

KERMIT LYNCH
WINE MERCHANT

SEPTEMBER 2018



Nicole Chanrion

© Gail Skoff

DISCOVER ROSSESE
NEW ARRIVALS FROM DULINE
ANALOG BURGUNDY IN A DIGITAL AGE

FORTY YEARS WITH NICOLE CHANRION

by Chris Santini

IT MUST NOT HAVE BEEN an easy ride, but Nicole did it. Gone from an unknown young woman in a decidedly man's world (Beaujolais of yesteryear) to the sage, ever-cheerful *vigneronne* the locals like to call “*La Patronne de la Côte*” (“The Boss of the Côte”). While nobody threw any spokes in the wheel when she began, most did look on with a bit of condescending amusement, waiting for what they believed would be her inevitable failure. And while many wondered in disbelief how a woman could possibly drive a tractor, much less make a decent wine, one man never had a doubt and offered nothing but unwavering support: Nicole's father, Raymond. It was he who took her out as a young child to work in the family vineyard, who taught her at an early age how to taste and appreciate fine Beaujolais. Although it was neither imposed on nor planned for Nicole to take over the family vines and winery, once Raymond began to age and fell ill, she decided to step in for good, some forty years ago. Small in stature, strong in presence, she forged ahead and by 1980 was alone on the domaine and running the show entirely on her own. Since then, Nicole has been one of those rare growers who basically do a single wine but do it really, really well. Her vineyards are all in a big block, right behind her house on the volcanic slope of Mont Brouilly, from which she fills five large casks each year of bright purple, heavenly scented, juicy Côte-de-Brouilly. Year in and year out, it is tremendously reliable, fun, and age-worthy. In fact, I'll let you in on a little secret. As you know, we have some heavy hitters and big stars in our Beaujolais portfolio, with earth-shatteringly great wines. And yet, when it comes time to put in Kermit's orders for his personal drinking cellar here in France (where he could just as easily order many of the hippest, hottest wines of the moment), more often than not he simply requests a few cases of Nicole's Côte-de-Brouilly.



Upon arriving in France recently, Kermit

checked in on what he'd ordered for his cellar so far.

“Have I ordered the last vintage from Chanrion yet?” he asked. “Hardly anyone outside of her little village has heard of her, but she's as good as anyone.”

It has been quite a forty-year trip—and it's far from over. I raise my glass to forty more!

2017 CÔTE-DE-BROUILLY

\$23.00 PER BOTTLE

\$248.40 PER CASE

SAUVIGNON BLANC

by Jennifer Oakes

I LANDED MY FIRST restaurant management job as a teenager, and the small chain’s management conference took place at a historic winery in Napa where the waitstaff simply assumed I was of drinking age. At our sumptuous catered lunch in the lush summer vineyard, I was trying to act the proper, knowing adult when we were poured glasses of “Fumé Blanc,” the name coined to differentiate California’s generally oak-tinged effort at Sauvignon Blanc. I practically spun out of my seat, excitedly badgering a colleague to explain this glorious nectar, the first non-Boone’s Farm wine I’d ever tasted. My palate has matured considerably since

then, but thankfully I can still be surprised by Sauvignon Blanc.

Grown in all four corners of the earth, it comes in as many styles and flavor profiles as the soils and

vintners’ creativity can supply. From the precipitously steep limestone slopes of Italy’s Alto

Adige to the pastoral green Loire Valley, these acid-driven, obligingly food-friendly and fruit-forward whites can be your table’s best companion. What other grape has the versatility to pair with raw oysters, fish tacos, ripe and creamy chèvre, or Thai basil fried rice with equal aplomb? Want something stony, smoky, and shatteringly crisp? Check. How about silky, honeyed, and chock-full of sweet/tart fruit? You got it. You know, I believe we might have a perfect Sauvignon Blanc for every occasion.



SAUVIGNON

PER BOTTLE PER CASE

2017 SAUVIGNON • SESTI \$25.00 \$270.00

Soft, pliable, and plush, with aromas of sweet summer nectarines and only 12% alcohol!

2017 REUILLY BLANC “LES PIERRES PLATES”

DOMAINE DE REUILLY 22.00 237.60

Flinty limestone, Granny Smith apple, lemongrass, and lime rind—juicy and refreshing.

2015 SAUVIGNON ALTO ADIGE “VOGLAR”

PETER DIPOLI 34.00 367.20

Bursting with exotic, tropical guava and lychee, with zestiness and minerality for days.

DISCOVER ROSSESE

by Anthony Lynch

2016 RIVIERA LIGURE DI PONENTE ROSSESE “ISASCO” • PUNTA CRENA

Over a cool glass of bright, juicy, peppery 2016 Rossese, I phoned Paolo Ruffino, who carries the flag for the Punta Crena estate after more than five hundred continuous years of familial wine production along the idyllic Ligurian coast. What, I asked, makes a great Rossese?

