

“The mistral is God’s gift to the vignerons here—when the nights are humid or it rains, the mistral blows the grapes dry so we don’t have to worry about rot.” Vieux Télégraphe’s Daniel Brunier, meanwhile, whose most celebrated cuvée features in this month’s club, says, “Without wind, there is no Châteauneuf-du-Pape. The mistral blows two hundred days a year. When you taste Vieux Télégraphe, you taste the wind. Grenache is so sensitive to humidity. Sometimes, we get one hundred millimeters of rainwater in two hours. It’s a serious storm for some countries. For us, in Provence, it’s normal. Then, two hours—not two days—two hours later, you have blue skies and dry air because of the wind. The mistral blows and cleans everything in the region. Two hours later, you have no sign of water in the street—the wind is like a vacuum cleaner for the water. It’s incredible.”

Farther north, in the Burgundian village of Vézelay, Valentin Montanet says the *galerie*, blowing from the Atlantic Ocean across the western coasts of France and Spain, used to feature as an unwelcome element of the region’s terroir, but now, in the grips of climate change, Vézelay benefits from the cool air and rainfall that accompany this westerly wind. Valentin’s Vézelay *blanc* is chiseled and mineral, but it also offers the generous fruit and charming floral aromas that bespeak a highly balanced terroir, in this case moderated by the *galerie*.

All of the wines in this month’s Club Chevalier originate from regions where the locals know and respect the influence of the wind. And all of these wines are more characterful because of this often-overlooked feature of terroir.

—TOM WOLF

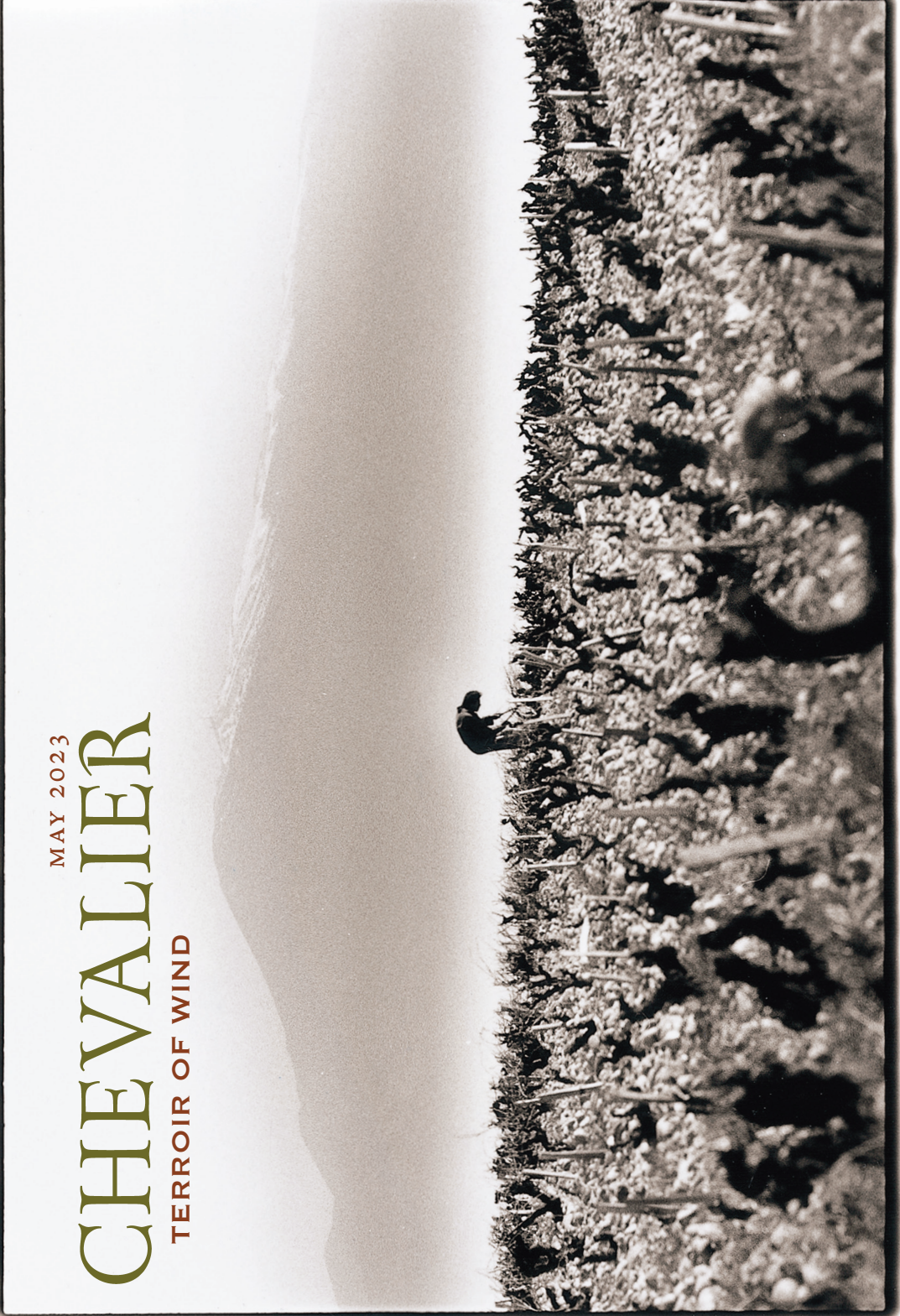


After a rainy winter (and two rare snowstorms), this has been a summer of persistent mistral—the legendary wind of Provence. Wind doesn’t begin to describe it. The mistral roars down the Rhône Valley and seems to take a left turn as it approaches Marseille. From the west, then, it attacks my place near Bandol. It is known to drive people stark raving mad. . . .

