

This month, we celebrate six trailblazing producers who not only display consistent mastery of their craft on a vintage-to-vintage basis, but whose work has also had a profound impact on their contemporaries as well as on the general public’s perception of a given region. These growers share a commitment to excellence, often in the face of established norms, that makes them undisputed leaders in their appellations. Determined role models in their respective areas, they have each redefined, in their own way, the wines from a specific region, grape variety, or produced via a specific method.

Raise a glass to these pioneering vigneronns as you enjoy the fruits of their wide-reaching efforts to go above and beyond what was previously thought possible. —Anthony Lynch



**2015 Bourgogne Vézelay “Galerie” • Domaine Montanet-Thoden \$28**

The town of Vézelay, an hour’s drive south of Chablis in the heart of Burgundy, has been producing wines for centuries, but estate bottling still represents a relatively recent phenomenon here. In fact, when Jean and Catherine Montanet planted their first vineyards in 1987, the fruit was destined for the *cave coopérative* they founded, which saw its first vintage bottled in 1990. They began farming organically in 1999, a particularly bold decision given the physical and financial effort required to do so in an area where most wine is sold in bulk. Unable to fully express themselves as vigneronns at the coop and determined to continue working organically, the Montanets finally split off and created their own domaine, using only fruit grown in their own vineyards. Their son Valentin joined them in 2010 and now runs the business, espousing his parents’ philosophy of organic farming and natural vinification to craft refreshing, mineral-driven whites and reds.

This white, named after the crisp, icy Galerie wind, is grown on the ancient limestone soils that put Vézelay on the wine map. That limestone provides a Chablis-like precision, giving this wine a mouth-watering freshness even in warmer years like 2015.

*Pairing advice from winemaker Valentin Montanet: Galerie is ideal for an apéritif among friends, or to celebrate the end of the week upon returning home on a Friday evening. If you have the soul of a chef, find a nice sea bass and some vegetables from the market and you will enjoy a delightful moment at table with this bottle that delivers freshness, elegance, and will ensure your night is a success.*

**2013 Venezia Giulia Malvasia • Kante \$35**

*Contadino, vignaiolo, artista:* all-around Renaissance man Edi Kante is as much of an enigma as the brilliant wines that he ekes from the rugged Carso hills in Friuli. After early experimentation with orange wines in the 1980s, Edi soon decided this was not the best way to express the local *terroir*. It’s all about the stone here: the *terreno* of Carso, a rugged limestone plateau in the hills above Trieste, is the defining common denominator in Kante’s wines. They are distinguished by a shared thread of chalky minerality, maritime freshness, fleshiness, smooth textures that lack hard edges, and awesomely singular presentation of grape variety.

In an increasingly homogenized universe, it is refreshing to encounter such a unique vision. From the vineyard to the unconventional techniques in the cellar to the hand-painted labels, Kante meticulously controls every step of the production process and follows the beat of his own drum, producing wines that are patiently made, aged to perfection in the three-story cellar he carved out of Carso bedrock, and released only when he deems them ready.

The Malvasia Istriana strain grown here is a far cry from the Malvasia of other parts of Italy. Like any Kante wine, it flourishes with some air, and the ripe fruit will tighten up into a wiry, briny, Muscadet-like seafood wine.

*Viewed by many as a hermit reluctant to emerge from his limestone cave, Edi is not one to turn down a good party, so long as fine food and wine are involved. A typical soirée usually involves the excellent cuisine of Signora Kante served alongside a seemingly endless lineup of old magnums from the depths of the cellar. The menu revolves around the Adriatic’s bounty of fresh seafood, prepared with elegance and simplicity. Possible pairings for this saline, energizing Malvasia include: a delicate fish crudo, boiled cicale di mare (mantis shrimp), fried calamari, zuppa di pesce (fish soup), grilled branzino, anchovy pasta...*

**2015 Chinon “Beaumont” • Catherine & Pierre Breton \$30**

Catherine and Pierre Breton are the real life *bon vivant* vigneronns of lore: they are passionate about what they do, enjoy sharing it with others, and entertain with generosity and charm. Proprietors in the appellations of Bourgueil, Chinon, and Vouvray, the Bretons first introduced biodynamic practices into their viticulture in 1994. Now certified organic as well as biodynamic, they have become international icons for the natural wine movement in an area where the climate can make organic farming difficult.

Catherine and Pierre run a benchmark domaine for their region, creating wines of such character that not only is their reputation held in high esteem, but it is also said that they have brought the rest of the Loire with them. They craft classic wines of stunning complexity and pure pleasure that stand tall as the finest examples of Cabernet Franc that the Loire has to offer.

The clay and limestone soils of the Beaumont vineyard confer this Chinon with good structure and extremely fine tannins, a combination that allows immediate access as well as the potential for further development in bottle. Today you can expect a silken mouthful of earthy forest berries, smoke, and spice, followed by a gentle finish that leaves the senses charmed. This cuvée epitomizes the Bretons’ *terroir*-specific approach to winemaking and highlights the couple’s mastery of viticulture and vinification.

