

**TERROIR WINE MERCHANT Newsletter**  
**Spring 2008**

**America's first wine merchant devoted exclusively to natural and organically produced wines.**

**About Terroir**

Terroir is a wine merchant with a definite point of view: we believe that wine is at its best when it is produced according to traditional methods and reflects a specific sense of place. Almost every wine we offer is made by hand, from organic grapes, and without the use of adjuncts, additives or chemicals. Our ever-expanding selection features wines from France, Italy, Austria, Germany, California, and more. In addition, we offer a tasting bar where about a dozen selections are available by the glass every day, and everything we have in stock is available by the bottle. Artisan cheeses and charcuterie are available to accompany your tasting. Cool music, too.

Drop by for a visit. Each of us--Dagan, Guillaume, and Luc--is ready to share our enthusiasm and knowledge of hand crafted wines to help you find something to suit your tastes.

Highlights in this Newsletter:

- Wines from France's Jura
- Two Italian white wines far from the ordinary
- Robert Michel's wines from in and around Cornas
- Loire Valley red wines
- Under \$20 values

**WINES OF THE JURA**

**Jacques Puffeney Arbois**

The wines of the Jura (in eastern France near the Swiss border) are, to say the least, not well known in the U.S. While Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are grown in the region, many wines are made from unfamiliar varietals (such as Savagnin, Poulsard, and Trousseau), and some white wines are crafted in a deliberately oxidized style (think sherry-like flavors).

For someone who doesn't know what to expect, a particular bottle may offer up a hefty dose of surprise. We feel that these wines should not be missed and are happy to guide the curious towards a new tasting experience. One of our favorite producers, Jacques Puffeney, makes his wines in Arbois, one of the appellations of the region. Puffeney is regarded by his fellow Jura winemakers as a leader in the area--he's been nicknamed the "pope" of Arbois. As is the case for almost all of our wines, Puffeney's Arbois are made from organically grown grapes and vinified according to traditional methods.

One wine that's easy to like is Puffeney's **2002 Arbois "Melon Queue Rouge"** (loosely translated as "grape with a red tail"--\$23.50). This variety of Chardonnay is distinguished by a small pink region at one end of each berry. The wine is fermented in stainless steel then moved to wood for 18-24 months of aging before being bottled. Bearing the stamp of its unique Arbois terroir, if you enjoy fresh, non-oaky Chardonnay you will have no difficulty appreciating the taste of this wine. Puffeney does not fine or filter his wines; perhaps that shows in the juicy snap and volume of this delicious white wine.

Puffeney's **2004 Arbois "Poulsard"** (again, that's the name of the grape varietal--\$ ) is one of our favorite reds: light, lean, and amazingly mineral with beautiful notes of red fruits and a perfect acidity. This, along with some Beaujolais wines we carry, is a great summer red. It's what I might drink on a sunny Sunday in Dolores Park--if I had Sundays off!

Note--for something far out of the ordinary ask us about our selection of wines made in the Jura "sous voile," or under a veil of yeast cells. These wines are intentionally exposed to air as they barrel age, taking on a tangy, almost salty-like quality that draws visitors from all over France for the annual Jura wine fair held each winter.

## WILD ITALIAN WHITE WINES

### **2006 Suori Cistercensi "Coenobium" Vino da Tavola di Lazio \$23.00**

The sisters of the Cistercian order based at this monastery in Lazio organically cultivate their vines in Vitorchiano, a hillside town about an hour north of Rome. The wine is composed primarily of the Verdicchio grape which is supplemented with small percentages of Grachetto, Malvasia, and Trebbiano. The vinification occurs in stainless steel tanks but one of the critical secrets behind the special character of this wine is that Giampiero Bea (son of Paolo Bea, the remarkable grower in Montefalco) is there to help guide Coenobium into bottle. The extended lees contact used by the Beas for their own "Santa Chiara" white wine is in vivid evidence here. The result is a wine of stunning concentration with pronounced herbal, floral, and citrus notes, fine density on the palate, and a classic minerality to the complex finish. This wine is unfiltered and unfiltered and bears a particularly rich, gold-green color which announces an idiosyncratic but compelling treat. Not your typical Italian white wine!

