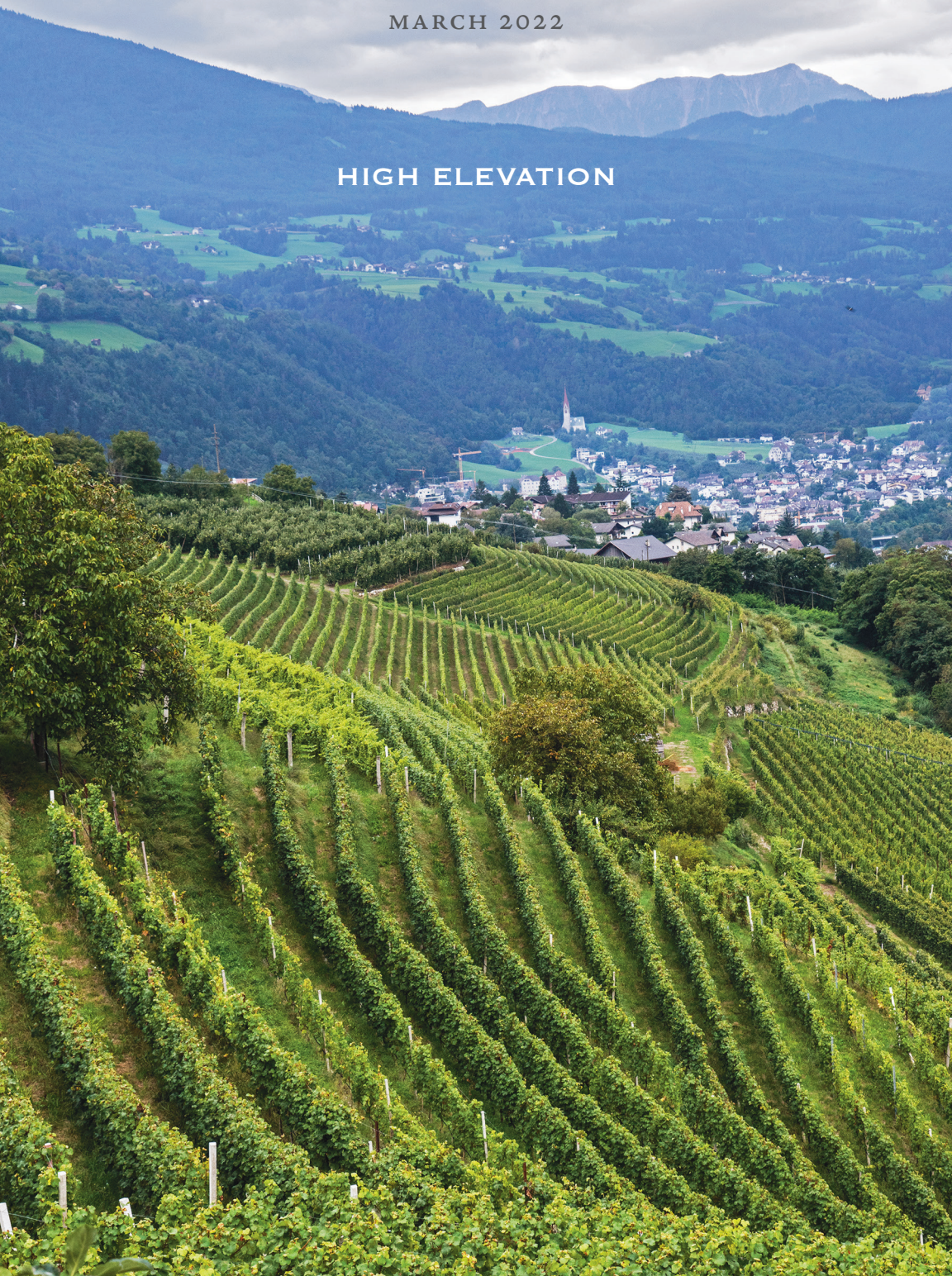


# CHEVALIER

MARCH 2022

HIGH ELEVATION







## HIGH ELEVATION

*The most visually stunning* vineyard sites are typically not sprawling flatlands sitting comfortably in valley floors—no offense to a certain nearby world-class wine region—but, rather, those perched high atop large hills or mountainsides. The difference, though, is not purely aesthetic: elevation is a crucial element in the notion of terroir, with serious consequences on viticulture and tangible effects in the resulting wine. This month's club shipment examines the mystique of wines produced from high-elevation vineyards.

