

KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

MAY 2014

THE ITALIAN PORTFOLIO



ITALY

by Kermit Lynch

WHEN I HUNG UP an open sign for the first time in 1972, I was not an importer; I was a Wine Retailer Without Borders. I sold wines from all over the place. Then I obtained the permit to import my very own discoveries from, at first, Germany, France, Spain, and Italy. Soon I dropped domestic wines in order to concentrate on my imports and to avoid losing California winemaker Joseph Swan as a best pal. Then I let Spain go—I simply could not get excited about the semi-oxidized style that reigned at the time. Next, painfully, I cut out German wines. Too damned white, if you ask me. No, just kidding—German Rieslings, especially aged Rieslings, can take my breath away.

I seemed to want to focus, to specialize. I'm not saying my choice of Italian and French wines was the best or the most logical—I was just following my own nose. Before, I had the feeling I was hopping from here to there, skimming the surface. I wanted to be able to concentrate on my two true loves, to immerse myself deeper into their ancient wine cultures.

Looking back, I see that my first shipment from Italy included 1974 and 1971 Barolos from both Aldo Conterno and Cantina Vietti. Hmm, wish I still had some of those beauties in my cellar. And from France, the first boat brought all Burgundy, including remarkable 1972s and 1971s from Hubert de Montille.

I am going to ask and answer myself right here on the page in front of you why I don't seem to have quite the same attitude toward French and Italian wines. I'm not sure it makes sense. Of course, the first thing I look for is quality. After that, with French wines my interest has had a lot to do with the specific *terroirs*—the difference between Rugiens and Taillepieds, Migoua and Tourtine, Chêne Vert and Dioterie. My interest in Italian wines, however, is more food driven—yes, more to do with the table than with the *terroir*.

Again, that's just me. Working here with me, Dixon Brooke (who has added such great wines as Quintarelli, Benevelli, Fantino, and Sesti to our portfolio) is passionate and determined to build a selection of Piedmont and Tuscan *terroirs* to rival our Burgundy, Loire, and Rhône portfolios. Keep your eyes on our Italian arrivals: there are new discoveries here and on the way.





*Wine regions featured
in this month's newsletter*

PIEDMONT

I FRATELLI FANTINO

by Dixon Brooke

WITH OPEN ARMS and hearts we welcome the Fantino brothers, Alessandro and Gian Natale, into the KLWM portfolio and family. The brothers work a small slice of prime Barolo country in the Bussia *cru*, just north of their family home and *cantina* in Monforte d'Alba. Their home away from home is the subzone of Bussia they call "Cascina Dardi"—ancient vines planted on steep, southeastern slopes and farmed almost exclusively by them. Their Nebbiolo grapes are vinified with sage-like omniscience in Monforte, in old *botti* reserved for the purpose. We proudly present three of their latest creations.



2009 BAROLO BUSSIA "CASCINA DARDI"

This wine is about as seductive and pretty as the king of wines can be. It is so good right now, I don't even counsel you to wait. The velvety texture and luxurious fruit of this delicious Nebbiolo beckon.

\$55.00 PER BOTTLE

\$594.00 PER CASE

2005 LABORO "DISUBBIDIENTE"

This disobedient child does not wear its true designation, Barolo Riserva, thanks to a technicality with the DOCG declaration. The Fantino brothers decided to vinify and age this Barolo exactly as their ancestors had: it never touched anything but old wood, and no modern technology was employed in its production. The result is a decidedly old-school, incredibly complex and layered Barolo that delivers a succession of aromatic, flavor, and emotional sensations.

\$65.00 PER BOTTLE

\$702.00 PER CASE

2004 BAROLO BUSSIA "CASCINA DARDI" RISERVA

The most "reserved" of this bunch, the Fantino Barolo Riserva is released in very small batches. The 2004 has a grand structure and a deep boldness that give way with substantial aeration to perfumed elegance and finesse. Ten years old today, it will need another five years before it starts to reveal its true personality, and then I suspect it will drink well for many, many more.