### **2002 Radikon "Oslavje" Friuli \$55.00 (500 ml.)**

One of those "weird wines" that we love so much at Terroir! Long maceration on the grape skins, no temperature control, no sulphur...this wine is made in the vineyard, not in a lab. "Oslavje" is a blend of Chardonnay, Sauvignon blanc, and Pinot Gris; Radikon the man is a blend of purist, perfectionist, and vinus visionary. Orange in color, this is a tannic white wine with buckets of spices, white flowers, and apples on the nose. A perfect match for aged cheeses or any hearty, rich Friulian dish such as creamy chicken with potatoes (we said hearty!). Be prepared for something quite out of the ordinary.

## THE WINES OF ROBERT MICHEL

Robert Michel is the fourth generation of the Michel family to work as a vigneron in the village of Cornas. He vinified his first wines in 1975, and gradually increased his vineyard holdings to the point that this tiny domaine ultimately encompassed slightly over 5 hectares. The vineyard property is concentrated within the appellation of Cornas. Of the four hectares within Cornas, 1 1/2 are located within the formidable parcel of "La Geynale." The bulk of the remainder is split between "Les Chaillots" and "Le Quartier de Renard," the grapes from which are used to produce the "Cuvee des Coteaux." Michel also holds a small parcel in the village of Sarras, north of Cornas, from which he produces a St. Joseph Rouge from the "Bois des Blaches" vineyard site.

This part of the Northern Rhone Valley is dedicated to Syrah, and this is arguably one of the varietal's finest terroirs. All grapes are harvested manually. After a brief cold maceration, they are pressed and alcoholic fermentation takes place in stainless steel or cement tanks. Later, the wine is racked into both small and mid-sized barrels to age (only a small proportion of which are new). The wines imported by Neal Rosenthal are bottled without filtration. The St. Joseph "Bois des Blaches" is usually bottled 20 months after harvest. Both cuvees of Cornas see 24 months of barrel aging. Michel retired at the end of the 2006 vintage, so there is not much time left to acquire these traditional Northern Rhone Valley masterpieces.

### **2002 Cuvee des Coteaux Cornas \$XX.XX**

A challenging year in the Rhone, there were rainstorms around harvest time. Conscientious vignerons such as Michel were nevertheless able to make wines of perhaps additional delicacy.

### **2003 Cuvee des Coteaux Cornas \$XX.XX**

#### **2003 Cornas "La Geynale" \$XX.XX**

What a contrast compare to the prior vintage. Perhaps the hottest year in memory in the Northern Rhone Valley (or all of Europe for that matter), 2003 has marked many wines with an extraordinary degree of ripeness. These wines...

### **2004 St. Joseph "Le Bois des Blaches" \$XX.XX**

A more classical vintage, the '04 St. Joseph...

## FRENCH SPARKLING WINES (OTHER THAN CHAMPAGNE)

Everyone is familiar with the wines of Champagne to one degree or another, but many other fantastic sparkling wines are produced in France. While the grapes used to make Champagne are usually Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier,

vignerons throughout the rest of the country may make their wines from grapes better suited to their local conditions. All of our sparkling wines are made using traditional, sustainable practices in both the vineyard and the winery. With so much flavorless, monolithic, overly acidic Champagne being pumped out by the mega-producers in the appellation itself, the quality and value offered by these alternatives come as a relief and are in our view well worth a bit of exploration.

**2002 Huet Vouvray Brut \$31.00**

Fantastic; the sparkling wine we give our highest recommendation. Made by Noel Pinguet of Chenin blanc grapes grown under biodynamic conditions in perhaps the Loire Valley's greatest white wine vineyards, the Huet Brut is fresh, complex, and certainly ageworthy.

**Stephane Tissot Cremant du Jura \$XX.XX**

Chardonnay-based wine from the Jura region, not far from the Swiss Alps. Tissot is another vigneron in the Jura making terrific wine that almost nobody knows.

**Dirlor Cremant d'Alsace \$**

All Riesling, all organic, all bubbly, and all fantastic.

### LOIRE VALLEY RED WINES

The Loire Valley is home to a variety of dedicated winemakers using organic and biodynamic practices to produce wines of genuine appeal and value, even in the era of a wimpy U.S. dollar. Somehow, the best of these wines mix seriously high quality with a dose of fun. Frequently using grape varieties that may be slightly outside of the mainstream (how familiar are you with Pineau d'Aunis, Cabernet Franc, Grolleau, Gamay, and Cot?), our producers are crafting fresh, fruit-filled, and food friendly wines as well as flat-out, age-worthy stunners.