*Pairing advice from winemaker Catherine Breton: At home, we like simple dishes, like a tender côte de boeuf (ribeye steak). Cabernet Franc is above all a fun, refreshing beverage. I imagine it alongside a magret de canard (duck breast) or poultry cooked in a Dutch oven with fresh spring vegetables.*

**2013 Faugères • Leon Barral \$35**

In the Faugères appellation, deep in the Languedoc countryside, Domaine Barral is a beacon of revolutionary winegrowing. Since beginning to bottle his own wine from his family’s grapes in 1993, Didier Barral has been an unwavering champion of biodynamic farming, going a step farther by establishing his vineyards as a completely self-sustaining ecosystem. Didier’s intimate knowledge of the land permits him to foster an environment rich in biodiversity where insect, plant, and microbial life benefit the soil to create a favorable habitat in which his vines can prosper. His masterful understanding of Mother Nature allows for farming without chemical additives, creatively employing effective natural remedies to commonplace vineyard problems like pests, drought, and excessive summer heat. This level of artisanship was once nearly extinct, had it not been for Didier and the profound influence he is having over other *viticulteurs* struck by the compelling results of his unique work ethic and ideology.

Once in the cellar, Didier’s harvest is cared for with the same zeal, although he would consider the wine all but finished once it leaves the vineyard. In line with his rebellious viticultural practices, he does not fine, filter, or add sulfur to his wines. His red Faugères, grown in rugged schist soil, displays power, rusticity, and incredibly fresh, pure fruit. Treat it as you would the wines of Lapierre and Gramenon—organic, living beings that demand care and respect. His Faugères ages beautifully in a good cellar, and the inherent vibrancy and depth of this bottling compellingly reflect this man’s renegade methodology and hands-on, do-it-yourself philosophy.

*Didier Barral’s tenet of self-sustenance, brilliantly executed within the bounds of his Faugères estate, entails raising his own cows and pigs on the property. Released in the vineyards in the winter, his animals fertilize the soils while eating up grasses that would compete with the vines for resources. The animals also ensure a steady supply of meat, which can be eaten*

*fresh, frozen for future use, or cured. A glass of Faugères with Didier’s very own wildly flavored charcuterie is hard to beat. He has also been known to age enormous hunks of funky cheeses in his cool cellar, often the result of barter with vigneron friends from other regions. With some age, this earthy wine is perfect with a rich, pungent slab of Cantal Vieux.*

**2013 Châteauneuf-du-Pape “La Crau” • Domaine du Vieux Télégraphe \$79**

One cannot think of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the most celebrated *cru* of the southern Rhône, without thinking of Vieux Télégraphe. The wines of V.T. evoke the concept of *terroir* in its purest form: they reflect their dramatic climate, the rough terrain that defines the soil, their full sun exposure at a higher altitude, the typicity of the varietals with an emphasis on Grenache, and of course, the influence of their caretakers, the Brunier family. Their story begins in 1898 with Hippolyte Brunier, a modest farmer who lived off the land. Hippolyte kept less than a hectare of vines, situated atop a stony plateau called La Crau, to make his own wine. On La Crau, there is nothing but *galets roulés*, or rounded stones, as far as the eye can see. Exposed to all kinds of elements—rain, hail, scorching sunshine, and especially the unruly Mistral—this was unwelcome terrain where only the toughest vigneron dare plant.

In spite of this, Hippolyte saw how his wine pleased others, and he began bottling more, gradually increasing his vineyard holdings. His grandson, Henri, later joined the family business, further expanding production and establishing the domaine as one of Châteauneuf’s most consistent and recognizable names. Henri retired in 1988 and left V.T. in the hands of his two sons, Daniel and Frédéric.

The final blend consists solely of old-vine fruit from La Crau, imparting incredible depth, concentration, and a filtered-through-stones minerality that provides excellent freshness. This 2013 is a classic, displaying strength, rusticity, and earthiness, promising tremendous longevity.

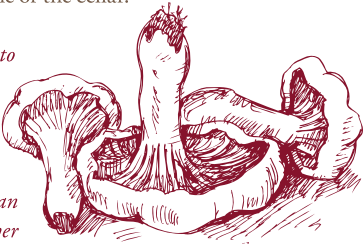
*The late Maguey Brunier, wife of Henri and mother of V.T.’s current vigneronns Frédéric and Daniel, was revered for her simple, soulful Provençal cooking. Imagine coming into the warm, comforting Brunier dining room, saturated with mouth-watering scents of rosemary, garlic, and roasting meat, after an arduously long and palate-staining tasting of young Châteauneufs. Few things are as satisfying as seeing Maguey remove a steaming gigot d’agneau (roast leg of lamb) from the oven, while the younger Bruniers carefully decant a dusty old bottle of V.T. made by their father.*

