

An aerial photograph of a terraced vineyard in a mountainous region. The vineyard is carved into the hillside, with rows of grapevines following the contours of the land. A small, white, two-story house with a dark roof is situated in the middle of the vineyard. The background shows a steep, forested mountain under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is a beautiful representation of a wine-growing terroir.

SEPTEMBER 2022

CHEVALIER

TERROIR PERFECTION

THE ULTIMATE COMBINATION OF GRAPE & SOIL

TERROIR PERFECTION

Any wine connoisseur knows that certain grapes are simply meant for a specific combination of climate, soil, and the countless other variables that make up *terroir*. In Burgundy, for example, centuries of trial and error have established a hierarchy of vineyard sites that has been codified into local appellation bylaws. The region's marginal climate is just warm enough to ripen Pinot Noir consistently, and the clay-limestone soils of the Côte de Nuits are just fertile enough to nurture the vine, forcing its roots to work hard to reach minerals and moisture in the subsoil. Add in the favorable drainage and southeastern exposure afforded by the Côte's gentle slope, and we have honed in on a very specific, limited range of potential vineyards from which the highest-quality Pinot Noir wines can be produced.

Just like Pinot in the *premier* and *grand cru* parcels of the Côte de Nuits, every grape variety has a preferred habitat in which it gives its best. While most *cépages* are grown across a wide range of climate zones and soils, very few sites feature the conditions that allow a given variety to produce nuanced wines of finesse, character, and pedigree. In this shipment, we examine six ideal matchups of grape with *terroir*—quintessential wines resulting from the perfect marriage of vine and place.

Some may surprise you: the warming climate has upended the traditional hierarchy in certain cases, with classically prized vineyard sites becoming too hot to produce wines as balanced as once before. For this reason, we have chosen to highlight Roussanne from Savoie, where the relative coolness and stony soils provide purity and finesse that is increasingly hard to achieve from the same grape grown in the Rhône Valley.

In the case of Sicily's Carricante, what is often a rather neutral grape comes to life on the high-elevation slopes of Etna. Thanks to the volcanic soil and traditional practice of fermenting white wines on their skins—the *human* element of *terroir*—Grottafumata's *bianco* showcases Carricante in all its golden, perfumed glory.

In Beaujolais, Gamay is known to have an affinity for soils of decomposed granite. Good, even great, Gamays from other soils exist, but only the granitic slopes of northern Beaujolais consistently produce reds with explosive fruit, fine-grained tannins, and a spicy, minerally crunch—markers of the very finest Beaujolais. While the region has small pockets of limestone, growers often choose to plant them to Chardonnay, knowing that, unlike Pinot Noir, Gamay will not perform so well in calcareous soils. Every grape has its preference, it seems.

—ANTHONY LYNCH

2020 SAVOIE CHIGNIN-BERGERON “LES TERRASSES”

◆ ANDRÉ & MICHEL QUENARD \$37

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT to the northern Rhône, it is very tempting to say that today, Roussanne is better adapted to Savoie, where the grape is known as



Bergeron. The Alpine-influenced climate is significantly cooler here than that along the baking banks of the Rhône, fifty miles or so to the west—a welcome chill when each new vintage seems hotter and drier than the last.

While Alpine Roussanne may be a novelty to most, the grape has been cultivated in these parts for hundreds of years. In fact, the Romans arrived here from across the Alps in the second century AD, planting some of Savoie’s first vineyards, records indicate, on a steep slope known as the Coteau de Torméry.

Nowadays, the Quenards of Chignin carry on the tradition of farming the Coteau de Torméry’s near-vertical limestone incline. This beautifully refined, tenderly floral, and succulently peachy wine is the outcome—a product of centuries of tradition, one chosen site, and a family’s laborious dedication to eking out a genuine elixir from Savoie’s towering mountain facades.