\$65.00 PER BOTTLE

\$702.00 PER CASE

BENVENUTI IN PIEMONTE!

by Jane Berg

WHAT A BREATH of fresh air it was to travel to Italy last month after all these years living in France. Let me explain. My love for France will always be true, but since Kermit put me in the office over here, these days France and I are like an old married couple. So I recently decided to expand my horizons. Below are a few Italian suitors who will be courting me in France this spring. Who says long-distance relationships can't work?

2012 LANGHE ARNEIS • ELVIO TINTERO

Famous in the wine world for their juicy Moscato d'Asti, the Tintero family also offers a range of dry wines made from local grapes. Delightfully low in alcohol, with hints of ripe pear and melon—all you'll need is some thinly sliced prosciutto, sweet Gorgonzola, and a handful of *grissini*. Picnic, anyone?

\$12.00 PER BOTTLE

\$129.60 PER CASE

2012 NEBBIOLO "CAMILU" • GUIDO PORRO

For sun-kissed fruit from a deeper register, the 2012 wines from Guido Porro are pitch perfect. This harmonious, soulful red is easygoing, affable, affordable, and will provide you with a stellar dinner companion.

\$26.00 PER BOTTLE

\$280.80 PER CASE

2012 LANGHE NEBBIOLO • BENEVELLI PIERO

Every so often I encounter a producer whose wines are so genuine they renew my understanding of *terroir*. The Boillots in Gevrey-Chambertin come to mind, as do the Clapes in Cornas. I'm thrilled to have been introduced to their Italian counterpart, Massimo Benevelli. This Nebbiolo is a class act, *il cavaliere* of the bunch.

\$22.00 PER BOTTLE

\$237.60 PER CASE

2005 BARBERA DEL MONFERRATO "PERLYDIA" • CANTINE VALPANE

The nine long years you didn't even know you were waiting for this Barbera are finally over. Expect wild blackberries and fresh floral perfumes with a dusting of fine cocoa tannins. There's always something to learn from a wine with age. And just think, nine years, yet under twenty bucks.

\$18.95 PER BOTTLE

\$204.66 PER CASE

ALTO ADIGE

by *Anthony Lynch*

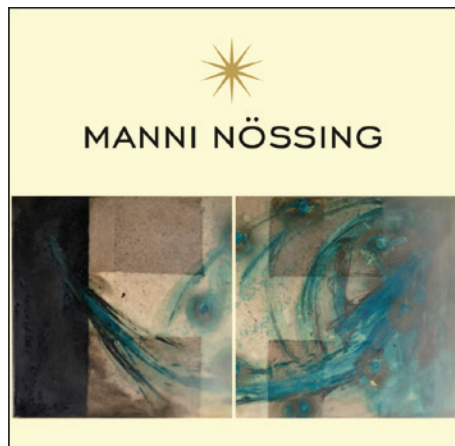
ON MY FIRST VISIT to Manni Nössing's small winery in the Dolomites, a colleague and I were led terribly astray by our rental car's GPS. Rather than taking the main road that channels north through the narrow Valle Isarco, we were directed into an enchanted forest, circumnavigating a colossal mountain before ending up in a remote vineyard on a tiny dirt road with a frustrating lack of signage. Finally—after several phone exchanges with Manni in which I desperately wielded my broken Italian, and he his broken English—we arrived at our destination on the aptly named Weinbergstraße, a mere hour and a half late to our appointment.

Upon walking in, we noticed a row of empty bottles—perhaps Manni's "wall of fame"—including the likes of Clape Cornas and Château Thivin. A very promising start, soon to be confirmed when we tasted through Manni's production. It immediately became clear: he strives for plenty of acidity in his wines. On the palate, this translates to alpine freshness, high-definition delineation of flavor, and a mouthwateringly crisp finish. With our spirits high and palates cleansed, we left the winery awed by his Kerner: a wine of pinpoint focus, featuring aromas of tropical fruit that jump out of the glass. The 2012 is particularly expressive, its mineral tones accenting the clean finish. Equally stunning is the Veltliner. Lean and precise yet also elegantly rounded, it dazzles at table, thanks to its balance and versatility. Manni Nössing's mountain gems are a must-try for any white wine lover.

