

KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

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VISIT VENICE ■ VINTAGE MONTPEYROUX ■ AN ITALIAN FEAST

VISIT VENICE

by Kermit Lynch

AN IMPORTER OF ITALIAN WINES, I have now and again found myself on the Italian wine route in need of some shut-eye. I try to pick nice places to relax instead of the more convenient *autostrada* hotels. *Quality of life*, that's my motto. Occasionally I'll wind up in Venice, a rather picturesque site if a little worse for wear and tear in certain quarters—evidently the sea is lapping away at its very foundations.

Heed my advice: my favorite visits to Venice have coincided with dreadful weather. One winter the lagoon was frozen, believe it or not, and the temperature enough below to freeze one's nose off—good-bye, wine-tasting career! However, it was fabulous, because two pals and I had Venice almost to ourselves: empty canals, streets, hotels, and at one of Venice's impossible-to-get-a-table restaurants, we were the only diners.

Then this past October, my wife and I encountered rain and high tides that flooded much of the town. It was still crowded, but bearable, everyone by necessity wearing knee-high rubber or plastic boots. Along with the art and scenery, we discovered a thriving food and wine scene. In case you go, that's why I'm writing about it.

Most tourist-ridden sites worldwide are now geared toward the low airfare/tour bus/cruise ship crowds. Crowds, as in crowded. You walk the street one slow-motion step at a time, and even that is jarringly halted, because half the mob is stopping every two steps to take a selfie.

Hey, Mom, it's me on the Rialto Bridge!

Oops, sorry, Mom, the press of the mob just pushed me over the railing.

The quality of the food sinks to mediocre and worse. The cooks must be thinking that they'll never see a customer again, so why take any pains. Near Bandol, where Gail and I live several months of the year, we always cook at home now, because there is not one single restaurant we want to go back to. I had a terrible visit to Rome recently, a place I dearly loved: streets mobbed, tourists eating cheap, restaurants with no soul. And the Amalfi Coast. Yikes. Good luck. Best



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© Kermit Lynch

go in the winter, because the summer is torture despite the glorious landscape. Traffic jammed for miles, tourism become their sole income—bah, humbug!

But that's not all. Cheap travel is great for *égalité*, but the result is the destruction of everything that attracts us in the first place, including the local cuisine. When *égalité* means mediocrity for one/mediocrity for all . . . well, there must be a better way.

Normally I explore and eat around a lot, but I liked a couple of restaurants in Venice so much, I would advise you to return again and again.

Trattoria Antiche Carampane is so off the beaten track, I almost gave up. I walked using Google Maps. Venetian alleys and streets make Google a blithering idiot. Countless times I found myself going in circles—swearing in circles, too.

It was worth it! Service with a smile, interesting collection of diners, unpretentious setting, superb selection of northern Italian whites (including Duliné's Malvasia Istriana), one delicious platter after another, mostly seafood, all local. They passed out a free starter, a paper cone filled with peanut-sized crispy fried shrimps, perfectly cooked. Every note seemed to hit just the right pitch. I wish I lived next door.

My second fave rave: Alle Testiere on Calle del Mondo Novo. I'm sorry, but you can't imagine how good warm, grilled white polenta tastes next to a cool ball of the best, least creamy baccalà of my life (baccalà is Italy's *brandade de morue*). It is so delicious you might order it as your second and third courses, too, because when your plate is empty, you'll experience a feeling akin to heartbreak. Luca



© Gail Skoff

is the perfect host and also author of the short, gem-filled wine list. When the lagoon was frozen, he's the one who served me and my pals Duline's Pinot Grigio—rare, expensive, fairly priced, hard to beat. Thank you, Luca, for that first, startling taste. At Testiere you should order both the cheese and the dessert courses, because they're so good.

Pardon the digression, but I am convinced that Italian cheeses are now better, generally, than French. Same with charcuterie. The French and their bureaucratic fervor have dulled down both, waving the health flag as justification. Yes, both cheese and charcuterie are safely sterile nowadays, and (is it a coincidence?) produced by factories instead of small farmers. When it comes to food and wine—sorry, Big Brother—artisanal wins, and I'll bet it is better for us, too.

