

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and dark trousers, is sitting on the grass at the base of a large, ivy-covered tree. He is holding a small glass to his lips and drinking. The tree has a thick trunk covered in green ivy and a dense canopy of green and yellowing leaves. In the background, there is a vineyard with rows of grapevines, some of which have yellowing leaves, suggesting autumn. The sky is bright and slightly overcast.

CLUB CHEVALIER

NEW FROM ITALY

MAY 2018



*I*n the mid-1970s, when KLWM was founded, the world's wine landscape did not at all resemble what we know today. While certain wine districts—notably in France—enjoyed significant prestige, most of the regions that we now prize had yet to develop to the scale at which their commodities could gain international renown. Only a handful of producers carried the flag for Napa, for example, a far cry from the glamour we currently associate with its wines. Across the pond, most of Italy lacked the technology and financial investment for its countless small-scale grape growers to bottle their own wines. With a few exceptions, such as in Piedmont and parts of Tuscany, growers made wine for private consumption or sold fruit from their minor holdings to a local co-op, and viticulture represented only a portion of land use in a traditional system of polyculture wherein each family sought to live off a small plot.

Nowadays, the wine world has reached an entirely new level. Historically acclaimed wine regions have honed their techniques to produce more world-class bottles than ever before. Meanwhile, due to the globalization of the wine market, small growers now have the resources—and the clients—to bottle their own wine and showcase what their land has to offer. As a result, the last ten or twenty years have seen countless new labels hit the market as family-run wineries have popped up all across Italy, many of them offering something new and unique. Thanks to advancements in winemaking and a global demand for fine wines in all styles, a farmer in a remote corner of Italy growing an indigenous grape variety according to traditional methods is more likely to craft a wine of real interest rather than rustic rotgut. And importers like us are more than happy to seek out such farmers and propose new tastes to foreign markets.

These developments, paired with our fascination and adoration of all things Italian, have led us to introduce a number of new Italian producers in the past few years. This month, you will taste six exciting recent finds from Friuli, Tuscany, Sardinia, and Sicily. More than mere fermented grape juice, each of these bottles tells a story about a land, a people, and the deep history of viticulture that makes the Boot one of the most thrilling places on the planet for a wine enthusiast.

— ANTHONY LYNCH



VIGNAI DA DULINE

Proprietors Lorenzo Mocchiutti and Federica Magrini farm their vineyards according to the “Fukuoka method”—also known as “do-nothing farming”—based on the teachings of Japanese farmer and philosopher Masanobu Fukuoka. This entails treating the vineyard as its own ecosystem, allowing natural forces to find their own balance.

CASTAGNOLI

The vineyards at Castagnoli are among the steepest and highest-altitude in the Chianti zone, making it one of few places in Tuscany with terraced vineyards. This results in a uniquely high-toned expression of Sangiovese, with almost exotic aromatics and beautifully defined structure.

VIGNE RADA

With just under five hectares under vine, Vigne Rada is one of the smallest producers in the Alghero region. Plantings here are dominated by two large houses whose cumulative holdings amount to about 800 hectares (roughly 11 million bottles per year), a far cry from Vigne Rada’s family-run, artisanal approach.

GIOVANNI MONTISCI

A mechanic by trade, Giovanni Montisci shifted gears upon inheriting small plots of very old Cannonau vines from the family of his wife, Francesca. Their holdings total barely two hectares from three small parcels, which are often tilled with the help of a bull.

PORTELLI

Alessandro Portelli represents the fifth successive generation to run this historic estate. Until the 1960s, vinification took place in *palmenti* (small farmhouses) scattered throughout the countryside. Today, the harvest is brought to a central *cantina* (cellar) on the outskirts of Vittoria and vinified using the same traditional methods.

MASSERIA DEL PINO

Reaching up to 1,000 meters elevation, the vineyards on Mount Etna are among Europe’s highest. The cool nights extend the growing season and allow the development of rich, complex flavors at relatively low alcohol levels, making Etna the source of some of the most elegant wines of southern Italy.

2016 VERMENTINO DI SARDEGNA “STRIA”

◆ VIGNE RADA \$22

VIGNE RADA is a young estate founded by Gino Bardino, a former banker who quit his office job to follow his dream of making wine. Gino and his family built a modest winery and began to plant vineyards on the slopes outside their home of Alghero, a colorful city on Sardinia’s northwest coast still distinguished by the cultural influence of fourteenth-century Catalan colonists. Conditions are ideal for growing high-quality grapes: fresh maritime breezes and the drying *maestrale* moderate the Mediterranean heat, while the poor, rocky soils are perfectly suited to the production of balanced, characterful wines. This Vermentino is reminiscent of wildflowers and Mediterranean herbs, with an unctuous texture and clean, saline finish. Delightfully crisp in its youth, it reveals a surprising complexity and depth after two or three years in bottle.