PER BOTTLE PER CASE

2012 KERNER • MANNI NÖSSING \$30.00 \$324.00

2012 GRÜNER VELTLINER • MANNI NÖSSING 30.00 324.00





NEW FROM CAMPANIA

by Anthony Lynch

CAMPANIA: an idyllic land, home to Vesuvius, the Amalfi Coast, and, of course, the feared and revered Mafia. On an enlightening trip recently, I tasted freshly produced *mozzarella di bufala* unlike any other, cemented my belief that *pizza napoletana* is the only pizza, and sampled a variety of intriguing and delicious local wines. This import represents something dearly new to us, as our first wine from the southern reaches of the peninsula. Nonetheless, it shares what binds all KLWM selections: it is crafted sustainably through traditional production methods, it is true to its place of origin, and it shines at table. This tiny estate is a welcome addition to our portfolio, and we urge you to discover the virtues of Campania's fascinating wine world.

2011 FIANO DI AVELLINO "PARTICELLA 928" CANTINA DEL BARONE

Cantina del Barone is a familial estate in the purest sense of the term: surrounding the Sarno family's house is a plot for growing fresh herbs and vegetables, a small hazelnut grove, and a modest vineyard planted to Fiano. Fiano thrives in Campania's volcanic soils, producing a delicate and refined white reminiscent of acacia blossoms, green almond, apple skin, and toasted hazelnut. This white's haunting perfume is delivered with total class.

\$29.00 PER BOTTLE

\$313.20 PER CASE

ABOVE: Fresco at Villa Oplontis © Gail Skoff

IL MAESTRO DEL VENETO

NEW ARRIVALS FROM GIUSEPPE QUINTARELLI

by Dixon Brooke

DRIVING THE HILLS above Verona on the way to the Quintarelli estate, you have the impression of an area steeped in ancient farming tradition. This is a region of timeless beauty, where you can feel the history emanating from the land. What a fitting place for the Quintarelli estate to reside, and from which to craft the masterpieces bearing their name. In fact, the two are inseparable.

2010 PRIMOFIORE

The new vintage of Primofiore is a head-on Quintarelli experience—full-bodied and ripe, with a solid tannic backbone. The quality that most impresses me is its ethereal nature: I can't believe the way it floats across the palate delicately, despite its power and concentration; I just described the hardest balance to achieve in fine wine.

\$59.00 PER BOTTLE

\$637.20 PER CASE

2005 VALPOLICELLA CLASSICO SUPERIORE

The harmony and refinement of this new bottling leave nothing to be desired. Like a drier version of his Amarone, it boasts a plethora of secondary aromas and flavors already, while still having a solid core of youthful, exuberant fruit. The *ripasso* technique employed here infuses the wine with yet another level of complexity. This is the perfect ambassador to the genius of Quintarelli, his vinous translation of the Veronese hills.

\$89.00 PER BOTTLE

\$961.20 PER CASE

2004 AMARONE DELLA VALPOLICELLA CLASSICO

The latest Amarone release from the Quintarellis at ten years old, the 2004 is a statuesque wine of epic proportions. Dense, chewy, and very confident, with a knockout nose, this beauty will probably never be too old to enjoy. I recommend being patient with this vintage.