2017 SAVENNIÈRES “CUVÉE SPÉCIALE”

◆ CHÂTEAU D’ÉPIRÉ \$33

ÉPIRÉ LAUNCHED their Cuvée Spéciale in 1984, after Kermit begged them to keep some of their old *demi-muids* for an exclusive U.S. bottling that would effectively keep alive the vanishing tradition of aging Savennières in wood. Neutral barrels—in this case, a medley of chestnut, acacia, and oak—are desirable as they accentuate Chenin Blanc’s depth and minerality without imparting any woody flavor. While Chenin can be found across Loire on different soil types, Savennières is known for its schist, which imparts distinct character to the grape also known as *Pineau de la Loire*. Lean, stony, and austere, and just beginning to show some secondary notes after a few years in bottle, this is terroir-driven Chenin with ample body, nerve, and plenty of length on the palate—in other words, textbook Savennières.

2019 TERRE SICILIANE CARRICANTE “LATO SUD”

◆ GROTTAFUMATA \$49

CARRICANTE is a peculiar grape, prone to giving generous yields of high-acid, rather neutrally scented juice. The ancient vineyards on Etna tend to produce lower yields, providing better concentration and balance, while the unique flavors of the site express themselves like paint on a blank canvas. This old-vine Carricante gets its luxurious golden hue from four days of skin contact, a traditional process on Etna that further helps to bring out the distinctive scents of this special place. The lava stones that make up the soil, the direct sun beating down on steep, blackened slopes at elevation, the wild herbs growing among the vineyard rows, and even the plume of smoke wafting from Etna’s summit . . . it’s all there, plus a ravishing dollop of wildflower honey to round things out. Try not to serve it too cold—take a few minutes to admire its dazzling color while it warms up in your glass if you must.



2020 DOLCETTO DI DIANO D’ALBA “SÖRÌ CRISTINA”

◆ IL PALAZZOTTO \$20

IN *NATIVE WINE GRAPES OF ITALY*, Ian d’Agata writes that the country’s second president, Luigi Einaudi, loved Dolcetto so much that he “planted thousands of vines on his Piedmontese estate.” However, in recent decades, the variety has largely been abandoned, as Nebbiolo’s commercial success has led the



more lucrative grape to replace what has long produced Piedmont’s delicious, straightforward everyday reds. Fourth-generation grower Paolo Olivero has resisted the temptation, specializing in single-vineyard Dolcettos from one of the grape’s great *crus*, Diano d’Alba. With its slightly higher elevation and chalky white marl soils, the village produces some of the most perfumed, fruit-driven Dolcetto you’ll find. Green-harvesting, natural fermentation, and Paolo’s most sophisticated technique—opening the windows of his cellar during winter to stabilize the wine before bottling it unfiltered—are responsible for this

versatile, fresh, and unbelievably charming *rosso* that makes a serious case for the Dolcetto grape planted in its preferred terroir.



2020 FLEURIE “LES MORIERS” ♦ DOMAINE CHIGNARD \$30



AN OLD MAP of Beaujolais hanging in the Chignard cellars shows the *lieu-dit* Les Moriers of Fleurie ranked as a first growth in an 1874 classification of the region's vineyards. This terroir has long been known to produce special wines, and tasting Cédric Chignard's 2020 confirms its status as one of the appellation's top sites. Les Moriers is a sloping granite *clos* (walled-in parcel) that borders the neighboring *cru* of Moulin-à-Vent, and, logically, the wine marries the delicacy, floral tones, and textural seductiveness of Fleurie with Moulin-à-Vent's power and structure. Chignard works the gnarly old *gobelet*-trained vines with traditional techniques, including whole-cluster fermentation and aging the wine in large, neutral *foudres*. From its lovely aroma, reminiscent of flower petals and ripe sour cherries, to the surprisingly rich, palate-coating flavor, this Fleurie beautifully combines high-toned finesse with a potent depth.