2014 VENEZIA GIULIA BIANCO “MORUS ALBA”

◆ VIGNAI DA DULINE \$55 *by Dixon Brooke*

MORUS ALBA is a magical blend of old-vine Malvasia Istriana grown in red clay with a rare, ancient clone of Sauvignon in sandstone marl soil (known as *flysch*). The very different, yet complementary grapes and *terroirs* create a



Friulian wine experience with few equals. Aged in neutral barrels with complete malo, Morus Alba is a full-bodied, textured white with many layers. The tiny yields give an intensely concentrated wine of immense complexity, with delicate aromas of white flowers and ripe citrus soaring over a deep, rich structure, all balanced on a

taut beam of minerality. It should be decanted and savored in large Burgundy glasses, as you would do with a fine Meursault. Discovering each arrival from Duline—getting acquainted with each, beginning to realize what you’ve got in your glass—is a profound experience.

➤ *I think Morus Alba is best drunk in front of the sea, with fish appetizers—even raw. One night in a restaurant, I witnessed a man pour a splash directly into a shucked oyster. It was a simple, yet powerful pairing. Otherwise, I suggest a vegetable risotto, or a pasta with zucchini and shrimp.*

—FEDERICA MAGRINI OF VIGNAI DA DULINE

2015 CERASUOLO DI VITTORIA

◆ PORTELLI \$23 *by Dixon Brooke*

CERASUOLO DI VITTORIA is an enlightened blend of Frappato and Nero d'Avola (locally known as Calabrese), and the two grapes, when blended, melt into each other in a harmonious symphony of flavor and texture. With its medium-bodied, sensual, seductive personality, the wine is hard not to love. The Portelli family is a historic producer in the area; Salvatore Portelli and his son Alessandro exhibit total mastery of these fine examples of southern Sicilian charm. Their wines are fresh, vibrant, and joyful to drink, all while being faithful representatives of their native land. The Cerasuolo offers Frappato's inviting floral aromatics and fruit-driven pleasure, along with the muscle and depth of the noble Calabrese. This is a statement in elegance and refinement—country charm wrapped in suede.

2015 ETNA ROSSO "I NOVE FRATELLI"

◆ MASSERIA DEL PINO \$40

IN 2005, Catania natives Cesare Fulvio and Federica Turillo left their jobs in the city for a simpler life in Randazzo, on the northern slopes of Mount Etna. Their new home was a small farm surrounded by two hectares of terraced vineyards at Contrada Pino, elevation 800 meters. They renovated the property's ancient *palmento*, a traditional farmhouse featuring an old press and large fermentation vats made of lava stone, and began to work the 120-year-old vines organically and biodynamically. The grapes are stomped by foot in these vats, and then an open-air fermentation takes place before the wine is aged in old 500-liter *tonneaux* and bottled unfiltered. These primitive, yet time-tested techniques yield a profound Etna Rosso. Its intensely gripping, silty-fine tannin is a trademark of wines from Contrada Pino.



2016 CANNONAU DI SARDEGNA “BARROSU”

◆ GIOVANNI MONTISCI \$55

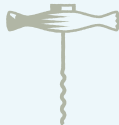
THE CANNONAU GRAPE (a.k.a. Grenache) finds a grandiose expression in Mamoiada, in the heart of Sardinia’s mountainous interior. With a mere two hectares of vines and a radically artisanal approach to his craft, Giovanni Montisci has earned a cult-like following for his powerful and distinctive wines from organically farmed old vines grown at 650 meters elevation. The chilly nights here preserve freshness while favoring a deep, complex expression of Cannonau that ranks among the world’s finest Grenaches. Naturally fermented, aged in large casks, and bottled unfiltered, Giovanni’s 2016 “Barrosu”—a local word for someone who is brazen or bold—is imposing as its name suggests, recalling wild strawberry, juniper, and Mediterranean scrubland.