Yesterday, I had had it up to here with a monumental mistral. Company due, chops to grill—impossible. I phoned Alain Pascal at Gros ’Noré.

“Hey, Alain. This mistral . . .” I actually growled—grrrrr! “Don’t gripe. The mistral is our doctor,” he said.

—Kermit Lynch, September 2011 newsletter



MAY 2023
CHEVALIER
TERROIR OF WIND



TERROIR OF WIND

We most often associate terroir with soil, and in many cases this makes sense. *Terre*, after all, means “land,” and in some regions, the soil is the most important feature of the overall terroir.

But all kinds of other factors contribute to terroir, too, such as climate, elevation, diurnal shifts, and the ecosystems that thrive around a vineyard. In some regions, these variables are just as relevant to a wine’s character as the soil—if not more. If there is a single element of terroir that doesn’t get enough attention, though, it may be wind.

Consider Provence and the Rhône Valley, for example, where the famed mistral blows year round from the south of France into the northern Mediterranean. This wind is so notorious and regionally influential that many Provençal Nativity scenes now feature a shepherd holding on tight to his hat so the mistral doesn’t blow it away. And its influence on wine production is not lost on vignerons, either. The late Lucien Peyraud of Domaine Tempier once claimed,

2020 VÉZELAY *BLANC* “GALERNE”

◆ DOMAINE MONTANET-THODEN \$38

VÉZELAY IS a freshly minted AOC capable of producing distinct, world-class Chardonnay, especially in the hands of a vigneron as talented as Valentin Montanet, whose family domaine began to pioneer organic farming in the region in the 1990s. The climate this far north is relatively cold and is reinforced by the *galerie*, a wind that sweeps down from the northwest across the vineyards of Vézelay, helping the grapes to stay dry, cool, and healthy. This climate, a clay-and-limestone soil, and stainless-steel vinification are the pillars of Valentin’s Galerie, a divine rendition of pure, chiseled Chardonnay, bearing notes of orchard fruit, citrus, and oyster shells. Speaking of which, pair it with food as you would a Chablis: oysters, light seafood, and mild cheeses.



2019 VENEZIA GIULIA MALVASIA ◆ KANTE \$43

MALVASIA ISTRIANA IS A CULTIVAR of Malvasia grown abundantly in the northern Adriatic basin, between Venice and the Istrian peninsula of northern Croatia, from which the grape takes its name. It loves to be planted within view of the sea so that it can drink in its salty breezes. The *bora*, a cold, fierce wind that travels from the mountains into the Gulf of Trieste, keeps the vines healthy and strong. The windswept, limestone plateau of the Carso district, above Trieste in eastern Friuli, is the home of the Kante winery where this Malvasia is grown. Aromatically reminiscent of Friulano, with whispers of peach and apricot, it is soft and delicate and has a dry, cleansing finish. Planted here centuries ago, this grape remains today to slake the thirst of locals and visitors as it is served alongside fresh sea critters.



2021 PATRIMONIO ROSÉ “CRU DES AGRIATE”

◆ DOMAINE GIACOMETTI \$25

THE AGRIATES DESERT is a large, rugged, and arid swath of land between the Cap Corse and Calvi on the northern end of Corsica. Swept year round with a hot and dry wind called the *libecciu*, the area has been empty for nearly a century. The wind combined with the clay-granite soils makes growing anything here extremely laborious, as the vines require frequent plowing to allow the roots to forage deep for water and nutrients. Three generations ago, Laurent Giacometti purchased a derelict, sprawling vineyard and estate in the middle of the Désert des Agriates. It took more than three decades of organic farming and persistence for the Giacomettis’ vines to learn to go deep, away from the parched and sea-salt-crustured surface. Made from Niellucciu blended with a splash of Sciaccarellu, this classy rosé is remarkably fresh, pure, and focused, with a filtered-through-granite minerality—as well suited to apéritifs as an al fresco summer feast!



2020 COLLIOURE “LA PINÈDE”

◆ DOMAINE DE LA TOUR VIEILLE \$30

IN 1981, VINCENT CANTIÉ AND CHRISTINE CAMPADIEU TOOK OVER two small, family-owned domaines where they’d grown up, in Collioure and Banyuls. Together, they farm vineyards planted on steep schist terraces overlooking the sea, exposed to the fierce and wily wind known as the *tramontane*. The vineyards are so steep that cultivation must be by hand, and extensive irrigation canals are the only prevention against soil erosion. At harvest, grapes are carried up and down the mountain in baskets. This method of farming, while extremely challenging, preserves the traditions of Vincent’s and Christine’s ancestors. The heart, soul, and hard work that go into crafting these wines make their labor of love all the more delicious. This sunny, stony Grenache-based red warmly recalls these ancient practices.