First, we must define high-elevation vineyards. The answer varies significantly by region and within each region, as other factors such as latitude, topography, and proximity to bodies of water can enhance or mitigate the climatic effects of being higher up. In the wine regions of the Andes, for example, vineyards are found higher than 2,000 meters (6,500 feet) above sea level, something completely unthinkable in Europe, where conditions would be far too cold for viticulture. Europe's highest vineyards reach a staggering 1,200 meters (nearly 4,000 feet) in the tiny Blanc de Morgex appellation of Valle d'Aosta, in the heart of the Italian Alps, but many other wine regions have their own "high-elevation" sites that, while closer to sea level than their Alpine counterparts, are nonetheless impacted by their relative altitude. For most of France and Italy, this effect begins at about 350 meters (1,150 feet).

Increasing elevation primarily impacts climate. Higher in the atmosphere, sunlight is more direct and intense, producing grapes with thick skins and concentrated flavors. Conversely, the colder nights have the opposite effect: ripening is slowed and acidity is preserved, resulting in a valuable freshness.

ABOVE: Harvest at Château Thivin. © CHÂTEAU THIVIN  
FACING: Giulia Negri overlooks the Barolo landscape. © GIULIA NEGRI



Taken together, these phenomena determine the all-important difference between daytime and nighttime temperatures. A high diurnal temperature range allows grapes to ripen fully and develop complex, vivid flavors while maintaining their zippy acidity—a trademark of mountain wines the world over, which you'll taste in Manni Nössing's bracing Grüner Veltliner from high in the Dolomites.

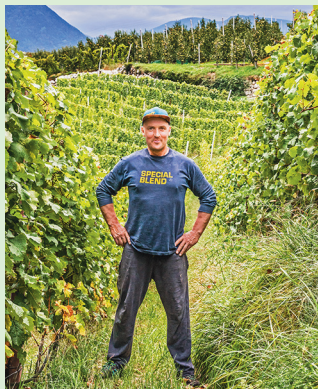
But not all high-elevation wines are mountain wines. Even minor changes in elevation can mitigate warm climate, making conditions more favorable to growing a certain grape variety. Syrah in the Languedoc is often heavy and alcoholic, but the vineyards of Ermitage du Pic Saint Loup, nestled on limestone slopes at the appellation's highest point, give a vibrant, savory expression of the grape more closely associated with the northern Rhône. In the case of Giulia Negri, who farms some of the highest sites in Barolo, her situation has allowed her to craft Nebbiolo of a rare finesse in the scorching 2017 vintage. All of the growers represented here stand to benefit from their location as the reality of climate change settles in. Wine regions won't migrate to northerly latitudes to combat the heat, but growers can plant higher up to avoid making wines marred by overripeness and high alcohol.

We've only just begun to explore the endless nuances of high-elevation viticulture, having yet to discuss phenomena such as humidity levels, precipitation, inversion layers, fogline, and extreme weather, as well as the variable terrain often found with increasing elevation. Let these six bottles be an introduction to this fascinating world, and don't worry—these vigneroni may have their heads in the clouds, but they are as focused and serious as can be.

—ANTHONY LYNCH

## 2020 SÜDTIROL EISACKTALER GRÜNER VELTLINER

◆ MANNI NÖSSING \$32



MANNI NÖSSING'S small estate lies in Bressanone, a village in the heart of the narrow Alpine valley known as the Valle Isarco. Just miles from the Austrian border, Manni's vines are subject to a mountain climate in what is Italy's northernmost grape-growing district. The cool conditions here are ideal for producing racy, mineral-driven whites, and the grapes that fare best here—Kerner, Müller Thurgau, Riesling, Grüner Veltliner—are imports from Austria and Germany. Planted up to **700 meters** elevation, Grüner Velt-

liner performs superbly on these steep granitic slopes, and Manni has mastered farming and winemaking to achieve the right balance of mouthwatering acidity with sun-endowed ripeness and mineral extract. Stone, spice, and floral aromas make this Grüner a truly compelling taste of the Dolomites.