➤ *Sardinia may be surrounded by water, but in Mamoiada, the landscape is rugged and mountainous, with cold, harsh winters. The local cuisine reflects this, and specialties are from the land rather than the sea. The rich, powerful wines produced here perfectly complement this hearty, rustic, earthy cuisine. Featured dishes of the area include culurgiones—large ravioli stuffed with potatoes, pecorino, and wild herbs—as well as pastas with porcini mushrooms and wild game, which can be found in abundance. Giovanni’s cellar is dotted with hanging legs of prosciutto, to be sliced up and served during a tasting; the luckiest guests will have the fortune of enjoying his wife’s crispy, tender roast suckling pig—a match made in heaven with an exquisite Cannonau.*

2013 TOSCANA ROSSO “SALITA” ◆ CASTAGNOLI \$60

TOWERING OVER a boundless panorama of rolling hills and saturated with scents of wild herbs and flowers, the Castagnoli vineyards are a Tuscan paradise. Among the steep, terraced rows of *alberello*-trained Sangiovese vines, outcrops of layered blue *galestro* stone peek out from beneath the soil and litter flaky debris all about. And yet the vines seem quite happy growing out of almost pure rock, perhaps thanks to the biodynamic preparations intended to fertilize the land and boost the plant’s immune function. In the cellar, the most basic “technology”—open-top fermentation bins and used barrels—suffices to usher the transformation of grape to wine. Salita is a declassified Chianti Classico from the estate’s most prized parcel, a sun-drenched incline that yields a full-throttle Sangiovese loaded with the flavors of its *terroir*.





2016 Vermentino di Sardegna "Stria" <i>Vigne Rada</i> SARDINIA	Vermentino	8-year-old vines Alluvial with riverbed stones and quartz; clay, limestone, chalk	Serve <i>cold</i> 46–52° F Decant optional	Wild mint, lemon blossom, honeysuckle, fennel Lush, salty, savory, with a briny finish	Drink now through 2022
2014 Venezia Giulia Bianco "Morus Alba" <i>Vignai da Duline</i> FRIULI	60% Malvasia Istriana, 40% Sauvignon	Vines planted in 1940, 1979 Red clay (Malvasia), flysch (Sauvignon)	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–54° F Decant optional	White flowers, grapefruit, tangerine, riverbed stone Delicate, creamy yet focused; intensely mineral	Drink now through 2025
2015 Cerasuolo di Vittoria <i>Portelli</i> SICILY	70% Calabrese (Nero d'Avola), 30% Frappato	Vines planted in 1997 Clay, limestone	Serve <i>cool</i> 56–60° F Decant optional	Cherry pit, violets, plum Lively, exuberant, supple	Drink now through 2022
2015 Etna Rosso "i nove fratelli" <i>Masseria del Pino</i> SICILY	90% Nerello Mascalese, 10% Nerello Cappuccio	120-year-old vines Volcanic	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant 1–2 hours	Black cherry, roasted spices, smoke Dense, chewy, grippy, elegantly rustic	Drink now through 2030
2016 Cannonau di Sardegna "Barrosu" <i>Giovanni Montisci</i> SARDINIA	Cannonau	60-year-old vines Sandy granite, clay	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant 1–2 hours	<i>Garrigue</i> , wild berries, pink peppercorn Broad yet ethereal; rich, grandiose, refined	Drink now through 2030
2013 Toscana Rosso "Salita" <i>Castagnoli</i> TUSCANY	Sangiovese	9-year-old vines <i>Galestro</i> schist	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant 1–2 hours	Blackberry, cacao, baked earth, dried herbs Concentrated, voluptuous, powerfully structured	Drink now through 2030

cover: Lorenzo Mocchiutti of Vignai da Duline in his Ronco Pitotti vineyard. Photo © Oddur Thorisson for Conde Nast

left: Federica Turillo and Cesare Fulvio of Masseria del Pino. Photo © Armando Rotoletti

recipe: Photo © Ristorante Al Tuguri

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♦ SEA BASS CRUDO ♦

IN SEASONED SALT & BROWN SUGAR

{ from Ristorante Al Tuguri in Alghero }



*Suggested by Gabriele Bardino of Vigne Rada, this recipe is typical of Alghero.
It pairs wonderfully with their Vermentino, making your aperitivo dreams come true.*

♦ INGREDIENTS ♦

1 sea bass fillet
1 cup coarse sea salt
½ cup brown sugar
2 tablespoons ground spices
(cinnamon, clove, star anise,
pink peppercorn, fennel seed)
orange zest
1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
pane carasau
(Sardinian flatbread)

Place a slotted surface, like a grill or colander, over a pan or baking sheet so marinade juices can drain off. Fillet the sea bass and place skin downward on the slotted surface. Rub the fillet with the sea salt, brown sugar, spices, and finely minced orange zest, as if to form a crust. Cover and refrigerate for at least 6 hours. Scrape off crust and thinly slice fish. Place slices in the olive oil and serve on small pieces of *pane carasau* (or any thin, crispy bread). SERVES 4