

KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

FEBRUARY 2020



Italian garden

© Gail Skoff

CRU BEAUJOLAIS BOUNTY • A BRIEF HISTORY OF MARSANNAY • NEW ARRIVALS FROM ITALY

SICILIAN WHITES

by Anthony Lynch

2018 SICILIA NOTO BIANCO “MIZZICA” • RIOFAVARA

Embracing the charms of dry Moscato could be your wine revelation of 2020. The grape takes on myriad forms depending on where it grows, absorbing the local flavors in a way that few other varieties can, whether it be in Alsace, Corsica, Sardinia, or anywhere else. This example, produced by the lovely Padova family in the Val di Noto of southeast Sicily, is a unique interpretation of chalky white soils, wild Mediterranean herbs, and coastal sea breeze through the lens of organically farmed Moscato. Delicate, stimulating, and completely dry on the palate, it delivers citrus zest and floral nuances with a faint bitterness on the finish that works wonders at table. Seafood *crudo* with a spritz of lemon and a drizzle of Riofavara olive oil (also sold in the shop) is not a bad place to start.



Duomo di Siracusa © Anthony Lynch

\$22.00 PER BOTTLE

\$237.60 PER CASE

2018 TERRE SICILIANE BIANCO “LATO SUD” • GROTTAFUMATA

Mauro Cutuli sources fruit from three tiny vineyards on the southern slopes of Mount Etna. The blend consists mainly of old-vine Carricante and Cataratto, fermented on the skins for four days in a nod to Etna tradition. His 2018 clocks in at a very affable 11 percent alcohol, presenting a subtly smoky aroma complemented by notes of yellow fruit, herbs, and wild broom. The ashy black volcanic sand in which the vines grow is home to abundant wild mint, onions, spinach, and other edible vegetation that Mauro likes to forage and cook into an ultra-local pasta. Don't hesitate to look into other classic dishes from Etna as possible pairings—this stony *bianco* is the perfect foil to *al dente* fusilli coated in *pesto di pistachio*, or bucatini with fennel, raisins, and anchovies.

\$49.00 PER BOTTLE

\$529.20 PER CASE

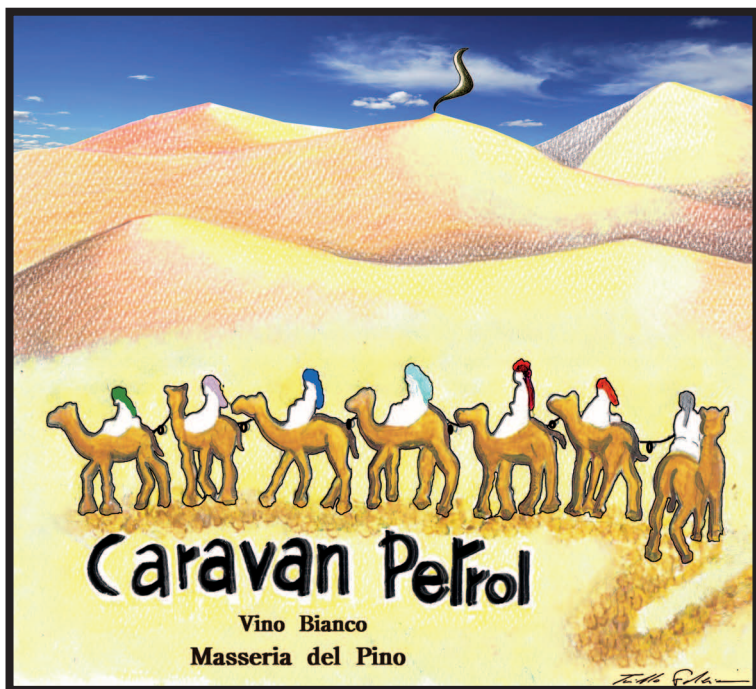
2018 VINO BIANCO “CARAVAN PETROL” MASSERIA DEL PINO

Mount Etna’s astronomic rise in hipness over the last decade or so has created a sort of gold rush, or oil rush (see below), with producers from all over Sicily, mainland Italy, and beyond seeking to cash in on this ancient wine region’s newfound popularity. Just as hungry entrepreneurs—often with great means and little respect for the land and its history—settle in, hoping to make it big, Cesare Fulvio and Federica Turillo humbly tend to their two hectares of 120-year-old vines high on the volcano’s northern face. They craft wines with their bare hands—and feet!—that are worlds removed from the heavy investment, modern technology, and mass marketing that is reshaping the Etnean landscape.