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## 2020 BEAUJOLAIS *BLANC* "CLOS DE ROCHEBONNE"

◆ CHÂTEAU THIVIN \$34

NOT ALL BEAUJOLAIS is red: the region's sporadic limestone outcrops offer the possibility to craft compelling whites, too, in the kingdom of Gamay. In what is decidedly a southerly latitude for the Chardonnay grape, the folks at Château Thivin farm a parcel at high elevation, where cool nights ensure focused flavors and zippy acidity. Indeed, the Clos de Rochebonne, a stony plot at **480 meters** above sea level, has all the makings of a great white wine terroir. Aged in barrels with complete malolactic, this magnolia- and hazelnut-scented Beaujolais *blanc* has the elegance, subtle creaminess, and mineral-tinged finish typical of fine Burgundy. It also has immediate charm and drinkability, as any self-respecting Beaujolais should.



## 2020 JULIÉNAS “BEAUVERNAY” ♦ DOMAINE CHIGNARD \$26



JULIÉNAS is perhaps the most diverse of Beaujolais’s ten *crus*, making it difficult to generalize about the character of its wine. Soils range from granite to schist with pockets of clay, sand, and alluvial deposits, while a wealth of different exposures and elevations also contribute to its countless possible expressions of the Gamay grape. Cédric Chignard inherited a small

plot of old vines from his mother on the hill of Beauvernay, which is certainly among the top sites in the appellation. Perched at **450 meters** above sea level on steep slopes of schist-like blue stone, Beauvernay yields high-toned fruit with racy acidity and a crunchy mineral backbone—a *vin de terroir* if there ever was one. This lightning bolt of Gamay can be enjoyed today or aged for several years.

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## 2019 PIC SAINT LOUP “SAINTE AGNÈS”

### ♦ ERMITAGE DU PIC SAINT LOUP \$29

THE THREE RAVAILLE BROTHERS who make up Ermitage du Pic Saint Loup—Pierre, Jean-Marc, and Xavier—have gone to great lengths to reap the full potential from the stone-ridden slopes of Pic Saint Loup. Their conversion to biodynamics proved crucial, allowing for living soils able to resist heat and drought, ultimately resulting in purer wines with lower alcohol and greater aromatic finesse. Farming some of the best vineyards in the appellation—cool, sites reaching **400 meters** elevation and littered with calcareous rubble—certainly doesn’t hurt, either.

Their Cuvée Sainte Agnès demonstrates the potential for wines of uncommon elegance in the Languedoc’s most temperate appellation. With aromas of black olive and violets, Syrah planted in this cooler southern climate shows a kinship with the great appellations of the northern Rhône. Grenache and Mourvèdre fill out the blend to provide an appropriate Mediterranean soulfulness, but this bottling is more about restraint and perfume than bombastic fruit. Savory and floral, with bright accents of orange zest, it soars over the palate with grace and finishes with a freshness reminiscent of cool stone.





## 2018 VINO ROSSO “BARROSU FRANZISCA”

◆ GIOVANNI MONTISCI \$126

MAMOIADA, in the heart of Sardegna’s mountainous interior, could be considered a *grand cru* site for the Cannonau grape. Planted at dizzying altitudes on granite soils, the grape reaches a regal expression in this extreme terroir, yielding

magnificent reds made to pair with the hearty local cuisine. Giovanni Montisci cultivates just two hectares of ancient bush-trained vines at **650 meters** elevation, where chilly nights preserve a certain buoyancy to these deep, complex wines perfumed of wild fruit, flowers, Mediterranean herbs, and spices.

Giovanni’s wines ferment spontaneously, age in neutral wood, and are bottled unfiltered and unfiltered with minimal added sulfur.

