countless other factors—are just as important in governing whether a wine’s life span will more closely resemble a short-lived fling or a long-term affair.

This month’s shipment includes two Chardonnays from Burgundy, two Nebbiolos from Piedmont, and two Merlots from Bordeaux. While every bottle is more than drinkable right now, each set features one example meant for immediate consumption and one capable of significant aging. Opening both wines of a given type will reveal the differences that inherently make one more age-worthy than the other: heightened complexity, intensity, and structure, for example. Alternatively, save three for later and enjoy a real treat at some point down the road—after all, a great old bottle opened at the right time truly can inspire us to age just like a fine wine.

—ANTHONY LYNCH



2017 BOURGOGNE *BLANC*

◆ LA SŒUR CADETTE \$27

WE COULDN'T BE MORE EXCITED about Valentin Montanet's foray south from his home base of Vézelay into the Mâconnais and the Beaujolais. These wines are a perfect fit into his portfolio of workingman's Burgundies. The best of the natural wine school, his wines are uncompromising in both production standards and final results: organic viticulture and minimalist intervention in the cellar; precise, true-to-appellation, delicious wines at an honest price in your glass. There are no trade-offs with the Montanets. With textbook orchard fruit and a crystalline finish, this Bourgogne *blanc*—sourced from the northern Mâconnais—offers immediate Burgundian pleasure.



2015 PULIGNY-MONTRACHET

1ER CRU "HAMEAU DE BLAGNY"

◆ COMTESSE DE CHÉRISEY \$100

THE TINY, ANCIENT HAMLET OF BLAGNY straddles the appellations of Puligny and Meursault, high on the hill just below the forest. Monks first established the village and planted vines in the fourteenth century. This almost magical, lost-in-time corner of the world boasts a unique microclimate; its average temperature, exposure to the elements, and soil differ slightly from the rest of Burgundy. The grapes grown in these vineyards almost always benefit from additional hang-time at the tail end of the growing season due to the hamlet's slightly cooler temperatures, and their exposure to drying winds and late-afternoon sun allows the grapes to stay clean and healthy. Laurent Martelet of Domaine Comtesse de Chérisey works these vines without the use of any chemical herbicides or insecticides. It's for all of these reasons that he produces perfectly balanced, statuesque, and long-lived Burgundy in every vintage. The *premier cru* Hameau de Blagny is from vines on the south side of Blagny, just above Puligny Truffières. This wine combines the power and richness of Meursault with the ethereal finesse of Puligny-Montrachet.

2017 ROSSO DEI DARDI

◆ A. & G. FANTINO \$20

ALESSANDRO AND GIAN NATALE FANTINO of Monforte d'Alba know a thing or two about Nebbiolo, having produced decades' worth of world-class Barolo. They are lucky to own a prime parcel within the Bussia *cru*, a sub-plot named Cascina Dardi renowned for yielding sumptuous, powerful reds. However, the Fantinos had other ideas for some of Dardi's younger vines: why not capture Nebbiolo's dazzling aromatics in the form of a fresh, early-drinking red with low alcohol and soft tannins? The resulting Rosso dei Dardi sees light treatment in the cellar to avoid excessive extraction, ages in stainless steel, and is bottled young in order to show off the juicy, playful side of the grape that we rarely get to experience. It takes well to a chill, and the price point encourages pulling the cork simply for the sake of quenching one's thirst.

2012 VINO ROSSO "LABORO DISOBEDIENT"

◆ A. & G. FANTINO \$60



THE FANTINO BROTHERS are back at it with the fourth-ever release of their superb Laboro bottling, an intentionally declassified Barolo Riserva produced according to near-extinct winemaking methods. No stainless steel, no new wood, no pumping, no filtration, no added yeast or enzymes . . . all you'll find is sustainably farmed, old-vine Nebbiolo from one of Monforte d'Alba's top sites, fermented and aged in traditional old oak casks, and bottled by gravity with minimal sulfur added. Truffles, luscious dark fruit, and intoxicating spices preface this regal Nebbiolo that is so plush and cushiony you can start drinking today, pleasure guaranteed.

2015 FRONSAC “CUVÉE PIVERTS”

◆ CHÂTEAU MOULIN \$29



THE VILLAGE OF FRONSAC sits on a big bend in the Gironde River on the right bank of Bordeaux, just west of Pomerol as the crow flies. Home to a distinctive expression of Merlot, Fronsac’s *terroir* consists of gravelly, gently rolling hills, not unlike the Médoc. Bénédicte and Grégoire Hubau began making wine in 1988, and they have become heroes of the natural wine circuit in France. This pure Merlot was bottled with zero sulfur dioxide, so keep it cool! Dark, silky, and fresh, no rough edges—dangerously good! Bordeaux doesn’t have to wear a stiff suit and tie. This is a perception changer.