Back to Luca at Alle Testiere—he gave me the address of a teensy wine bar near the Venice market. “Go to Al Merca,” he said. “Their wines by the glass are beautifully selected. I don't know how they come up with them.” They also have delicious Venetian-style sandwiches. Alert: no chairs, no tables, no roof. I went three times, and now it's my favorite Venetian snack bar.

Remember, seek out the periods when Venice weather is inclement and make sure it is not a school vacation week in Europe before making your plans. And, oh yes, reserve those restaurant tables way in advance.

A TRIO OF CORSICAN REDS

by Dixon Brooke

2013 PATRIMONIO ROUGE “CRU DES AGRIATE” DOMAINE GIACOMETTI

Domaine Giacometti is one of only two wine domaines in this uncharted area of the island. As you drive south from Saint-Florent to Calvi through the highlands, the Agriate desert is a dry, maquis- and granite-covered scrubland that unfolds below the narrow road and extends out to the sea. The Giacomettis' Niellucciu vines thrive in this harsh landscape, and the taste of their wine is unmistakable compared to other Patrimonios. It has a certain dry extract, like rosemary branches and *réglisse* roots stuck in your teeth. Cru des Agriate is about as raw as wine can get. Experience Corsica's wild side.

\$19.95 PER BOTTLE **\$215.46** PER CASE

2013 FAUSTINE ROUGE “VIEILLES VIGNES” DOMAINE COMTE ABBATUCCI

Here we have a wholly different animal, the Sciaccarellu grape grown on the granite ridgelines south of Ajaccio. Highly aromatic and medium-bodied, with a distinct taste of the wild myrtle herb that grows around the vineyards, this red has a finesse that is uncommon for any wine produced this far south. Jean-Charles AbbattuCCI has mastered this *terroir* and matched it with a nursery of heirloom varieties cultivated by his grandfather to create some of the most unique, compelling, and delicious wines in all of Europe. Faustine is the perfect introduction to his style. Warning: it is addictive.

\$37.00 PER BOTTLE **\$399.60** PER CASE

2013 CORSE FIGARI ROUGE • CLOS CANARELLI

This page presents three very different visions of Corsica. Here is the aristocrat. This wine has more place in Pomerol or Pommard than it does in the rugged granite slopes of southern Corsica. Yves Canarelli is the mastermind behind this great estate whose potential seems to know no bounds. Niellucciu is the heart of the matter here, but Sciaccarellu and other native grapes play a role. The intensity, the incredible quality of the tannin, the smooth texture, the kaleidoscope of aroma and flavor—all will keep you mesmerized and coming back for more.

\$45.00 PER BOTTLE **\$486.00** PER CASE

SURROUNDING THE ALPS

MOUNTAIN SAMPLER

by Anthony Lynch

TODAY WE VISIT THE ALPS to discover a fascinating tradition of viticulture and winemaking. Grape growing has long held a sacred place in these mountain cultures, often as a necessary means of sustenance, since little else will grow in the poor, rocky soils that dominate. Beyond providing a livelihood to Alpine farmers, the wines in this sampler—produced along the rim of the French and Italian Alps—demonstrate that these *terroirs*, defined by high altitude and steep, rugged slopes, are capable of yielding remarkable wines of unique character.

Conditions are extreme: winters are harsh, summers can be very dry, and the intense daytime sun is matched only by often-frigid nighttime temperatures. Given the potential for violent storms, grape growers—as well as vines themselves—must be cold-hardy and resilient.

What does an Alpine wine taste like? This sampler will offer you an idea via whites and reds from Savoie, Valle d'Aosta, and Alto Adige. Expect vibrant acidities, vivid aromatics, a certain “mountain structure,” and minerals galore. Enjoy a discount on this sampler and savor your journey through these breathtaking mountains.