The Franzisca, his top bottling, showcases a single parcel of eighty-five-year-old Cannonau. This masterpiece represents the pinnacle of skilled artisanship—its brawn is matched only by its ethereal touch on the palate. Uncork it in the place of a Châteauneuf or a Barolo for a true revelation.



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## 2017 BAROLO “LA TARTUFAIA”

◆ GIULIA NEGRI \$63

WITH THE HIGHEST VINEYARDS in the entire Barolo appellation, Giulia Negri farms a unique terroir for Nebbiolo. Even in the hottest years, her wines display a vibrant freshness when her neighbors downslope struggle with high alcohol and overripe fruit. The 2017 release is a great example of this: despite the heat waves and drought that characterized the growing season, she produced an elegant and lifted crop of wines whose total charm comes as a delightful surprise. As the climate continues to evolve and vintages like 2017 become the norm, Giulia is perfectly placed to continue crafting balanced wines.

La Tartufaia is produced from vines at **460 meters** elevation in the commune of La Morra, a village known for the aromatic finesse of its wines. Giulia’s is a textbook example of classically structured Barolo typical of the area. Fine tannins, salty minerality, and pure, perfumed Nebbiolo fruit make this a gorgeous Barolo to drink now and over the next several years.





2020 Südtirol Eisacktaler Grüner Veltliner <i>Manni Nössing</i> ALTO ADIGE	Grüner Veltliner	5- to 20-year-old vines  Sandy granite	Serve <i>cold</i> 46–50° F Decant optional	White pepper, spring water, lime zest Bracing, stony, austere	Drink now through 2028
2020 Beaujolais Blanc “Clos de Rochebonne” <i>Château Thivin</i> BEAUJOLAIS	Chardonnay	Vines planted in 2009  Clay, limestone	Serve <i>cool</i> 50–54° F Decant optional	Toasted hazelnut, vanilla, lemon curd, pastry dough Creamy, luscious, taut, saline	Drink now through 2026
2020 Juliéna “Beauvernay” <i>Domaine Chignard</i> BEAUJOLAIS	Gamay	Vines planted in 1946  <i>Roche bleue</i> (metadiorite)	Serve <i>cool</i> 54–58° F Decant optional	Cranberry, sour cherry, peony, peppercorn Electric, crunchy, high-toned	Drink now through 2028
2019 Pic Saint Loup “Sainte Agnès” <i>Ermitage du Pic Saint Loup</i> LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON	50% Syrah, 40% Grenache, 10% Mourvèdre	40- to 50-year-old vines  Clay, limestone	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant optional	Smoke, black cherry, violets, black olive Meaty, chewy, sleek, elegant	Drink now through 2030
2018 Vino Rosso “Barrosu Franzisca” <i>Giovanni Montisci</i> SARDINIA	Cannonau	85-year-old vines  Sandy granite	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 60–64° F Decant recommended	Wild strawberry, Mediterranean herbs, juniper Deep, generous, mouth-filling, silky	Drink now through 2030
2017 Barolo “La Tartufaia” <i>Giulia Negri</i> PIEDMONT	Nebbiolo	Vines planted in 2004  Sand, clay	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 60–64° F Decant recommended	Blood orange, spice, raspberry, flowers Delicate, refined, suave	Drink now through 2030

front cover: Manni Nössing’s vineyards in the Dolomites of Alto Adige. © GAIL SKOFF

far left top: © GAIL SKOFF

far left bottom: Thivin’s Clos de Rochebonne. © CHÂTEAU THIVIN

middle top: © DOMAINE CHIGNARD

middle bottom: Vineyards beneath Pic Saint Loup.

