

Seasonal Tasting May 15th 2023

WHITES

Birgit Eichinger Gruner Veltliner Ried StrasserGaisberg Erste Lager 2020 £44

In the heart of continental Europe lies Austria, a reasonably small wine producing country that is enjoying a period of growth and higher standing amongst wine lovers around the world. The best examples of Austrian wines are found in the heartlands of Wachau, Wagram and Kremstal, all in Niederosterreich; the largest wine growing region in the country. It encompasses eight separate sub-regions that stretch from Wachau in the west to Carnuntum in the east.

In true continental style, winters are harsh and cold but summers are generally hot and dry. Most of the best white wine vineyards are moderated by proximity to the Danube river. In particular, Wachau is UNESCO world heritage approved, and famed for its beautiful steep terraced vineyards that flank the Danube valley. Here, as in Wagram and Kremstal, the top Rieslings (usually the most concentrated and intense) are designated “Smaragd” while the more moderate examples are called “Federspiel”, and the lightest “Steinfeder”.

Most commonly planted in Austria, Gruner Veltliner is seeing something of a renaissance at present. Gruner Veltliner produces a range of styles from soft and light to more complex, mineral age worthy style. The wines are often distinguished by a peppery, celery salt character.

Loire Anjou Blanc 2018 £23

LocationThe Anjou appellation area extends across 128 communes in Maine-et-Loire, 14 in Deux Sèvres and 9 in Vienne. The Anjou regional AOC also includes a number of sub-regional and communal AOCs.

Vineyard area: Whites: 500 ha.

HistoryThe monasteries played a major role in helping to develop the Anjou vineyards, as each had its own enclosed plot of vines. When Henry Plantagenet became King Henry II of England in 1154, the royal court began to serve Anjou wines, and continued to do so even after his death – so for nearly a thousand years, the crowned heads of France and England had a part in boosting recognition of Loire Valley wines. As a result, the vineyards expanded during the 16th and 17th centuries from their original location on the banks of the Loire further towards its tributaries.

Soils: The appellation area comprises two distinct regions:

- Anjou Noir, or ‘Anjou sur Schistes’ on the dark, schist based soil of the south-eastern edge of the Massif Armoricaïn,- the larger of the areas;
- Anjou Blanc, or ‘Anjou sur Tuffeau,’ a smaller area of lighter-colored soils – altered chalk (tuffeau) at the south-western extremity of the Paris Basin.

Climate: Temperate oceanic; mainly dry with minor variations in temperature – the proverbial “douceur angevine” the mild tranquillity of Anjou.

Average annual production over the last 5 years 70,400 hl., **Whites** 19,000 hl,

Grape varieties: White: Chenin (80 % minimum), Sauvignon, Chardonnay

Growing practices: Planting density: 4,000-5,000 vines per hectare Pruning: single or double guyot.

White: Golden yellow in colour, ranging from pale to intense; concentrated nose of honey and apricot (from schist soils) or florals (Sauvignon and/or Chardonnay); elegant, velvety mouthfeel. Serve at 10°C (6° for sparkling wines). Most Anjou AOC wines are best drunk within 2 to 3 years.

Goes well with: Lobster, scallops, turbot, vegetable casserole, chicken with wild mushrooms and cream, lamb tagine.

GREYWACKE SAUVIGNON BLANC 2022 £39

TASTING NOTE Aromas of cassis and passionfruit are first to emerge, with guava, crisp pear and white peach adding a delicious fruit salad intricacy. On the palate, it's generous yet refreshing, with ripe pineapple and a lime sherbet zing, layered with elderflower and hints of citrus blossom. A classic example of Greywacke's interpretation of the famous Marlborough style – ripe, textural and scrumptious – with the volume turned well down.

VITICULTURE Fruit was sourced from several prime vineyard sites in Marlborough's Southern Valleys and the central Wairau Plains (specifically Woodbourne, Renwick and Rapaura). Soil types vary from the young alluvial soils of Rapaura and Renwick, which contain high proportions of New Zealand's ubiquitous greywacke river stones, to the older and denser clay-loams of the Southern Valleys. The majority of the vineyards were trained using the divided Scott Henry canopy management system, with the balance on a two- or three-cane VSP (vertical shoot positioning) trellis.

WINEMAKING Harvested largely by machine during cool (often cold) night-time conditions, the sauvignon blanc grapes were trucked to our winery in the Omaka Valley, where they were lightly pressed to yield a modest volume of high-quality juice. The juice was cold-settled and racked prior to fermentation, which was primarily carried out in stainless steel tanks with cultured yeast. A portion of the juice was allowed to undergo spontaneous indigenous yeast fermentation in old oak barrels.

All individual vineyard batches were left on lees and kept separate until late June, when the blend was assembled. The wine was bottled in mid-August with alcohol 13.5%, pH 3.24 and acidity 6.8 g/l.

REDS

Chile - Apaltagua Syrah 2010 £19

The most remarkable aspect of this wine could be said to be its price! Lower than the Club wines, which are generally thought of as representing the basic prices of Coffee Room Wine List prices.

From the Maule valley region of Chile, roughly half of the way down the North-South extent of Chile.

This wine is deep ruby red in colour. The tannins have softened out and I would not recommend keeping this wine any longer before drinking it. It has a lovely plummy character that makes it absolutely ready to drink.

There are currently only 10 bottles left in the Athenaeum cellar! So that may be just as well in view of what I have said. Not the greatest wine we have but one of the best for value for money.

Australia - Sidewood Estate Shiraz Adelaide Hills 2015 £48

So we are here in South Australia, in a climate somewhat cooler than Barossa. Fermentation takes place in 100% French oak barrels. It is a beautiful example of a rich New World Shiraz, with that typical spicy, savoury character that is so special and can withstand strong meat flavours, sauces and cheeses. In my view this is an ideal time to drink this wine – it has a ripe maturity and I would not expect it to improve further.

The maker claims aromas of “*dark plum, blackcurrant, bitter chocolate*” and it is the chocolate which for me characterises Shiraz.

France - Domaine Jean-Jacques Girard, Burgundy, Chorey-Les-Beaune 2019 £43

This wine is actually the new Club Red Burgundy and I would be interested to know what you think of it. We had to pay a bit more for it than originally intended but are pleased with the quality.

2019 was a remarkably good Burgundy vintage (9/10 - Berry Bros.), with previously unseen levels of ripeness and acidity.

Chorey-lès-Beaune in the Côte de Beaune is a commune just to the north of the town of Beaune, just before you reach the Côte-d'Or in the north of Burgundy.

It produces very good value wines that are placed price-wise between basic Bourgogne Pinot Noir and Premiers Crus like Savigny-lès-Beaune and Volnay.

Professor James Crabbe (Chairman) and Mr. Richard Mair (Member), Wine Committee.