Consider their Carricante-based white: lightly skin-macerated, it was pressed manually and aged in a solitary chestnut cask before an unfiltered, unsulfured bottling. Charming, fresh, and textured, with suggestions of wildflowers, saffron, lemon, and nuts, this is Etna in all its raw glory.

\$58.00 PER BOTTLE

\$626.40 PER CASE



RÉGIS BOUVIER

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MARSANNAY

by Tom Wolf

IF A HANDFUL of Côte d'Or villages, like Volnay, Meursault, and Gevrey-Chambertin, have been consistently prestigious for centuries, Marsannay lies at the other end of the spectrum. Despite having been preferred by the dukes of Bourgogne as far back as the fourteenth century, it has largely been overlooked throughout the last couple of centuries, and its reputation has been on the rise only in the past few decades with the accumulation of talented vignerons such as Régis Bouvier. Why did Burgundy's northernmost appellation languish in obscurity and misunderstanding while its neighbors prospered?

The recent history begins in the nineteenth century, when Marsannay producers broke from the rest of the Côte and generally ripped out their Pinot Noir vines in favor of Gamay to satisfy the market of neighboring Dijon. After phylloxera completed the damage to Marsannay's Pinot Noir production, Joseph Clair replanted the grape and, in 1919, made a Pinot Noir rosé, launching Marsannay's legacy as Burgundy's leading source of serious and delicious pink wine. Nearly five decades later, in 1965, wines from this commune were finally allowed to bear labels stating "Bourgogne Rouge de Marsannay" and "Bourgogne Rosé de Marsannay." In 1987, Marsannay was granted AOC status, placing it in the same hierarchy as village-level Gevrey-Chambertin and Volnay. Since then, ambitious Marsannay producers have bottled their wines by *lieu-dit*, highlighting notable parcels. Today, many Burgundians believe that conferral of *premier cru* status to the best sites is imminent. If this happens, the sloping vineyard Les Longeroies will be among the first to be officially elevated.

2017 MARSANNAY BLANC "LES LONGEROIES"

Even though most of Marsannay is planted to Pinot Noir, a small amount of Chardonnay is grown there as well. This distinct, nutty *blanc* evokes pretty orchard fruit and citrus, and possesses great acidity and a little grip. It is begging to be paired with grilled white fish or chicken.

\$41.00 PER BOTTLE

\$442.80 PER CASE

2017 MARSANNAY ROUGE "LES LONGEROIES"

Arguably Régis's most over-delivering wine—and coming from his oldest vines—the Longeroies *rouge* showcases notes of black cherries, black tea, and baking spices. It stands among our most versatile red Burgundies, regardless of price.

\$41.00 PER BOTTLE

\$442.80 PER CASE

PIEMONTE

by Anthony Lynch

2017 LANGHE NEBBIOLO “PIAN DELLE MOLE” • GIULIA NEGRI

From cool, high-elevation vineyards in the Barolo commune of La Morra, twenty-eight-year-old Giulia Negri brings us everything we want in a great Nebbiolo. Perfumed and precise, with just enough tannin, this Langhe is simply beautiful, bursting with freshness, lively fruit, and downright deliciousness. She not only has a refined palate, but also has real touch with the Nebbiolo grape—try this bottle to see why Giulia is no longer a rising star, but an affirmed talent among Piemontese vigneroni.

