

# CHEVALIER

**LIVING LEGENDS  
AND RISING STARS**



**NOVEMBER 2023**





## LIVING LEGENDS AND RISING STARS



his month's Chevalier selections are divided into three bottles from living legends and three from rising stars in our portfolio, but if you tasted all six blind, or without reading about them first, you wouldn't be able to tell which wines fall into which camp. The same goes for visiting the vigneron behind them. When you step inside all six cellars or tour the vines with them, you realize that strong common threads run through each: incredible talent, thoughtfulness, and a spirit of constant probing to better understand one's terroir and winemaking methods, no matter if they're twenty-five or seventy-five years of age.

Perhaps no one in this group represents these qualities more than Alain Pascal of Domaine du Gros 'Noré in Bandol. A man as thick, sturdy, and deeply rooted to the soil of Provence as his old Mourvèdre vines, Alain began bottling his own wines in 1997, naming his domaine after his late father, Honoré,

producing old-fashioned and rustic-in-the-best-sense Bandol from early on. Over the nearly three decades since, however, his style has evolved for the better. Today, his cellar is filled with bottles from countless regions near and far, which he has not only enjoyed but learned from. In recent years, power and concentration have gradually faded from the forefront of his cuvées, allowing freshness and finesse to shine.

The other "living legends" in this club, Guy Breton and the Fantino brothers, have shown similar evolutions throughout their careers. While early in his career Guy Breton was among the last to harvest, now he is among the first in the region to pick and does everything else during the vinification process to prioritize finesse over ripeness and extraction. The Fantinos, meanwhile, have also trended toward freshness and elegance when it comes to their Barbera, opting today to use stainless steel instead of wood in an effort to preserve as much of the grape variety's purity, brightness, and charm as possible.

The younger generation of rising stars also show, of course, great curiosity and constant refining, but what's most striking about these three vigneron is their questioning, from the start, whether there is room for fresh or under-represented interpretations of their regions. In his Brouilly, for example, Alex Foillard takes a terroir known for the stony firmness it yields in its wines and imbues it with the kind of velvet you more often get from Morgon. Giulia Negrì, meanwhile, embraces the unusual northern exposure, high elevation, and forests surrounding her vines in Serradenari to draw out a singular elegance from Nebbiolo. And Roch Sassi leans into the occasional "alpine" vintages—like 2021—when the conditions of his pre-Alps sliver of Provence lend themselves more to a continental, cool-climate *blanc* than one evoking the warm Mediterranean coast. He also embraces malolactic fermentation, giving his whites and rosés a little more creaminess and body than you'll often find in the Côtes de Provence's lighter, airier cuvées. —TOM WOLF



## 2022 BANDOL ROSÉ" ♦ DOMAINE DU GROS 'NORÉ \$42

ALAIN PASCAL IS THE FIRST to admit that his winemaking has evolved over the years thanks to a friendship with Kermit, who spends much of the year just a stone's throw away in Le Beausset. Alain says that the bottles Kermit has introduced him to have encouraged him to seek more and more finesse and precision in his wines by picking earlier, experimenting with stems, and allowing his grapes to steep gently instead of punching them down. One day, while tasting Alain's wines together, Kermit turned to him and said rejoicingly, "*Ça, c'est du vin!*"—"Now that, *that* is wine!"

Alain, a great chef and host, makes his wines for a crowded tabletop of homemade dishes. For lunch, he might pair his rosé with a pissaladière, whose caramelized onions and briny toppings of anchovies and black olives highlight the dark fruit and bitter licorice sides of this mostly Mourvèdre blend. On warmer nights, he might prepare a whole fish, carefully slit open and lined with herby branches and fronds. Baked with lemons until crisp, the firmly textured fish draws attention to the saline side of his wines without feeling too delicate. If wines of place also reflect the character of the person who made them, then Alain's Bandol rosé speaks volumes about him and his native Provence. Listen up, you may even pick up on the warm, Provençal twang in his voice when he says, "*Bon app!*"—letting you know the man, like the wine, is as local as they come.