**2010 Alto Adige “Iugum” • Peter Dipoli \$48**

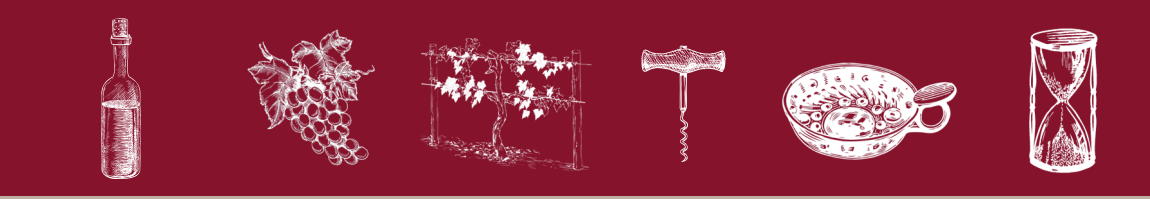
Alto Adige native Peter Dipoli studied the land intensely in a search for great *terroir*, ultimately settling on high-altitude sites flanking the Adige Valley to craft his one-of-a-kind wines. Having located a steep plot with soils of clay and limestone, he proceeded to plant Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, with the goal of producing a much more substantial red than the light quaffers the region is known for. High above the valley floor, the vines here benefit from cool nights and a long ripening season, conferring optimal maturity to the fruit while avoiding unpleasant vegetal flavors.

Iugum is vinified in large oak fermenters and extensively aged in oak *barriques* before release no less than four years after the vintage. The wine features a sturdy mountain frame enveloped by silken, hedonistic dark fruit—a testament to this spectacular *terroir* rather than the varietals or their *élevage*. For such a powerful wine, the restraint and nuance are remarkable, making Iugum good for the table or the cellar.

*Dining with Peter Dipoli always provides a remarkable window into the cuisine of Alto Adige, and this deep, elegant red is the perfect foil to the region’s hearty mountain dishes. Perhaps the most typical offering is canederli alla tirolese, a rendition of bread dumplings laden with speck and served in broth. You are also likely to encounter potato gnocchi with spinach and cheese. Game and wild mushrooms abound in the Dolomites; an aged vintage of Iugum seamlessly echoes the rather rustic, earthy flavors. Other local staples like stewed pork or beef shine with a wine like this.*







<b>2015</b> <b>BOURGOGNE</b> <b>VÉZELAY “GALERNE”</b> Domaine Montanet- Thoden <i>Burgundy</i>	Chardonnay	Vines planted mid- 1990s, early 2000s Clay, limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 46–52° F	Citrus, green apple, peach; precise, racy, mineral	Drink now
<b>2013</b> <b>VENEZIA</b> <b>GIULIA MALVASIA</b> Kante <i>Friuli</i>	Malvasia	19 year-old vines Clay, limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 46–52° F	Orange blossom, sea spray; fleshy, taut, saline	Drink now through 2025
<b>2015</b> <b>CHINON</b> <b>“BEAUMONT”</b> Catherine & Pierre Breton <i>Loire</i>	Cabernet Franc	40 year-old vines Clay, limestone	Serve <i>cool</i> 55–60° F Decant optional	Forest berries, smoke, spice; silky, delicate, fine tannins	Drink now through 2025
<b>2013</b> <b>FAUGÈRES</b> Leon Barral <i>Languedoc</i>	50% Carignan, 30% Grenache, 20% Cinsault	40 to 70 year-old vines Schist	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 60–64° F Decant 1–2 hrs	Blackberry, game, dried herbs; dusty, bold, chewy	Drink now through 2025
<b>2013</b> <b>CHÂTEAUNEUF- DU-PAPE “LA CRAU”</b> Domaine du Vieux Télégraphe <i>Southern Rhône</i>	65% Grenache, 15% Mourvèdre, 15% Syrah, 5% Cinsault, Clairette, etc.	20 to 60 year-old vines Alluvial deposits, limestone, silica, and <i>molasse</i> (red clay) with <i>galets roulés</i>	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 60–64° F Decant 1–2 hrs	Black cherry, <i>garrigue</i> , <i>régisse</i> ; complex, regal, stony	Drink now through 2035
<b>2010</b> <b>ALTO ADIGE</b> <b>“IUGUM”</b> Peter Dipoli <i>Alto Adige</i>	80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon	Vines planted in 1992 Clay, limestone	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 60–64° F Decant optional	Black currant, violets, plums; dense, deep, velvety	Drink now through 2030



*Didier Barral’s vineyards are covered with all kinds of rare greens and unusual herbs growing wild. Many of the plants are so indigenous and so ancient that their names are long forgotten, while some of them have names in the regional Occitan dialect that have never been translated to modern French.*

*I swear I can smell some of those unique and intensely perfumed greens and herbs in their Faugères. It is a peek at what wines might have tasted like back in the day when nearly all vine growers, all over France, made wine as just a single element of a multifaceted farm. Each of those elements would be imprinted with the farm’s terroir and the farmer’s personal touch. While France once teemed with growers like this, hardly any remain today. Didier Barral is our last producer to remain off the modern grid, with no cell phone, no email, and no computer. We hope he stays that way for a long time to come. —Chris Santini*

KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

# CLUB CHEVALIER

MARCH 2017



## PIONEERS *of the* VINE