PER BOTTLE

2014 CHIGNIN BLANC • A. & M. QUENARD	\$19.00
2013 GRÜNER VELTLINER • MANNI NÖSSING	30.00
2014 VALLE D'AOSTA FUMIN • CHÂTEAU FEUILLET	36.00
2009 ALTO ADIGE “IUGUM” • PETER DIPOLI	48.00

Normally \$133.00

SPECIAL SAMPLER PRICE

\$106

(a 20% discount)





Manni Nössing's Alpine vineyards in Bressanone, Alto Adige

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WHITE BURGUNDY

by Dixon Brooke

2013 MÂCON VILLAGES DOMAINE ROBERT-DENOGENT

There is a lot to get excited about here, especially for lovers of white Burgundy. 1) A new wine from the Roberts of Fuissé, who are the white-wine extension of Morgon's "Gang of Four." 2) A wine the Robert family plans to produce in quantity and that represents an amazing value. 3) The great new label that sports a watercolor painting of sardines. None of this would matter, of course, if the wine didn't ooze with their *savoir-faire* and style: rich and opulent, with an intense minerality and a finish that just won't quit—in short, a welcome addition to the sterling Robert-Denogent portfolio.

\$33.00 PER BOTTLE \$356.40 PER CASE

2014 CHABLIS "VIEILLES VIGNES" FRANCINE ET OLIVIER SAVARY

Here is a quick hint on technique: plunge your corkscrew directly through the wax. Lift cork slightly to break wax seal. Gently brush or blow broken bits to counter/table. Remove cork. Pour. There is no need to pull out a pickax. Savary's VV bottling is the ultimate introduction to this magical combination: Chardonnay grown in Kimmeridgian limestone and a properly dosed *élevage* in wood. The electricity and minerality imparted by the soil are balanced by a buttery creaminess that is heavenly.

\$30.00 PER BOTTLE \$324.00 PER CASE

2014 CHABLIS "VAUPRIN" ROLAND LAVANTUREUX

Roland's sons Arnaud and David are turning heads in Chablis and all over the world as they have taken this already very reliable domaine to new heights in record time. Among their many brilliant moves was isolating their best village parcel in their hometown of Lignorelles (a steep, southerly exposed slope) and bottling it separately to create this single-vineyard wine that shows off the potential of their *terroir*. They created Vauprin for their best restaurant clients in France. We were able to secure a few cases for our private clients in the USA. This is *premier cru* quality, folks.

\$35.00 PER BOTTLE \$378.00 PER CASE

RED BURGUNDY

by Chris Santini

2013 BOURGOGNE PASSETOUTGRAIN DOMAINE ROBERT CHEVILLON

Ah, the great *terroirs* of Gamay: Morgon! Moulin-à-Vent! Nuits-Saint-Georges??? Believe it or not, Gamay has been grown around the Côte d'Or for centuries and served a much greater historical purpose than cheap juice for the harvest pickers. Traditionally made Burgundian Pinot Noir, especially in the colder pre-global warming years of yore, took several years to unwind and shed its tannin and austerity. Gamay gave the growers something young and bright to drink in the meantime. *Passetoutgrain*, a word based on old local patois and generally meaning “toss it all in,” is an archaic and rapidly disappearing local appellation for field blends of Gamay and Pinot Noir that are harvested and co-fermented together. The Chevillons, world renowned for their muscular and powerful Nuits-Saint-Georges, show a softer side here. Fresh and smooth Gamay/Pinot blend from the slopes of Nuits-Saint-Georges—that’s not a phrase you hear every day. Pass the peas and *passe* the *toutgrain*, please!

\$32.00 PER BOTTLE

\$345.60 PER CASE

2013 BOURGOGNE ROUGE DOMAINE LUCIEN BOILLOT

Here’s another rare blend of a different kind: Pinot fruit from around the village of Gevrey-Chambertin in the Côte de Nuits, and some from around Volnay in the Côte de Beaune. The lush fruit and structure from Gevrey and the floral, soft touch of Volnay combine as a wonderful homage to Boillot ancestors and Burgundy at large.

\$35.00 PER BOTTLE

\$378.00 PER CASE

2013 MARANGES ROUGE 1ER CRU “LA FUSSIÈRE” • BRUNO COLIN

If you’re not yet familiar with Maranges, the southern frontier of the Côte de Beaune, let this be your introduction. Nearly all the growers here agree that La Fussièrre is the most “Maranges” of all the “Maranges.” This is what defines their *terroir*: rustic, mineral, and juicy all at once.