2018 CÔTE-RÔTIE “LA BOISSELÉE” ♦ BARRUOL / LYNCH \$90

HARD TO BELIEVE, but by the 1960s most of the Côte-Rôtie was abandoned to wild brush. One could earn far more money growing apricots along the Rhône than by growing grapes on the slopes above. What was once celebrated the world over had quietly slid into oblivion. Thankfully, a few growers weren't fazed and carried on, earning neither fame nor fortune in return. Kermit and a fortunate few found their way here in the 1970s, tasted what was then largely a floral, earthy, complex, and sometimes gamey style, and had the foresight to bring it back to market. Slowly, the jewel was rediscovered. Soon, though, everyone wanted to make Côte-Rôtie “great” again, which many interpreted as powerful, strong, sucker-punch wines. The old, rustic style began to fade away.

Along came Louis Barruol, with a near-fanatical obsession for the Côte, its terroirs, and its lore. Louis channels the Côte-Rôtie of yore in his vinifications, with a few seemingly simple yet essential guidelines: select grapes from the greatest terroirs (terraced slopes of fractured mica schist), ferment with whole clusters (the stems are essential), use only indigenous yeasts, and bottle unfiltered. The product is nothing short of epic, with a capacity to age and evolve in your cellar for many years.





2020 Savoie Chignin-Bergeron “Les Terrasses” <i>André & Michel Quenard</i> SAVOIE	Bergeron	25-year-old vines Limestone scree	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F Decant optional	Apricot, peach, wildflowers Round, elegant, mouth-filling	Drink now through 2028
2017 Savennières “Cuvée Spéciale” <i>Château d’Épiré</i> LOIRE	Chenin Blanc	Vines planted in 1988, 1989, 2000 Schist, phthanite	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F Decant optional	Walnuts, quince, beeswax, ginger Bracing, lean, stony, powerful	Drink now
2019 Terre Siciliane Carricante “Lato Sud” <i>Grottafumata</i> SICILY	70% Carricante, 30% Catarratto	40- to 100-year-old vines Volcanic	Serve <i>cool</i> 50–54° F Decant recommended	Honey, yellow flowers, saffron, smoke Rich, fleshy, textured	Drink now through 2026
2020 Dolcetto di Diano d’Alba “Sörì Cristina” <i>Il Palazzotto</i> PIEDMONT	Dolcetto	Vines planted in 1985 Limestone, marl	Serve <i>cool</i> 56–60° F Decant optional	Violet, black fruit, brambles, spice Plump, smooth, gently bitter	Drink now
2020 Fleurie “Les Moriers” <i>Domaine Chignard</i> BEAUJOLAIS	Gamay	35- to 100-year-old vines Granite	Serve <i>cool</i> 56–60° F Decant optional	Peony, sour cherry, raspberry, earth Juicy, bright, supple	Drink now through 2030
2018 Côte-Rôtie “La Boisselée” <i>Barruol / Lynch</i> NORTHERN RHÔNE	Syrah	30- to 50-year-old vines Schist	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 60–64° F Decant recommended	Black olive, spices, ground coffee, dry-aged meat Robust, deep, dense, finessed	Drink now through 2030

front cover: Terraced rows of Bergeron on limestone scree in Savoie. © A. & M. QUENARD

inner panels: Schist at Épiré. © DIXON BROOKE

far left: Steep limestone vineyards in Chignin. © DIXON BROOKE

middle: Paolo Olivero. © DIXON BROOKE

near left: Cédric Chignard pulls a sample.

© DOMAINE CHIGNARD

back cover, top: Carricante in volcanic sand at

Grottafumata. © GAIL SKOFF

back cover, bottom: Mauro Cutuli. © GAIL SKOFF

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@kermirlynch.com.



“**CARRICANTE** is a grape that offers a quite favorable interpretation of volcanic soils, especially in the cooler zones of Etna. I have tasted Carricante grown in other parts of Sicily and did not find the freshness, acidity, and salinity that it has on Etna. It is a grape that gives a good yield on sandy volcanic soils, and is well adapted to soils rich in minerals such as sodium, potassium, and magnesium.”

—**MAURO CUTULI**
Grottafumata