For Rossese, there are two important factors. First is location: Rossese must be planted at least 200 meters above sea level, and it needs plenty of sun to ripen properly. Second, it must grow in soil of very low fertility. The variety is highly productive, and it requires poor soils to restrict yields and make interesting wines.

The Ruffinos planted top-quality Rossese clones from Dolceacqua (see below) in their Isasco vineyard, where terraced slopes of *terra rossa* (red clay) overlook the Mediterranean perched at 240 meters elevation. All the care, attentiveness, and backbreaking labor required to farm this site result in one of the most joyful and lighthearted reds you will encounter. Taking a sip is akin to crunching into a just-ripe cherry tomato, its nectar bursting onto the palate with sweet, spicy, piquant goodness. Serve it when you would normally open a white but feel like drinking a red.

\$28.00 PER BOTTLE

\$302.40 PER CASE

2015 ROSSESE DI DOLCEACQUA “POGGIO PINI” • TENUTA ANFOSSO

Flashback to 1888 on the steep mountainsides around Dolceacqua, not far from Ventimiglia. The Ligurian Alps, which emerge abruptly from the Mediterranean at the French-Italian border, are completely covered with vines—three thousand hectares of vines, to be exact, the majority clinging to near-vertical, rocky slopes terraced with dry stone walls. The Poggio Pini vineyard has just been replanted following the devastating phylloxera epidemic, its half-hectare of Rossese newly grafted onto resistant American rootstock.

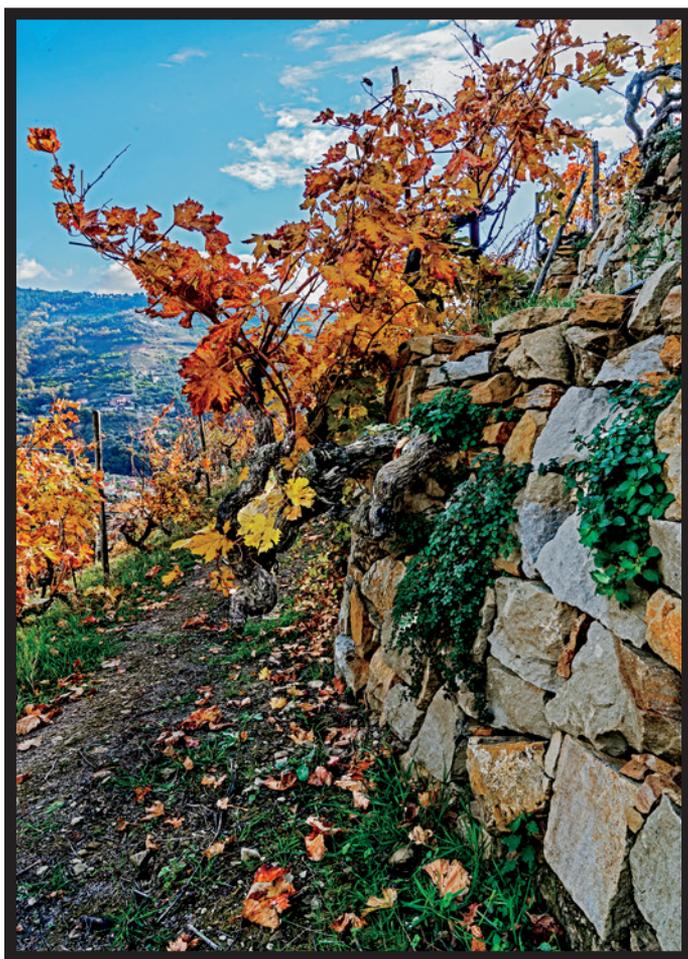
Now fast-forward to present day: only about eighty sparse hectares of Rossese dot the dramatic landscape. One of Liguria’s historically acclaimed wines once praised by the likes of Napoleon and numerous popes, Rossese di Dolceacqua fell victim to urbanization and mechanization over the latter half of the twentieth century—farmers deemed its precipitous inclines too difficult to farm and abandoned them to seek fortune elsewhere.

The Anfosso family, proprietors of the breathtaking Poggio Pini vineyard, persisted. Alessandro Anfosso now farms this *cru*, proud to uphold the tradition his ancestors established over the five preceding generations.

The 130-year-old vines at Poggio Pini give his greatest wine: a deep, silken Rossese that marries floral, smoky, and spice elements, culminating in a mouth-watering, stony finish. Equally adapted to fish, meat, vegetable, and mushroom dishes, this red is of unrivaled gastronomic value. But most of all, it is a riveting monument to one hell of a *terroir*, where the Rossese grape reaches heights that would make Alessandro's ancestors, weary after a long day in their vineyards, proud.