\$30.00 PER BOTTLE

\$324.00 PER CASE

2016 BARBARESCO “VICENZIANA” SILVIO GIAMELLO

Mature bottles of Barbaresco from this tiny grower rank among the finest Nebbiolos I have ever tasted. The scintillating, rose-scented 2001 will be hard to forget, as will the burly 2003 paired with tagliatelle coated in a slow-cooked beef ragù prepared by Silvio’s wife, Marina.

The 2016 will doubtless offer the same thrills to those capable of keeping their hands off it. It presents a wonderfully rich, intense aroma of classically styled Barbaresco, layered with underbrush, tobacco, and bitters. A dense and savory palate, framed by firm tannins and plenty of cooling acidity, suggests the 2016 will live a long and prosperous life. Decant if you wish to drink it young.

\$45.00 PER BOTTLE

\$486.00 PER CASE

2014 VINO ROSSO “LABORO DISOBEDIENT” • A. & G. FANTINO

From their cellar in the heart of historic Monforte d’Alba, brothers Alessandro and Gian Natale Fantino exemplify low-intervention winemaking at its best, with an old-school vibe that resonates through each of their classic cuvées. The Laboro is a declassified Barolo Riserva aged in neutral old *botti*; Gian Natale defines it as “so typically Barolo that it’s not even a Barolo.” Deep and brawny, it is loaded with dark fruit and balsamic notes of incense, tea, and spice, finishing with a thick, chewy tannin. “This is old-fashioned Nebbiolo, the way we like it!” Gianni exclaims. This brooding beast epitomizes great Barolo from Monforte.

\$64.00 PER BOTTLE

\$691.20 PER CASE

NEW VINTAGE, SAME VALUE

by *Dustin Soiseth*

ONCE AGAIN, our Beaujolais producers have delivered a remarkable crop of delicious, *terroir*-driven wines at reasonable prices, each a distinct expression of one of Beaujolais's *crus*. There are no generic blends here, no regional cuvées. These are honest-to-God small-production, "grand cru" Beaujolais, as Kermit likes to say. I don't know how they do it, but I'm glad they do.



2018 CHIROUBLES GUY BRETON

Even in the richest vintages, Breton's wines retain an amazing freshness and purity, and his seductively earthy Chiroubles is no exception. This small, sandy parcel of sixty-year-old vines is a more recent addition to the domaine, and it yields a softer, more reserved counterpoint to Breton's iconic Morgon.

\$37.00 PER BOTTLE

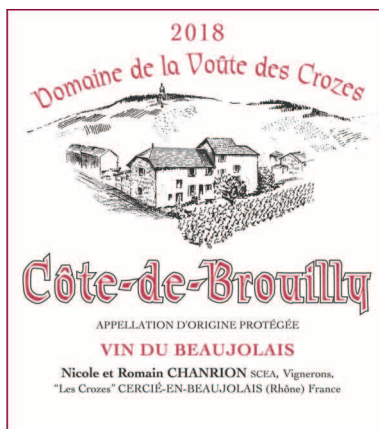
\$399.60 PER CASE

2018 CÔTE-DE-BROUILLY NICOLE CHANRION

As ever, Nicole Chanrion delivers a delicious *cru* Beaujolais at a Beaujolais-Villages price. The hillside vineyard on the ancient volcano Mont Brouilly gives a flawless balance of tannin, acidity, and juicy Gamay fruit. I think this is the Mary Poppins of Beaujolais: practically perfect in every way.

\$24.00 PER BOTTLE

\$259.20 PER CASE

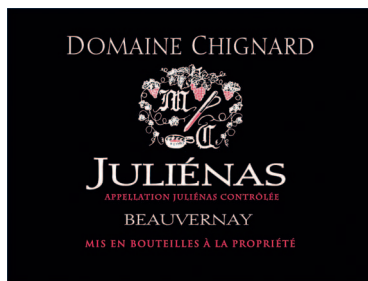


2018 JULIÉNAS
“BEAUVERNAY”
DOMAINE CHIGNARD

Cédric Chignard’s chewy Julié纳斯 is the darkest wine in this group, with the firm spine that comes from old vines in hard, rocky terrain. When you’re in the shop, look for the black gothic label. It matches the wine.