\$360.00 PER BOTTLE

\$3,888.00 PER CASE

**2000 AMARONE DELLA
VALPOLICELLA CLASSICO
“SELEZIONE GIUSEPPE QUINTARELLI”**

Time seemed to stand still for a moment when I tasted this wine for the first time at dinner with the Quintarelli family. It was the result of the only time Giuseppe had ever pronounced a single lot of Amarone to be worthy of being bottled separately with a designation superior to his already exceedingly discriminating and rare Amarone Riserva (only produced every five years or so). This Selezione seems years younger than the more recent Amarone and Amarone Riserva releases. It actually seems timeless. The intensity of color, of aroma, of flavor; the persistence, the length, the complexity, the poise: it is regal in every way. Truly a wine of meditation, much like the 1997 Recioto we will soon be shipping. Just when you thought Quintarelli didn't have another gear, he found one.

\$1,200.00 PER BOTTLE

Extremely limited quantity



Etching on botte at Quintarelli

© Dixon Brooke

REGION TO REGION

by Anthony Lynch

FRIULI

2012 PINOT GRIGIO • LA VIARTE

A vigneron from Alsace, proud of his homeland's rich, perfumed Pinot Gris, told me what he thought of northern Italy's clean, crisp Pinot Grigio: "The climate is too cold, they harvest too early, and the wines are underripe and lacking character." If only he could have tasted La Viarte's Pinot Grigio. This rendition from Friuli offers the best of both worlds: it is lively and perky with lots of mineral notes, yet it is saturated with flavor, loaded with tangy ripe citrus that makes the mouth water. Here is a Pinot Grigio that is more than a simple thirst quencher.

\$17.95 PER BOTTLE

\$193.86 PER CASE

EMILIA-ROMAGNA

2012 LAMBRUSCO SECCO • FATTORIA MORETTO

At KLWM, we are not ones to "berry and cherry" you in our wine descriptions, but Moretto's Lambrusco makes it hard to resist. Raspberries, strawberries, cherries, cranberries, blackberries . . . this dry red *frizzante* is awash with delicious fruit. While quite low in alcohol, it has earthy tannins that contribute a solid frame. As a result, you'd be hard-pressed to find a better companion for your next meat and cheese platter.

\$18.00 PER BOTTLE

\$194.40 PER CASE

SICILY

2011 ELORO "SPACCAFORNO" • RIOFAVARA

Riofavaara's wines, from southern Sicily's Val di Noto, easily represent our southernmost imports. Seeing as the estate has the same latitude as parts of nearby Tunisia to the west, one can imagine the ruthless summer sun striking down on the Nero d'Avola vines as they desperately dig into the dusty earth in search of hydration. Correspondingly, the Spaccaforno bottling is a wine of intense concentration, full of aromas of ripe fruits such as blackberries and dates. For such a black stallion, it is attractively smooth and polished, but don't go thinking you won't have stained teeth after a glass or two of this beauty.

\$22.00 PER BOTTLE

\$237.60 PER CASE

TUSCANY

CHIANTI CLASSICO

by Dixon Brooke

ONE OF THE MOST “classic” Italian wines of our time, Chianti boasts a history that spans eight hundred years. Of course, the Etruscans were making wine in the Chianti hills another millennium previously, even though they weren’t calling it Chianti. The region has undergone profound change over time, but the end result is one to be celebrated: the Sangiovese grape takes center stage (and can do so as a mono-varietal if it wishes!), and today more and more growers focus on the quality of their work in the vineyards and on making wines that are truly Tuscan in identity and spirit.

2008 CHIANTI CLASSICO RISERVA VILLA DI GEGGIANO

The Bandinelli brothers at Geggiano are decidedly low-key in the cellar, letting their choicest Sangiovese age and develop slowly in older casks underneath their villa just north of Castelnuovo Berardenga and Siena. Recently released, their latest Riserva is a throwback to old times, when your average Chianti had a certain tannic bite that made it an ideal pairing for roast game, rich *ragù*, and aged cheeses.