© ERMITAGE DU PIC SAINT LOUP

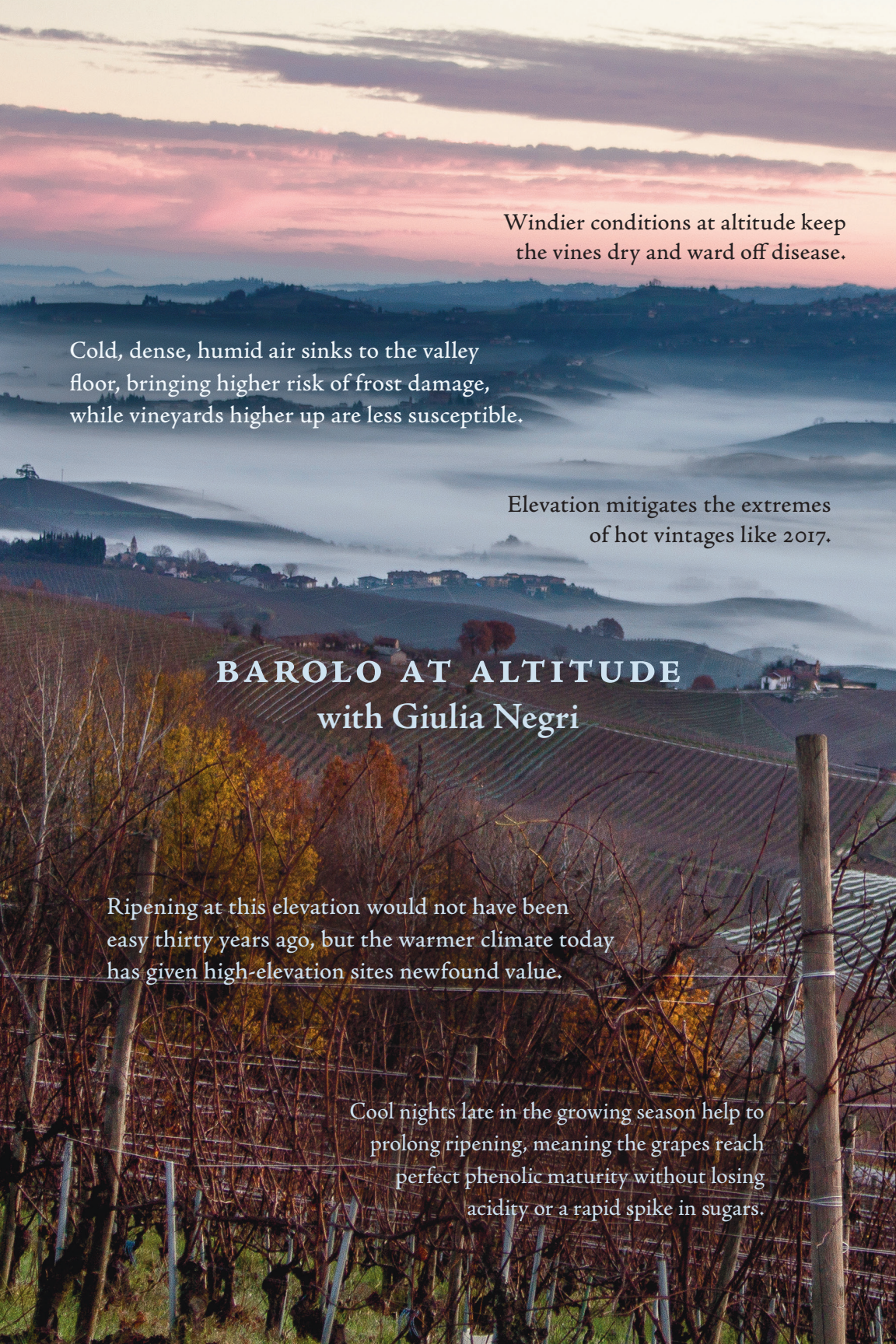
near left: A dusting of snow in Mamoiada.

© GIOVANNI MONTISCI

back cover: The view from Giulia Negri’s Serradenari vineyard. © GIULIA NEGRI

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Windier conditions at altitude keep  
the vines dry and ward off disease.

Cold, dense, humid air sinks to the valley  
floor, bringing higher risk of frost damage,  
while vineyards higher up are less susceptible.

Elevation mitigates the extremes  
of hot vintages like 2017.

## BAROLO AT ALTITUDE with Giulia Negri

Ripening at this elevation would not have been  
easy thirty years ago, but the warmer climate today  
has given high-elevation sites newfound value.

Cool nights late in the growing season help to  
prolong ripening, meaning the grapes reach  
perfect phenolic maturity without losing  
acidity or a rapid spike in sugars.