\$45.00 PER BOTTLE

\$486.00 PER CASE



The Poggio Pini vineyard

© Gail Skoff

SUPERB NEW ARRIVALS FROM VIGNAI DA DULINE

by *Dustin Soiseth*

THE ARRIVAL of a new producer is always an exciting event here in our Berkeley shop, not unlike the heady days of a new relationship. Everyone is over the moon, staff and clients alike. But this feeling doesn't last forever. New wines arrive, vintages pass, and the bloom comes off the rose. Mignon McLaughlin wrote a famous aphorism about relationships: "A successful marriage requires falling in love many times, always with the same person." This trait is also useful in the wine business, and with our producers it's frankly pretty easy. We're now four years into our relationship with the wines of Duline, and I'm just as smitten as I was the first time I tasted them.



2017 FRIULI ORIENTALI PINOT GRIGIO "RONCO PITOTTI"

If I had to pick one word to describe Duline's Pinot Grigio, I think I would go with "complete." It seems like the perfect glass of white wine, and I can't imagine changing a single thing. Or maybe I would go with "delicious." From the flowers on the nose to the fruit on the palate, and on through the succulent finish, it's simply a joy to drink. You know what? After careful consideration, I think I'll go with two words: "completely delicious."

\$45.00 PER BOTTLE \$486.00 PER CASE

2017 FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA MALVASIA "CHIOMA INTEGRALE"

Both the name "Chioma Integrale" and the drawing of proprietor Lorenzo Mocchiutti on the label refer to Duline's practice of not trimming the vine shoots during the growing season. Instead, each vine is given the freedom to find its own balance, and that balance, in turn, finds its way into this bottle. It has body but still refreshes. It is crisp but not austere. There's fruit, but it's not cloying. And then there's the nose. Lorenzo says that when Malvasia Istriana is perfectly ripe, there's a whisper of lavender. It's quite an experience.

\$45.00 PER BOTTLE \$486.00 PER CASE



Lorenzo Mocchiutti

© Joanie Karapetian

PREMIER CRU WHITE BURGUNDY

by Emily Spillmann

2016 MONTAGNY 1ER CRU JEAN-MARC VINCENT

“A little bit of luck, a little bit a gift” is how Jean-Marc Vincent describes the opportunity to work with grapes from the lesser-known appellation of Montagny. At the southernmost end of the Côte Chalonnaise, Montagny produces wines that have the roundness of southern Burgundies while maintaining the balancing, bracing acidity so appreciated in the Côte de Beaune. Among the Vincents’ *premier crus*, this one distinguishes itself by its charming accessibility and subtle tension that supports but doesn’t dominate an irresistible fleshiness.

\$46.00 PER BOTTLE **\$496.80** PER CASE

2016 PULIGNY-MONTRACHET 1ER CRU “LA GARENNE” • DOMAINE LARUE

Have you ever tried *premier cru* Puligny Montrachet at the hands of a Saint Aubin star like Didier Larue? The grapes come from a vineyard high above the hamlet of Blagny, where there are only thirty centimeters between the limestone soil and the bedrock. Think about that for a moment. Thirty measly centimeters of pebbly earth before those hardy vines anchor themselves in whatever mineral-rich cracks and crevices they come across, gleaned scarce nutrients and suffering through droughts to produce highly concentrated grapes with amazing acidity and verve. You’ll find all the purity and energy for which Larue’s wines are known, plus the depth and richness typical of Puligny.

\$89.00 PER BOTTLE **\$961.20** PER CASE

2016 PULIGNY-MONTRACHET 1ER CRU “LES PERRIÈRES” • DOMAINE BOILLOT

When a little parcel of Perrières was for sale in 2006, Pierre Boillot hedged his offer by proposing a parcel of his Volnay vines to the seller. Despite a series of unlikely events involving a committee of proud Puligny residents who clamored to protect the parcel from an “outsider,” Pierre’s offer turned out to be too good to pass up, and he acquired the vines. This white is a rare pearl: floral on the nose, with volume and roundness on the palate, and a long, long finish.

\$154.00 PER BOTTLE **\$1,663.20** PER CASE

ANALOG BURGUNDY IN A DIGITAL AGE

by Will Meinberg

THERE IS NO DISPUTING the advancements made possible by the digital age, but it seems digitization has stripped away some soul. The warm sound of a vinyl record and the rich colors of film bring out something innately human with their subtle imperfections. While a number of vineyards are being managed by apps and winemaking decisions are made by computers, here are Burgundies that are still very “analog.”

2014 NUITS-SAINT-GEORGES 1ER CRU “LES RONCIÈRES” DOMAINE ROBERT CHEVILLON

This is Pinot Noir captured on vintage color film. The brilliant fruit and lean tannin are framed and focused to make for a beautifully composed Burgundy. Les Roncières seems to embody everything traditional and authentic in the region, which is no surprise coming from the masters of Nuits-Saint-Georges.