These wines are not oaky, raisiny, pruny, or ponderous, and because of their appealing natural acidities they tend to be very accomodating when it comes to matching with various cuisines (they may be some of the only red wines that really complement Asian food). We are big fans of Loire Valley red wines and we've found that most people who taste them at the wine bar really enjoy them. Winemaking practices have improved by leaps and bounds in the region as abandoned vineyards have been reclaimed by young winemakers focusing on quality in an area long known for emphasizing quantity. Some of the best known appellations in the region include Bourgueil, Chinon, and Saumur Champigny, but don't be afraid to try wines labeled as Touraine or even Vin de Table.

**Thierry Puzelat**

Thierry Puzelat is the younger of the two brothers who run Clos du Tue Boeuf, their family estate. When nature dealt the estate several difficult years of tiny crops caused by bad weather, revenues were tight and Thierry would have liked to expand by renting or buying more vineyards. His brother did not want to add more vineyard and cellar work to his already heavy schedule so Thierry started a négociant business, set up his own separate winery, and sourced excellent vineyards and grape growers from whom to buy grapes. Convinced that good wine can only be made from healthy grapes, he has selected vine growers who farm their plots organically, in biodynamically for some. He now offers a range of local wines, both red and white, from Touraine and Cheverny. (We met Thierry in April--although, um, fun loving, he is a dedicated, serious vigneron.)

One of his most reliable sources for great grapes is an estate tended in bio-dynamie by a neighbor and friend of the owners of Clos Roche Blanche (who also make extraordinary wines) in the hamlet of La Tesnière in Touraine. From vines growing on a soil of clay with silex over hard limestone, Puzelat buys varietals that have a long history in the area--even if you may never have heard of them. One such, Pineau d'Aunis, is an obscure, ancient varietal that still survives, most of the time in blends with other grapes. Even when vinified as part of a blend, it imparts its deliciously refreshing, spicy, lively and aromatic characteristics.

**2004 "Telquel" \$19.00**

"Telquel" means "as it is" in French, and sounds a lot like "teckel," the French word for dachshund, thus explaining why there's a drawing of a wiener dog on the label. This blend of Gamay, Pineau d'Aunis, and Cot is simply delicious. Spicy, fruity, absolutely gulpable--this wine disappears way too quickly. We have customers who seem to have developed an addiction to this wine.

**2005 ----**

## **Catherine and Pierre Breton**

What more can we add to what has been written about the Bretons? Standard bearers--no, make that superstars--in the world of French natural wines, their bottlings of Chinon and Bourgueil (neighboring Loire Valley appellations devoted to red wines made from Cabernet Franc) are on most of the best wine lists in Paris. The wines are consistently well-crafted, characteristic (or perhaps that should be characterful), and their most serious wines are absolutely ageworthy. (Check out the Bretons' website: <http://www.domainebreton.net>.)

### **2005 Bourgueil "Clos Sénéchal" \$23.00**

The 2005 vintage was remarkable, bringing ripe (but not overripe) fruit with plenty of balance and substance. The Bourgueil 'Clos Sénéchal' is made from vines 15-30 years old, growing in clay/limestone/chalky soil on a slope with ideal southern exposure. Hand harvested, vinified in open wooden vats, and bottled without fining or filtration, this wine is already seductive, but if carefully stored could last a decade at least. Full of dark berry fruit and a touch of tobacco, it offers outstanding value. While we're not ones to make wine drinking decisions based on what appears in the wine press we do concede that sometimes a wine journalist nails it, expressing what we wish we'd said ourselves. John Gilman, in "View from the Cellar," had this to say about this extraordinary wine:

*The Clos Sénéchal is one of the very finest vineyards in Bourgueil, with its ideal exposition and its excellent base of argilo-calcaire soils. To give some idea of the state of the market for Bourgueil these days, there are significant tracts of this great vineyard that are either fallow or in utter disrepair, as many of the second tier owners here do not find it economical to replant or take proper care of their vines. It is a pity, as one cannot imagine a comparably great vineyard in Burgundy having the same difficulties, but such is the wine world these days. The 2005 Breton Clos Sénéchal was bottled in mid-April, and while it is certainly closed, it has at least recovered its equilibrium and is quite easy to read. The bouquet is deep, primary and outstanding, as it jumps from the glass in a mélange of cassis, black raspberry, espresso, herb tones, vinesmoke and a great, complex base of stony minerality. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and laser-like in its focus, with a great core of fruit, an athlete's body, tangy acids, and outstanding length and grip on the ripely tannic and intensely flavored finish. A stunning bottle of Bourgueil in the making--all this beauty needs is time. 2015-2040+.*