\$50.00 PER BOTTLE

\$540.00 PER CASE

RHÔNE

by Anthony Lynch

2014 CHÂTEAUNEUF DU PAPE BLANC

“CLOS LA ROQUÈTE”

FRÉDÉRIC & DANIEL BRUNIER

The Brunier brothers bottle this white Châteauneuf as a more accessible alternative to the exalted La Crau bottling. La Roquète is a completely different *terroir*—its sandy soils lend a softer edge to the Clairette, Grenache Blanc, and Roussanne that make up the blend. Suggestive of molten rocks with a trace of honey and wildflowers, it can age but really aims to please in its tender youth.

\$49.00 PER BOTTLE

\$529.20 PER CASE

2013 VACQUEYRAS ROUGE “CUVÉE DE LOPY”

DOMAINE LE SANG DES CAILLOUX

Serge Férigoule of Sang des Cailloux is the quintessential Provençal vigneron: his jovial, singing accent; generous, laid-back disposition; and silver handlebar mustache could come right out of a Marcel Pagnol film. His wines, accordingly, are a picture-perfect depiction of his home region, loaded with aromas of Provence and plenty of southern soul. This old-vines bottling is all about smoky *garrigue*, dense black fruit, taut leather, chewy tannins, and stones. It will provide an authentic Vacqueyras experience for many years.

\$53.00 PER BOTTLE

\$572.40 PER CASE

2013 CÔTE RÔTIE “NÈVE” • BARRUOL/LYNCH

A few words from vigneron Louis Barruol on the *lieu-dit* Nève:

Nève is a fantastic, albeit little-known, terroir of Côte Rôtie. Located in the north of Ampuis on the lower part of the slope, its soils consist of decomposed red schist. It has an extraordinary capacity to display an intensely seductive nose—complex and full of refinement. There is always an ethereal quality.

Louis works exclusively with Serine, the ancient clone of Syrah known for low yields and a lovely aroma of violets. It ferments wild, stems and all, then the wine ages fifteen months in neutral barrels before an unfinned and unfiltered bottling. The finesse here, along with its smoky, peppery, floral nuances, will resonate strongly with enthusiasts of traditionally crafted northern Rhône Syrahs.

\$75.00 PER BOTTLE

\$810.00 PER CASE

ALSATIAN BEAUTIES

by Anthony Lynch

2013 RIESLING “VIGNOBLE D’E” DOMAINE OSTERTAG

Here is an excellent introduction to the André Ostertag house style: racy yet fleshy, bone-dry, radiating a generous perfume of tropical fruit with a crunchy minerality on the mouthwatering finish. It makes for a delicious and versatile house pour, and may well serve as a provocation for trying André’s dazzling single-vineyard Rieslings.

\$28.00 PER BOTTLE

\$302.40 PER CASE

2013 PINOT GRIS “RÉSERVE” MEYER-FONNÉ

This radiant nectar should satisfy all your cravings for warmth and comfort this winter. Richly textured, yet upheld by a lively acidity that beckons sip after sip, this exquisite treat could only come from Alsace. If the slight bit of sweetness concerns you, don’t knock it ’til you try it: a hint of residual sugar makes this Pinot Gris all the more ravishing on its own, and a magical partner to creamy cheeses as well as more adventurous cuisines—ask our staff for suggestions. The balance is spot-on, and it leaves the palate with a sustained impression of flowers, honey, and sun-ripened golden plums.

\$27.00 PER BOTTLE

\$291.60 PER CASE

2013 PINOT NOIR “S” • ALBERT BOXLER

Alsace may not be the first place you turn to for fine Pinot Noir, but when it is interpreted by a master vigneron like Jean Boxler and hails from the spectacular Sommerberg *grand cru*, it is surely worth the detour. Produced just like Boxler’s electric whites—fermented spontaneously and matured in used wood—this rare gem evokes Alsace as genuinely as a hike through the Vosges Mountains on a cool, misty autumn day. Hints of dark cherry and forest berries are framed by a chiseled structure and judicious use of oak in this stately wine of remarkable depth. This Pinot does not take itself for a Burgundy, but it shines as brightly as many a red Burgundy of higher pedigree.

