

# CLUB CHEVALIER

♦ CHARDONNAY & PINOT NOIR ♦



MARCH 2018



It's no coincidence that Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are perhaps the most revered wine grapes in the world. Having been grown for hundreds of years in their spiritual homeland of Burgundy, these varieties are responsible for some of the finest—and most expensive—wines in existence, precious bottles coveted by collectors and drooled over by wine connoisseurs worldwide. Their origins are still hotly debated by viticulturalists and ampelographers: Pinot Noir is an ancient vine, documented in France since at least Roman times. It is uncertain whether traders brought it over from a distant land to the east, like many varieties commonly cultivated in France today, or if it descends from a wild vine domesticated by the Gauls. The theory of a cross is a likely one, as interbreeding could well have produced new varieties that fell into favor with early vignerons. Studies have suggested that Chardonnay is a cross of Pinot Noir and Gouais Blanc, a grape widely grown by the Romans in an area that now roughly corresponds to Burgundy.

Fast-forward to present time, and these noble *cépages* are among the most commonly planted wine grapes around the world. While the Emperor Charlemagne had a fondness for the sacred nectars produced from the hill of Corton and Napoleon famously loved his Chambertin, today one can just as easily find Chardonnay from Carneros in California or

Pinot Noir from New Zealand's Central Otago. In fact, one reason they are so esteemed lies in their uncanny ability to translate minute nuances in *terroir*. The foremost example, of course, is Burgundy, where (as you'll see) a Pinot from Saint-Romain bears little resemblance to one grown in Savigny-lès-Beaune, mere miles away.

But even outside of Burgundy, these varieties are responsible for fascinatingly diverse interpretations of local conditions—for better or for worse. Chardonnay's migration to northeast Italy in the early nineteenth century, for example, has yielded truly splendid wines in places like Friuli's Carso district; bottlings from the high-yielding vineyards in nearby fertile flatlands can be just as insipid as any California Chardonnay grown on the wrong piece of real estate.

This month's club explores Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs from six distinctive *terroirs* of France and Italy. You'll taste classic Burgundian renditions as well as others from more exotic locales, such as Alsace and Friuli. Ultimately, it will be up to your palate to determine whether these noble varieties deserve the praise and adulation that makes them among the most popular wine grapes on Earth, capable of inspiring wild passion, frenzy, creative ingenuity, and all the deepest emotions of the human soul.

— ANTHONY LYNCH



## 2015 POUILLY-FUISSÉ “LA CROIX VIEILLES VIGNES”

◆ DOMAINE ROBERT-DENOGENT \$49

THE ROBERT FAMILY is onto something very special in the rolling hills of the Mâconnais, crafting wines with a level of purity and drive that all Chardonnays should aspire to achieve. The first step is a diligent selection of *terroirs*: the *lieu-dit* in question here, La Croix, features rocky schist soils home to eighty-five-year-old



vines. In the cellar, the wine ferments slowly with natural yeasts and ages in barrel for almost two years untouched on its fine lees. Finally, it is bottled unfiltered with a minimal sulfur dose. The 2015 edition comes out rich, generous, and toothsome, with layer upon layer of orchard fruit and a subtle creaminess. Young, taut, and upheld by a fresh stoniness, this masterpiece will drink beautifully for many years.

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## 2011 VENEZIA GIULIA CHARDONNAY

“LA BORA DI KANTE” ◆ EDI KANTE \$68

CHARDONNAY HAS A LONG HISTORY in Italy, and today it can be found in every region. The country’s best Chardonnays, however, are concentrated in the northeast, where cooler climate and precise winemaking allow for very interesting expressions of the grape. Even in Friuli, it takes on many forms. In the Carso district, around the city of Trieste and hugging the border with Slovenia, abundant gray limestone and a notable influence of the nearby Adriatic Sea are responsible for some truly distinctive whites. Edi Kante’s wines perfectly capture the influence of stone and salt, showing a mouthwatering acidity and typically more minerality than fruit. Kante raises his whites in neutral oak, then selects the best-tasting barrels and ages them an additional few years before release. His top selection of Chardonnay is labeled “La Bora,” an ode to the eponymous wind depicted on the label wreaking havoc on a Trieste pier. This unique Chardonnay is fresh, saline, and unexpectedly powerful—not unlike an Adriatic storm surge.