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## 2021 CÔTES DE PROVENCE "BLANC DE BLANCS"

### ♦ CLOS SAINT-JOSEPH \$55

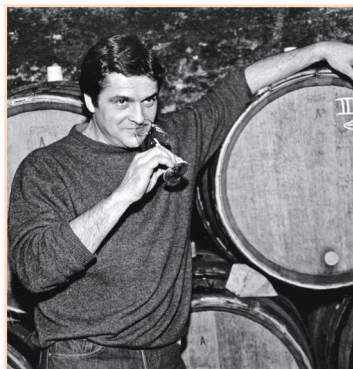
ROCH SASSI OF CLOS SAINT-JOSEPH is the only grower to bottle any wine eked from the incredibly rocky slopes around Villars-sur-Var, a picturesque stone village in the heart of the Provençal pre-Alps. A proud ambassador of Villars's winemaking history, Roch farms his five hectares organically and utilizes biodynamic practices to boost the vines' immunity and ward off disease. Rigor in the vineyard means top-quality raw material and less need for intervention in the cellar. Accordingly, his wines are fermented naturally and bottled unfinned, with little or no filtration.

The Blanc de Blancs is unlike any other Provençal white in our portfolio. A delicate aroma of flowers in bloom prefaces its textural fullness—a fleshy complement to the precision and stoniness conferred by this remote terroir. It leaves the palate with a mouthwatering salinity that is all too often lacking in southern whites.



## 2022 BEAUJOLAIS-VILLAGES "CUVÉE MARYLOU" ♦ GUY BRETON \$34

GUY BRETON'S HOUSE STYLE is determined as much by his vineyards as by his personal taste. Across multiple appellations, he farms old vines in cool, high-elevation parcels where Gamay ripens late, with modest alcohol levels and perky acidity. Correspondingly, he dislikes tannins, opting for gentle whole-berry vinifications at low temperature to minimize extraction. His proclivity is for highly aromatic reds low in alcohol that are bottled unfiltered, with minimal sulfur. While he owns several parcels within the Morgon and Régnié *crus* of Beaujolais, he also has vineyards higher up in the hills that fall under the Beaujolais-Villages appellation. These cooler, high-altitude granite sites are perfectly suited to achieve his goal: brightly perfumed wines with lively, juicy fruit, lifted by a fresh acidity. The Cuvée Marylou, named for his daughter, is a great introduction to the house style and a testament to how unbelievably gulpable Gamay becomes when farmed and vinified by one of the region's best. Guy prefers to enjoy his wines in copious quantity, in good company, and slightly chilled.



## 2021 BROUILLY ♦ ALEX FOILLARD \$46

ALEX FOILLARD epitomizes the new generation of talent coming of age in the Beaujolais. Growing up in the Foillard household, he had privileged access to the brightest minds of natural wine, but that did not prevent him from exhibiting some ambition of his own. In order to really spread his wings, he purchased



his own vineyards, including a one-hectare plot of fifty-year-old vines in Brouilly, a *cru* novel to the Foillard cellars. You might detect a slight southern accent in this release—a generous dash of plump, sun-ripened fruit enveloping its granite core—along with the deluxe silkiness that characterizes all Foillard bottlings.



## 2020 BARBERA D'ALBA SUPERIORE

◆ ALESSANDRO E GIAN NATALE FANTINO \$26

ALESSANDRO FANTINO spent two decades working at Cantina Bartolo Mascarello, one of Barolo's best known *aziende*, before teaming up with his brother Gian Natale to produce a lineup of wines that bear the family name. While this Fantino operation is small and modest in terms of manpower and marketing reach, the brothers' wines are grand. Descend into their humble cellar beneath the historic village of Monforte d'Alba and the first thing you notice are the large, vertical Slavonian oak barrels, where, for a minimum of four years, Nebbiolo takes its time developing into deep and complex Barolo. At the other end of the cellar stand large stainless steel tanks in which Alessandro and Gian Natale age their more approachable and exuberant Barbera for a year and a half with the aim of preserving as much young charm, fragrant fruit, and bright acidity as possible. Depending on the vintage, the Fantinos' Barbera can show a stronger side of this grape variety with robust concentration and flavors, or a more lithe and refined side. This vintage embodies the latter with its elegant and versatile profile and notes of cherries, cranberries, and blood orange that pair perfectly with pizza.