\$60.00 PER BOTTLE

\$648.00 PER CASE

THE MAESTRO OF MONTPEYROUX

SYLVAIN FADAT

by Dixon Brooke

SO LET'S START WITH MONTPEYROUX. It is an ancient stone village high in the Languedoc hills that has seen the centuries pass slowly, dating back to pre-Roman times. Its cobblestone streets have flowed red with wine annually since. Then there is one of our heroes, Sylvain Fadat, who owns two of the choicest vineyards in the entire appellation: the *lieux-dits* of Aupilhac and Cocalières. Sylvain's reputation was earned with Aupilhac (after which his domaine is named) before he purchased and planted Cocalières. The distinguishing factor of the broad, steep slope behind his winery known as Aupilhac is its blue marl loaded with fossil deposits. This unusual soil imbues his wine with special character. Its incredible longevity is another prized quality that has proven itself time and time again. The wine is deep, dark purple, a blend of Mourvèdre, Carignan, Syrah, Grenache, and Cinsault. It contains wildness, *régisse*, earthy loaminess, rosemary and thyme, graphite, and blue and black fruits. A big, complex mouthful of wine that simply can't be beat for the price.



MONTPEYROUX

2013 MONTPEYROUX DOMAINE D'AUPILHAC

Fresh off the boat from France—fresh from the farm, so to speak—here is Sylvain's flagship wine in all its carnal, primary glory. Full-bodied, meaty, with bold fruit and ripe yet substantial tannins, it can be enjoyed now with hearty stews, grilled and roasted meats, or pasta ragùs. It can also be aged for ten-plus years.

\$25.00 PER BOTTLE

\$270.00 PER CASE

2006 MONTPEYROUX DOMAINE D'AUPILHAC

We raided Sylvain's cellar to give you a "ten years on" experience. You will not be disappointed. The heart of darkness has given way to a sanguine, savory medley of red fruits, wildflowers, spices, and earth. It is drinking beautifully right now.

\$47.00 PER BOTTLE

\$507.60 PER CASE

WHITE BEFORE RED

PROVENCE EDITION

by Anthony Lynch

2013 CASSIS BLANC CLOS STE. MAGDELEINE

Clos Ste. Magdeleine is crafting Cassis like we have never tasted before. Vigneron Jonathan Sack has had an immediate impact since stepping into his father's shoes at the helm of the domaine, going organic in the vineyards and championing noninterventionist methods like native yeast fermentation to capture an authentic expression of this stunning seaside *terroir*. The abundant white limestone and perennial marine influence bring nerve and a coastal salinity, while lovely Mediterranean scents—*anise*, yellow flowers, citrus, peach—are delivered with newfound focus and precision. The pinpoint, sea-breeze finish and total finesse throughout are truly exceptional among Provençal whites. You'll want to try the 2013 to see how the unique *terroir* of the tiny Cassis appellation is glimmering like never before.

\$32.00 PER BOTTLE

\$345.60 PER CASE

2011 BANDOL ROUGE DOMAINE DE TERREBRUNE

Terrebrune's Bandol brings up an interesting paradox: how can a red composed of 85% Mourvèdre—a notoriously ferocious, rustic *cépage*—exhibit so much elegance and polish? I recently asked myself this very question as I brutishly sipped the newly arrived 2011, gnawing some meat off a lamb chop with barbaric impudence and pausing only to wipe my greasy hands on the pristine white tablecloth. *Terroir* and winemaking certainly have something to do with it, I thought, and then forgot about it as I savagely bit another chunk of meat off the bone and washed it down with this deep, classy Bandol, a combination of angelic grace with tooth-staining fruit and notes of briary wild herbs and gamey beast.

\$39.00 PER BOTTLE

\$421.20 PER CASE

KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT—TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Title to all wines sold by Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant passes to the buyer in California, and the buyer is solely responsible for the shipment of wines. We make no representation as to the legal rights of anyone to ship or import wines into any state outside California. In all cases, the buyer is responsible for complying with the laws and regulations, in particular those relating to the importation of alcohol, in effect in the state to which the buyer is shipping alcohol. 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.