## **La Dilettante \$**

### **Olivier Cousin "Le Cousin Rouge" \$20.00**

Cousin is a former sailor who ultimately found his life's passion on land. This explains the nautical elements (such as an anchor) on some of his labels. His wines are 100% organic, and 100% grapes--no additives of any kind, not even sulphur. He even plows his vineyards with the aid of his horse, Joker. Pure Grolleau, a varietal few people have heard of, let alone tasted, this wine might best be served slightly chilled so that the up-front juicy fruit flavors are enhanced.

## **WINES UNDER \$20**

We can't say that there aren't people who drink premier cru Burgundy with dinner every night, but we don't know them. (We are, however, open to invitations!) For the rest of us, opening a bottle of wine midweek or in the middle of a relaxing Sunday afternoon shouldn't require a great deal of thought or a major investment, but should certainly reward the effort. Looking for delicious wines made traditionally that don't cost an arm and a leg? They are being made and we are pleased to offer as many as we can find, including the following.

### **Livor Tinto Rioja Vina Ijalba 2006 \$\_\_\_\_\_**

One of the best values on offer in our shop at the moment. It's delicious, it's 100% Tempranillo, it has a funny-looking 1980's-style label, and it's a great bargain. For a Sunday afternoon, a barbecue (Spring has sprung!), or a weekday evening, this wine offers up maximum bang for the buck.

### **Domaine des Sablonnettes "Les Copines Aussi" \$17.00**

Another Loire Valley red wine, this 100% Gamay is cool, refreshing, and goes down easy. To get the best of its lovely floral aromatics, chill slightly and pour into a carafe. Nice pink label to match the name ("girlfriends too").

### **Domaine Monpertuis "Cuvee Counoise" 2005 \$13.00**

Counoise is one of the grape varieties grown in the Southern Rhone Valley and permitted to be included in Chateauneuf

du Pape. Here, the grape is vinified in an adjacent area and bottled separately but to our tastebuds it shouts Cotes du Rhone. Remarkable quality for the price (which may have something to do with the great vintage); be sure to carafe this wine before enjoying it as it really improves when given some air.

**Alice and Olivier de Moor Sauvignon St. Bris 2004 \$15.00**

St. Bris is an appellation located near Chablis. While Chablis is made from Chardonnay grapes, however, St. Bris is made from Sauvignon blanc. The de Moors make great wines and this bottle is no exception. It is unlike just about any other S.B. we have tasted. Rich, wild, maybe even freaky describes this anodyne of the typical grassy, cat pee smells associated with the grape. This wine actually rewards some contemplation.

**Clos Siguier Cahors 2005 \$13.50**

Located in the Southwestern corner of France, Cahors is made of Malbec, a blending grape traditionally used in some Bordeaux. Cahors can merit its reputation for tannic, paint-peeling monsterism, but this wine is delicate without being wimpy. Like the Counoise above, this repays a bit of decanting in spades, opening up to show fresh raspberry, floral, and licorice aromas and flavors.

**WINE STORAGE**

Natural wines are made in the vineyard and cellar, not in a lab. They can be delicate and, just like beer, milk, or orange juice, benefit from proper storage conditions. We take our obligation to deliver wine to you in superior condition very seriously. Our stock is stored onsite in light-, temperature-, and humidity-controlled vaults at a constant 54 degrees (plus or minus about a degree). We're not aware of any other retailer in San Francisco that goes to such lengths to assure you of the quality you pay for and have a right to expect. By the same token, we recommend that your wine be stored properly once you take it home. Don't leave that case sitting in the trunk of the car on a hot day.

**TERROIR WINE MERCHANT**

**\*\*\*All wines receive a 10% case discount (mix and match)\*\*\***

**Check out our website for upcoming special events.**

**Find us:**

**We are located at 1116 Folsom Street, near the corner of Seventh Street, in San Francisco's SOMA neighborhood. Street parking only. We are a three-block walk from the Civic Center BART station.**

**Visit us:**

**Sunday through Thursday: 10:00 a.m. until midnight**

**Friday and Saturday: 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 a.m.**

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