## 2016 PINOT NOIR “RÉSERVE”

◆ MEYER-FONNÉ \$28

WHILE ALSACE is predominantly a white wine-growing region, roughly ten percent of its vineyard land is planted to Pinot Noir. This has typically gone toward the production of sparkling whites and rosés, but recently Alsatian reds have been gaining significant momentum, as ambitious vignerons seek to take advantage of the increasingly warm climate to craft serious red wines. Furthermore, the varied soil types on the eastern flank of the Vosges give many expressions of the grape. Félix Meyer of the historic Meyer-Fonné house sources his from vineyards of limestone, marl, and sandstone, then ages the wine in neutral oak barrels. The outcome is this deep Pinot Noir that does not try to emulate those from Burgundy but instead wears a distinctive *terroir* stamp of Alsace: deep, spicy, resinous, and reminiscent of a walk in the forest after a rain. Still very young, this 2016 should be decanted or opened a few hours beforehand to allow its stern structure to soften and reveal all the wine’s charms.



## 2015 SANCERRE ROUGE ◆ DANIEL CHOTARD \$28

THE ROLLING HILLS around the hilltop village of Sancerre, in the Loire Valley, are completely covered with vineyards. It may come as a surprise to learn that Pinot Noir represents almost one quarter of plantings here, with the rest reserved for the Sauvignon Blanc responsible for Sancerre’s brisk, citrusy whites. Interestingly, Pinot Noir once dominated these slopes, but planting Sauvignon became the norm after the phylloxera epidemic wiped out all of the region’s vineyards in the late nineteenth century. Today, growers in the area are realizing the potential to make fine reds—after all, Sancerre is not so far from Burgundy, and it shares the clay and limestone soils known to yield such noble expressions of Pinot. Daniel Chotard and his son, Simon, are constantly experimenting in the cellar, testing different techniques in fermentation



and aging in order to improve each vintage. This 2015 *rouge* saw aging in a combination of stainless steel tanks and oak barrels of various sizes, the perfect combination to capture bright, fresh fruit while maximizing depth and complexity on the palate. It is proof that red Sancerre deserves to be taken seriously.





## 2015 SAINT-ROMAIN *ROUGE*

◆ CHRISTOPHE BUISSON \$43

NESTLED DEEP IN THE VALLEY that separates the prestigious Burgundy appellations of Volnay and Meursault lies Saint-Romain, an off-the-beaten-path gem that offers terrific value for its fine reds and whites. Christophe Buisson is one of the few Saint-Romain specialists, with holdings in some of the village's best vineyard sites. His parcels are situated on steep slopes surrounding the



town's ancient château and backed by enormous white limestone cliffs, slightly higher in altitude than the vineyards of neighboring appellations. The result is a longer growing season with a later harvest date, giving wines marked by a fresh acidity, bright fruit, and a mineral note that stimulates the palate. This Pinot Noir was fermented in concrete tanks and aged in used barrels, offering immediate drinkability in a region where most wines of this complexity require years of bottle age to show their best. Try it with a fried pork chop, poultry, or anything involving wild mushrooms.

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## 2015 SAVIGNY AUX SERPENTIÈRES *1ER CRU*

◆ DOMAINE PIERRE GUILLEMOT \$53

ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST red Burgundy values, with a track record that would make many *grands crus* jealous, this flagship bottling from the Guillemot family of Savigny-lès-Beaune is a stalwart wine in the KLWM portfolio. Their *premier cru* Serpentières vineyard stands out as a Savigny of superb elegance, complexity, and profoundness. It exemplifies the grandeur of bouquet that can be attained from a wine with such a seemingly light touch. Blackberries, herbs, dark chocolate, juniper . . . all come together in a multilayered wine of beautiful balance that deserves to be aged for a few years. During a recent visit, the Guillemots proudly opened a 1947 from two barrels their great-grandfather chose to bottle rather than sell for a new car. Someone gave him the sage advice that the wine would last longer than the car.