2021 SAVOIE CHIGNIN MONDEUSE “VIEILLES VIGNES”

◆ A. ET M. QUENARD \$33






FOR SEVENTY YEARS, the Quenards’ Mondeuse vines have clung to the impossibly steep and scree-laden slopes of the pre-Alps, enjoying great health and complete ripening courtesy of the slope’s quick draining, sunny southern exposure, and cool Alpine air currents from the *bise*, a dry northeasterly wind that blows over the Swiss plateau. Miraculously, Guillaume Quenard tends to his precarious vines by hand before aging the wine for a year in old, neutral *foudres* before bottling. The resulting fine-grained *rouge* shows some northern Rhône Syrah qualities—an irresistibly savory, peppery hint and note of black olive—but it also delivers a tart brightness and impressive acidity that make it extremely versatile at table. Pour this beautiful Mondeuse alongside a tender steak or pasta topped with grilled mushrooms.

2018 CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE “LA CRAU”

◆ DOMAINE DU VIEUX TÉLÉGRAPHE \$105

THE VIEW FROM THE STONY PLATEAU OF LA CRAU, the vineyard that produces the Châteauneuf-du-Papes of Domaine du Vieux Télégraphe, is one of the best in the entire wine world: Mont Ventoux and the Dentelles de Montmirail off in the distance, bush-trained old vines all around, and *galets roulés*—the area’s famous rounded stones—crunching underfoot. Perhaps it was this otherworldly landscape that inspired Hippolyte Brunier, founder of Domaine du Vieux Télégraphe, to tend to some vines in the late nineteenth century. Or maybe it was more a sense that this was a truly remarkable place to grow the grapes needed to make one of the best Châteauneuf-du-Papes around. Brothers Daniel and Frédéric Brunier, along with their children, now farm the magical moonscape of La Crau, where old vines huddle low to the ground, their gnarled trunks bent in a permanent south-facing bow from the incessant *mistral*. Thanks to the drying wind, sun-reflecting *galets roulés*, and old vines, the Bruniers’ Châteauneuf-du-Pape is a regal, concentrated, and succulent *rouge* full of spice, dark fruit, stones, and *garrigue*.



				
2020 Vézelay Blanc “Galerie” Domaine Montanet-Thoden BURGUNDY	Chardonnay	Vines planted in mid-1990s, early 2000s Clay, limestone	Serve cold 46–50° F Decant optional	Lemon curd, apple, pear, oyster shell Lean, precise, zippy, flinty Drink now
2019 Venezia Giulia Malvasia Kante FRIULI	Malvasia Istriana	19-year-old vines Clay, limestone	Serve cold 48–52° F Decant optional	Fresh herbs, apricot, sea mist, orange blossom Delicate, saline, medium-bodied, gently bitter Drink now
2021 Patrimonio Rosé “Cru des Agriate” Domaine Giacometti CORSICA	95% Niellucciu, 5% Sciaccarellu	Vines planted in 1988, 1990, 1993 Granite	Serve cold 46–50° F Decant optional	Maquis herbs, pomegranate, strawberry, citrus Bright, pure, stony Drink now
2020 Collioure “La Pinède” Domaine de la Tour Vieille LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON	80% Grenache, 7% Carignan, 7% Syrah, 6% Mourvèdre	35- to 70-year-old vines Schist	Serve slightly cool 58–62° F Decant optional	Black cherry, ripe dark fruit, spice, garrigue Succulent, fresh, generous, stony Drink now through 2028
2021 Savoie Chignin Mondeuse “Vieilles Vignes” A. et M. Quenard SAVOIE	Mondeuse	70-year-old vines Clay, limestone	Serve cool 56–60° F Decant optional	Violets, cracked black pepper, wild fruit Elegant, lively, buoyant, chalky Drink now through 2033
2018 Châteauneuf-du-Pape “La Crau” Domaine du Vieux Télégraphe SOUTHERN RHÔNE	65% Grenache, 15% Mourvèdre, 15% Syrah, 5% Cinsault, Clairette, others	20- to 60-year-old vines Alluvial deposits with <i>galets roulés</i> (rounded riverbed stones)	Serve slightly cool 60–64° F Decant recommended	Thyme, lavender, blood orange, réglisse Deep, rich, mouth-filling, noble Drink now through 2028

front cover: La Crau vineyard. © DOMAINE DU VIEUX TÉLÉGRAPHE
inner panel: The view from the Quenards’ vines in Chignin.
far left, top: Valentin Montanet. © JOANIE BONFIGLIO
far left, bottom: © EDI KANTE

middle, top: © DOMAINE GIACOMETTI
middle, bottom: La Tour Vieille. © GAIL SKOFF
near left: Kermit and Henri Brunier, ca. 1986. © GAIL SKOFF

◆ ◆ ◆ KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT ◆ ◆ ◆

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@kermitlynch.com.

◆ ◆