\$25.00 PER BOTTLE

\$270.00 PER CASE



2018 RÉGNIÉ
“GRAIN & GRANIT”
JEAN-PAUL &
CHARLY THÉVENET

Velvety. Exotic. Funky. Vibrant. Sanguineous. Wild. As the son of Gang of Four legend Jean-Paul Thévenet, Charly certainly has the pedigree to play it safe, but this wine shows that he is doing anything but.

\$37.00 PER BOTTLE

\$399.60 PER CASE



2018 BROUILLY
“REVERDON”
CHÂTEAU THIVIN

With its beguiling floral aromatics, freshness, and grip, the 2018 Reverdon has all the poise and finesse we’ve come to expect from this nearly 150-year-old domaine. What’s their secret? Perhaps it’s the vineyard’s hillside location (most of the Brouilly appellation is flat). Perhaps it’s the Geoffroy family’s staunch adherence to traditional farming and vinification. Perhaps it’s doing a thing for a century and a half until it’s as natural as breathing.

\$26.00 PER BOTTLE

\$280.80 PER CASE





Boxler's Sommerberg vineyard

© Gail Skoff

ALBERT BOXLER TRIO

by Jane Berg

THIRD-GENERATION VIGNERON Jean Boxler makes his world-class wines in the immaculate, storybook village of Niedermorschwihr at the eastern base of the Massif des Vosges. It's surprisingly sunny this far north, and quintessentially Germanic. Colorful, half-timbered houses are topped with pointy gabled roofs that slope as steeply as the surrounding vineyards. Cheerful and orderly, the place is unlike any other in France, and Jean's wines are similarly unique. He works with nine different grape varieties, all farmed organically in accordance with traditional Alsatian *savoir faire*. If you're looking to spice up your wine routine in 2020, look no further than these three wines.

2015 CRÉMANT D'ALSACE

Interested in a knockout glass of sparkling wine to replace your go-to Prosecco? In the realm of Crémants—de Bourgogne, du Jura, de Loire—Crémant d'Alsace reigns. Where other sparklers are faint of heart, this *brut* blend of Pinot Blanc, Pinot Auxerrois, and Pinot Noir will boldly stand up to strong flavors like liver pâté with pickled onion, or bitter kale with toasty walnuts.

\$36.00 PER BOTTLE

\$388.80 PER CASE

2017 PINOT GRIS "RÉSERVE"

Earthy Pinot Gris as dramatic and flinty as this, with a hint of residual sugar, demands an assertive pairing. Try it with smoked sausage and mustard, served with a wintry purée of parsnip and rutabaga to highlight its savory side. If there's any wine left in the bottle, finish it off with some sticky Muenster and ripe pears and you'll never be happier you saved a drop.

\$52.00 PER BOTTLE

\$561.60 PER CASE

2016 RIESLING GRAND CRU "SOMMERBERG"

Grown in pure granite, *grand cru* Sommerberg gives us a broadly structured Riesling that takes further shape in well-seasoned, old *foudres*. It's hard to imagine this beauty could taste any better than it does now, but I'll be curious to revisit it in five to ten years to discover what becomes of its intoxicating perfume of sweet honeysuckle and sleek petrol.

\$82.00 PER BOTTLE

\$885.60 PER CASE

CHENIN BLANC

by Emily Spillmann

THE UNBEATABLE ASSOCIATION of *vin jaune* with a slice of aged Comté or Bandol rosé with bouillabaisse attests to the small but hardly trivial part of *terroir* that resides in pairing a wine with its culinary counterpart. A good rule of thumb is to serve a given wine with its region's typical fare.

Not so with Chenin Blanc. Of all the French wines I've known, this Loire Valley pillar must be among the most versatile to pair with our American melting-pot cuisine and worldly specialties. Below are three expressions from Vouvray, Jasnières, and Chinon, with a few food suggestions to spark your creativity.