AN ITALIAN FEAST

by Katie Dodds and Julia Issleib

Benvenuti! *How's this table for you, signori? Let's get you started with some crudités, bagna càuda, and a chilled glass of . . .*

2014 MATAÒSSU "VIGNETO REINÉ" PUNTA CRENA

The citrus notes of the Mataòssu grape contrast nicely with the olive oil and garlic in this slow-cooked dipping sauce, as the minerality provided by the ancient vines lend the wine enough structure to make it stand up to the salty anchovies. Mouthwatering, *no?*

\$27.00 PER BOTTLE **\$291.60** PER CASE

2014 VALLE D'AOSTA CORNALIN CHÂTEAU FEUILLET

Carne cruda: Paper-thin slices of Piedmontese fresh raw meat provide the backdrop, animated by citrus cream sauce and vibrant fava beans. Cornalin, a rare red varietal from just north in the Valle d'Aosta, has the straightforward freshness and light herbal spiciness to carry this delicate standard of Italian cuisine.

\$32.00 PER BOTTLE **\$345.60** PER CASE

2014 COLLI ORIENTALI FRIULANO LA VIARTE

These shiny *scampi* were still swimming in the sea this morning! They're grilled and doused in lemon, and the sweet meat welcomes the acidity of a young Friulano. La Viarte's is bright, with a touch of roundness and a nose of apricot.

\$23.00 PER BOTTLE **\$248.40** PER CASE

2013 BARBERA D'ALBA "BRICCO RAVERA" BENEVELLI PIERO

Parmigiana: Salty, fine eggplant simmers in green olive oil from November's harvest, buried under the same tangy tomato sauce and mozzarella that *Nonna* will use for Sunday pizza tomorrow. This plate pays homage to classic Italian

ingredients, as does the glass of this vivacious Barbera by its side. The year 2013 gave us feisty, mineral-driven wines made to complement *pomodori*.

\$24.00 PER BOTTLE

\$259.20 PER CASE

2013 BARBERA DEL MONFERRATO “ROSSO PIETRO” • CANTINE VALPANE

The simple Roman staple *cacio e pepe* depends on texture. With only pepper and pecorino to otherwise occupy the palate, the long strings of *tonnarelli* pasta must provide the perfect resistance and give. The chewy tannins and silky finish of Pietro Arditì's house Barbera add even more depth to your bite, and the nose brings a touch of rosebuds to the rustic course.

\$15.00 PER BOTTLE

\$162.00 PER CASE

2012 VENEZIA GIULIA VITOVSKA • KANTE

Ecco il branzino al forno! Fresh out of the Adriatic Sea, the firm white fish—grilled and accompanied by sautéed cherry tomatoes, capers, green fleshy olives, and thyme—calls for a taste of the fresh, floral, yet broad-shouldered and buttery Vitovska, born just kilometers from the coast.

A cross between Malvasia and Prosecco, the grape took its origin in a small area surrounding the winery of Renaissance man Edi Kante, one among the few vintners who saved it from extinction in the 1980s. Today it's the most widely planted grape in the area.

\$35.00 PER BOTTLE

\$378.00 PER CASE

2011 BAROLO “GIANETTO” • GUIDO PORRO

Made from younger vines than Porro's other Baroli, the Gianetto is accessible a bit earlier than its siblings. Alongside the build of a great Barolo, softer tannins, spices, and dark ripe fruit lead to a youthful and mouthwatering finish. The perfect companion to *arrosto alle nocciole*: the high acidity will complement the tasty veal and creamy sauce as pleasantly as the hints of tobacco and licorice pair with the chopped roasted hazelnuts on top.

\$47.00 PER BOTTLE

\$507.60 PER CASE

*We hope you enjoyed your meal! Can we get you anything else?
Dolci? Caffè? Grappa?*

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AN EPIC VOUVRAY

by Dixon Brooke

2012 VOUVRAY “LE PORTAIL” CHAMPALOU

Kermit and I have had many discussions about the current state of affairs in Vouvray. Where are all the great wines? This once-thriving region of scores of masterful vintners seems very quiet these days. One wine stands pretty tall and proud to us: the Champalou family’s single-vineyard masterpiece, Le Portail. Planted on a chalk plateau right outside of their home and winery, the vines are pampered daily. The wine is aged in older *demi-muids*, does its malolactic fermentation, and is bottled without filtration. Many used to be made this way; almost none are today. This dry Chenin Blanc combines unctuous texture with chalky minerality and nervy acidity to create one hell of a classy package. Delicious now, it will continue to provide pleasure for more than a decade.

\$38.00 PER BOTTLE

\$410.40 PER CASE