2015 LUSSAC SAINT-ÉMILION

◆ CHÂTEAU DE BELLEVUE \$30

ANDRÉ CHATENOUD, the owner of Bellevue, is a steadfast organic grape farmer. His delicious Lussac Saint-Émilion is mostly Merlot with a touch of old-vine Cabernet Franc, all grown on a foundation of pure white limestone. The chalky soil manifests itself in an appetizing acidity, stony tannins, and lively fresh



fruit that give the wine a flavor as site-specific as can be. André puts a very respectable wine into bottle each year while always remaining true to his principles in the vineyard. His inimitable homemade foie gras and his trademark duck breasts grilled over vine cuttings make the perfect match for his stellar Bordeaux. This vintage can be enjoyed now or cellared for ten to twenty years.



2017 Bourgogne <i>Blanc</i> <i>La Sœur Cadette</i> BURGUNDY	Chardonnay	30-year-old vines Clay, limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 46–52° F Do not decant	Apple, pear, peach, white flowers Generous, round, crisp, medium- bodied	Drink now
2015 Puligny- Montrachet <i>1er Cru</i> “Hameau de Blagny” <i>Comtesse de Chérissey</i> BURGUNDY	Chardonnay	Vines planted in 1950 Clay, limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–54° F Decant optional	Buttered toast, gunflint, tropical fruit Taut, fleshy, powerful, broad	Drink now through 2030
2017 Rosso dei Dardi <i>A. & G. Fantino</i> PIEDMONT	Nebbiolo	21-year-old vines Sandy clay	Serve <i>cool</i> 56–60° F Decant optional	Violets, rose petal, <i>frutti di bosco</i> (forest fruits) Juicy, bright, playful	Drink now
2012 Vino Rosso “Laboro Disobedient” <i>A. & G. Fantino</i> PIEDMONT	90% Nebbiolo, 5% Freisa, 5% Dolcetto	60-year-old vines Sandy clay	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant 1–2 hours	Tar, truffles, incense, black tea Rich, deep, plush, structured	Drink now through 2035
2015 Fronsac “Cuvée Piverts” <i>Château Moulin</i> BORDEAUX	Merlot	45-year-old vines Clay, limestone	Serve <i>cool</i> 56–60° F Decant optional	Wild berries, fresh fruit, mild spice Fresh, pure, fruit- driven, low tannins	Drink now
2015 Lussac Saint-Émilion <i>Château de Bellevue</i> BORDEAUX	95% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc	40-year-old vines Clay, limestone	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant 1–2 hours	Black cherry, dusty earth, blackcurrant Chewy, chalky, firm, focused	Drink now through 2035

cover: Chez Chérissey. Photo © Gail Skoff
inner panel: Burgundian cellar. Photo © Gail Skoff
far left: Valentin and Jean Montanet
middle: Alessandro Fantino

near left, top: Grégoire and Bénédicte Hubau
near left, bottom: Portrait of André Chateaufort
by his wife, Catherine

To reorder any of our Wine Club selections, please give us a call at 510.524.1524
to speak to a salesperson, or send us an email at wineclub@kermitynch.com.

2017 Bourgogne Blanc vs. 2015 Hameau de Bligny



warmer lower acidity	<i>climate</i>	cooler higher acidity
30 years	<i>vine age</i>	65 years
8 months in stainless steel	<i>élevage</i>	12 months in 228-L oak <i>barriques</i>
DRINK NOW		DRINK LATER

◆ Puligny-Montrachet's climate yields high-acid Chardonnays that unwind slowly over time. Farther south, Chardonnay ripens earlier to give fruitier wines that evolve faster.

◆ Older vines naturally produce less, giving more intensely concentrated wines better able to withstand the test of time.

2017 Rosso dei Dardi vs. 2012 Laboro Disobedient

◆ In Barolo country, the top sites are south- and southeast-facing slopes that receive maximum sunshine during the growing season. These vineyards tend to produce the most powerful, long-lived wines.

21 years	<i>vine age</i>	60 years
West less ripeness, power, complexity	<i>exposition</i>	Southeast more ripeness, power, complexity
15 days	<i>maceration</i>	30 days
6 months in stainless steel	<i>élevage</i>	5 years in <i>botti grandi</i> (large oak casks)
DRINK NOW		DRINK LATER



◆ Longer maceration on the skins means greater extraction of tannins, whose anti-oxidant properties are known to help wines age.

2015 Fronsac "Cuvée Piverts" vs. 2015 Lussac Saint-Émilion



1 year in concrete tank	<i>élevage</i>	1 year in 225-L oak <i>barriques</i>
none added	<i>sulfur dioxide</i>	small addition at bottling
DRINK NOW		DRINK LATER

◆ Tank aging accentuates fruity primary aromas, whereas *élevage* in oak contributes tannins from the wood and promotes a natural stabilization crucial to slow aging.

◆ Wines without added sulfur tend to be more supple and expressive in their youth, but they can be more susceptible to oxidation over the long term.