2018 VOUVRAY • CHAMPALOU

Céline Champalou likes to serve this Vouvray with her family's favorite house appetizer: grapefruit and avocado salad with shrimp, lightly tossed with home-made lemongrass-infused mayonnaise. As a main dish, she proposes pan-fried scallops with ginger and fresh tagliatelle. At my house, this bottle takes a week-night chicken curry to new heights, its exotic fruit notes complementing the coriander-cumin-turmeric and peppery spiciness to a tee.

\$23.00 PER BOTTLE

\$248.40 PER CASE

2018 JASNIÈRES • PASCAL JANVIER

How about some fish tacos? Easy as pie. Marinate cod in lime juice, chili powder, and cumin, and then throw it in a generously buttered skillet for five minutes before flipping. Just the time it takes to whip up a crisp cabbage slaw. Slice some avocado, heat up the corn tortillas, bring it all together, and top with loads of cilantro. This lively, mineral, honeyed Jasnières adds an elegant touch to a finger-licking good meal.

\$23.00 PER BOTTLE

\$248.40 PER CASE

2018 CHINON BLANC • BERNARD BAUDRY

A rare white from an appellation of reds, and the richest Chenin Blanc among these three, Baudry's Chinon Blanc is delightful with a Middle Eastern-spiced dish like roasted eggplant and curried yogurt. Outside-the-box ingredients such as black garlic and rose harissa or my colleague Caterina's secret weapon, sumac, produce an umami pop when paired with the lush, waxy texture of the wine. Bold spices amp up its character rather than overpowering it, so have fun with it. And, if you discover a new "unlikely" pairing, send your recipe our way!

\$35.00 PER BOTTLE

\$378.00 PER CASE

SOUTHERN FRENCH REDS

by Anthony Lynch

2018 SYRAH • LIONEL FAURY

Picture tasting in Lionel Faury's cellar, high on a vine-covered hill in the very north of the northern Rhône. He splashes a sample of deep purple juice into your goblet: a Syrah that leaps out of the glass, as if ripe olives, violets, and an array of black fruits had been smooshed together with a granite mortar and pestle, its tooth-staining contents emptied out and strained to leave behind a vinous elixir teeming with life and vividly fresh aromas, coating the palate like stone-ground blackberry pulp with each velvety sip.

\$25.00 PER BOTTLE **\$270.00** PER CASE

2018 CORBIÈRES "CAMPAGNÈS" MAXIME MAGNON

Deep in the Hautes-Corbières, a wildly hilly region of the Languedoc midway between Narbonne and Perpignan, a young Maxime Magnon stumbled upon a treasure: ancient vineyard parcels in steep, rocky soils destined to be abandoned, as local farmers were unwilling to break their backs to eke out tiny yields of wine that would ultimately get lost in the town co-op's generic blend. Maxime seized the opportunity and bought the vineyards, immediately going organic. Today, Campagnès is his greatest red, a century-old field blend of mostly Carignan that is fermented whole-cluster and bottled unfiltered with very little sulfur. He counts Allemand, Barral, and Lapierre among his strongest influences, and it shows—this drinks like great *cru* Beaujolais infused with southern soul.

\$56.00 PER BOTTLE **\$604.80** PER CASE

2018 VIN DE PAYS DE VAUCLUSE ROUGE SELECTED BY KERMIT LYNCH

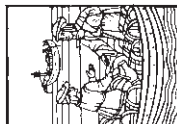
Treat this smooth, juicy red as you would a Côtes du Rhône. After all, the grapes—mostly Grenache and Syrah—come from the heart of the southern Rhône, where they are pampered by Mediterranean sunshine and sublimated by fresh breezes filled with herbal scents of the *garrigue*. One of our best deals from France, the Vaucluse *rouge* is especially gulpable in the 2018 vintage: opportune rains yielded a less powerful wine than in other years and instead bestowed a tender floral character that is seriously hard to resist.

\$14.00 PER BOTTLE **\$151.20** PER CASE

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“The simple physical act of opening
a bottle of wine has brought more
happiness to the human race
than all of the governments
in the history of the earth.”

JIM HARRISON, in *WINE READS*, compiled by Jay McInerney

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