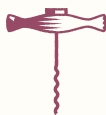


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## 2019 BAROLO "LA TARTUFAIA" ◆ GIULIA NEGRI \$80

SURPASSING FIVE HUNDRED METERS in elevation, the *cru* Serradenari represents the future of Barolo in a warming world, and the same could be said about Giulia. Barely into her thirties, she already boasts a handful of impressive vintages under her belt, and her respect for the region's traditional winemaking practices, such as extended macerations and aging in large casks, allows her to draw the most from what is decidedly a special site. Giulia has extensively studied the subtleties of her own terroir, searching for the nuances responsible for diverse expressions of Nebbiolo within her holdings. From sandy clay soils, she fashions the generous, silky Tartufaia, a Barolo bestowing immediate pleasure through its gentle fruit and harmonious tannin. We can't speak highly enough of this newcomer who has burst onto the scene in Piedmont. Pulling one of her aged Barolos from your cellar in several years' time is sure to be a momentous occasion.





2022 Bandol Rosé <i>Domaine du Gros 'Noré</i> <b>PROVENCE</b>	54% Mourvèdre, 25% Cinsault, 19% Grenache, 2% Clairette	30-year-old vines Clay, limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 46–50° F Decant optional	Strawberry, citrus, <i>garrigue</i> Crisp, refreshing, chiseled	Drink now
2021 Côtes de Provence “Blanc de Blancs” <i>Clos Saint-Joseph</i> <b>PROVENCE</b>	40% Rolle, 30% Ugni Blanc, 25% Sémillon, 5% Clairette	5-, 30-, and 90-year-old vines Clay, limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F Decant optional	White flowers, melon, sea salt, peach Textural, stony, precise	Drink now
2022 Beaujolais-Villages “Cuvée Marylou” <i>Guy Breton</i> <b>BEAUJOLAIS</b>	Gamay	45-year-old vines Granite	Serve <i>cool</i> 54–58° F Decant optional	Cranberry, raspberry, wet stone, leather Fruit-driven, mineral, easy-drinking	Drink now
2021 Brouilly <i>Alex Foillard</i> <b>BEAUJOLAIS</b>	Gamay	50-year-old vines Granite	Serve <i>cool</i> 56–60° F Decant optional	Currant, cocoa, cigar box, forest floor Earthy, concentrated, complex	Drink now through 2030
2020 Barbera d'Alba Superiore <i>A. &amp; G. Fantino</i> <b>PIEDMONT</b>	Barbera	Vines planted 1999–2002 Gray marl, clay	Serve <i>slightly</i> <i>cool</i> 58–62° F Decant recommended	Black cherry, strawberry, iron, balsamic Bright, soulful, balanced	Drink now through 2030
2019 Barolo “La Tartufaia” <i>Giulia Negri</i> <b>PIEDMONT</b>	Nebbiolo	Vines planted in 2004 Sand, clay	Serve <i>slightly</i> <i>cool</i> 58–62° F Decant recommended	Truffle, rose petal, red cherry, tobacco Pure, plush, refined, elegant	Drink now through 2040

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inner panel, left: Roch Sassi and his partner, Constance Malengé.  
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*“I was drawn to wine in the first place because it’s among the few things that you can really say that you will never know how to do it. Being quite ambitious, I like that kind of challenge—facing something that is bigger than you and you will never be able to control it because it depends on so many variables, not just you.” —Giulia Negri*



*“The winemaker is Alain Pascal, a living, breathing hunk of Provence. This 1997 is his domaine’s debut bottling.*

*Alain’s father, who planted the vineyard at La Cadière d’Azur, was named Honoré. Locals called him Noré for short. He was a massive, broadbacked 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.*

*Several times this summer I crossed the little valley that separates my house from his. He’s a hunter, too, so along with the wines I have been served bloody, barely cooked little birdies (you are supposed to eat them crunchy bones and beaks and all), delicious homemade pâtés, and a sickeningly flavored leg of wild boar that I could barely cut through with knife and fork, much less chew, much less (gag) swallow. Folks, I do it for you, to score for you that rare prize, a natural wine.*

*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*