2015 Pouilly-Fuissé "La Croix Vieilles Vignes" <i>Domaine Robert-Devolent</i> BURGUNDY	Chardonnay	Vines between 50 and 85 years old Blue schist	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–54° F Decant optional	Orchard blossoms, tropical fruit, lemon custard Rich, creamy, tense, stony	Drink now through 2022
2011 Venezia Giulia Chardonnay "La Bora di Kante" <i>Edi Kante</i> FRIULI	Chardonnay	20-year-old vines Clay, limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 46–52° F Decant optional	White flowers, salted butter, sea spray Fleshy, focused, marine	Drink now through 2025
2016 Pinot Noir "Réserve" <i>Meyer-Fonné</i> ALSACE	Pinot Noir	Vines planted in 1975 Limestone, marl, sandstone	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant 1–2 hours	Forest berries, damp earth, pine resin Robust, firm, dense, earthy	Drink now through 2022
2015 Sancerre Rouge <i>Daniel Chotard</i> LOIRE	Pinot Noir	Vines between 20 and 55 years old Clay, limestone, Kimmeridgian marl	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant 1–2 hours	Sour cherry, black tea, wet stone High-toned, precise, with gravelly tannins	Drink now through 2020
2015 Saint-Romain Rouge <i>Christophe Buisson</i> BURGUNDY	Pinot Noir	30-year-old vines Clay, limestone	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant 1–2 hours	Ripe red berries, cedar, sanguine notes Full-bodied, vibrant, sinewy	Drink now through 2022
2015 Savigny Aux Serpentières 1er Cru <i>Domaine Pierre Guillemot</i> BURGUNDY	Pinot Noir	55-year-old vines Marl	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant 1–2 hours	Red currants, raspberry, leather, spice box Elegantly rustic, bright, deep yet ethereal	Drink now through 2040

cover: Chardonnay vineyard in Meursault, Burgundy. Photo © Gail Skoff  
inner left panel: Harvest in Kante's vineyards. Photo © Edi Kante  
inner right panel: Félix Meyer of Meyer-Fonné. Photo © Meteri

far left: Jean-Jacques Robert and his son Nicolas. Photo © Daniel Madero  
left: Christophe Buisson. Photo © Gail Skoff

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➔ The myriad expressions that Chardonnay and Pinot Noir can take on make wines from these grapes extremely versatile at table. Even within a single region, they can be light- to full-bodied, with an endless range of aromas and flavors to suit dishes of countless styles. The following recipes are suggestions from vigneron families in Burgundy, so you can expect a delightful marriage with the Chardonnay and Pinot they produce, respectively. That is not to say that the other wines in this club shipment cannot be used instead: feel free to experiment, using your palate as your guide.



## SEARED SCALLOPS IN CHANTERELLE WHITE WINE SAUCE

*as suggested by Nicolas Robert of Domaine Robert-Denogent*

1 pound sea scallops  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
4 cups chanterelles,  
stemmed and quartered  
½ cup white wine  
1 tablespoon minced  
thyme leaves  
Salt and freshly  
ground pepper to taste  
Fresh parsley,  
for garnish

Pat down the scallops with a dry cloth to remove moisture. Heat olive oil in a large, heavy-bottomed nonstick skillet over medium heat until hot. Add the scallops and sear until browned, about 1–2 minutes on each side. Transfer to a plate, and tent with foil to keep warm. Add the mushrooms to the same skillet and sauté until golden brown, about 12 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to remove mushrooms onto another plate.

Pour the wine into the skillet, add the thyme, and cook, stirring, until reduced by half. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Divide mushrooms among 4 plates. Top with scallops. Generously drizzle with white wine sauce. Sprinkle with parsley and serve.

*Serves 4*

## ŒUFS EN MEURETTE *de la famille Guillemot*

3 tablespoons butter  
1½ cups thickly  
sliced bacon, diced  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
2½ cups pearl  
onions, chopped  
½ cup flour  
1 liter red wine  
1 bouquet garni  
6 slices of bread  
3 tablespoons white  
wine vinegar  
6 eggs

In a sauté pan, melt the butter and then add the diced bacon. Cook until browned, and transfer to a plate. Add the garlic and onions to the same pan, and cook until the onions are translucent. Sprinkle with the flour, and stir until the flour is golden.

Add the red wine and bouquet garni to the pan. Reduce heat to very low and cook for 45 minutes. The sauce should become creamy.

To finish the dish, toast the slices of bread. Bring 4 cups of water and the vinegar to a boil in a large shallow pan. Break the eggs, one at a time, into the places where the liquid is bubbling, so the bubbles spin the eggs. Lower the heat and poach the eggs for 3–4 minutes, until the egg whites are well done but the yolks remain moist. Using a slotted spoon, remove the eggs and set one egg on each piece of toast. Pour the sauce on top and sprinkle with bacon. Serve very hot.

*Serves 6*