\$121.00 PER BOTTLE \$1,306.80 PER CASE

2015 MARANGES 1ER CRU “LA FUSSIÈRE” BRUNO COLIN

Bruno Colin has faithfully upheld his family’s traditional practices to cultivate profound Pinot Noir from one of the best vineyard sites in Maranges. This richly textured, intensely aromatic wine is a true example of sturdy and rustic Burgundy that can be made only by the hands of an artisan.

\$59.00 PER BOTTLE \$637.20 PER CASE

2016 GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN 1ER CRU “LES CHERBAUDES” • DOMAINE BOILLOT

Pierre Boillot holds firmly to traditional practices and refrains from many modern winemaking techniques to produce a wine of substantial soul. Like an analog waveform etched into vinyl, this wine is the truest expression of its *terroir*. With vibrant fruit and a silky finish, it’s sure to age gracefully while gaining vintage soul in the years to come.

\$143.00 PER BOTTLE \$1,544.40 PER CASE

WHITE BEFORE RED

• VALUE EDITION •

by Maeve Decouvelaere



2016 PINOT BLANC KUENTZ-BAS

Pinot Blanc is one of my go-to cooking wines. To be clear, I like to enjoy a glass or two *while* I'm cooking! I'll often polish off a bottle with gathered company while we chop, roast, and chat away, nibbling on cheese and saucisson. Sometimes a cup of wine will even end up in a pot, its flavor melding with our vegetables of choice. Clean and crisp, undeniably Alsatian and highly versatile, this stony, bone-dry white will certainly whet any appetite and keep you coming back for more.

\$14.95 PER BOTTLE

\$161.46 PER CASE

2017 CORBIÈRES ROUGE DOMAINE DE FONTSAINTE

After a bottle of white, naturally, a bottle of red. The bright, light Pinot Blanc may leave your palate watering for something lush and peppery. Fear not, we have just the thing to make those taste buds sing! Fontsaïnte's Corbières *rouge* has long been a staple here at Kermit Lynch—for good reason. Dark berry fruit, smooth tannins, and pleasant spice take this crowd-pleasing red to the next level. Pair it with roast chicken, burgers, or, if you're feeling particularly French, a cassoulet. With a bottle of this Corbières *rouge*, you and yours will be sipping and smiling all night.



\$16.00 PER BOTTLE

\$172.80 PER CASE

ORGANIC TUSCAN SANGIOVESE

by Dixon Brooke

2016 TOSCANO ROSSO “MONTELECCIO” • SESTI

Sesti, one of our Brunello growers in Montalcino, releases this red first to market every year. Named for their “hill of oaks” south of Montalcino, it is a blend of the fruit that doesn’t go into their Rosso di Montalcino and Brunello bottles. The (no longer a) secret is that it is usually even more delicious upon release than its nobler brothers, who need extra time to blossom. Aromatic, vibrant, well built, with an inherent energy and poise, vintage 2016 shows significant cellar promise for those so inclined.

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

2015 CHIANTI CLASSICO • CASTAGNOLI

Castagnoli is a beautiful and majestic site in Castellina-in-Chianti, on the western edge of this ancient growing region between Florence and Siena founded in 1716. Their Chianti has a simple but important secret sauce: pure, organic, head-trained Sangiovese grown in *galestro* schist on steep, terraced hillsides facing the sea. It is one of the most complete, and delicious, expressions of Sangiovese that I know of. Vintage 2015 has provided a truly exciting wine that delights on all levels. Full, lush, savory, fresh, and invigorating, this wine will provide much pleasure for many years.



\$29.00 PER BOTTLE **\$313.20** PER CASE

2014 CHIANTI CLASSICO RISERVA PODERE CAMPRIANO

Luca Polga and Elena Lapini from Podere Campriano in Greve-in-Chianti love to eat great food, drink delicious wine, and enjoy life. They are some of the most fun and gracious hosts you could ever imagine, and they purposely make the type of Sangiovese that you want to consume with abandon. Their Chianti is always irresistibly tasty, with soft edges, inviting aromas, and wonderful flavor. The Riserva comes from a parcel surrounded by wild forest, and it is the most pungent and soil-driven of all their outstanding Chiantis. Just take a whiff and imagine the black truffles being gingerly fished out of the moist earth to accompany a Campriano feast . . .

\$42.00 PER BOTTLE **\$453.60** PER CASE

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Over the years I've run into some amusing tidbits on Nuits-Saint-Georges in the French wine literature. One source decided that geographically Nuits-Saint-Georges is the rognon (kidney) of Burgundy. That would make Chambertin the brain, Santenay the toe, and Beaune not admirably placed at all.

—KERMIT LYNCH, 1984

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