\$32.00 PER BOTTLE

\$345.60 PER CASE

2003 CHIANTI CLASSICO RISERVA VILLA DI GEGGIANO

So many red wines contradict the generalization about the much-maligned, warm 2003 vintage, both in terms of wine quality and style and in terms of longevity. This Geggiano Riserva, offered in magnum, is a great case in point. Still young, balanced, and fresh, it is a good reminder that high-acid red grapes like Sangiovese and Pinot Noir can support and even thrive in warmer years if harvest date is mastered. This is a great wine to enjoy now, but it will also continue to improve in bottle.

\$185.00 PER MAGNUM

\$999.00 PER CASE

TUSCANY

BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO

by Dixon Brooke

IF BAROLO IS THE KING of wines, Brunello could be called the prince. With a much more recent history than Barolo, Brunello has grown up quickly. While the notion of subzones and *crus* is much less developed here than in Barolo, there is movement and interest. With Cabernet-gate behind us, and the aging requirements for Brunello sacrosanct, the main risk to quality in the future seems to be the temptation to expand the zone too far outside of its historical boundaries to take advantage of the commercial allure of the Brunello name (sound familiar? Chianti, Cannubi, Champagne, Prosecco, etc.). Here are three great producers working three very different but all magnificent *terroirs*.

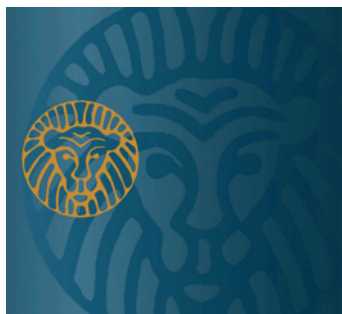
2008 SESTI

The Sestis' rigorous and respectful approach to farming that borrows from biodynamics produces gorgeous grapes—the foundation, of course, for all great wine. Their vineyards are a striking sight that never fails to impress me with their vibrant energy. They are downright pampered, the best way to treat a vine (planted in the right soil, naturally). The Sestis' traditional method in the cellar of employing only older, oval *botti* for the *invecchiamento* further refines their Brunello, while its youthful freshness and vigor is maintained. A majestic Sangiovese from the Sestis from the stellar 2008 vintage.

\$90.00 PER BOTTLE

\$972.00 PER CASE

2008 COLLEONI



Marino Colleoni farms steep, high-altitude marl soils on the north side of Montalcino. Aging here is the same as with all our Brunelli—old casks. The Colleoni Brunelli sport high-toned aromatic displays, chiseled, medium- to full-bodied frames, great acidity, and lengthy, savory finishes. Since they are truly versatile wines, I do not limit myself to traditional Tuscan Sangiovese pairings with them. Few things work better than those mystical pairings, however.

\$84.00 PER BOTTLE

\$907.20 PER CASE

2007 POGGIO DI SOTTO

The steep limestone *terroir* at Castelnuovo dell'Abate, coupled with the cooling winds off Mount Amiata, helped this estate thrive and make a classic Brunello in 2007. If you like the Poggio di Sotto style, here it is in spades. As always, this will be long-lived, but it is also drinking beautifully right now.

\$169.00 PER BOTTLE

\$1,825.20 PER CASE



2000 POGGIO DI SOTTO

A Poggio di Sotto slowly but surely nearing its apogee, Sangiovese doesn't get much better than this. Founder Piero Palmucci guaranteed a life span of twenty years for every vintage of Poggio di Sotto. He got started relatively late in his career, so he was never able to extend the claim based on personal experience. I'm pretty confident that it will be extended over time.

\$150.00 PER BOTTLE

\$1,620.00 PER CASE



PROSECCO MAGS!

PROSECCO SUPERIORE CONEGLIANO VALDOBBIADENE BRUT • SOMMARIVA

It is a mouthful to pronounce (and a delicious one to drink), but it is important to understand the difference between Prosecco labeled this way and the sea of wine out there calling itself Prosecco. Our job as merchants is to know the difference and bring you only the best. From a family-owned and -operated farm/winery in the heart of the best hillside territory of the original Prosecco growing area—you'll want a few of these on hand for parties.

\$32.00 PER MAGNUM

\$172.80 PER CASE



MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA

by Anthony Lynch

LIGURIA

2010 SPUMANTE BRUT • PUNTA CRENA

If we can safely assume that the vast majority of our readers have never tasted a Mataòssu, then what about a *sparkling* Mataòssu? Punta Crena is likely the only place on Earth where this ancient Ligurian varietal can still be found, and based on this solitary example, it takes quite well to the *metodo classico* of sparkling wine production. With four years passed since the vintage, certain nuances have emerged—a pleasantly surprising complexity that can be attributed to bottle age. Its lush grapefruit aroma mingles with a hint of sage, along with a sweet musky scent that recalls a pot of golden wildflower honey. Upon sipping, you'll find an energetic bead with a crunchy saline finish—truly one of a kind that is bound to shock and awe palates all around.

\$24.00 PER BOTTLE

\$259.20 PER CASE



VALLE D'AOSTA

2012 FUMIN CHÂTEAU FEUILLET

This vibrant red is the product of alpine climate, high altitude, and steep granite mountain slopes. In this northwest corner of Italy, the Fumin grape vividly expresses a myriad of dark fruits in its lively yet dignified fragrance. The depth here is astounding, with bass notes resonating with purity, all while providing utter refreshment. Pair it with a creature that will mirror its mountain gaminess.

\$35.00 PER BOTTLE

\$378.00 PER CASE

KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT—TERMS AND CONDITIONS

All wines purchased from Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant are deemed sold in California and title passes to the buyer in California. We make no representation relative to the customer's right to import wine into his/her state. In placing an order, the customer represents to Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant that he/she is at least 21 years of age and the person to whom delivery will be made is at least 21 years old.

ITALIAN GROCERIES

by Dixon Brooke

EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OILS

Veneto: Giuseppe Quintarelli, Negrar

A beautiful oil boasting power and finesse, just like the wines. Length, balance, and nuance, with a pungent aftertaste that sneaks up on you.

\$65.00 PER 750-ML BOTTLE

Toscana: Sesti, Montalcino

A beautiful Tuscan oil that combines characteristic pepperiness with rich flavor and pristine freshness. Check out the deep green hue.

\$36.00 PER 750-ML BOTTLE

Liguria: Punta Crena, Varigotti

Our lightest and most versatile oil, from thousand-year-old Taggiasca trees growing along an old Roman road high above the Mediterranean. Perfect for fish, salads, and most things—you'll find that you go through it almost as quickly as a bottle of their Pigato.

\$24.00 PER 500-ML BOTTLE

ANTICA MACELLERIA CECCHINI, PANZANO IN CHIANTI

We are excited to debut these fine products in our store, from the hand of esteemed butcher Dario Cecchini of Panzano. Along with the oils and wines on these pages, you are well on your way toward some authentic Italian meals.

Profumo del Chianti

Fine gray sea salt mixed with a custom blend of Tuscan herbs. The perfect way to finish grilled meats, to coat fowl for roasting, or to season housemade salumi, it is also great mixed with olive oil for dipping raw vegetables.

\$6.50 PER 4-OUNCE JAR

Fiore di Finocchio

Wild Tuscan fennel pollen, for all things above and more. Sprinkle liberally.

\$9.50 PER 4-OUNCE JAR

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ITALY, BY THE GLASS AT BARTAVELLE

THERE'S NO BETTER WAY to get to know our Italian imports than to give them a taste. Join us on Saturday, May 24, from 3:30 to 5:30 P.M. at Bartavelle Wine & Coffee Bar (next door to our retail shop) for a tasting flight of our Italian imports. Wines featured in the tasting will be 15% off inside our shop until we close.

\$12 *Flight of 6 wines*

SATURDAY, MAY 24 • 3:30-5:30 P.M.

BARTAVELLE WINE & COFFEE BAR
1603 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley

*Can't make it to the tasting?
Bartavelle will pour Italian selections from this newsletter all month long.*

